

# “Bring the Maoists back to the table.”



**US Ambassador Michael Malinowski is an old Nepal hand, having first served here in 1991. He spoke to Nepal Times this week on a wide range of issues. Excerpts:**

**Nepal Times: How do you reconcile America's need to support democracy on the one hand, with the requirement that democracy may need to be shelved to bring things back on track?**  
**Michael Malinowski:** Democracy is resilient, flexible enough to withstand dire threats like this insurgency. But to function well, democracy needs structures like parliament, elected public officials, their accountability, institutions that support the freedom that democracy requires: free press, an honest bureaucracy, intellectual exchange. But what it comes down to at the end is the political will of an individual—whether individuals can work as voters, whether they are educated, whether the people they elect are accountable to the electorate. This can only be done by a country's own citizens. That is the drama that is being played out today.

**You were one of two envoys the king consulted before he took over executive powers. What do you make of the recent political developments?**  
 The US and other countries are concerned about political developments in Nepal. We are hoping that the Nepali people can overcome this crisis, that peace can be restored. We support Nepal. We support a continuation of the constitutional role, we support the continuation of multi-party democracy, we want to see the people able to articulate their demands through an organised system, and we expect that free and fair elections will take place. There are three points here: a constitutional role, continuing multi-party democracy and full commitment to seeing elections happen. What can be done to attain this? I think there are four major areas. Firstly, politics. It's been frustrating that the legal politicians have not been able to come

together in a more concerted fashion to face the threat from the Maoists. You know, the house is on fire and people are still worrying about who is going to sleep in the master bedroom. We hope that people will rise above their personal, political concerns for the good of the country. That hasn't happened so far, though the people are trying to make it work.  
 The second plank is to get to the resources for not only the insurgency, but the process of development of Nepal in general. Nepal has larger development problems. We need to develop more effective programs to get to the grassroots problems. Things are being done. Coupled with that, you need a better economic atmosphere to bring in employment. To create jobs you need to have a government that better delivers goods and services, you need to have a government that is not corrupt.

**Times** nepal@gmail.com  
 Weekly Internet Poll # 57  
**Q. Should the political parties join the interim government?**

Total votes: 1,687

Weekly Internet Poll # 58: To vote go to [www.nepaltimes.com](http://www.nepaltimes.com)  
 Q: Do you think Maoist leader Prachanda is serious in his latest offer for talks?

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## Captain saved airport, but not himself

**TOYA DAHAL in RUMJATAR**  
**B**y all accounts, it was a grossly uneven fight. Two thousand battle-hardened Maoists, some armed with automatic SLRs and light machine guns were attacking a force of just 61 soldiers of the Royal Nepal Army guarding Rumjatar airfield in Okhaldhunga. After a six-hour firefight, the Maoists retreated, leaving at least 42 of their dead comrades and carrying away dozens of other dead and wounded.



Credit for the defence of Rumjatar goes to Captain Dinesh Thapa, 30, who died in the fierce gun-battle. Captain Thapa's preparation, his ability to get advance intelligence of the impending attack, and his solid defences around the airfield allowed soldiers under his command to fight on.  
 Captain Thapa was single, and the son of veteran army colonel, Nar Bahadur Thapa. He was a born soldier, often leading his units deep into the surrounding mountains, where they had their ears close to the ground. In an interview in the control tower of Rumjatar airport just ten days before his death, he told us: "Our army is capable and well-trained, and we can put down the Maoists. But our numbers are small." If Captain Thapa had his way, he would increase army strength to 200,000, and place units in every village. "Unemployed youth would have jobs, stability would return,

### Captain Dinesh Thapa was killed in Rumjatar, but the Maoists were unable to penetrate the defences he built.

and the economy would pick up," he had said.  
 "You can't fight this war with 20,000 soldiers in such terrain," he added, gesturing from the mountains towering over the airstrip. In the interview, Thapa was surprisingly critical of higher officers in the army who he said didn't visit the frontlines often enough. "This affects the morale of the boys," he said. "I go to the field very often. I get, why can't they come down from Kathmandu?" Ironically, Chief of Army Staff Pyar Jung Thapa visited Rumjatar a day after the attack to pay tribute to the bravery of Captain Thapa and his men.  
 Dinesh Thapa was dressed in civvies and looked relaxed when he spoke to us just after Dasain. There was no hint of bitterness in his comments. He just wanted to improve conditions for his men, and win the war. He felt his unit had enough weapons, and added: "In the west, the soldiers are having a hard time not because of lack of resources, but because of carelessness." And he seemed determined not to allow a defeat during his watch.  
 A Yell Airlines Twin Otter diverted from Lukla landed on the runway below, Captain Thapa was prophetic: "The Maoists will never be able to take Rumjatar, however large their numbers." Just ten days after he spoke these words, at 10:30 pm on 28 October, the guerrillas attacked in force from all sides, pummeling the trenches and the sandbag positions with automatic fire and grenades.  
 Thapa was in the same air traffic control tower where we had spoken. He was in radio contact with the army base up the ridge in Okhaldhunga, and was asking for reinforcements. The base was telling him that two helicopters were on their way from Kathmandu. He had just left the tower and was running to a gun position when he was felled by a grenade. Army officials later said Captain Thapa's defences were so impenetrable, the attacking force couldn't even cross the barbed wire fence surrounding the airport. In Kathmandu on Thursday, army spokesman Colonel Despak Gurung was full of praise for the unit: "They were heavily outnumbered, but they were very disciplined and kept on fighting valiantly even after Captain Thapa was killed." ♦

DESTINATION	FLY TIME	DEPT	ARRIVAL	DEPART	FLY TIME
Delhi	09:00	10:00	10:00	11:00	11:00
London	09:00	10:00	10:00	11:00	11:00
Amsterdam	09:00	10:00	10:00	11:00	11:00
Paris	09:00	10:00	10:00	11:00	11:00

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UNITY

In the past two years, everything as Nepalis have accomplished and taken pride in has been systematically dismantled. In fact, if we were conspiracy-minded we would say that it seems to be that someone is slowly and systematically killing our nation.

Yes, a lot of things went wrong after 1990. Our politicians were corrupt and feeble, they forgot about governance and ravaged the country. But even die-hard cynics will admit that there had been progress. So, how come the Maoists have targeted these few areas where there had been advances in development, in infrastructure and in the evolution of the institutions of democracy?

The Maoists said they will leave tourists alone, but the insurgency they unleashed has devastated tourism. Hundreds of thousands have lost their livelihood, and have been forced to migrate abroad to work. Arrivals have plummeted, with serious consequences for the economy. Later, armed bandits known as khobadis have started extorting and robbing tourists in the name of revolution. Nepal's eco-tourism projects which had won worldwide acclaim are in deep trouble, national parks and nature sanctuaries are being encroached by smugglers and poachers.

Nepal was the first country in the region to open up energy generation to foreign joint ventures. For the first time in our history, we have surplus hydro-power generation capacity. Nepal's success story in micro-hydro development, building investment and technical capacity at the grassroots for power generation has been recognised as a model for developing countries. Small hydro-power plants have been systematically targeted for bombings, medium-scale plants specifically designed for rural electrification like Jhimruk, Andhikhola have been put out of action, and for the first time hydro-power plants built with foreign investment have been hit. Who is it that wants to sabotage the one sector besides tourism that has the potential to turn our economy around?

Then take telecommunications. We had one of the best phone networks in the world six years ago, and this was a vital achievement for a mountainous country with few roads. Half the villages in this country had phones, and if things had gone according to plan three-fourths would have been wired by now. By picking off one microwave relay station after another, the Maoists have set us back ten years. One-third of the 75 districts in the country today do not have phones.

We had other success stories: our community forestry programme took 20 years to build with painstaking legislative changes, advocacy campaigns and local awareness-building. It has increased forest cover in the midhills, and agro-forestry has made farmers self-sufficient in fuelwood, fodder and food. Nepal's small farmers' development projects with their micro-credit component may not be as famous as Bangladesh's Grameen Bank, but they are every bit as effective.

All this progress in grassroots development has been made possible because local governance structures could be put into place through political devolution legislated by the Local Self-governance Act. For the first time in our nation's history, grassroots democracy had given Nepalis control over their own destiny. It is not by chance that the Maoists have taken apart this network. By destroying two-thirds of all village councils, killing hundreds of elected local leaders, they have wrecked precisely that aspect of democracy that was working.

Since 1990, our national-level political leaders tarnished the image of the judiciary, police and the civil service with corruption and politicisation. But the two institutions which had so far remained intact, the monarchy and the Royal Nepal Army have also been dragged into controversy. The last remaining symbol of our unity is now just another political force. And our military's reputation is also frayed.

Could all of this have happened by chance? If not, who was responsible? Is there, as Girija Koirala has been saying, a "grand design" whose deeper? We know who is responsible: we are. There is no point looking for ghosts and scapegoats. We are all collectively responsible for letting things slide. We are all guilty of standing aside, being cynical, fatalistic and only becoming bad things are. It is we who have the responsibility to set things right, and we can start by being a little less cynical ourselves, being less divisive, and mustering greater unity of purpose. For starters, it requires all of us individually to be more honest, efficient, committed and positive.

All kinds of deaths have become routine over last seven years. When the government repeatedly failed to protect the life and liberty of its citizen, and Maoist mayhem spread



**STATE OF THE STATE**  
**The purity of pure despair**  
by CK LAL

**Instead of cursing the darkness, Mohan Khatri lit a lamp.**

I had known Major Mohan Khatri for nearly two years, but I can't claim that I was close enough to be a friend. We knew each other, but the bond hadn't deepened with either shared interests or sharing of ideas and opinions over a period of time. The late Major Khatri wasn't related to me but his name was endeared to me "concerned citizens" in our own ways.

The Major, for that's what we all called him even though he had retired from the army seven years ago, ran a tourist resort. He had so much self-confidence that he never felt the need to show it. He believed that future leaders of national institutions badly needed some hard training in team-building and risk-taking. Perhaps it was his faith in the future of our country that made me respect him so much when he was alive. And forced me to give when he was mercilessly murdered by Maoists during Dasain.

All this progress in grassroots development has been made possible because local governance structures could be put into place through political devolution legislated by the Local Self-governance Act. For the first time in our nation's history, grassroots democracy had given Nepalis control over their own destiny. It is not by chance that the Maoists have taken apart this network. By destroying two-thirds of all village councils, killing hundreds of elected local leaders, they have wrecked precisely that aspect of democracy that was working.

most all over the country, our confidence in the ability of the government died a slow, painful, death. The sanctity of monarchy suffered a severe blow on 1 June, 2001.

Sher Bahadur Deuba killed our faith in parliamentary democracy on 22 May, 2002 by his midnight dissolution of the lower house of the parliament. And then another midnight announcement on Friday the Fourth last month, this time from the king himself, declared the passing away of the sovereignty of the people.

Mahaak, the deity of death and destruction, is performing his Tandava in Nepal without bothering to take a break.

But there was always the hope that the destruction will stop some day, and a spurt in creativity will begin soon after. In many ways, Major Khatri was one of the symbols of such hope. He was a person who dared to light a lamp rather than continue with the pointless game of cursing the darkness. It is this realisation that makes Mohan Khatri's passing away more painful. There is no tragedy bigger than the death of hope, and the demise of dreams is the worst fate that can befall a society.

Major Khatri, were he alive, would have respectfully, but strongly, disagreed with such a suggestion. He was a doer, believing in tackling fate rather than taking it lying down. Mourning was not his style, at least not public mourning. I can almost hear his reproach, "Be



COMMENT

One thing we have come to learn about the Maoists is that despite their doctrinaire approach, the leadership appears to make dramatic shifts in its demands depending on the evolving political situation.

For instance, a year-and-half after vilifying King Gyanendra, hurling insults, calling him "fascist", and even refusing to use his correct surname, Maoist supreme Prachanda has suddenly changed his tune. For the first time, he has indirectly accepted the role of the monarch by asking for a roundtable meeting with him and the political parties. The details of such tripartite talks were not spelled out, but the statement created ripples in political circles in Kathmandu.

This, of course, is nothing new. True to the adage that there are no permanent friends or enemies in politics, the Maoists had earlier cosied up to political figures that they used to pour scorn on. And people like Girija Koirala have been in the past only too happy to reciprocate. Koirala was a sworn enemy of the Maoists while in power, but has been playing football with them when out. He has not hesitated to flee some republican fathers after the palace became friendly with his nemesis, Sher Bahadur Deuba. And when the king ended up sacking Deuba, the conspiracy-minded Koirala has been shouting about a "grand design". Koirala had been led to believe by his contacts in the rebel movement that the Maoists would never talk to the monarchy. Prachanda's statement is therefore a smack on his face. It is also an insult to the Chand government, which Prachanda has bypassed by going straight to the king.

To be sure, Prachanda's 25 October statement doesn't suddenly make the Maoists monarchists. But this tacit acceptance of the king's role is a fundamental departure from their previous stance and must be seen as positive. I was told that King Gyanendra had public relations people after 1 June 2001, but the Maoists had

Something gives

We have to start somewhere to seek a way out of this.

increasing pressure from India, and also a fear that there are secret contacts between the palace and the Indians and this could sideline them in any future governance structure. So far, the Maoists have been calling the shots. They hold a large part of the countryside under their sway, there has really been no reason for them to negotiate, or be moderate. This had forced the government and military to be reactive, and respond to their initiatives. Now, suddenly, there is someone deciding in Kathmandu who is setting the agenda and being proactive.

So the Maoists keeping themselves busy driving a wedge between the political parties and the monarchy, to try to isolate both from public support. Prachanda, has also thrown the fractious political parties into confusion about their next move.

Three months ago, the Maoists declared that they had achieved "strategic balance" with the army, and they were poised to go on a "strategic offensive". Since then, they have suffered several reversals, including the last one in Okhaldhunga. But the royal wave of 4 October has strengthened their political position, and they are confident enough to use the political path as a parallel strategy.

The Maoists also appear to be preparing the ground to take their struggle to a nationwide level, by seeking widespread support for the monarchy become more overt. For this they will try to invoke patriotism from the political parties to oppose foreign expansionism. India is by no means a part of their equation because the Maoists are using Indian territory for training and supplies.

The Prachanda statement could also be a ploy to further erode the perceived military hardware for the army from

Europe and the United States. Human rights pressure and the pro-Maoist roadshow in major European cities starting next week are expected to increase doubts in donor capitals about supplying expensive weapons to one of the world's poorest countries. By offering an olive branch now, the Maoists are hoping to sow more doubt and delay delivery.

The biggest failure in all this has been the role of the political parties. They should have been trying to bring the two forces that they think are acting extra-constitutionally against the monarchy and the Maoists within the constitutional mainstream. But the parties are immersed in their own petty games, and are not playing a proactive role as competing forces.

The Chand government has said it is waiting for a response to his offer for talks. Well, the response is now here. How is he going to react? The prime minister could declare an amnesty for rebels, and formally call the Maoists to join a roundtable meeting. This would pull the rug from underneath the political parties.

At the table, the main subject will have to be the formation of a constituent assembly under certain conditions: preservation of the constitutional monarchy, parliamentary democracy, a meaningful ceasefire and safeguarding of civil rights.

The road ahead will not be easy. We can expect some disagreement between the political forces and even with the Maoist movement between hardline and moderates over republicanism, and also about whether the "people's liberation army" should be inducted into the army. There may even be a regression to violence. But we have to start somewhere. ♦

(Readers can send feedback to [puskar2@yahoo.com](mailto:puskar2@yahoo.com))

LETTERS

**SHRISHA KARKI**  
Thanks to Manjushree Thapa for her article "Putting the media on trial" (#116). It made me understand the reality of the whole event.

I was devastated by Shrisha Karki's suicide. One can imagine the trauma and sexual harassment this young girl must have undergone to choose such a serious act to end her life. She must have spent days in depression and gloom. Again it is so ridiculous that the so-called professionals in the media published those pictures did not know privacy laws. No wonder so many bogus sub-standard papers are mushrooming in capital, which prod into people's private lives in an embarrassing and degrading manner. Journalism is supposed to be a respectable profession. Those who do not know their codes of practice or journalistic ethics are unfit to be in the business. And another woman, instead of giving support to a woman in distress, has forgotten her duties and has gone down to greed to blackmail an innocent soul. All the people involved should be brought to trial so that Shrisha's soul can rest in peace.

**Dr Arati Thapa Hamal Wakefield, UK**

Manjushree Thapa has been "hitting the nail on the head" lately. I want to very much thank her on the one hand for presenting us for Dasain with Laxmi Prasad Devkota's superb poem "Deranged" (#115) and on the other for her comment on the deplorable incident around Shrisha Karki in our last number (#116). On the latter, I was hoping that someone would openly address the issue in the way she did and put the blurred facts that lurk behind in clear focus. She did it outstandingly. Hopefully we all could learn from the tragedy to prevent another.

**Karin Eichelkraut, Pata**

**MOHAN KHATRI**  
I would like to add my tribute to what Kunda Dixit and Daniel Lak had to say in the last issue about the gruesome murder of ex-Major Mohan Khatri in Mude (The village) support keeps me going... "Victory of death" (#116). Aside from everything he did for the community by building schools and hospitals, he was hard working and always tied to be a perfectionist. He built the resort literally with his bare hands and he ran it with a personalised touch. His food was superb, hospitality without a blemish and the rooms were very



**Dr Armit KC Bishalnagar**

**Reading Kunda Dixit's tribute to Mohan Khatri brought tears to my eyes. We didn't know the late major, but he is in your online edition brought him and his work alive to us, and we are outraged at his murderers. We want to tell them, you are cowards for killing a defenceless, selfless social worker. This the meaning of your revolution, when you kill someone who actually understood your cause better than your "class enemies"?** Reading the wise words Mohan Khatri wrote to his friend before he died that are quoted in the article, we felt both sorry for our Mother Nepal which has lost a devoted son, and nothing but anger at the anti-nationalists who perpetrated this crime. We want to tell the leaders of the people who killed Mohan Khatri: one day, comrades, you will pay for this.

**Dilip, Gokul, Rajist, Nandan, Rajat, Nepal students in India**

**Purushottam Bhattacharya Dillobhat, Bhaktulali**

**GAS PROBLEMS**  
After reading your editorial "Kleptomaniacs in Corruption" (#112) and a recent news item that the Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) is considering a hike in the price of petroleum products to check on security border smuggling, I am tempted to offer my suggestions, since I am used to own a gas station in Japan. A price hike is not the only solution to this crisis. The major fault started with the Ministry of

Industry, Commerce and Supply during gas station licenses issued indiscriminately to everyone who could bribe them or show an approach to higher officials. This practice started after democracy. The result is that there are more gas stations than are necessary for the Nepal market. The new gas stations could not get enough business to see a return on their investment. Gas stations bordering India have a good opportunity to sell their products in India. This brought more profit than selling gas in Nepal itself. The open Indo-Nepal border is a drawback, and customs officials on both sides are in deterrence. NOC and the ministry should immediately regulate the licenses, and privatise the import of petroleum products. What we need from the ministry and the NOC now is commitments, not more corruption.

**Pravesh Saxa, Chicago, USA**

**CORRECTION**  
In Dynasty (#116) one of the references to Rana Uday Singh wrongly identifies him as King Bahadur Shah. It was his brother, Ananda Chandra Shah's reign was actually 29 years. -Ed.

# "The house is on fire, and they are arguing about who should sleep in the master bedroom..."

# who should sleep in the master bedroom..."

from p1

We applaud the recent anti-corruption effort. We hope that it is done according to the law, that it is non-partisan in nature. If people abuse the public trust they should be held accountable. This is not passing judgement on any of the personalities involved, but the system should sort that out.

The third is on the security side, and a lot of the above cannot be done because of the security situation. The security forces have to become better at what they are doing. The object is not to kill people, but to bring them to the negotiating table, bring them back into the system. I am happy to say that the US is involved now in trying to help the military and security forces to get better.

To get better also means things like civic action.

The fourth plank is international and regional support. Neighbouring countries have an obvious role to play. There is a porous border with India, it has expressed concerns about the situation here. Certainly they have a very positive role to play in this. This is not going to be easy, it can't happen unless Nepalis themselves do it. Outsiders can,

but at the end of the day it's Nepalis who have to be in charge of their own future.

**You have publicly equated Maoist groups with other militant groups like the Seditious in Peru and the Khmer Rouge. But does this insurgency actually fit into the global US war against terror?**

The terrorists today are driven by a lot of reasons—religious, sectarian, ethnic, philosophical. This group here, the so-called Maoists, are driven by the philosophy of ultra-left extremist Marxism coupled with a willingness to take individual lives, to use innocent victims, to destroy infrastructure in an effort to get their goal which, after all, is power.

So, the link between so-called Maoist groups and other terrorist groups is the question of tactics. The use of violence, and the goal is to attain power. Tactics used are the same. They admire the Sendero Luminoso and the Khmer Rouge, one of the most horrific examples of the 20<sup>th</sup> century of violence against humanity.

Now, how does this fit into the worldwide campaign? We abhor all types of terrorist acts. The world has no place for such tactics in the 21<sup>st</sup>

century. The arrogance of the people for this type of terrorism is fairly unjustifiable. People who think they have the right to impose their views through violent methods. There is no place in civilized society for that. So, the United States recognises that and it is part of our overall action against terrorism, terrorist movements. We are concerned about developments in Nepal and we are actively engaged with the government and the people of Nepal to try to terminate this insurrection.

The goal of the US, the goal of Nepal, the goal of the United States, is not to kill Maoists. They are all Nepalis. The goal is to bring them back to the negotiating table.

**Your government has committed support to the Nepal government to fight the Maoists. But there is concern in some quarters about the delay in that assistance. What is holding things up?**

Late last year, the US government undertook a policy review on our relations with Nepal. It determined that the US would help the government of Nepal face this violent terrorist, so-called Maoist, insurgency. And there would also be economic assistance designed

to go to the root of insurgency, and also to help form a security shield so the government would be able to better fulfill its primary requirement. The primary requirement of any government is to protect its citizens.

Since that assessment was made, we are developing new programs of assistance. This is in addition to our regular programs, and they are specifically designed to help end the insurgency, to bring the Maoists back into the system.

I am happy to report that the USAID budget, which was about \$24 million last year has been kicked up this year, to about \$34 million. Most of the new funding is for things that have relevance in getting into the root causes of violence and the insurgency. All programs that other countries, other donors do are, of course, done in conjunction with the government of Nepal. On the development side, we have the resources and an existing program to bring goods and services to areas that may have been neglected before, basically to show that democracy and the government can deliver.

On the security side, we have been able to cobble together

significant funding, and basically there is \$17 million this year to be used on the security side. This money will be spent in conjunction with the government of Nepal, the Royal Nepal Army and other security forces here. It will consist of a multifaceted package that will include equipment, supplies and training. The training will include a number of things obviously for counter-insurgency. Also it would include things like civic-military relations, public relations, human rights. We have already done programs with both the military and the police on human rights. So we would be a wide range of efforts. I am happy to report that we will not be the only ones doing this, there would be other countries as well. I would call on other countries, friends of Nepal, to bring in the programs they already have in place to assist these counter-insurgency efforts. Some countries can offer help on the development side, but other countries might be able to help on the security side. But rather than criticise Nepalis and the government of Nepal, we would ask the donors to bring something to the table.

**How much co-ordination is there between Washington and New Delhi on events here?**

We have a very good dialogue with India on a variety of issues. Certainly, Nepal has been and should be one of the subjects of dialogue as it is a friend of both countries. Everybody wants to see peace return here.

**But some people in Europe and the United States are arguing that providing military assistance to the government of Nepal would be tantamount to supporting the poorest countries who just prolong the conflict, and aggravate the suffering.**

They should visit the Teaching

Hospital, or Bir Hospital, where about 1500 Maoists were being ignored way too long. Now that is changing, as the true nature of their movement is being unveiled.

**You took part in the Nepal donor contact group meeting here three weeks ago. Was there a consensus on support for Nepal?**

We thank the government of the United Kingdom for putting things together. This was a follow-up to the London meeting. The countries represented there ranged from Nepal's neighbours, traditional donors, international organisations. All of them recognised that Nepal was in crisis and these friendly nations and institutions had a responsibility to help Nepal. Certainly the statement that came out condemning the Maoist insurgency tactics was strong and clear. Nepal is in this situation today because of this insurgency.

**What lessons can we learn from the tragedies in Cambodia and Afghanistan?**

Both Cambodian and Afghanistan have relevance here, in terms of what might happen. In Cambodia the movement was conducted by people who read the same books as Nepal's Maoists, and they had over three-and-a-half million people dead in a very short time. National genocide, focussed by the same political arguments that these Maoists use. The result is that the international community is now spending massive amounts of money in Cambodia to rebuild. It is not only a question of money, it is the question of human costs. How many people killed, how many people injured, how many infrastructure has to be put back together, how many lives have had to be healed. We don't want to see that happen in Nepal. We have already seen elements of that in terms of the

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Hospital, or Bir Hospital, where about 1500 Maoists were being ignored way too long. Now that is changing, as the true nature of their movement is being unveiled.

**You took part in the Nepal donor contact group meeting here three weeks ago. Was there a consensus on support for Nepal?**

We thank the government of the United Kingdom for putting things together. This was a follow-up to the London meeting. The countries represented there ranged from Nepal's neighbours, traditional donors, international organisations. All of them recognised that Nepal was in crisis and these friendly nations and institutions had a responsibility to help Nepal. Certainly the statement that came out condemning the Maoist insurgency tactics was strong and clear. Nepal is in this situation today because of this insurgency.

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### HERE AND THERE

The day began in Dang with a litany of complaints from local people about Maoists and the security forces, both sides harassing a cowed population. Nothing new there then. But things got steadily more interesting as time went by.

Just after lunch, the driver announced that there was a Banke-Bardya bandh and that he wouldn't be taking us back to Nepalganj from Ghazal. He could not be persuaded with threats, money or reason. As we know, very little stops a Nepal from observing a bandh, and our driver was, well, everyman personified. Just down the road though, a different breed of jeep jockeys, pockets jangling with coins and keys, my wife rimmed glasses, two flunkies in tow. He would break the bandh, he said, for Rs 4000—twice the usual daily rate. Sold.

We were off in a cloud of bravado and dust. At the first police checkpoint, enter the army. The police set a table-blow-a-banner that read National Condom Day. Inflated latex or balloons bound in the breeze. Through the window, we received four packaged condoms each—and I kid you not—a brochure with colour photographs—very detailed, graphic photographs—explaining how to use them. I remembered the apocryphal tale from India of the couple who choked to death trying to swallow condoms given to them by government workers too prudish to explain where they went.

**RESEARCH PHIRRI**

blaming from the stereo, we negotiated the switchbacks from Dang's broad valley down to Lamaha on the Mahendra highway. Then it got serious. No more condom jokes. As road ahead, the jeep began jiggling. I listened nervously as a policeman said, "I can't advise you to go or stay, it's up to you." He muttered about cars on fire further down. Odd young men whispered "can't go, it's dangerous," and "if I target you, not the kharai." I showed one of them away semi-violently. Just then a truck rolled up and pronounced the road ahead "clear, no problem." So off we lurched in convoy with other brave souls. The driver was all for going his lachars nibbled their nails nervously.

Around a corner at speed, and the jeep began jiggling lopsidely like a one-legged kangaroo, an odd howling coming from the front left-hand side. Our man drove on and pronounced the road ahead "clear, no problem." So off we lurched in convoy with other brave souls. The driver was all for going his lachars nibbled their nails nervously.

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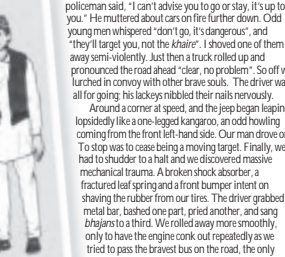
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## Bandh surreal



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**A bandh observed is a bandh indeed, even if on the wrong day.**

boys. We'd passed the site of the alleged burning car by then, and it remained alleged. A flight attendant, a long-legged stretch before Samsherjany Armed Police camp was our drag strip to safety and Tuborgs at the Hotel Balka. The APF surely would be guarding Nepal's citizens during the bandh, doing their duty. Well, unless the APF is about to defend the country's honour in a volleyball tournament, no, no, they were not on duty. A Saturday afternoon, pre-achol, lassitude lay over the camp, and the white ball bounced back and forth with vigour. We told the lone cop on the road that there were no burning cars, no signs of trouble.

Rumbling into Nepalganj, the setting sun a deep crimson towards Kailali, we looked forward to a hero's welcome at the hotel. The bored desk clerk looked up and flashed a "namaste" before informing us that the rumour of the bandh had been false. "It's tomorrow," he said, "the whole tarai belt." Our spirits and eggs sank; false courage spent for naught. But then I realised. A bandh observed is a bandh indeed, whether 24 hours early or not. This comes in the guise of a surreal fear psychosis and the authorities are doing little or nothing meaningful about it.

I nominate my rakshin driver from Dang for Home Minister, Police Chief, captain of the national volleyball team. Strange times demand creative thinking. ♦

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SOMEWHERE IN NEPAL

# Yesterday once more



With the vapours of the political instability of the 1950s billowing up again, it would be in order to dip deeper into those turbulent years. The seeds of instability built into the 1950 Dohi Compromise took little time in sprouting. The Kangres's acceptance of the ceasefire was a clear recognition of the power of the other two parties, the palace and the Rana. To shield themselves from allegations of a sell-out from the rank and file,

## Politically for Nepal, it is the 1950s all over again

of gauging the strength of the parties, leaders were asked to join the cabinet in their personal capacity. A condition the Kangres rejected. While the parties were busy negotiating a common minimum programme, MP was reappointed prime minister, with the backing of the Rastriya Praja Party he had recently founded. After the party's declination in the Kathmandu municipal board election, the Nepal Congress, Tanka Prasad Acharya's Praja Parishad and Dilli Roman Regim's Rastriya Congress formed a Democratic League and began questioning the legitimacy of MP's government. The wily premier had another trick up his sleeve. He approached each party in the League separately with offers for sharing power. The Nepal Congress took the bait and submitted four names. MP promptly withdrew his offer. The result: the Kangres were neither with the League nor the government. Meanwhile, an advisory council enforced a Special Emergency Powers Act that vested greater political powers in the palace. Predictably, Kangres and their allies began warning of threats to the hard-won gains of 1951, but were too busy squabbling to do anything about it. Deteriorating law and order triggered by labour and agrarian unrest, among other things, led the palace to constitute the government. Since there was no way

launched a civil disobedience movement to press demand for civil liberty, independent judiciary, early elections and steps to control inflation. MP's government was defeated in an assembly vote on a budget grant and resigned. After a spell of direct rule, the king appointed Acharya as premier on 27 January, 1956. MP's decision to oust Acharya from the Home Ministry but retain him as minister without portfolio had bolstered his standing. His joining hands with the banned communists in a United Front fortified his position. (He returned the favour by titling that ban) Acharya, whose pleas for homogeneity in the cabinet were rebuffed by the palace, stepped down on 13 July the following year. KI Singh's appointment as premier produced another realignment of forces. None of the parties were willing to join his team. The Rastriya Parishad, Nepal Congress and Rastriya Congress formed a Democratic Front and demanded early elections. They couldn't agree on whether it should be for a constituent assembly or parliament. The communists joined the three parties without becoming a formal part of the alliance. The elections scheduled for October 1958 were postponed till the following February. The royal proclamation didn't specify his media. But they were to be for a constituent assembly or parliament. KI Singh's efforts to



by PUSKAR BHUSAL

by MANJUSHREE THAPA

COMMENT

# An editor at large

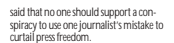
Three weeks after actress Shrishra Karki's suicide, Jana Aastha's editor Kishore Shrestha is still at large. He has been charged with murder for causing her death by publishing a nude photograph of her in his paper on 9 October.

Shrestha claims, now, that he is suffering political persecution in this case. Speaking from an unknown location to a radio station in Pokhara on October 25, he accused the film artists leading the campaign against him of trying to frame him, just as in Panchayat times Narayan Man Bijukchhe was framed for the death of Karna Hyela. He said that he did not blackmail Karki and he regretted her death. (See also Shrestha's comment on p 12.)

oposing a fundamental lack of compunction, he also said he had similar pictures of other film artists, and conveyed a veiled threat to them: "A few actors and actresses are engaging in a politics of crowds because they are afraid that pictures of themselves might be printed as well." None of this will save him well in his trial. Or trials. In addition to the murder charge, film artists have filed a public offence case against him, and are proceeding with defamation charges for the story that accompanied Karki's photograph. Noted women's rights advocate Shanta Thapaliya is representing these cases. No doubt, there is politics involved in this matter. Shrestha is a left-leaning journalist who in Panchayat times wrote on the murders of two girls in what was known as the Namita and Sunila scandal; he won no favour from royal circles accused in these murders. More recently, he published Maoist politburo member Krishna Sen's death in police custody. He usually earned powerful enemies in doing so. Speaking informally about the Karki case, film artists have expressed misgivings about the film artists' motives, why ask journalists, are these film artists so upset at Karki's death when they refused to join the widespread protest against singer Pawan Kumar Shrestha

## Of course there's politics in the Shrishra Karki case, but there's also the question of journalistic ethics.

In a car accident, allegedly by Prins Paris, in August 2000? Are royalist film artists using this opportunity to punish Shrestha for his anti-royalist politics? Are they supporting a grand design to curtail democratic liberties? Such mind-bogglingly difficult questions are those who strongly condemn Shrestha's action to join hands with the film artists. Progressive and activist women's groups have spoken out against Shrestha, although their delay in responding is much. Media organisations have struck cautious balance. The Nepal Press Council has condemned the editor for breaching journalistic ethics, and has demanded an apology and explanation. But, apparently dissatisfied with existing legal avenues, Chairperson H-rishi Bhatti has asked for special commission to be formed on the matter. The Federation of Nepalese Journalists has similarly asked Shrestha to offer a public clarification. Bhatti has said it will take action against him and other journalists involved in this case. Yet the Federation has also come down against the film artists for attacking Jana Aastha's office, for opting for unlawful means of protest when lawful means were available, and for trying to discredit the entire media, the Reporter's Club, the Federation's President Tarash Dhal has



Shrishra Karki

said that no one should support a conspiracy to use one journalist's mistake to curtail press freedom. The film artists' decision to appeal directly to the king in this case has not allayed widespread suspicions of their political motives. For their part, the film artists have demised accusations of their political motives, and they have expressed disaffection at the king's decision to act in this case. Former Sub-Inspector of Police Uddar Bhandari has admitted to shooting Karki's nude photograph to the BBC Nepal Service from London. Taking high moral tones, he claimed to have paid a film industry fee between Rs.6,000 to bring Karki to his house for sex; once the actress was there, he forcibly took her nude pictures in order to scare her into stopping prostitution. He did not blackmail the actress, it was his intention, he said, to clean up the film industry. Speaking to Karlipur, Kathmandu's DIG Amar Singh Shah dismissed Bhandari's claims. "This is the product of a criminal mind frame, which [Bhandari] is trying to conceal by talking big." Yet the fact remains that neither Bhandari nor Shrestha has been apprehended. Is there politics involved in this

BIZ NEWS

## Fedex it

An alliance between Federal Express and an outbound service for documents and packages from Nepal to the world. The company announced "significant improvement" in its inbound services into Nepal. Hamdi Osman, Fedex's regional vice president for the subcontinent and the Middle East said, "Our aim is to get even closer to the customers who require high-quality, international express transportation services." Fedex is eyeing Nepal's carpets, garments and handicraft exports, as well as the business of commercial outlets and development projects. Everest Cargo formed in 1984 and is now a leading market player in Nepal and is a member of the Everest group of companies.

## Darjeeling tea patent

India is preparing the paperwork to patent Darjeeling tea so that multinational companies cannot use the name without paying a royalty. In much the same way as sparkling wine from the Campagne region of France is called "champagne", Darjeeling can only be used if it is tea from the region of India's West Bengal state bordering Nepal. The Indian Tea Board's patent proposals are currently being studied by the commerce ministry in Delhi, which has expressed concern that some countries were selling their teas as Darjeeling in absence of a patent. "The Tea Board has decided to patent the brand Darjeeling tea," West Bengal Industry Minister Nirupam Sen told rediff.com. The lack of a patent for Darjeeling tea currently allows tea from any garden to be sold as Darjeeling tea. India could theoretically demand royalty for selling tea under the brand name Darjeeling tea once it wins the patent. The Indian tea industry has set an export target of 205 million kg this year.

## Ex-Gurkhas to guard QE2

Britain's two biggest cruise companies are using undercover ex-Gurkhas to protect their lines against terrorist attacks, according to a report in the Daily Mirror. The ex-soldiers from Nepal are already on board Cunard's flagship QE2 and P&O's prestigious Oriana. Nearly a million UK passengers will be taking cruises this year, and there are fears of airline-type terrorist attacks on cruise liners. These fears were heightened after last December on a French tanker and a US warship early this year. Ex-Gurkhas already guard Malaysian and Singapore cruise ships in the Malacca Straits and casino ships in Macau, (see Nepal Times #91). Cunard and P&O refused to discuss security arrangements. But a P&O spokesman said, "The special security people are dressed as crew and are on duty round the clock."

## Nepali worker dies in Malaysia

A Nepali worker in a rubber factory collapsed last week. Thirty-two others were injured, and some of them were Nepalis, according to reports from Ipoh in Malaysia's west coast.

## NTB gets Vasco de Gama Award

Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) has been selected to receive the PATA/Business Traveller Germany Vasco de Gama Award as the Company of the Year 2003. The award is given to a member organisation of the Pacific Area Travel Association (PATA). The committee wishes to recognise the outstanding work the Nepal Tourism Board has carried out over many years in the promotion and development of travel and tourism in the PATA region. Europe and the positive actions the Board has undertaken to face the hard times the industry has been recently confronted with, by the jury said. The award will be presented at the international tourism fair in Berlin in March 2003. "This Award has further encouraged us to work even harder towards achieving our goals and objectives," says NTB chief, Pradeep Raj Pandey.

## Green and blue bank

Can a garbage dump be turned into a park? That is exactly what Standard Chartered Bank Nepal with the United Nations Women's Organisation (UNWV) have set out to do at Lamochaur Community Park at Dhobighat. The community in the area has been encouraged to participate to set up and manage a park as well as organise waste management. The bank itself practices what it preaches and has launched its 'Clean and Green Week' to undertake initiatives in conserving nature by conserving paper, fuel and electricity. Staff driving to work in their personal vehicles took the initiative of sharing vehicles. This was done with the objective of saving fuel and reducing pollution with fewer vehicles plying the road. This is besides the help the bank has provided local schools with computer equipment. At a function in Lamochaur, Standard Chartered Nepal CEO Rajew Kulkarni said, "It is important to leave a clean and green environment for future generations, and help children play an active role in achieving this." Participants in the program included housewives, children of the community, UNWV members and staff of the bank. Bishnu Thakali of the Women Environment Preservation Committee (WEPAC) gave an interesting demonstration on Household Solid Waste Management.

## BHAGIRATHI YOGI

Eight months after the renewal of the Nepal-India Trade Treaty, Nepal manufacturers say that although they still face a bigger problem is to fulfil new annual quotas for exports. While renewing the 1996 Treaty, India slapped a quota on four Nepal products: vegetable ghu, acrylic yarn, copper products and zinc oxide saying exporters were using the treaty to dump these products on the Indian market and this was adversely affecting India's domestic market.

"Though the export of vegetable ghu has resumed, we are still worried that we may not be able to hit the quota allocated for us this year," said Almaran Murarka, President of the Nepal Vegetable Ghee and Oil Industries Association. Because of cross-border bureaucratic hassles with quarantine laws and new taxes, it has taken time for exports to return to optimum levels. Nepal manufacturers have so far exported only one-fourth of the allocated quota of the ghu, which is 100,000 tonnes for this year. And there is only four months to go.

The secretary level talks of the Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC) held in New Delhi in August had reached agreement on addressing procedural hassles while implementing the treaty. "We had reached understanding on 22 different agenda items during the IGC meeting," said Purbashottam Ojha, joint secretary at the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies. "There has been progress."

During the IGC meeting, the Nepali side had requested the Indians to reconsider some clauses that they said were negatively

# New trade winds

## Indo-Nepal trade is becoming more hassle-free, as both sides try to remove bottlenecks.

affecting Nepal traders: quarantine checks for Nepal's agrifoods, extra restrictions for certain items, an anti-dumping duty, and a four percent Special Additional Duty (SAD) in this year's Indian budget.

In addition, the West Bengal state government imposed a 20 percent "luxury tax" on Nepal tea and vegetable ghu. Likewise, a 40 percent anti-dumping duty was imposed on acrylic yarn and zinc oxide exported from Nepal. "The 1996 Trade Treaty between Nepal and India was a preferential one giving lots of facilities for Nepalese exporters," says Krishna Hari Bansal, director general at the Department of Commerce. Nepal traders have been lobbying with both governments to have some of the new conditions removed. Indian officials at the IGC meeting considered these concerns positively, according to Nagma Mallick, first secretary for commerce at the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu. She added: "India has

already addressed a number of issues raised by the Nepali side in the last two months." New Delhi has promised to set up three more quarantine-check posts at Sunauli, Jagadhri and Banbasa by November in addition to the three others already set up at Rupaulitha, Rasauli and Panitkani so that Nepal's agrifood exports would not encounter delays. Nepal currently exports up to Rs 5 billion worth of agricultural products to India every year.

India has also agreed in principle to waive SAD, anti-dumping and luxury taxes as well as to raise the quota ceiling for copper products by 2,500 tonnes. "We have full commitment to give support to Nepal," Indian Indian Commerce Secretary, Deepak Chatterjee, told us this week.

It's not just the Nepalis who have gripes. India has raised concerns that Nepal is not offering equal treatment for Indian car

imports. "While Nepal accepts self-certification from Japanese and Korean automobile manufacturers, Indian car users require certification even if they are Euro II," a Mallick told us.

Rajendra Khelan of FNCCI is convinced there are no major problems left. The only thing still in need of resolution, he says, is the much-delayed railway container port at Birganj which was completed two years ago and is still not operational. "India should consider Nepal's request to expedite the Birganj port as soon as possible, and we must also consider their concern about Indian car imports in good faith," Khelan said.



Empty tracks at the Birganj container port.

# "Railways agreement will be concluded soon"

Indian Commerce secretary Deepak Chatterjee was in Kathmandu this week to take part in the 11th meeting of the Committee on Economic Cooperation of SAARC. In an interview with Nepali Times, Chatterjee addressed some of Nepal's concerns on bilateral trade:

**Birganj dry port:** "It will be operational soon, as both the countries are in the final stage of concluding a railways agreement. Everything has been resolved except customs procedures."

**Post-WTO trade scenario:** "India will consider Nepal's concerns, it within the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO) rules, member of the working party on Nepal. We will fully support Nepal's accession to WTO. Nepal joining the WTO won't affect the bilateral trade between Nepal and India as well as the proposed regional trade blocs (FTA)."

**Indian investment in Nepal:** "More than political instability, propped investors look at issues like tax structure, duty drawback, personnel human resource development. And some of the problems faced by joint venture companies here don't send a good message."

**Routing ghu exports through India's central market:** "Ea they (Nepal exporters) were making a killing. You have to be satisfied with substantial profits, you can't always think you can make a killing



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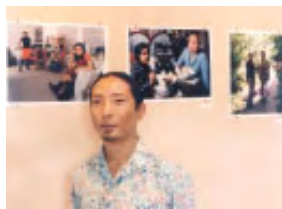
## In the November Himal

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# Life in a different light



Surendra Lawotii is fascinated by light, colour and space. The 30-year-old photography graduate from Columbia College Chicago uses these elements to document the immigrant experience of some of the 500

Nepalis living in Chicago and its suburbs. Surendra, who moved to the US in 1994, has been photographing the Nepali community in Chicago for the past two years, since the Chicago in the Year 2000 program first commissioned him to do so. His work got a boost this year when he won grants from Chicago's Community Arts Assistants Program and a Chicago Art Council grant. "In a way, this project is a reflection of my own experience as a young Nepali finding his way in this city," Surendra told us.

These photographs were recently exhibited at the NAFA Art Gallery. Surendra currently works with the photography department of Columbia College and teaches visual art classes to underprivileged high schoolers.



### "Shiva" 2001

The living room of Rajesh Tuladhar and his family is filled with religious posters, Nepali handicrafts and other icons. At one end of the room, posters of Britney Spears, N'Sync and other teenage pop stars adorn the walls. They belong to Neha, Rajesh's niece, who is the youngest in the family.



### "Pooja kotha"

A workaday closet is turned into a religious altar in the home of Shrawan and his family.



### "Suntan"

Prason takes in sun on the roof of the 'Ruby', a rented boathouse moored on the Illinois river. A two-hour drive from Chicago, the riverbank is a popular getaway for urban Chicago dwellers.



### "Rahul"

12-year-old Rahul stands strong and proud on a misty Chicago evening. An avid hip-hop enthusiast, Rahul can rap in Nepali and is always happy to entertain friends.



### "Neha"

As preparations for the ceremony take place, Neha leans on a limousine rented for family member Vivek's wedding.



### "Thanksgiving"

Served with dal bhat, the traditional turkey is a must even for Nepalis at the all-American Thanksgiving festival started when the Puritans to thank Native Americans for their help.



### "Dhiraj"

Dhiraj, suitcases packed and ticket in hand, is about to head to the airport to fly to Nepal, where he will visit family and friends he hasn't seen for six years.



### "Sony"

Vivek is welcomed by the mother of his South Indian NRI bride Teja at the entrance of a Hindu temple where the marriage ceremony will take place.

# Tell a Tale

The British Council Short Story Competition

And the winners are...

Age Categories (15 - 18)		
Position Held	Name	Story Title
First	Kamesh Regmi	Dreams
Second	Pradipta SJB Rana	The Naked Truth
Third	1. Sneh Rajbhandari 2. Trishna Rana	Life Left Lifeless My Bundle of Joy

Age Categories (18 - 35)		
Position Held	Name	Story Title
First	Ranjan Adiga	The Marriage of Ram Kumar's Son
Second	Goetanjali A Lama	Kanchhi's Tale
Third	1. Nayantara Kakshapati 2. Sujata Tuladhar	Up the Drains of Kathmandu Twist of Fate

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OPINION by YEVGENY PRIMAKOV

# Politics an rebellion

The Chechen rebels must be quelled with talks and military monitoring.

The horrific death toll in Moscow last week confirms Russia's military superiority. Chechen rebels as distinct from the global war on terror. Chechnya should remain part of the Russian Federation, but more than military means are needed for that.

Russian federal forces have devastating blows on Chechen insurgents, but the resistance is never crushed as is also proven by the numerous successful raids on Russian troops in and around Chechnya. Russia's military commanders could plan better, but they aren't solely to blame. The Chechen rebels have political goals and in can only end through a political understanding.

The first step is to separate peaceful Chechen citizens from the rebels. Russia failed to do this at the insurrection's onset, because the bands resided with civilians, and many civilian deaths resulted. Russian forces attacked the rebels head-on. Russian federal forces are trying to separate common people from the bandits by ending self-government and security to Chechen settlements.

Most peaceful ones have not turned their backs on the bandits, because the bandits have taken over those who collaborate with Russian authorities. And many fear Russian officials more than the bandits. The idea of separating authority to Chechen self-government is checked, because rebel commanders must be brought into the talks. Often clan leaders who

won't ever consider putting their authority up for a vote, they alone have the right to deliver peace. If not democracy, if maintaining their authority and local autonomy is required to end, or at least limit, the slaughter, Russia should agree to some rebel demands.

Some rebels want negotiations as time to regroup and resupply themselves. The global war on terrorism has made it difficult for them to secure financial and military support. Afghanistan is no longer a training and supply base.

Saudi Arabia and Turkey strictly control citizens who once helped Chechnya separatists. Even Georgia restricts Chechen activity, though not as much as Russia would like. Chechen rebels have political goals and in can only end through a political understanding.

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against bandits who continue attacks as the negotiations ensue. Part of the Russian military must remain in Chechnya during peace talks, also to strengthen the deal. Chechen who choose to negotiate and are prepared to ensure the security of their settlements. But Russia's troops should not conduct the peace talks, as happened after the first Chechen campaign (1994-1996).

The peace that ensues them is merely an armed truce.

A representative of President Putin must oversee everything in Chechnya economic development, military action, efforts to alleviate the suffering of Chechens. They should assume control of Defence Ministry units. Interior Ministry troops, FSB agencies and local administrations. Chechnya could be a special presidential area through negotiations, until local Chechen authorities establish their ability to enforce the rule of law. A single command accountable directly to Putin would rule out uncoordinated actions, improve discipline, strengthen the responsibility of those dealing with Chechnya, and clarify the civilian lives with Chechen civilian lives of some Russian commanders.

International solidarity must not mean Russia supporting America in Afghanistan, but also the US and the west backing Russia in its counter-terrorist struggle. And Russians must see that Chechnya requires a political solution.

Negotiations cannot rule out Russian military operations

(Yevgeny Primakov is a former prime minister of Russia)

OPINION by S. FREDERICK STARR

# Crises of legitimacy

Unless the international community helps Karzai work independently, the last year's efforts may come to naught.

Karzai's government, and Karzai himself, are controlled by a small group of powerful men associated with the former Northern Alliance and dominated by Minister of Defence Marshall Fahm.

Foreign commentators agree that a clique of Tajik elites exerts an inordinate influence in the government. This undermines the government's exclusivity. Many key figures are from a handful of villages in just one valley, the Panghir. Pashtuns living in the strategically important south and east, together with Shia Muslims of Afghanistan, constitute some two-thirds of Afghanistan's population.

Neither expanded peacekeeping nor efficiently delivered aid will achieve their desired ends until the Afghan public accepts Karzai's government as fairly representing its interests. It does not. Neither the best-armed government nor the richest can survive long unless broad sections of their population accept its policy as legitimate. Britain failed in America and the French crown failed in France because the governed refused to recognise their authority. Legitimacy shifted from the regime to its opponents, who soon brought it down.

Something similar is occurring in Afghanistan. If the process of this development is not addressed, Karzai's government will inevitably collapse, and with it the international process that began a year ago. Why do Afghans perceive us as illegitimate? Defence, announced this, it represented a reversal of America's earlier position, which favoured confining the peacekeeping force to Kabul and let it get in the way of US operations against al-Qaeda and Taliban dhards.

Washington DC - A new wave of bleaching has swept coral reefs worldwide with scientists linking the events to climate change. Over 400 cases of bleaching, a phenomenon linked with increased seawater temperatures which can damage and even result in the death of a reef, have been documented by researchers so far this year. The majority of bleaching events are from the Great Barrier Reef in Australia with others from reefs in countries including the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, Palau, the Maldives, Tanzania, the Seychelles, Belize, Ecuador and off the Florida coast of the US.

The World Bank Center says 2002 is the second worst year for reefs after 1998 and since 1962, when records started being kept.

Coral bleaching occurs when stressful conditions such as high temperatures cause corals to expel the microscopic algae that live in their tissues. The algae provide essential food energy for corals, and reefs are vital habitat for fish that coastal communities rely on.

While Jiang publicly voiced his dissent to a nuclear-free Korean peninsula, Chinese state media also alluded to Pyongyang's nuclear aspirations by blaming Washington's 'hostile foreign policy' for the nuclear stand-off.

US-led to believe denial of Saudi complicity in the attacks reflected our distress with what happened on that dark day. I hoped that we would have the courage to overcome our past hesitation and start looking deep into our national psyche, asking the big question: 'Why did 15 of our young men take American to an brutal way?'

We are no closer to answering this question than we were before, because we do not have the will to own ask it. Had we been more confident and less full of bluster, we would have organised seminar after seminar to analyse what happened, to understand the reasons behind it, and plan for a future without a similar tragedy.

Osama bin Laden's hijacked planes not only attacked New York and Washington, they also attacked Islamabad as a faith and the values of tolerance and coexistence that it preaches.

But despite the enormity of what happened, we remain in denial. We cling to conspiracy theories even after bin Laden and his fellow conspirators bragged about their great 'action' from their hideouts in Pakistan. We have the fact that 19 young Muslim men decided to leave home, head for what they described as jihad, and became terrorists.

We must admit that 15 Saudis helped prepare the attacks on America 11 years ago, and that hundreds of other Saudis were neededly killed for away from home, in the mountains and villages of Afghanistan. We must uncover why Taliban-ruled Afghanistan seemed such an attractive destination for a significant portion of Saudi youth in the years before 11 September. Afghanistan was a country when Muslims were killing each other. Any Muslim knew that this was in this case was to try to reconcile the combatants, not join the violence.

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OPINION

# The money shot

Brazil's new president needs to make some tough fiscal decisions.

Brazil's large trade surplus has more to do with outdated importers than export growth.

The darkest shadow has the threat of defaulting on the country's \$260 billion debt. Despite prudent fiscal policies and a primary surplus target (ie, before interest payments) of 3.75 percent, Brazil's debt is growing and for several months has been difficult—if not impossible—to finance. It now trades at half its face value, implying high probability of default. The 40 percent decline in the exchange rate this year and recent increases in the overnight (SELIC) interest rate to 21 percent aggravate the situation, as much of the debt is linked to the SELIC rate. For once, the IMF cannot be accused of inaction. To avoid contagion from Argentina's financial crisis, the IMF approved a \$30 billion package with Brazil in August to stabilise markets and avoid the need for the Central Bank to exhaust Brazil's reserves defending the currency. Much of this money remains to be disbursed.

Finance Minister Pedro Malan, and the governor of the Central Bank, Arminio Fraga. Giving the Central Bank more independence would be well received in the markets, which fear that Lula will inflate the country's way out of difficulties. Lula's said he will not change fiscal policy. If his administration increases the fiscal surplus through expenditure cuts or new laws, this may reassure international capital markets. Such actions go against everything Lula stands for and what his supporters demand, but may be necessary if Brazil is not to follow Argentina. Argentina's collapse (its GDP will drop by around 12 percent this year) is a

terrible warning against default. In addition, Brazil's debt is owed mainly to Brazilians as the losers in any dispute will be Brazilian banks, insurance companies and other financial institutions, putting the entire financial system at risk of collapse.

If Lula survives this, he will need to turn attention to the controversial issue of regional and hemispheric integration. Armed with Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), the Bush administration is keen to push ahead with the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Lula is sceptical, and would prefer to boost MERCOSU, the custom union linking Brazil with its neighbours. But Argentina's crisis has undermined MERCOSU, and Argentina's commitment to the regional project cannot be assured after next year's presidential elections there.

(Yevgeny Primakov is a former prime minister of Russia)

by VICTOR BULMER-THOMAS

Victor Bulmer-Thomas, a specialist in Latin American economies, is director of the Royal Institute for International Affairs in London.

OPINION

# Sri Lanka peace talks on track

Political squabbling between Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ran Wickremesinghe and President Chandrika Kumaratunga is

leading fears of instability, but analysts say it is unlikely to undercut peace talks with Tamil rebels that entered their second round yesterday. Some say the latest tensions in the fragile cohabitation between rivals Kumaratunga and Wickremesinghe may in a way help the peace process by creating a release valve for opposition to it, as non-violent, democratic dissension.

Kumaratunga has maintained that the government led by Wickremesinghe's United People's Party (UNP) has been giving in too much, too quickly to the LTTE. Still, "all this talk of polls won't affect much, because remember there has been a ceasefire since December that is continuing without any major problems," said Indira Ganesan, media director at the National Peace Council, a Norwegian-funded peace promoter. Last week, the rivalry between Kumaratunga and Wickremesinghe led to talk that the UNP may seek fresh polls to strengthen its fragile majority in the legislature and deal with Kumaratunga's challenges.

As the Sri Lankan government prepared for the talks in Nakhon Pathom outside Bangkok, Kumaratunga urged an end to bitter differences between political parties. But she also pointed to ceasefire violations that she says are hurting Sinhalese and Muslims. Kumaratunga said that learning from the five previous attempts to solve Sri Lanka's war, "the absence of war is not peace. It has proved to be only a period of respite for further continuation of war." On 23 October, Kumaratunga visited Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister Vidar Helgesen, saying she had other engagements.

At the first round of Norwegian-mediated talks in September, chief Tiger negotiator Anton Balasingham said the rebels had scaled down their demand for a separate state to greater regional autonomy for the Tamils. The new talks will focus on three key issues: The government and rebel sides are expected to create a Joint Task Force (JTF) for humanitarian and reconstruction activities in the north and east. Its creation is also key to a donors' summit for Sri Lanka to be held in Norway on 26 November. The other issues are the resettlement of displaced persons and strengthening the ceasefire implementation.

(S. Frederick Starr is co-director of the Center Asia-Pacific Institute, SAS, Johns Hopkins University.)

by JAMAL KHASHOGGI

# Foreign investors favour China

GENEVA - This year China is tipped to win the lion's share of the global foreign direct investment (FDI) flow even in the face of a 27 percent reduction from last year. Investors are forecast from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). FDI inflow for the giant Asian economy is likely to break the record with \$50 billion, surpassing the United States. The report attributes China's success to economic liberalisation, industrial restructuring and accession to the WTO last year. Medium- and high-tech manufacturing industries and services have been earmarked for FDI according to UNCTAD numbers. The movement of such investment is expected to decline for Hong Kong, South Korea, Thailand and Taiwan.

(S. Frederick Starr is co-director of the Center Asia-Pacific Institute, SAS, Johns Hopkins University.)

by JAMAL KHASHOGGI

# The basic question

A Saudi asks what drove his compatriots to 11 September.

Journalist visiting Saudi Arabia recently asked me why five out of six students he interviewed at King Saud University still believe that al-Qaeda was not responsible for the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in America last year. Dealing with this question is increasingly frustrating for me, because I have run out of plausible explanations.

I used to believe denial of Saudi complicity in the attacks reflected our distress with what happened on that dark day. I hoped that we would have the courage to overcome our past hesitation and start looking deep into our national psyche, asking the big question: 'Why did 15 of our young men take American to an brutal way?'

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COMMENT

Victor Bulmer-Thomas, a specialist in Latin American economies, is director of the Royal Institute for International Affairs in London.

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# Kishore Shrestha speaks



Comment by Kishore Shrestha in a column called 'Note of Dissent' in his newspaper, *Jana Astha*, 30 October.

Isn't it a journalist's job to write freely? If he opens the curtains on the dark and seamy side of the cinema world, is it right to blame the messenger. This question has risen because of the demise of Shishira Karik. If we are prosecuting junior servants who have become overnight millionaires, then isn't

it fair to ask how cinema artists who are supposed to earn not less than Rs 20,000 for playing in two films a year have come to pay Rs 30,000 a month in rent, have mobile phones, drive around in Santros and wear expensive clothes?

And when we try to investigate these things, instead of trying to reform ourselves and thank us, the cinema artists are baying for our blood. In fact Shishira's father, Dal Bahadur Karik, in a two-hour conversation with us two days before her suicide had said: 'They don't even pay her for her work, and don't give her respect. Rather than act in another, we'll go hungry. Shishira won't act in any films anymore.' We have been exposing this depravity in the film industry for the past four years. And yet, when we expose the vice, they come after us. Yes, those who question the printing of a naked picture in our conservative Hindu society may have a point. And raising that question would quote nature. But what is happening here is that those with old grudges against us for past offences are using this excuse to shut us down. And Himdrom is telling us: 'Beware! We may be stark naked but you can't open your eyes.' We'll pull your tongues out, we'll take out your eyes, and we'll fire a murder case against you."

Six days after the news came out, Shishira committed suicide like the 1,200 Nepalis who cannot come to terms with their anguish and take their own lives every year. There was no suicide note, the family has said it was suicide and allowed the body to be removed, the police report says suicide. A suicide is a suicide, it can't be murder. Even veteran lawyers have said that. And yet the angry mob of film artistes have said it was trick photography that it was incorrect news, that it was yellow journalism, and they have registered a case of manslaughter. Already, the person who took the picture was admitted from London to having taken it. Another film actress has admitted that she was acting as the pimp, and it has now been proven that another actress went of her own free will for the sake of monetary payment to the house of someone who had no links with the world of cinema. The Lynch mob is not to be called yellow journalism!

As far as the naked picture is concerned, how come someone can go against all norms and values to take the picture, and those whose job it is to print cannot print the photo? There were five photographers and we printed the one that was the least explicit and objectionable. So we are following our journalistic guidelines. We are not the first newspaper to print naked pictures. *Kantipur* newspaper's *Kanti* magazine has a similar naked picture on page 26. The big boys can do anything, and when we do investigative journalism we get pounced upon.

If anyone can find my involvement in the printing of the picture in that edition, you can hang me. I have already received physical and mental punishment for that publication, and I am willing to subject myself to any other punitive action from the Press Council or the Journalists' Federation. Unlike some members of the film industry, I am not a middleman for any other institution. Therefore I have nothing to be afraid of. I am willing to accept that I have some degree of culpability for what happened, and I would like to end with the words of Yubraj Lama of the Film Producers' Association and Harhar Sharma of the Cultural Corporation who said at Shishira's 13-day memorial: 'Let our artiste friends look in the mirror every morning and do some self-analysis.'

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK

The royal declaration has lessened the belief that the king can do no wrong. Since the king has control of executive powers, he, not Chand, will be blamed for any wrongs that occur.

—Gripit Prasad Koirala in *Kantipur*, 28 October, 2002.



Sign Ministership Ballroom... the files are getting really troublesome, but still, no one's come to eat! *Budhabar*, 30 October, 2002

### Ban bands

Editorial in *Samacharpatra*, 29 October

The bandh called by the Maoists in the capital and the tarai areas, and the incidents of vandalism leading up to the bandh, have had a negative impact on the conditions for peace talks.

There's a new political situation developing in the capital. The royal announcement of 4 October and the developments following it have not only further increased the instability in the state, they have also heightened the uncertainty about which direction the country is headed in. So far, the new government headed by Lokendra Bahadur Chand has been unable to win the assistance of the political parties. As a result, the extension of the council of ministers has not been completed yet. Those who hoped that the political parties would join the government have already become disappointed, and the hope that was created by the royal announcement and fell in its wake, is being used to increase conflict, rather than as a reason to cooperate.

The number of violent activities is increasing in the run-up to the bandh [on Monday, 28 October]. The common people are not attracted to the Maoist or to the royalist or to the Maoist bands called by them. However, it appears that they accepted this. This bandh, which the Maoists declared internally to be their own party, hadn't even been publicised. However, the tarai remained quiet Sunday and the capital came to a standstill Monday. The five explosions that took place on the eve of the bandh were also unexpected.

On analysis, it's clear that the bandh was no part of those in charge of the state. If the state had been able to arrest those responsible for the explosions and take action against them, the capital wouldn't have been reduced to such a state on Monday. Even so, it would be wise of the Maoists to understand the seriousness of the situation rather than be encouraged by the thought that they pulled off a victory. No one will think it is weakness on the part of the Maoists if they withdraw the bandh [scheduled for 11-13 November] well in time. Instead, it would be seen as an example of their ensuring a positive environment for talks.

### No people power

Editorial in *Samacharpatra*, 27 October

The Maoist problem is at the core of the recent events. There are only two solutions to the problem. Number one, talks, number two, I'm not optimistic about talks. If an appointment was made to hold the people's mandate that would be unable to hold talks, there's no guarantee that a government that doesn't enjoy popular support can do so. If talks don't happen, the state will use force. Before 11 PM, 4 October, the government, the political parties, the donors, the king—everyone—supported the move to put down the Maoists, but that still could not be done. So how can this government deal with the Maoist challenge alone?

There's a certain psychology at work. When the Maoists started killing Congress members, the ultra-left applauded. They said it showed their right. If they maintain the same attitude when the Maoists deal with the king's forces, what will happen? If the king's forces are as weak as immobile, the donors will cease their support. Then, only those powers within the king's hold will fight the Maoists. But only the other powers root from the battlefield, for how long will they continue to fight alone, and for what? Seen from this angle, the royal announcement of 18 Asg [4 October] itself threatens the continuity of the constitutional monarchy. Politics is being pushed into darkness. In this situation, the Maoist leaders guess that foreign armies, especially the Indian, will come in. But once foreign forces come in, it will take another 50 or 60 years to remove them, and to create public opinion against them. Thus, I don't think we can expect people power, but rather weapons, instruments and training.

### Constituent coincidence

Editorial in *Samacharpatra*, 30 October

Is it a coincidence that the king and the Maoists both want constituent assembly elections? The Maoists have decided to elect a king and the Maoists both want constituent assembly elections. On the other hand, the Nepali Congress (which claims it has been in touch with the Maoist leadership) has for the first time in its history accepted the necessity of holding constituent assembly elections. So, the king, Nepali Congress and the Maoists all want the same thing? Will this really solve the Maoist problem? Will they disarm before constituent assembly elections? A constituent assembly election is a de facto referendum on the monarchy. Is the king really ready to accept this? Will everyone accept the people's mandate after a constituent assembly election? This is the burning question on everyone's mind at the moment.

### Drive for cars

Editorial in *Samacharpatra*, 27 October

A large number of government vehicles have been returned to the offices that own them following the Home Ministry's stern warning to those guilty of misuse. While a large number of vehicles were returned voluntarily, the police had to forcibly collect others. A total of 67 vehicles from the Home Ministry and 23 vehicles from other ministries that were being used illegally have been returned. The vehicles returned include one from the Health Ministry used by Man Mohan Adhikari, who was the UML's president during the CPN (UML) government. After him, the car was used by Yuvraj Gyalwai, a member of the National Assembly. Former Chief Justice Om Bhadrta Shrestha who deplores unauthorised requests, refused to return the government vehicle he was using, has finally done so. Former State Minister for Women and Social Welfare Subhas Sarin has returned seven vehicles, the largest number retained by a minister. A vehicle of the Kali Gandaki Project being used by the former prime minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai was brought back by a senior project official, while police also brought back vehicles from the home of former State Minister for Health Man Bahadur Bhandari. Many other vehicles were taken off the road and brought to the traffic police office. A parliamentary committee had prepared a report regarding the misuse of government vehicles two years ago. Four years ago, the Auditor General's office had also highlighted the misuse of government vehicles. According to the Home Ministry, most of the government vehicles being misused were from the Ministries of Health, Industry, Agriculture, Forests, Housing and Physical Planning, Water Resources.

# Kamaiya census

Editorial in *Samacharpatra*, 27 October

More than two-and-a-half years after the government freed Nepal's bonded labourers, reports say more than double the number of kamaiyas counted by the Ministry of Land Reform in its initial records have been left out. This was revealed after the ministry began recounting those kamaiyas left out from its records following an outcry by various organisations. It is a prime example of the government's carelessness. Following the ministry's re-call for applications by kamaiyas, 1,834 kamaiyas living in Banke district registered their names at the district land reform office. Previously, the Ministry of Land had published the details of 1,342 kamaiya families in Banke district. The ministry had extended the application dates until 23 October. Since the present number of kamaiyas is more than twice the first count, the ministry will certainly face problems in rehabilitating them. It still hasn't solved the problems of those registered initially. A large number of kamaiyas have also been left out from the government's lists in the districts of Bardia, Kanchanpur, Kailali and Dang, but the real figure is not known. Banke Land Reform Officer Him Bahadur Budathoki is not prepared to accept the new numbers of kamaiyas. He said, 'We can't accept those figures until after an investigation is carried out.'

The identity paper of a freed kamaiya hoping to get land.



# Mr Bangdel has left the country

His contributions to Nepali art history, one of his last legacies will be his call to arms against the scourge of idol theft. Born in Darjeling in 1924 and arriving in Nepal in the early 1950s after studying at in Paris and London, Bangdel was impressed by Kathmandu Valley's rich heritage of religious statuary, and published several scholarly volumes on the subject. But even as he watched, the idols began to disappear. As art thief peaked in the mid-1980s, he began preparing his book *Stolen Images of Nepal*, which was published by the Royal Nepal Academy (of which he had earlier served as head) in 1989. Bangdel's book provided photographic documentation, juxtaposing Before and After images of places that held statuary. He said, 'I felt it was important to provide evidence and to document so that even decades later status quo will be lifted can be returned under international law. Also, the very act of publishing brings down the market value of Kathmandu Valley statuary, which reduces chances of future theft.'

He was talking about idol theft, because it was happening rampantly with the suspected involvement of the highest and mightiest. Despite his stature as a scholar, artist and head of the Academy, Bangdel was threatened with his life if he kept up his crusade. Some suspected Bangdel himself of criminal activity because of his camera-toting activities. Jurgens Schick, a German art connoisseur, the only person besides Bangdel who could be called an 'idol theft scholar,' remembers how Bangdel had shown him consideration more than a decade ago. Schick, whose own book on the subject is *The Gods are Leaving Nepal* had been harassed by the authorities for his interest in the matter of stolen statuary, and it was only in Bangdel's book that he found understanding. 'When I found Mr Bangdel at the Academy, at last I had the one Nepali who showed sensitivity to this subject. No one else did.'

The reason to publish incontrovertible photographic evidence of theft of idols is the matter of criminal liability and recovery of status quo, so that even decades later status quo will be lifted can be returned under international law. Also, the very act of publishing brings down the market value of Kathmandu Valley statuary, which reduces chances of future theft.

The proof of Bangdel's efforts was there for all to see (if anyone was



Today is especially a good day to be pleasantly comfortable when Mr. Bangdel has left the country. He wrote a few hundred words for my completed book on the Nepal Congress. I am writing unnecessary details of the testing period of the party. It will have to be trimmed—job will hand over to Shalaja to perform. In the meantime, I will go on scribbling...

The Uml Maheshwar statue returned to Nepal, to Patan Museum, 18 years after it was lifted.

# Back at Sundarjal >20 'Meantime, I'll keep scribbling...'

14 February

Sundarjal

Today swallows appeared. They create a lively atmosphere in the evening. During our eight years incarceration in this camp on the previous occasion, a pair of them would come to my room on the day of the first appearance, inspect the place and start building a nest of earth in my room itself. Every year, perhaps on the same day, heralding the advent of the spring. This time none of them came inside my room. They flew all over the sky in ecstatic abandon—perhaps they have no intention being too happy to engage from the first day of the spring in the dreary work of building a nest and start keeping a house. I will miss them if they avoid my room. I have a secretly superstitious wish that they one pair of them stay in my room. I will have a [sic] dream—I will help to extend my ... Life to some extent at least. There are some birds in the compound. The mynahs they chatter sometimes rarely, the crows, singing, frolicking dhobi birds, make brighter their dull, drab image, and a pair of owls with their young ones—and a host of frogs, aggressive, healthy and dominating the avifauna—they are all there. But only one can even contemplate building their nest right inside my room? And, swallows are so swift, almost like arrows, a sight that appears to be real sky nymphs, ethereal with just a troubling splash of matter, insubstantial ball of terrific energy, like an embodied soul. I pray that one pair to stay till October when it will be time to leave for home.

Homesickness is reduced in intensity. Still some writing, but not much—only 750 words. I don't get into proper mood. In the morning when my mind is a little more calm than at the time I am taken up by morning chores. During the day after lunch I remain emotionally wound up remembering dear ones at home. I become glum, restless. It is (and will be) the same. In the evening after 5, a [sic] day-round of chores. After dinner I am so scarce of insomnia that immediately after taking food when there is a feeling of being light up which promotes some drowsiness, I promptly put off the light and lie down to sleep. At 9 or 10, GM starts preparing tea at 4 and by 4.30 tea is in my room. I have to get up before that, which means again, I cannot sleep long hours.

The GM's newspapers were supplied to us today. The reason why GM of course brusquely rejected, was the death of Indira a president Fanukhuddin Ali Ahmed the day before. Therefore yesterday the government officers were closed for a day. The camp commander is under strict orders not to convey any news of the outside and he didn't tell us what the cause was—thence the chain of reasoning.

15 February

As monotonously usual. (Sanskrit verse.)

16 February

Being Shivaratri day, there was a holiday, hence no activity of any kind. Inside the prison the life became still duller and time passes still more, ever more, slowly. But I wrote for some time. I completed writing the statement which I propose to make in court when they produce us before it in communication with 6 or is it 19 cases pending against me, according to the govt notification in their Gazette, the statement has turned out reasonably good, representing our point of view on democracy, right of the people and the inevitability of revolutionary action in conditions of total denial to the people of democratic civil rights. GM has liked it, but he says that there should be more meat in the concluding portion which in my present draft appears to be precipitously abrupt. He thinks that the conclusion should convey one idea that it is not enough that we plead not guilty, and that we should be honorably acquitted, it is also necessary to state that efforts towards ... re-introduction of full democratic set-up should be made to complement or to fully achieve the political purpose of our release. Otherwise our release will be of no great significance and the govt would be taking advantage of our being set at liberty. Some such idea. I don't know if this idea can be incorporated in the concluding portion of my statement. Moreover, whether it is the place before the court of law. Anyway he has approved of the statement taken as a whole. The statement will take about 2 hours to read in the court. We don't know if and when the court will really sit to try us. The tribunal to try our cases had been reinstated 16 days ago and there has been no apparent motion of its activities that are visible to us. Perhaps they may even decide not to try us at all. The public announcement of the institution of the tribunal is meant for popular consumption, perhaps the announcement had to be made because our detention in a secret place has brought adverse comments to be published in foreign papers. But GM thinks that whatever might have been the original intention in setting up a tribunal, once the announcement has been made the govt will have to go through the motion of putting us before it for the trial.

Today is especially a good day to be pleasantly comfortable when Mr. Bangdel has left the country. He wrote a few hundred words for my completed book on the Nepal Congress. I am writing unnecessary details of the testing period of the party. It will have to be trimmed—job will hand over to Shalaja to perform. In the meantime, I will go on scribbling...

**Green Bar of the month**



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**ABOUT TOWN**

**EXHIBITION**

- Raw Material: From the road in Asia Travel collage by Margi Scharrf. Indigo Gallery, Naxal, 8AM-6PM daily. 41380

**EVENTS**

- Christmas Bazaar 13 December, followed by barbecue, courtyard, Dwarika's Hotel, 479488
- House of Cards Tihar at the Rox Bar with live band, DJ, games and more, happy hour from 6PM-9PM. Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 491234
- Studying at Cardiff Law School, Wales Professor Phil Thomas speaks, 10 November, 2.30 PM, Nepal Bar Association Hall, next to Supreme Court. For more information and for walk-in interviews email anup@pioneerlawfirm.com. 221340
- Seventh annual Friends of KISV Deusi bhailo featuring Kumar's ballet, snacks and dinner. Rs 1,000 per head, 5.30 PM, 2 November, Dwarika's Hotel, 9810,34656
- Weekly dialogues on life and living and books and audiotapes at the Krishnamurti Study Center, Dhyankuti, Swoyambhu. Saturdays 1PM-6PM. 227704.

**MUSIC**

- Live music by Catch 22, Friday nights at the 40,000 1/8 Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, 414336

**DRINK**

- Friday Indulgence Irish music from An Fainne, tasting with 12 Scottish single malt, Rs 959. The Piano Lounge, Hotel Yak & Yeti, 248999

**FOOD**

- Arabic Food Festival Chef and belly dancer from Lebanon. Rs 1,500 singles and Rs 2,200 couples, includes two glasses of draft beer, lunch or dinner, and dessert. Until 3 November, at Le Meridien Kathmandu. 224399
- Saturday Brunch at the Café with Asian and Mediterranean buffet every alternate week. Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 491234
- Sekewa Saanjh Friday Nepali BBQ, Rs 555 plus tax per head, with a can of beer or soft drink, Dwarika's Hotel, 479488
- Vegetarian specialties and clay oven pizza at Stupa View Restaurant & Terrace, Boudha. 480262
- iced Lemon Sour Plum Sour, sweet, salty, bitter, to go with the improved Singaporean and Malaysian food. Sing Ma, the Food Court, foodcourt@wink.com.np. 520004

**GETAWAYS**

- Christmas & New Year Packages Overnight stays with dinner and breakfast, Dwarika's Hotel, 479488
- Tea House Combo Room, breakfast, Nepali thali dinner, swimming, jacuzzi. Rs 700 per head on twin sharing for Nepalis and expats, Tea House Inn, Nagarkot, 410432
- Dhawal Retreat Two nights and three days at Rs 6,499 per head on twin sharing, Rs 8,999 for single occupancy, includes sports, 30 percent off spa and health club, heated outdoor pool and more. Fubari Resort & Spa, Pokhara. 477305

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**NEPALI WEATHER** by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

DESS 10/20/2002/02/01

This week's satellite picture of the subcontinent taken on Wednesday morning shows a cloud-free Nepal and Tibetan plateau. The weather disturbances are far away to the south and west, and this should give us dry, clear days with the minimum temperatures dropping to the single digit. The westerly disturbance currently over Iran will head this way and bring some high-altitude cloud cover by the weekend, and perhaps even some snow flurries at higher altitudes.

**KATHMANDU VALLEY**

Fr	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
23-11	22-10	23-10	24-10	24-09

**BOOKWORM**

**Born in Bigtur, Nepal: Socio-Economic Relationship of a Brahmin-Bhujel Village, 1971-2000** Peter Hodge Prindle  
Rajendra Prasad Bhandari, Kathmandu, 2002  
Rs 1,195

Based on fieldwork carried out from 1971-1972, this study attempts to provide in-depth documentation and analysis of the economic and social processes of a Nepali village and examine how this data relates theoretically to studies of rural and peasant communities in other regions of Nepal.

**Another Voice: English Literature from Nepal** Deepak Thapa, Kesang Tseten, eds  
Martin Chaurita, Kathmandu, 2002  
Rs 275

Short stories by Mani Dixit, Joti Isaacson, Sujzma Joshi, Peter Karthak, Sunil Nepali, Gita Rana, Manjushree Thapa, Kesang Tseten and Samrat Upadhyay. Poetry by Wayne Amzits, Hannah Chi, Padma Prasad Devkota, Tsering Wangmo, Dhumpa, DiB GURung, E Ann Hunkins, Manju Kanchuli, Tek B Karki, Kesar Lall, Yuyutsu RD Sharma and Abhi Subedi.

**The Confluence of Religions, a Scientific Perspective**  
Hari Narayan Malla  
Dr Sarala Malla, Kathmandu, 2002  
Rs 100

Malla believes that the whole human mind and body evolves from the earth's electromagnetic forces and the gravitational force of the sun, earth and moon. The natural forces may be called the 'World', god's creative power. Malla scientifically confirms all scriptural claims of different religions, and suggests a basis for their coordination. He also proposes a chain of global peace monuments.

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# LANDRUK



A perfect two-day trek with plenty of snacking thrown in.

banking down. At the head of the canyon you start climbing again, stone steps this time up to a ridge where the trail opens to the Modi valley and Tokla village. Down another staircase here, up past streams and fields and the Modi Khola way down and before you know it you're in Landruk.

This is happiness. Almost every public room in every lodge in Landruk looks on to the mountains. The ACAP-regulated food is good, the pleasant exhaustion after a good day's walk has set in, and being caloric is the only way to be, if you intersperse it with half-hearted attempts at playing cards or something similarly mind-numbing.

Up bright and early the next morning, walk along the trail leading down to the Modi Khola as the first rays of the sun hit the himal. The stiff climb up to Ghandrak, the social hub of the Annapurna trekking routes, might just leave you gasping for moral further north! To Chhomrong! Or Ghorepani! Contain yourself—you didn't take them much time to work.

While in Ghandrak, though, check out the Gurung Museum, which has weapons, clothing, utensils and household items used by Gurungs dating back to the 1800s. Skizback some millet dhindo and whiz your way down. It almost doesn't matter whether you go slow or try to save some knees for old age on the steep walk down. As you plunge past fields, rivers, and forests, your ears will pop anyway. Two hours and you're in Syauli Bazar, a perfect place for a quick snack as you take in the green fields and the roar of the river before you walk the last hour to Birethanti, asphalt, unpleasantness, and taxis.

The hardest part of this trip will be waking up at crack of dawn in Pokhara, likely after a night of carousing on lakeside, and swilling what breakfast you can get—probably the subcontinental chura-omlette-five cups of milky, sugary tea. Off you go, on the bus to Baglung, or the flying taxi to Phedi. The reason it's vital to wake up early is not so much getting to Landruk by nightfall, as slogging up past grazing forests, fields and a stone staircase en route to Dhampus before it gets too warm, and getting some good mountain views. Past the forest, the air is crisp, and the golden rice fields in the Seti valley provide a warm contrast to the foregone hills and azure sky. It's a sign on the classic Annapurna Circuit which more than makes up for the two-and-a-half-hour, almost 700 m climb to Dhampus, on the ridge.

After Dhampus you'll hit the rhododendron forest and a stone-paved trail that climbs steadily for an hour-and-a-half to Pothana, which opens up a vista of the Annapurna with Machhapuchhre taking centerstage. (At this point, though, it looks more like Matterhorn than a fishbowl, but it's still an excellent bit of mountain.) Past the Pothana lodges, where foraging and delicious noodle soup is available, is another stone-paved trail to the top of the hill, as it were. Pitim Doreal, a 45-minute walk, offers a great view of Annapurna South and Hinchuli, and a real sense of accomplishment when you look down at where you came from.

The days get a bit easier from here—or harder, depending on how you take the steepness of your descents—as you walk down the other side of the hill into a canyon of the Modi Khola through lush forests with waterfalls, ferns, orchids, butterflies, birds and what you can imagine to be the sound of

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## Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

## Jand, Raxi, or Moi

Having once been unable to taste the difference between the omelette served on the early morning New Delhi shuttle and the styrofoam breakfast tray it rested in, and having thus inadvertently suffered a polydipsy syndrome, I was determined this time on RA206 to stick to a liquid diet. So, when the flight attendant came down the aisle to ask "Black coffee, white coffee, or black-and-white coffee, sir?" I thought: same difference, yeh, why not give it a try.

The fluid that was served had a taste that was hard to pin down accurately. So, when she came around again, I said: "Miss, if that was coffee, give me tea. If it was tea, give me coffee." That is the great thing about our national flag carrier: it is full of surprises and leaves a lot to the imagination.

The world over, airline food is generally regarded as being violently boring. Luckily, our own airline is now working on an in-flight menu that will inspire awe and wonder with its clever and creative use of Nepal's multifarious ethnic cuisine. Recently we were given a sneak preview of the line-up at the gastrodrome:



## Kathmandu-Delhi

Breakfast

Yak Noodle Soup (Strips of chewy yak sukuti in a choice of My-My, Ha-Ha, or Buy-Buy Instant Noodles)

or  
Muesli in Thimi Yoghurt  
Sherpa Butter Tea with Salt, or warm Tongba  
Juicy dhupri chunks

## Bangalore-Kathmandu

Brunch

Jumping Salad (Free-ranging grasshoppers and cricket subdued with ginger dressing tossed with watercress and basil)

Deep-fried goat guts with Chiura

or

Stir-fried coagulated Rakti in ketchup with Bagmati Slutge dal

Dessert: Red ant abdomens in Wild Himalayan

Honey

## Kathmandu-Hong Kong

Lunch

Three eggs in one basket with guava and cucumber slices

Red herring in gundruk, stewed with tamarind, tomato and garlic

or

Raw water buffalo Chwela-Kachila marinated in lemon sauce and red chilly paste.

Sprite or Fanta

## Kathmandu-Dubai

Dinner

Sinki Salad (sun-dried radish strips wrapped in elephant-ear karkalo leaf)

Fermented juvenile Tama bamboo shoots with baby potatoes in rice

or

Kodo ko dhindo with charas chutney and a fresh green chili on the side.

Rasputin rice pudding

Jand and/or Raxi, and/or Moi

## NEPALI SOCIETY

## Allo, allo

Collecting and processing allo, stinging nettle, isn't easy. Kopila Rai, a 34-year-old native of Chingkha village, which overlooks the Arun river, should know. Kopila collects the allo—which has culturally and religiously determined uses for Kulung Rai people in eastern Nepal—to process it and then weave it into strong, soft fabrics. "It's hard and painstaking work, collecting and processing allo," says Kopila. "But our endeavours are paying off."

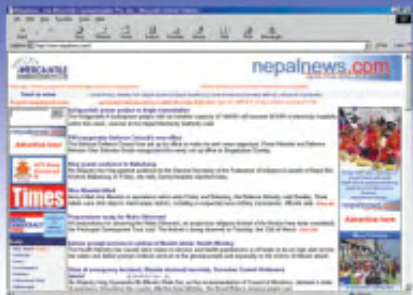
Today, Kopila is chairperson of the Chingkha Allo Cloth Production Club, which has two dozen members, nearly all women, who manufacture allo cloth and transform it into marketable products like shawls, scarves, bags, and jackets. "It's an extra source of income which helps supplement the income from farming. We have to rely less on the manko for money," says Kopila.

Kopila makes time to collect and process the nettle in between keeping house and caring for two children. "We're away for three or four days at a stretch, collecting allo from deep inside highland forests, where the sun rarely shines." Men usually help in harvesting the shrub. Once the bark is stripped off the shrubs, it is boiled in water containing ash. The bark is then stone-washed at a nearby river bringing out the fibre that makes allo so special. Ever since she attended her first training some 20 years ago, Kopila has been sharing her expertise with other women to improve their business and technical skills. She also serves as the vice president of the regional allo production club.



The Mountain Institute, which has been carrying out a variety of programs with local people in the Makalu-Barun area, recently recognised Kopila's efforts. She is one of 12 "mountain heroes" featured in a 2003 calendar celebrating 14 years of the institute's partnership in the Makalu-Barun area.

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