



Ashmina Ranjit in Japan p15



EXCLUSIVE

Mahara on CNN

Chief Maoist negotiator in the failed peace talks last year, Krishna Bahadur Mahara, spoke on camera to CNN from an unspecified hideout. Mahara flatly denies the Maoists are recruiting children and killing civilians, and tries to use the deadlock between the king and the political parties to his advantage. Highlights:

Are you terrorists?
"We are a political force and do not support terrorism. We condemn all types of terrorism. This is a people's movement, a people's war. It is a people's force. We are not terrorists and that is clear."

Why do you recruit children?
"We have no children in our fighting force. We do not admit anyone below 18 in our army. This is a baseless allegation."

Why do you kill civilians?
"The allegation of Maoists killing civilians is also false. In fact the government is responsible for all those killings."

Prospects for talks?
"The reason the government is opposing talks is that it is preparing for a full-fledged war. The government agrees to a political solution, we are even ready for a ceasefire."

Prospects for peace?
"The whole world is putting pressure for peace talks, and then an interim government in such a situation, the king does not have any other possibility but to take these talks forward."



Peaceniks on warpath

Activists launch campaign against military aid to Nepal.

BHAGIRATH YOGI

More than 600 people, mostly western students and peace activists based in the US and Europe, have signed a petition urging US lawmakers to stop military aid to Nepal. Dozens of Nepali rights activists and development workers have also joined in.



The reverberations of the conflict are no more confined to Nepali hills and valleys. Banned by increasingly convergent world opinion against terrorism, former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba travelled to Washington and London in May this year seeking military assistance.

Nearly a month after the London meeting of donors to Nepal (June 19-20), the British government announced an aid package of £ 6.5 million to procure two helicopters as well as provide training and other logistics for the Royal Nepal Army. The Bush administration announced in August that it would provide a supplemental \$20 million as military aid to Nepal to buy "non-lethal" equipment and services for the army.

But things don't seem to be moving exactly the way Nepal would like. There has been reaction against military aid to Nepal. Belgian Health Minister Magda Aelvoet resigned over the proposed sale of 5,500 automatic rifles to Nepal. The government of Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt

survived after winning a confidence vote in August, but the weapons will not be supplied until after Belgium's parliamentary elections in November.

The Association of Nepal and Himalayan Studies (ANH-S) at a one-day conference, "War on Terrorism: War as Terrorism" at the University of Wisconsin's South Asia Centre on 12 October adopted a petition to be sent to the United States government calling for a halt to the planned military aid. The petitioners said the aid "could resolve nothing and would do untold harm both to innocent Nepalis and to the prospects for a political resolution to the insurgency."

In its 2 August 2002 decision, the US government said the \$20 million emergency "supplemental funding" would force the Maoists to decide that a military victory is not possible and that negotiations provide the best hope for realising their goals. The petitioners do not agree. "Our collective experience in the study of Nepal society and our close attention to the course of events since the commencement of the CPN (Maoist's

armed insurgency in 1996 lead us to the opposite conclusion," claimed the ANH-S. The association has posted the petition on the web (www.petitiononline.com/demonnepa/petition.html) for signatures.

"It is our considered view that military aid will not help bring about a negotiated settlement, but instead deepen and prolong an already devastating civil war. Rather than increase the chances for Nepal to achieve a peaceful functioning democracy in the foreseeable future, such aid will only aggravate the present conflict, leaving Nepal and the region to cope with unintended repercussions and untold suffering far into the future," says the ANH-S.

Those who signed the petition come from a wide spectrum. Interestingly, their diversity is reflected not only in their understanding of the issue, but also in the way they lobby for a 'noble' cause. There are many names recognised in Nepal as scholars of experience, and also a few who seem to have "walked" into the website and signed on. see p6

Editorial Reaction and revolution

Times Weekly Internet Poll #50

Q. Which of the following offers the best solution to the present political impasse:

Legend:
 ■ interim govt government
 ■ constituent assembly elections
 ■ reinstatement of parliament
 ■ none of these

Total votes: 1,885

Weekly Internet Poll #48: To singh to www.nepaltimes.com

Q. Do you support US military aid to Nepal?

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Rishikesh Shaha, 77

Nepal's scholar, statesman Rishikesh Shaha died Thursday shortly after DEEPAK THAPA had visited him and written this tribute. We print this piece in the present tense to keep Shaha's memory alive.

There is something particularly winsome about an ailing old man lighting up and giving you a smile of welcome. That is how Rishikesh Shaha greets you when you enter his room. After the initial shock of seeing how wasted he looks, the first thing that strikes you is the dhaka top that somehow remains perched on his head even in repose. Then the sadness creeps over you as you realise that there lies a piece of Nepali history, and he is dying of lung cancer.

While working with *Himal South Asian*, we used to describe Rishikesh Shaha as Nepal's scholar-statesman, and I doubt if there is any other Nepali who can share that designation. Just look at his accomplishments. A founding member of the Nepal Democratic Congress, one of the constituents which later became the Nepali Congress, he later sided with Dilli Raman Regmi in the Nepali National Congress, and was even part of the People's Front together with Tanika Prasad Acharya's Praja Parishad and the Communist Party of Nepal to oppose Nepal Congress policies.

Thereafter, he left for New York to set up Nepal's permanent mission to New York in 1956, and also served as the country's first ambassador to the US. It is a measure of his stature in the world body that in 1961, he was appointed chairman of the international commission to investigate the death of Dag Hammarskjöld, the UN secretary-general who died in a plane crash in the Congo.

Shaha was brought back to Nepal in 1960 after King Mahendra's takeover to serve as a cabinet minister. For the next couple of years, he was shunted around by the Foreign Minister, special ambassador to the UN and as chairman of the commission to draft the Panchayat constitution. Having won a Rastriya Panchayat seat from the graduates' constituency in 1967, his statement calling for a more representative and a more

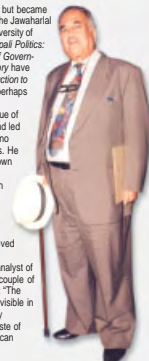
responsible political system landed him a 14-month prison sentence.

Shaha never served in a public post after that, but became prolific as a scholar. He was a visiting professor at the Jawaharlal Nehru University and Regent's Professor at the University of California at Berkeley. His books, most notably, *Nepali Politics: Retrospect and Prospect, Essays in the Practice of Government in Nepal and Modern Nepal: A Political History* have become standard reference works, while his introduction to *Nepal and Heroes and Builders of Nepal* provide perhaps the best introduction to the country.

Rishikesh Shaha's deep commitment to the issue of personal freedom was evident when he founded and led the Human Rights Organisation of Nepal in 1968; no mean feat during the authoritarian Panchayat days. He later left the organisation but did not relent in his own personal crusade against injustice.

In recent years, Shaha was accused of being an apologist for the Maoists because of his friendship with Baburam Bhattarai, with whom he corresponded even after Bhattarai went underground. But Shaha was also accused of being pro-absolute monarchy for asking the king to step since he believed the politicians were ruining the country.

But he was above all a humanist, and a keen analyst of the Nepal's political evolution. Writing in 1996, a couple of months after the "people's war" began, Shaha said: "The signs of an imminent legitimacy crisis are already visible in Nepal's fledgling democracy, and the immortality accorded to the civilian deaths in Rolpa is a foretaste of difficult days ahead." Only a statesman with vision can foresee events so far into the future. ♦



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KTAA-AKAS	HH6776	TUE-FRI	20:20	05:55	TUE 26 OCT
KTAA-AKAS	HH6778	TUE-FRI	21:20	05:55	27 OCT-19 APR
AKAS-KTM	HH6777	MON-THU	19:45	11:05	TUE 28 OCT
AKAS-KTM	HH6777	MON-THU	19:45	12:05	27 OCT-19 APR

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Custody (mis)management

Justice denied is justice denied

MANJUSHREE THAPA

In the sunless reception room of the station, policemen sit on sofas, watching film dances on TV. Didactic posters—"Let's not associate with corrupt people"—and photos of police brass line the walls. A monk tries to speak in broken Nepali to the man at the front desk. The families of those targeted in police cases shuffle by.

Middle-aged Shova, squatting on the floor, says, "Ko ho ko, thaha chaina"—(I don't know what's what. She was arrested 18 days ago, for what, she was not told. She has not received an arrest warrant. She cannot read or write. When the police gave her a prepared statement, she thumbprinted it without knowing what it said.

After her husband having a lawyer presented her with another document, and she thumbprinted that too, though it was not read out to her. She does not know how long her husband orders and for. She has not got her Rs 25 daily allowance. She sold her gold earrings to feed herself, and to provide for her fatherless children, now living by themselves. She knows, now, that she is being charged with drug trafficking. But at no time in custody has she been informed of a right to a lawyer, her right to

not incriminate herself, or her right to a medical examination. When family members come to visit, they are allowed to see her from afar, but not to speak to her.

Shova's experience is unfortunately typical of those detained in police custody. A report that Advocacy Forum presented recently at a consultation meeting says that only 6 percent of the detainees interviewed at the Hanuman Dhoka Police Station in one calendar year had their cases remained within 24 hours, as required by the constitution. Only about 35 percent of detainees said that they gave statements of their own will.

Nearly 43 percent said they had not been informed of the reason for their arrest. Over 70 percent said that they had no contact with lawyers. Over 32 percent said they were denied access to their family members. Over 49 percent said that they had suffered severe physical torture. An additional 41 percent complained that they had suffered mild physical, verbal or sexual abuse in detention.

This should be shocking, but so are the statistics for those who are arrested in police custody. The lack of access to their family members, human rights violations such as death in police custody, are greeted with a public outcry.

Not far from where Shovats is



The detention centre at Hanuman Dhoka, Kathmandu.

Human Rights Violations in Custody

July 2001 - June 2002

Of 456 detainees in Kathmandu

246 said they were not informed of the reason for their arrest
226 said they were physically tortured
319 said they were forced to sign statements prepared by the police
150 said they were denied access to family members
322 said they did not know that they had the right to consult a lawyer
412 said they were not provided medical examinations

Of 134 detainees in Nepalgunj

65 said they were not informed of the reason for their arrest
62 said they were not allowed to visit family and friends
111 said they were not provided the right to read papers before signing them
40 said they were physically tortured (severely)
93 said they were not provided medical examinations

Of 96 detainees in Biratnagar

74 said they were not informed of the reason for their arrest
74 said they were not allowed to read papers before signing them
61 said they were not aware of the right to have lawyers
17 said they were severely tortured
90 said they were not provided medical examinations

Source: Advocacy Forum

"Kerkar", the station's dreaded interrogation department. This is where Jeevan, another detainee, says he was beaten by policemen four or five times in a row. He says he couldn't get a medical examination afterwards. The police didn't write down what he said in his statement, he says, and they took

his signature.

Another detainee, Prem Bahadur, says he was beaten unconscious by four or five constables at the station where he was first held. He was taken to Bir Hospital for a medical examination, but no x-rays were taken. Later a constable gave him a couple of

by DANIEL LAK



Constitutional rights for criminal justice, under Article 14:

1. No person shall be punished for an act which was not punishable by law when the act was committed, nor shall any person be subjected to a punishment greater than that prescribed by the law in force at the time of the commission of the offence.
2. No person shall be prosecuted or punished for the same offence in a court of law more than once.
3. No person accused of any offence shall be compelled to be a witness against himself.
4. No person who is detained during investigation or for trial or for any other reason shall be subjected to physical or mental torture, nor shall be given any cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Any person so treated shall be compensated in a manner as determined by law.
5. No person who is arrested shall be detained in custody without being informed, as soon as may be, of the grounds for such arrest, nor shall be denied the right to consult and be defended by a legal practitioner of his choice.
6. Every person who is arrested and detained in custody shall be produced before a judicial authority within a period of twenty-four hours after such arrest, and the time necessary for the journey from the place of arrest to such authority, and no person shall be detained in custody beyond the said period except on the order of such authority.
7. Nothing in clauses (5) and (6) shall apply to a citizen of an enemy state, and nothing in clause (6) shall apply to any person who is arrested or detained under any law providing for preventive detention.

Brufen pills to ease the pain in his ribs, he says.

These cases are in Kathmandu. Advocacy Forum's report exposes equally dismal violations in custody centres in Biratnagar and Nepalgunj. Lawyers are generally not given access to detainees before their cases are remanded. Detainees are often held illegally, without any documentation, and are sometimes disappeared. They are sometimes hidden from international human rights observers. Police often use violent means to extract confessions. Minors are still being held in adult facilities. Detainees share crowded, bug-infested facilities, sometimes sleeping nights in hallways. Women have trouble meeting sanitary needs during menstruation, and in the study period one woman even gave birth in custody.

Mandira Sharma of the Advocacy Forum says that reform in custody management is extremely urgent.

Indeed, speaking informally, police personnel need to defend their routine violations. They cannot give medical examinations to detainees, saying there are no financial provisions for it, and that people in custody must pay for their themselves. If detainees talk to family members, they'll help hide incriminating evidence.

The backlog in the courts makes it impossible to remand cases on time. Defence lawyers only cheat detainees and teach them how to lie. If the police don't beat detainees, they'll never confess to their crimes.

By contrast, SSP Chuda Bahadur Shrestha's passion for the rule of law is evident as he speaks, insisting that while new measures

must be taken, important gains have been made in custody management under the 1990 constitution's Article 14. The Torture Compensation Act alone. In 1996 the police also created a standard custody management format. The present IGP has stressed routing out corruption, improving custody facilities, and improving the police's human rights record. "A course on human rights is now part of basic police training," SSP Shrestha says, "and we are working with national and international human rights agencies."

It is a fallacy, he argues, to lay the responsibility for custody management solely on overburdened police stations.

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prevention and neighbourhood security, and to resolve minor infractions, avoiding the criminal justice system. SSP Shrestha says that this kind of collaboration decreases the incidence of arbitrary arrest, overcrowding in custody centres, and over-expenditure on the part of the state. "It also promotes friendliness between the communities and the police."

As for ensuring the rights of those already in police custody, this requires activism from the courts as well as from defence lawyers, he says. Mandira Sharma agrees, saying, "The police, the courts and defence lawyers are all very aware of reforms that need to be made."

But this is yet another sector in which reform has been talked about

and little acted on. Only a few judges bother to ensure the rights of detainees. Defence lawyers hesitate to go to custody centres because they don't want to seem to be soliciting clients. Communities are largely hostile to accused criminals. And it is unrealistic to think that detainees might demand rights for themselves.

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On any given day there are roughly a hundred detainees at the Hanuman Dhoka Police Station, on charges of drug trafficking, theft, rape, terrorism, murder, cheating, traffic-related deaths, forgery, counterfeiting, multiple marriage, public offences, abuse of power and other criminally coded crimes. A random sampling of their last names reveals the criminalisation of Kathmandu's dispossessed classes: Tamang, Rai, Pokharel, Lepcha, Chak, Magar, Gurung, Rimal, Lama, Khatri, Yadav, Shrestha, Lama...

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Behind her, a policeman watching TV picks up the remote and begins to channel surf.

There are changes. There have been changes.

DOMESTIC BRIEFS

1,321 VDCs gone

Rs 283.1 million and increasing. That's how much damage the insurgency has inflicted on VDC buildings alone. At last count, 1,321 of Nepal's 3,915 VDC buildings had been damaged by Maoists, mostly by fires and explosives. Work has come to a complete standstill in these seats of local self-governance. There are no plans so far to repair the buildings, due to budgetary constraints as well as Maoist threats that any VDC rebuilt would be attacked again.

Far-west Nepal has seen the most damage, with 83 percent—316—of its 383 VDC buildings have been destroyed. In the eastern region, 285 of the 893 VDC offices are gone, in the central region, 334 of 1,199, in the western region 221 of 865 VDC offices are damaged, and in the mid-western region, the figures are 165 of 575 offices. The government does not yet have detailed reports of damage from all the regions.

And 443 post offices

It's not just VDC infrastructure that's been hit, in the form of post offices. At last count, 443 POs had been damaged by Maoists in 34 districts. The damage totals almost Rs 7 million in physical infrastructure. Rs 4.1 million in office equipment, Rs 800,000 worth of stamps, and Rs 2.2 million in miscellaneous damage. Postal service officials say that three of their workers have been killed by Maoists so far. Aryabhanchi and Acham districts have been affected the most. In Acham alone the damage adds up to Rs 3.4 million, with the Maoists having destroyed 12 post offices, including the district post office. Other districts affected are Ramechhap, Sindhupalchok, Kavrepalanchok, Sindhuli, Jumla, Dailikh, Bajhang, Dolakha and Baitadi.

Kesang Tseten honoured

Kathmandu-based filmmaker Kesang Tseten's stirring documentary film *Home Homes Chaps* has been selected by the American Museum of Natural History's prestigious Margaret Mead Film and Video Festival as part of its year-long travelling show, to be screened at 25 venues around the world. The documentary follows the scattering and homing instincts of former students of Dr. Graham's Home, a Scottish Presbyterian orphanage in Kalimpong, India, as they reunite as adults, still deeply affected by the social and family displacements that originally landed them in the orphanage. *Home Homes Chaps* is being shown as one of the highlights of the film and video festival, the largest showcase for independent cultural documentaries in the United States. The festival kicked off on 7 November with 39 documentaries from over 19 countries.

ANFA unite

The Nepal Sports Council, the country's sports governing body is preparing to unite the two warring All Nepal Football Associations (ANFA) currently in existence, but critics don't think it will last. The NSC's move is prompted by the fact that Nepal requires a single internationally-recognised football association to host or participate in international events. One ANFA is headed by former national player Ganesh Thapa and officially recognised by the FIFA and the Asia Football Confederation (AFC). The other, formerly headed by Geta Rana, is officially recognised by the Nepal Sports Council. Unless they unite, there's not much chance that Nepal will host the under-19 Asia Youth Cup from 1 December, or compete in the SAARC Cup in Bangladesh in the same month. "Since ANFA split two years, Nepal has not been able to play at international games," says NSC member secretary Binod Shanker Palikhe. "We have to try to get together."

Threatened mountains

The world's mountain regions are increasingly under threat as more and more land is converted to farming and grazing, according to a new report produced by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). *Mountain Watch*, the first map-based assessment of environmental change in mountain areas, reveals that mountains regions including the Himalaya are fragile and susceptible to climate change. Areas doing well, apart from Greenland, the region whose mountains appear to be the most pristine, are North and Central America, where only an estimated 9 percent is used for livestock and 5 percent for crops. "Our reverence for these mountains, wilderness areas has been partly based on their remoteness, their inaccessibility, but this new report highlights how, like so many parts of the world, some of these last wild areas are fast disappearing in the face of agriculture, infrastructure development and other creeping impacts," said UNEP Executive Director Klaus Toepfer. Compiled by the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre as a contribution to the International Year of the Mountains, the report was presented to officials attending the Global Mountain Summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, from 29 October to 1 November.

Foul air

Illegal brick kilns are once again spewing vile fumes into the Valley's already-polluted air. A committee was formed by Bhaktapur's Office of Cottage and Small Industries to inspect the area where most of the kilns are, and recommend action against them, but that doesn't seem to bother the kiln owners—some of the new kilns in Lalitpur and Bhaktapur are already well into construction work. A study last year revealed that only 45 of the 75 brick kilns operating in Bhaktapur district were legal. Still, the government took action against only 17.

Brick kilns are one of the leading causes of the Valley's foul air. In March 2002, the Industrial Development Board decided to phase out the obsolete kilns from Kathmandu Valley in one-and-a-half years and replace them with cleaner technologies. A study conducted by Clean Energy Nepal (CEN) last year in Bhaktapur's Jhaukhel VDC found that the concentration of particulate matter in the air was three times higher in the brick kiln area than elsewhere.

Little and likeable

It's nice to be that way, but to survive we also need to be self-reliant.



Immersed in talk of tanks, bombs and bad boy politicians, the denizens of this kingdom can be forgiven for forgetting that there's a world out there. Will they or won't they—our Maoists—come to the negotiating table? Does the present government have any authority, and will they ever prove it? What is really going on beyond Pulchowki, Shivapuri and Thamel? Will the tourists ever come back? These are all burning, pressing questions that are being endlessly debated around town.

And for good reason. The honest answer to most of them is "I don't know." But let me throw a few things into the mix from the wider world that should add a greater sense of urgency to our landlocked sensibilities.

First look west to a place called Iraq. If you're paying attention, you'll know that it's lead by a very bad man who is about to come under immense pressure from the International Community—is it the Good Guys—who give up nasty habits like making chemical weapons and gassing his own people. And guess what? War is Coming! I offer this not to express opinions, or start a debate. Discussions have ended. It's been decided. The United States will attack Iraq sometime early next year, perhaps after President Bush returns from a trip to Africa in late January.

Now how does this affect Nepal, you ask. Let me tell you. Iraq is the top priority in the US, the UK and all those other countries that are so generous to us here, that help us with so many things despite Nepal not being particularly high on anybody's list of priorities. Everyone likes us, that's true, but not everyone rates our needs anywhere near the top of their particular league table of overseas assistance priorities. And Iraq will bump us much, much further down towards the depths of importance. "Right off the screen," was how one merrimental aid worker put it to me recently.

The war itself will be time consuming, unpredictable and hugely expensive. The media—perhaps even lowly old—I will flock to Iraq's borders like moths to a candle flame. Even the valiant efforts of the aid donating embassies here in Kathmandu might be severely challenged as they try to coax paymasters and political people to pay attention to us. Just a small example, British Foreign Office

Minister Mike O'Brien, whose brief is South Asia, also covers Iraq. He'll be busy, very busy, and I daresay might have to burn the midnight oil if Nepal is to get any of his time from now on.

The State Department in Washington, the European Union, the United Nations, various multilateral and bilateral aid bodies will all be focused on Iraq. First the war, then the aftermath, which will also be expensive, unpredictable and potentially messy.

Another foreign development to worry about here in Nepal, Japan's economy is sinking ever deeper into stagnancy and unemployment. There's been no real growth in the Land of the Rising Sun for a decade. Most major banks are technically insolvent. The Japanese miracle is either over, or on long-term hold. Something—an earthquake, a political shake-up, a border dispute with a neighbour, North Korean nukes—will come along to aggravate things in Japan. And where does that leave Nepal's largest aid donor? Where does that leave Nepal?

Closer to home, has anyone noticed that the ossified leadership of the Chinese Communist Party is attempting a changing of the guard? Does anyone in Nepal pay attention to China and consider the implications of changes in Asia's most amazing economy? Try this on for size: China provides nearly half of all imports into America. Do we care that at some point soon, Beijing's autocrats might be facing immense pressure for real change from a billion Chinese people who want a bigger share of all that wealth, more freedoms, maybe even a slice of power? And India too, our most important economic partner—watch for elections there as the BJP seems set to do well in Gujarat. India's resilient democracy can cope with almost any governance change in New Delhi, but Nepal needs to be on top of things, reforming relationships and keeping up pressure for continuing cooperation with the Maoists, cross border trade, migration, etc.

Yes, there's a world out there and it's not really all that interested in us. It's about to get less interested. We can't see that as an opportunity to become more self-reliant and solve our problems ourselves, or we can flounder about in lonely obscurity, waiting for an outsider to offer a bag of money or an all-expenses-paid junket to the west. But let the water table in the Kathmandu valley, that's all drying up. And we'll be better there. ♦

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Those who do not know their rights are easily abused. Jumanu, another young detainee, says he did not know that eloping with a second husband was illegal. When asked if he needs a lawyer, he confesses that he does not know what lawyers do. What are the chances that the system will respect her rights?

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The world's mountain regions are increasingly under threat as more and more land is converted to farming and grazing, according to a new report produced by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). *Mountain Watch*, the first map-based assessment of environmental change in mountain areas, reveals that mountains regions including the Himalaya are fragile and susceptible to climate change. Areas doing well, apart from Greenland, the region whose mountains appear to be the most pristine, are North and Central America, where only an estimated 9 percent is used for livestock and 5 percent for crops. "Our reverence for these mountains, wilderness areas has been partly based on their remoteness, their inaccessibility, but this new report highlights how, like so many parts of the world, some of these last wild areas are fast disappearing in the face of agriculture, infrastructure development and other creeping impacts," said UNEP Executive Director Klaus Toepfer. Compiled by the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre as a contribution to the International Year of the Mountains, the report was presented to officials attending the Global Mountain Summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, from 29 October to 1 November.

Foul air

Illegal brick kilns are once again spewing vile fumes into the Valley's already-polluted air. A committee was formed by Bhaktapur's Office of Cottage and Small Industries to inspect the area where most of the kilns are, and recommend action against them, but that doesn't seem to bother the kiln owners—some of the new kilns in Lalitpur and Bhaktapur are already well into construction work. A study last year revealed that only 45 of the 75 brick kilns operating in Bhaktapur district were legal. Still, the government took action against only 17.

Brick kilns are one of the leading causes of the Valley's foul air. In March 2002, the Industrial Development Board decided to phase out the obsolete kilns from Kathmandu Valley in one-and-a-half years and replace them with cleaner technologies. A study conducted by Clean Energy Nepal (CEN) last year in Bhaktapur's Jhaukhel VDC found that the concentration of particulate matter in the air was three times higher in the brick kiln area than elsewhere.

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SOMEWHERE IN NEPAL by PUSKAR BHUSAL

Revolutionary resolve

The only people still describing this constitution as one of the world's best are its least prominent framers.



PHOTOGRAPH BY PUSKAR BHUSAL

I look like we're finally on the threshold of revolutionary change. The first time in 12 years, Constitution Day observances were dominated by calls for consolidating the supreme law through radical overhaul or outright replacement. Forget about the motives and the coherence that has entered the national conversation. The crude compromises foisted on us as weighty accomplishments were becoming too heavy. For the nation's left, right and centre, a constituent assembly is no longer a notion. The only people still describing this constitution as one of the world's best are its least prominent framers. Those who argued that the basic law could go unchanged for another half century have decided to keep quiet. The pronouncements of pundits and politicians over the weekend reviewed the memories of the last anniversary of the Panchayat constitution. An ailing Surya Bahadur Thapa had warned an adamant Marich Man Singh Shrestha of the dire costs of failure to move with the times. The parish president-in-chief was in full action four months before the tripartite Narayanhiti accord. Once again, calls for change are coming from within the system and the draftsmen can take up the call for the marginalisation or bring a fresh perspective to the political process. The smaller communist groups caught between the UML and Maoists can help bring the two closer. This is a good time for the rest of our 100-plus parties to prove their contention that they don't have to be in power to do the country some good.

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Tell a Tale Winners
The British Council Short Story Competition

1st Prize	Rajendra Adga	The Marriage of Ram Kumar's Son
2nd Prize	Pradeep Kumar	Kanchi's Tale
3rd Prize	Nayana Khatiwala	Up the Dunes of Kathmandu
4th Prize	Sushila Chandra	
5th Prize	Kamala Regmi	Dreams
6th Prize	Pradeep Kumar	The Naked Truth
7th Prize	Sushila Chandra	Life Left Unlived
8th Prize	Nayana Khatiwala	My Sunday Day

Times

Peace offensive

from p1

Stephen Mikesell, a longtime Nepal hand who has written extensively about the Maoist phenomenon and is one of the petitioners, told us over email from Madison: "All of us who signed felt that...even if the Maoists could be defeated militarily, the aid itself would lead to spiraling levels of violence, distortions and unforeseen repercussions far into the future."

But Subhagya Shah, a PhD scholar of anthropology at Harvard, counters: "I would agree if they had talked about overall US policy including enormous military assistance to India every year. To single out Nepal could be part of romanticism of political exoticism for the fashionable left."

For their part, the organisers of the campaign were careful to underline that opposition to US military assistance to Nepal should not be described as support for Maoist activities there. When contacted by *Nepal Times*, some of the key persons behind the campaign refused to go on record, citing fears for their own research as well as possible reprisals against their Nepal friends and colleagues.

A US scholar actively engaged in disseminating the petition wrote: "I must be understood that a petition to the US government regarding its military aid to Nepal is not in any way equivalent to support of Maoist activities. Most signers of the ANH-S petition simply wish to communicate to the US government their opposition to further militarisation of the conflict in Nepal, and would hold the same opinion about the militarisation of any other world conflict (and would also oppose the US's own moves towards war with Iraq)."

The debate on whether to let the Nepali military or not seems set to intensify particularly in view of reports of killing of civilians by the army. Nevertheless, some analysts think that the Maoist campaign itself is missing some fundamental questions. "The distance of the scholars from rapidly evolving situation in Nepal may be making them reach for easy and romantic answers," said one Kathmandu-based observer who, like some of the petitioners, requested anonymity.

Dipak Gyawali, a political analyst and resource economist, argues that if the Maoists could ceasefire, then Nepal's civil society could exert pressure on the army and government to engage them in a negotiated settlement. If Maoists are not going to lay down arms, and as long as the war situation continues the RNA will get its weapons from anyone whatsoever, including the free market. "It is far better for Nepal to get military assistance from the US and the UK as these governments are responsive to their demand that the RNA respond to reports of rights violations," Gyawali told us.

Not everyone agrees. Chitra Tiwari, a political analyst based in Washington, argues that the question is not whether the campaign to stop military assistance to Nepal infringes upon Nepal's right as a sovereign country to get assistance, whether lethal or non-lethal. The question is whether American taxpayers' money is being spent to save the lives of the people, or being used to kill non-combatants.

Rights activists from South Asia also echo similar sentiments. Gautam Navlakha, editor of the *Economic and Political Weekly*, has been actively questioning the Nepal government's action vis-a-vis the Maoists and was detained briefly by Indian police during a meeting in New Delhi of Maoist supporters two months ago. He told us: "Intervention of outside powers as well as military support during a civil war, a rule, invites caution because such support violates chances of political resolution. If this is played against the US military expansion in Central and South Asia and the nature of regimes being propped up, it becomes clear that democratic voices in the US oppose military support for autocratic monarchy in Nepal."

Neither the government nor the army have joined this debate, and all a Shital Niwas source would tell us was: "We would respond to the concerned authorities if the need arose."

Other analysts insist that the issue should be looked at from a broader perspective. Says Alok Bohara, professor of economics at the University of New Mexico: "In Nepal, having a strong military can bring some balance in the strategic equation, and will provide an incentive for everyone to come to the table. The army has not turned into a death squad, nor is it a right-wing militia."

A statement on WPRM's website (www.wprm.org) proclaims: "The agenda was to stop the imperialist aggression and support the ongoing victorious people's war in Nepal." U. Onesto, a journalist with RRR in multiple countries, *Revolutionary Worker*, presented a slideshow about her travels through Nepal's Maoist strongholds at the meetings.



ECONOMY

BIZ NEWS

Businessmen's prescriptions

The Nepal Business community has urged the government to implement a range of suggestions made by it, saying that such movement was long overdue. The community has identified five core areas that it believes need to be addressed immediately—security at both places of business, as well as the country in general; revenue law, policy and administration; the need for an appellate body to hear labour issues and deal with laws and policies; and corruption control.

Rajendra Kumar Khatun, spokesman of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), says that its umbrella organisation even has some more specific recommendations. For security in business places, the FNCCI suggests forming the industrial security force that would be responsible for the security of business premises. Similarly, the FNCCI says it is vitally important to harmonise the Nepal revenue mechanism with the fast-changing international system, and amend existing labour laws to make them investor-friendly. "The policy should also open up new areas for employment generation that are seasonal, part time, contractual, weekly or hourly that are paid a little higher remuneration," explained Khatun.

With regard to the corruption that business leaders say has taken a serious toll on the country's economic sector, Khatun cited four areas where change is required: the revenue administration, public commercial banks, government procurement departments and public service delivery utilities. The FNCCI has also demanded that the revenue advisory committee be made permanent and given teeth, and that the Income Tax Act 2058 be amended.

Straight from berry

Juniper Berry gun, a product of Sunny Distillery, has been launched in the Nepali market this festive season. This is the first gin brand of liquor manufactured within the country using "non-refillable closure" which is a high-tech gin distilling method. The product is available in the 180 ml, 375 ml and 750 ml bottle packs all over the country from November.

Home appliances by Ichiban

Touchstone Sales & Services, authorised distributor of Sharp for Nepal, has introduced a new home consumer electronics brand called Ichiban in the Nepal market. Gadgets will include home appliances, kitchen equipment and music gizmos to Nepal customers. The product range includes colour TV, refrigerator, deep freezers, air conditioners, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, microwave ovens, DVD players, etc. For the kitchen, there are also cookers, blenders, coffee makers, and even electric woks.

One of the most interesting features of the Nepal distillery in the US is how easy it is to keep a day's work with good geography and community that would most likely have sprung between the same group of people back in Nepal. Community life is a big part of the life of the people. It is a big part of the life of the people. It is a big part of the life of the people.

ALOK, TUMBAHANGPHEY... You've been blaming the pollution and the gas guzzling of your vehicle on Nepal's infamous adulterated fuel, maybe it's time to look under your hood instead. Motor vehicle mechanics in Nepal love to hold forth on the ill effects of adulteration. The US right to, to invent, and vehicular pollution is indeed one of the main contributors to the Kathmandu Valley's polluted air, but what most vehicle owners don't realise is just how important the state of their engine is.

That's the message that the Vehicle Anti-Pollution Program (VAPP) and the Tribhuvan University Department of Mechanical Engineering are trying to spread.

Almost 30 percent of the 136,000 vehicles tested between June 1996 - May 2000 failed the tailpipe emission tests. In a recent random monitoring of pollution emissions by the Valley Traffic Police in Pulchowk, 38 of the 47 vehicles checked flunked the test. Kathmandu has at least 200,000 vehicles on the roads everyday. You do the math.

The VAPP is a training program initiated by DANIDA's Environment Sector Programme Support (ESPS) to reduce vehicular pollution, focuses on training vehicle mechanics on the maintenance of EURO-1 emission standard vehicles, all of which use computers to control ignition, emission and fuel systems. All well and good, you say, but most mechanics here don't know how this works, and how such a delicately calibrated system can be thrown out of whack if you try to tune the engine as if it were of the old school.

The Ministry of Population and Environment (MOPE) started instituting EURO-1 certification for all cars imported after January 2000 to reduce air pollution in the Valley. But that hasn't been strictly enforced, and neither have pollution control regulations been implemented, such as taking all vehicles older than 20 years off the streets, has been slipped, and even the new vehicles have been poorly maintained. This means that, even though the brick kilns and the outskirts of the city have been shut down, the Valley's air remains pretty vile. But it seems as if we are all on our own to clean up the air and do less damage to our respiratory systems. "Most of the

15-21 NOVEMBER 2002 NEPALI TIMES

ECONOMIC SENSE

Diaspora dreams

It's time for more two-way traffic between Nepal and its children abroad.

The Beed's just been like a trip to Washington DC. There's law, policy and administration; the need for an appellate body to hear labour issues and deal with laws and policies; and corruption control. The Nepal Business community has urged the government to implement a range of suggestions made by it, saying that such movement was long overdue. The community has identified five core areas that it believes need to be addressed immediately—security at both places of business, as well as the country in general; revenue law, policy and administration; the need for an appellate body to hear labour issues and deal with laws and policies; and corruption control.

Of course, DC is interesting to Nepal for another reason—more than 10,000 Nepalis live in and around there. Meeting with them is both frustrating and exciting. Frustrating for many subscribe almost fanatically to the belief that Nepal is the end of the road, a failed state. Exciting because it's certainly a wonderful environment for Nepal music and arts, and potentially a strong investor base for projects in Nepal.

There are far more Nepalis in the US today than there were a decade ago, as evident in the increased workload of Nepal's embassy in Washington. The embassy was not called to handle so many people, and it still does not have the resources to do so. It is a good idea to have a good job in the US, and it is a good idea to have a good job in the US, and it is a good idea to have a good job in the US.

One of the most interesting features of the Nepal distillery in the US is how easy it is to keep a day's work with good geography and community that would most likely have sprung between the same group of people back in Nepal. Community life is a big part of the life of the people. It is a big part of the life of the people. It is a big part of the life of the people.

That's the best for this work with good outlook is always, but nothing optimistic—something infectious. (Readers can find their views at arbhush@yahoo.com)

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Back on the bike trails

The mountain biking races are here again. Gear up to fall down repeatedly.

Around this time last year, the opening of the Siemens Action Asia Himalayan Mountain Bike Race Series 2001 hit Thamel. 'Hit' is perhaps the most appropriate way to describe the frenzy of activity, horse-drawn carts, dancing, parades and whistle-blowing. The people of Kathmandu Valley—high-ranking government officials, expatriates, local celebrities, onlookers and the VDCs of Sankhu, Lubhu and Kakani—all loved the festivities surrounding what is, after all, an event primarily for the overly energetic biking up and down the hills of the Valley. The races are back

this year, with the opening ceremony in Thamel at 2PM on 22 November, and races the next three days.

The mud trails snaking up and down the hills surrounding the capital have long been popular with adventure sports athletes, especially mountain bikers. In addition to the splendid views of the Himalayas at this time of the year, the routes offer enough challenges and variety for many months of all-over sore muscles. A star German mountain biker, Marc Weichert, who won two races here last year, publicly extols the delights of off-roading in the Valley. After the competition last year,

he told us: "It was better than racing in the European World Cup."

The sport is certainly a catching addition, as evidenced by scores of young Nepalis who've taken it up.

Himalayan Mountain Bikes (HMB) was a major force in popularising mountain biking in the Valley with a well thought out long-term plan that included organising races and championships. "We had a five-year strategy which we started implementing in 2000. Basically, we've been working towards developing a truly international race," says HMB director Peter Stewart.

A keen biker himself,

Stewart explains how HMB is lengthening the courses they recommend and take people biking on, and making them more difficult to help raise the standard of serious Nepali bikers. Like any business dependent on tourism, HMB has had its share of post-9/11 problems, but that hasn't dampened their enthusiasm for the races this year, or that of the participants'. The efforts made by the local communities to liven up the event with cultural programs and the mass welcome participants received upon entering each VDC did not go unnoticed.

As much as the quality of the biking, the involve-

ment of the Valley's many communities has caught the attention of many international adventure sports channels and also National Geographic TV. "It was particularly due to the interest and support shown by the local VDC's that the television channels are returning this year," says Stewart.

The average race time this year for the Men's and Women's Open category is expected to be between three and a half to at least four hours and the trails too have been made more difficult. "A lot of work has been put to study the courses. Participants will certainly find the course more challenging than last

year," says race director Stewart. The Race 3 course from Nagarkot to Bhaktapur (see maps) is said to be the most challenging, and was 'discovered' by the German Ambassador, an avid biker. For Races 1 and 2, there are even camping

facilities so, for a small cost, exhausted bikers don't have to ride all the way back from Sankhu and Nagarkot.

Last year more than half the participants were Nepali, and HMB expects that to be the case this year

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too. The only trouble is money. The entry fees are not terribly high—between Rs 280 – Rs 2,200 for Nepalis, \$20 – \$80 for expats, and \$190 – \$270 for internationals—but there are other expenses built into participating in the races. "We've planned well for the races themselves, but the cost of logistical support and spare parts are often beyond reach for a normal Nepali," says one biker who says he may only be able to compete in one race.

In addition to three races in six categories, HMB is also doing something few sporting (and non-sporting

for that matter) organisations do—making arrangements so people with disabilities can join in the fun. Like last year, the races this month will feature specially-designed courses for the disabled. This year, Handicap International will help meet the competitors' expenses and other needs. Twelve wheelchair athletes have already signed on.

(For more details, ring Himalayan Mountain Bikes 442345, 9810.33865, or email applaud@wlink.com.np)



Registration 7.30-8.30 AM. Roads close at 8.30 AM. All races begin at 9AM.

Open Men/ Masters/ Open Women	Juniors/ Schools/ (alternate) Women's
Kilometers	Kilometers
Location	Location
Altitude	Altitude
00	00
05	05
16	16
22	22
29	29
33.60m	33.60m
Nagarkot	Nagarkot
2000m	2000m



Open Men/ Masters/ Open Women	Juniors/ Schools/ (alternate) Women's
Kilometers	Kilometers
Location	Location
Altitude	Altitude
00:00	00:00
07:00	07:00
18:30	18:30
29:60	29:60
33.60m	33.60m
Nagarkot	Nagarkot
2000m	2000m



Open Men/ Masters/ Open Women	Wheelchair - Disabled Athletes
Kilometers	Kilometers
Location	Location
Altitude	Altitude
00:00	00:00
14:00	14:00
19:00	19:00
24:00	24:00
38:00	38:00
Nagarkot	Nagarkot
1880m	1880m
Masgun	Masgun
1480m	1480m
Chandrahari Temple	Chandrahari Temple
1100m	1100m
1480m	1480m
1340m	1340m

*Women's/Juniors finish at Chandrahari Temple and transfer by bus to Bhaktapur



"This government has no constitutional status."

Excerpts from an interview with Narahari Acharya, Nepali Congress, Nepal Samacharparva, 10 November

The Nepali Congress has always stood for constitutional monarchy. Why did you propose a constituent assembly at a meeting of the party's central working committee?

Proposing a constituent assembly does not necessarily mean depositing the constitutional monarchy. The Nepali Congress has stood for a constitutional monarchy since its inception, but it also recognises that the constituent assembly is a tool of government. Proposing a constituent assembly does not in theory or in practice amount to ending the monarchy.

Are you saying that the king's move has created a constitutional vacuum?
Yes. We believe that the spirit of the constitution was killed when the monarch crossed the limits set by the constitution, and acted according to an interpretation of convenience. Only reviving parliament can rectify these blunders. If the Deuba government was dismissed for its incompetence and inability to hold elections, the present government should have set a date in the next six months for elections. The only way out is to restore parliament or hold elections for a fresh parliament. Right now a non-constitutional force is running the country.

Wasn't the constitution violated even before the royal move when the parties recommended postponing elections?

That's no reason for a constitutional monarchy to violate the constitution. Political parties should take part of the blame, because they created the background for 4 October. The all-party meeting was indecisive, but it decided the prime minister to find a solution within the constitution. The royal address may have promised a solution, but this has only added to the confusion.

Do you think a restored parliament would be a legal entity? And as for the constituent assembly, what the Maoists?

It's not about who will take advantage, but about getting out of this mess. And restoring parliament is not the end, but a means to a solution. A constituent assembly might still be important even if parliament is restored. However, we should start working on other solutions, and elections should be held soon. The Maoists were the main reason the elections were postponed. A constituent assembly may take three or four years to work, but we need to be mentally prepared, if we want it to bear fruit earlier...

You're perceived as being quite critical of the monarchy?

I hope the monarchy is always popular, but I wish it would keep up with the times. An absolute monarchy was made a constitutional one in 1950, and the Nepali Congress respects that status. But 4 October violated the spirit of the constitution. If the monarchy takes over and tries to retain the executive power, it will be criticised.

How do you evaluate the performance of the present government?

This government does not have constitutional status. Technically, it is a body that oversees the daily functions of government; executive power lies with the monarch. In the month since it was instituted, there have been no signs about what it plans to do and where it is heading. The Deuba government was said to be a failure because it did not set election dates, but the present government hasn't given any indication that elections will take place at all.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

Our constitution has provisions to punish political parties. It also has provisions that prevent the king's involvement in politics as this may lead to controversy. If the monarch defies the constitution, it is a clear indication that a change is required.

—Daman Nath Dhungana, member of the constitution drafting committee of 1990, in Chhappal, 10 November.



Elephant: Constitution.

Spacetime, 10 November, 2002
संवेदनशील

Conspiracy

Finance Minister Badi Prasad Shrestha has recently unveiled the so-called 'Economic Reforms Program (ERP) 2002' on behalf of the Chand government, which was formed amid constitutional and political controversy. The program comes at a time when the country's economic crisis has deepened, and all sectors of the economy are facing badly. The budgetary position in the first three months of the current fiscal year suggests that government expenditure is likely to be less than 30 percent of the initial outlay planned. Revenue mobilisation as well as mobilisation and utilisation of foreign aid have weakened.

There's really nothing new in the ERP. Previous governments have repeatedly talked about reforming the bureaucracy, managing expenditure, and so on. There are no concrete programs to address the problems faced by Nepali industries or offer the private sector any relief. The only novel idea in the new program is limiting the prime minister's delegation to nine.

But the government has also announced several policy level and long-term programs, violating its scope and mandate. Liquidating or privatising state-owned enterprises, involving the private sector in the import and distribution of petroleum products, etc., are significant issues that cannot be decided by this government without proper studies being carried out. The government seems to be conspiring to take away workers' rights guaranteed in existing Acts through unilateral amendments and ordinances.

Shrestha announced the observance of a 'yatri holiday' and the introduction of a special package to rescue the economy from its present crisis. But now he also says that the '10% Five Year Plan will be made public by December. How can a government that does not have the mandate of the people do this, especially when there are already misleading attempts to suggest that the 'Poverty Reduction Strategy Program and the Tenth Plan are the same thing.

The ERP seems part of the government's conspiracy to bring in office as long as possible. There is no chance of changing the country out of the present economic crisis unless a new government is elected to office with a mandate to modernise the country and transform the Nepali economy.

Salt for trees
Rajkanti, 10 November

Residents from Gorkha's northernmost villages are involved in an illegal timber trade via Sando, exchanging timber from the area's pine trees for rock salt from Tibet. Large amounts of timber are being

provide logistical and financial support to the Maoists even if they do not agree with them. The security forces search all houses and are suspicious of everyone. This does not make for warm ties between them and the public.

The Maoists, however, have specific targets, they don't touch the same treatment to everyone. Another weakness of the security forces is their strategy to indiscriminately employ informants from the public. Informants are always in this kind of always reliable. Many people accuse their enemies of being Maoists, and innocent people get hurt. If the general public is pressured by the security forces to provide information, they will sell the security forces, are endangering them.

The security forces don't realise that the public will always be more angry with them, even if it suffers at the hands of the Maoists

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Back at Sundarjal >21

"Meantime, I'll keep scribbling..."



17 February, 1997

Sundarjal
Spent the day brooding and feeling disconsolately sad. Since yesterday homesickness has assailed me again. This constant state of agony—how long will it last? I am not getting reconciled to the incommunication of incarceration. If it continues for sometime my health will suffer serious damage. I am in for heart trouble. If only this isolation is lifted, I don't know how the Jews lived in death camps in Nazi Germany. Our life here is not so bad. Except for total segregation, there are no physical discomforts.

Papers did not come. We wait for newspapers—even those sheets of paper known as Kathmandu dailies, with some interest. After all that is the only source of information of world happenings available to us. Tomorrow being National Day there will no newspapers. The day after is Saturday. Hence we will get papers only on Sunday.

The Captain informed me that the matter about a supply of zardo to me has been referred to Dr (Colonel) Bhattarai, whether I can take it or not on medical grounds. It means that perhaps I will be permitted to take zardo. Since they had stopped it once in the name of a jail rule that no madak papad should be supplied to us they want to get it only through the agency of a doctor's permission. A face-saving device.

18 February

Sundarjal
Today is National Day which is also celebrated as Democracy Day. It was on this date 26 years ago (1951) that I was inducted in a coalition cabinet as Home Minister, inaugurating a new era, a new dispensation in governmental setup—I was slightly over 36 years old. What a red letter day it was for all of us—for the

BP Koirala is obsessed with his failing health, and thinks his psychological condition under detention is worsening his medical problems. These pages from his prison diary written in English show that he also fears that the king intends to keep him in jail for a longer period.

country and the people. I was from the people's side, the most popular and at the same time most powerful man. Since I am a man of honour and ideals, I was very weak in my power motive, and therefore I did not use my influence and power, which had come to me without my making efforts for it, to maintain myself in power through manipulation and machination. I could have done that. I don't regret it. But since then I have been subjected to buffalings of political fortunes—up and down, up and down—and I am now landed, at about the age end of my life in jail—in a condition of total isolation from where I don't know when, if I will be liberated.

I am not in good health since I am imprisoned. Digestion continued to be bad, there is bleeding from the nose, this morning there were some traces of blood in my sputum, there is a constant buzzing in my ear and peculiar heaviness in the head, headaches too. I look a little gaunt, wrinkled, feel weak in the legs and continue breathing with difficulty and palpitations of the heart. A long list of physical complaints. Basically they are promoted or even induced by my present psychological state. I suffer from depression constantly, and sometimes the depression assumes the manic intensity.

I do some writing every day, but it does not at all calm my nerves. I am not intensely occupied with this routine. The quality of my writing has also suffered because I can bring concentration to thought to bear upon it. I devote innumerable ways to divert my mind from the obsessive brooding over the present state of deterioration—but such make-belief only promotes my depression by the awareness that they are false beliefs. Yesterday I wrote 1,100 words. How empty these are!

Today the Captain informed us a new set of utensils would be supplied to our kitchen which is outside the jail compound. They had been using big army utensils to cook our food, and we were interpreting this improvement in our favour supposing that our detention was a temporary affair. But now they seem to be making a permanent arrangement for the kitchen, which means a long detention. I don't mind a long detention provided, 1) interviews are allowed, 2) correspondence is allowed, 3) books and newspapers are allowed to be supplied by our people.

In the November Himal

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Child domestics amongst us

'Holy' cow and 'unholy' dalit:
Crimes against untouchables

From evil state to civil society:
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ENCOUNTERS by MEGH RANJANI RAI

Communicating with Coyote 1

"Where were you? You were asleep again, weren't you?"

I tall began with an email on a mountain mailing list. My virtual friendship with Jacqui Higgins-Rosebrook, the woman who "mans" the weather station at Stampede pass. (Check out my weather at <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/seattle/>).

She lives atop a mountain in the Cascades of Washington state, has three grown daughters who live in Seattle with their husbands, and six grandchildren. I was intrigued with her email ID "Coyote1". It brought images of western woods and snow, with the silhouette of a howling coyote raising its tail against the background of a full moon.

Such were my visualisations, perhaps influenced by Willie Bill Hickock, the last of the Mohicans, tales from Louis L'Amour of Shane, Fargo and "Clementine". I wasn't far from the truth as it turned out. Jacqui's ancestry includes the Cherokee people of Oklahoma and early Scottish settlers.

With pure Irish on her father's side. And a project that she was working on with her cousins were to get all the family photos on a disc.

The coyote is an important figure in the corn and early intermontane indigenous people of Washington, Oregon and Idaho. "He is one of my favourite gods of all the gods I have studied. My nearest neighbour are a family of six coyotes who are enchanting to watch, my nearest human neighbours on weekends are 15 miles away at the bottom of the mountain and not nearly as interesting." She sure has her priorities right.

She writes novels, screenplays and poetry and runs a non-profit organisation called "Children of Sonoma Valley Street". She's going 60, and what an interesting life. The virtual encounter has been for me. None of that children need to look after me. I am sick, I am depressed and I am old. Age is relative. There is so much to live for and enjoy, and you only get one stab at it as far as we know.

You can go with Jacqui to pick blueberries, or help her shovel the snow off the highway with a snow cat. She plants herbs and medicinal plants and grows Shilap tomatoes developed in Czechoslovakia when it was still one country. He's probably the highest high-altitude garden in the state. She deplores hikers who come up the Pacific Crest Trail that runs from Baja California to British Columbia and passes right in front of her door. Like trekking there, she. She drives down to the ghost town of Luster to celebrate the birthday of Dr. Murphy, who is 99 today. And to all her friends who missed the Leonid shower she has lines of verse:

Where were you?
You were asleep again, weren't you?
I wished you were here.
I watched for you
... once every thirty-three years,
Temple Tuttle passes by and
We get this chance to suck in our breath
In wonder and whisper
Yes, yes, YES!
With our suddenly let out breath
As streaks of gold quarter the sky.
But you regretted other obligations.
Some of you, who slept through the night
Got up this morning and went to church
To ponder miracles done
Two millennia ago and half a world away
WHAT CAN I SAY?
I'll be ninety the next time it happens.
I'll need a nap
And someone to remind me.
Will you be with me then?

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NEPALI SOCIETY

Nirajan's new club



From Kupondole's Friends Club to a German football club, For Nepali football striker Nirajan Rayamajhi, it will be a whole new club and country from next year as he joins the German football club, Ömek/Türkspor.

A prolific scorer in the domestic league, Nirajan was the first Nepali to score a hat-trick in World Cup qualifying matches—he did so against Macau in the qualifying matches to the 2002 World Cup where he scored seven goals altogether. In another first, he is now the first Nepali footballer to play professionally in Europe.

It all began when Bikram Subba, a Nepali living in Germany, tipped Ömek's manager about Nirajan's skill and the potential. A two-month training period and a few test matches later the 23-year-old had signed on as part of Ömek's D Division for approximately \$1,500 a month. Started by Turkish residents living in Germany, Ömek is considered one of the more competitive and proficient of the many foreign teams based in Germany. Arriving at D Division is considered a success. Professional football starts at the ninth league, clubs have to pass seven phases to arrive at Bundesliga, the top German league.

Come February, the Gokarna resident will be able to show off his skills in stadiums around Germany. He's looking forward to the experience, sure that it will boost his football career. "The honour and affection that Germany shows its football players has inspired me to play my best and to represent Nepal," says a thrilled Nirajan. The only sour note for the player will be leaving his wife behind while he goes on to conquer the football fields of Europe.

Under My Hat will return next week.



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