







LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH

Exactly one year ago, on 25 November, the Maoists abruptly walked out of peace talks and broke a four-month truce to carry out a spectacularly devastating attack on the army barracks in Ghorahi in Dang.

The next day, King Gyanendra declared a state of national emergency, the government officially labelled Maoists as terrorists, and the army was deployed. That Friday, we carried a headline: 'Let's get this over with.' We said: 'This campaign must be brought to a swift and effective conclusion with the least amount of Nepali blood shed.' How naive we were.

More than 5,000 Nepalis (plus minus a thousand—no one seems to know for sure) have died in the past year. More than had died in the previous five years. With inadequate logistics, equipment and manpower, the army has been fighting a vicious guerrilla war against its own people in one of the most difficult terrains in the world. Aside from the headline-grabbing attacks on security bases, there is the daily death toll of the innocent. Village leaders, teachers, social and political activists mercilessly murdered throughout the country every day. If murder and mayhem is what the Maoist leaders wanted, they have got it.

In this space exactly a year ago, we said: 'The emergency is not going to resolve the crisis. It depends how well we demonstrate that we have learnt the lessons about the past lapses that get us to this stage, and begin to correct them. Like...restoring the peoples' confidence that there is a government that cares about its people and not just itself.'

Now, we have no parliament, no local elected bodies, the prime minister has been sacked, there is a military stalemate and a political deadlock. But we do have a full council of ministers. Can this team of 22 ex-politicos, technocrats and relics from the Panchayat era deliver where an elected government failed? We desperately hope so.

The main parliamentary parties say their policy is one of 'no confrontation and no surrender'. How about a policy of unity? The forces of democracy have no choice but to get together. The extreme right and extreme left do not believe in democracy, the moderate centre that does must not be divided. But the signs are not good.

For the last month after he was appointed prime minister, Lokendra Bahadur Chand went house-to-house trying to persuade political leaders to join his cabinet. It didn't work. So the king handpicked his own men (and one woman). It shows a geographical and ethnic mix that reflects Nepal's diversity. In normal times this should make up a good team, but these are not normal times. It is not these Maoists at the gates, but there is a widening rift between the palace and the parties which will stymie efforts at service delivery.

The only people who benefit from this rift are the Maoists and the rightists. And, not surprisingly, both are trying their best to widen the gap. Nepalis are so muted by mindless violence and a sinking economy that they will go along with anyone who restores peace. Their disillusionment with the political parties is complete, and they will give the king and his council of ministers a chance. But the country's problems are so serious and solutions are required so urgently that the government has limited time to show it can deliver peace and development, in that order.

Everyone is waiting to see if the king can pull a rabbit out of the hat and announce a ceasefire. If that happens, the people will reward him with a peace dividend and that will translate into legitimacy for his ministers. The bad news is that there is really no reason at the moment for either side to talk. The Maoists are convinced their revolution is on track, and the government will only want to demand from a position of strength. The government wants to first intensify military pressure on the Maoists, for which it needs promised military hardware from abroad.

Everyone agrees there is no military solution to this crisis. Even the security forces say their objective is to force the Maoists to understand this. Having broken the truce once, it is up to the Maoists now to show that they are willing to negotiate in good faith. It would help if the international community and our neighbours leaned on them a little more.

One thing is certain: the nation can't take another year of this.



STATE OF THE STATE by CK LAL

The marketplace of ideas

CHAPKAIYAN (Pana District)—The pond that gives this village outside Birgunj its name is in an advanced state of decay. Water hyacinths have claimed the entire Chapkaiyan Pokhari.

Its banks serve as a refuse dump during the day and open-air toilet during the night. People cover their noses as they pass by this huge cesspool on their way to Rasaul. But nobody does anything about it, even during the holy Chhath festival. Come to think of it, I never Krishna Prasad Bhattarai ignored Chapkaiyan when he represented this area in the dissolved parliament.

No wonder, then, that very few here seem to be aware of the prolonged illness of their former prime minister. For the Koiris, Kurmis, Kallars and Musahans of Chapkaiyan, the gaps in the parliaments of a faraway capital have little or no meaning. Like the derelict pond, villagers here are resigned to their fate of total neglect.

However, the village population does seem to realise that the direct rule of the king is now the order of the day. They are guarded in their comments against the new dispensation. A richkhabar echoed the prevailing sentiment, 'If we say anything against the government now, they will declare us a Maoist, and we will be made to disappear. Why do you want me to stick my neck out by saying me to say what I feel?' He had a point.

In times like this, the presence of the people's representative may have kept their spirits up. Unfortunately, activists from nearly all mainstream parties have vanished. During Panchayat years, motivators of Nepali Congress and cadres of communist parties would never miss an opportunity like the Chhath festival in the tarai to interact with the public. Not any more. Commercial interests have taken over the community space vacated by political parties. Trappings of a burgeoning consumer culture are everywhere, even during

Chhath by the Chapkaiyan Pokhari is a fitting metaphor for contemporary Nepali politics.

Chhath. At Chharhar Pokhari, where the rich and famous of Birgunj gathered to offer prayers to the setting sun on Sunday, banners promoting maulis, noodles and ice-creams hang right above the head of falling devotees. Make you wonder if there is a link between this and the deterioration of political morals in this country.

'Parties in democratic politics,' says Anthony Downs, 'are analogous to entrepreneurs in a profit seeking economy. So as to attain their profit ends, they formulate whatever policies they believe will gain most profits, for as entrepreneurs produce whatever products they believe will gain most profits for the same reasons.' Unlike in the 'minimalist state' description of political parties, morality has no place in the market mechanism approach to politics.

Politicians of this school do not attach any importance to political parties. For them a political party is an instrument of acquiring power. Lacking the anchor of an established institution, political entrepreneurs are prone to manipulations by vested interests. Quite often, leaders with ambitions who dump them once their utility is over exploit their entrepreneurial skills. But these enterprising people seldom give up, like their compatriots in the world of business, they move on to newer adventures.

These are the kind of individuals that help establish political parties, make them grow, and then end up being the cause of their disintegration. The dynamic roles of Rishikesh Shah, Tuli Giri and Bishwa Bandhu Thapa post-1960 are similar to the (dis)paradox roles played by Sher Bahadur Deuba, Pradip Giri and Bimalendra Nidhi in the re-emancipated 42 years later on 4 October.

If Komode Madhavi Nepal has as far removed to be a latter day Keshar Jung Rayamajhi, the credit goes to the cadres of Nepali Congress to win a parliamentary seat from the General Secretary under close watch. Perhaps it

also shows that there are more invisible hands in national politics than in the 1960s.

Entrepreneurial politicians use political parties at their convenience, change them when necessary, and have no qualms about discarding them when such institutions prevent them from taking off at will. Whether they are rightists like Badri Naryan Bantel and Kuber Sharma, or self-proclaimed leftists like Dev Chandra and Kamal Chaulagain, political entrepreneurs find commitment to an established ideological institution extremely cumbersome.

The faster and higher they fly, the swifter is their descent. Politics may lie in bringing morality back to the political market system. In order to do that, mainstream political parties have no option other than to transform themselves into corporations with clearly defined goals and reaching out to the consumers with renewed vigour. Only then may they succeed in driving out unscrupulous political operators through free and fair competition in the marketplace of ideas.

Until then, we have to put up with the oddity of 'independent' leftists (like a Buddhist without faith in the Sangha) and failed rightists masquerading as 'clean and competent' political players. Politically conscious citizens here who once vowed to Krishna Prasad Bhattarai are asking why their representative doesn't break his vow of silence despite the resurgence of the right.

Chhath by the Chapkaiyan Pokhari is a fitting metaphor for contemporary Nepali politics. On the first day of the Nepali festival, we pray on the east bank in the fond hope that someone someday will rescue the pond from the killer weed that we will be able to breathe easy once again. But the ambitious entrepreneurs of the political free market are unlikely to engage themselves in this altruistic task.

It needs an institutional effort. Even a politician of the stature of Bhattarai needed the Nepali Congress to win a parliamentary seat from the General Secretary under close watch. Perhaps it

PEACEKINGS

I was uncomfortable with the slightly defensive tone of Bhagirthi Yogi's piece on your online edition 'Peacekings on warpath' (#119). Although he has tried to be fair in the article, the headline and box 'Revolutionary roadshow' indicate that we are trying to make fun of the genuine belief of some of us have that by arming both sides to the teeth. All we are going to get is more bodies, a longer war, and more dreadful future for the country.

Debra Sedovick, Chicago

There is no doubt that the Maoists need to be defeated. Nepalis cannot and will not tolerate being ruled by republican revolutionaries who know no other path but the path of violence. But I wonder whether the helicopters, guns and equipment promised by the US is going to be enough to stop them. A solution must be homegrown. It must have a development component, and above all it must rely on superior intelligence. So far, going by the massacres of policemen last week, there aren't many signs of those things.

S Thapa, by email

The Loony Lak has done it again. So, they want us to turn our other cheek to the Maoists. Only, there will be no cheeks left to turn once they blast our heads off with guns. They may not believe it but murderers do not set store by such quaint notions as dialogue and peaceful negotiations. The only language they understand and respect is that of power. When it comes to the Maoists, we inhabit the Hobbesian world in all its naked brutality and horror. Life is becoming brute, nasty and short by the day. Was it Hobbes who famously said, 'Covenants without swords are mere words'? Those of us who believe in freedom are engaged in a life-and-death struggle with an evil force brided by its ideological certainty. We

UNITY

I really laughed out loud after reading

Daniel Lak's 'Last stand' (#118) was wonderful and impressive. Politicians stand up to be a glass of wine, speeches, their throats are dry now, and we hardly hear a croak from these men. We need energetic people to manage the assets of our country. The problem is bringing political leaders from the shadows back to the mainstream. In my opinion, it would be best for Nepal if the Maoists and the king could work together. The Maoists accept they may even be willing to a monarchy in one form or another, and the monarch should accept the present agenda of the Maoists.

Khadanga Timisina, by email

FRITZ BERGER

Fritz Berger deserves thanks for keeping us well as well as textual representations of selected village folks from Nepal ('Then and now', #118). The juxtaposition of pictures

must do everything to defeat our own 'axis of evil', including accepting aid from the US and Britain for weapons. I am using a fake name to protect myself and family from Maoist murderers.

iPlinyi, Balaju

I am concerned that Bhagirthi Yogi's piece, 'Peacekings on the Warpath' represents the issue of support for US military aid to Nepal as one that splits along Nepali-non-Nepali lines. Yogi suggests that only a few dozen Nepalis towards the ANWS petition, while in fact, there are at least 100 Nepali signatories. It also appears that no Nepalis would support the petition were interviewed, while

DANIEL LAK

Daniel Lak is right about the need for our politicians to stand up and face reality. 'Last stand', #118. The election scheduled for 13 November could not take place because our politicians were scared the rebels might kill them if they participated. They were united in agreement with ex-Prime Minister Deuba's plan to postpone scheduled polls, a move legal experts called unconstitutional. Well, I do not think either Madav Kumar Nepal or Girija Prasad Koirala would want the king's move unconstitutional if they were made prime minister. They would be all praises. They are quarrelling over who gets to sit on the karts at a time when the people are suffering and the Maoist situation is getting acute. As Lak says, they should stop providing various support for Nepal to expand their business into the North American market. To borrow the king's words, this embassy is 'asakshman'.

Kumar Basnet, Sophia University, Tokyo

'Last stand' (#118) by Daniel Lak is an inspiring piece of writing urging us to stand up or get lost. I really enjoyed the brilliant article 'Dispora dreams' by Artha Beed (#119) on your site. It was edifying. A merger between Nepal's living abroad and our clueless government could ensure a better deal for our country and our people. This could probably be an idea worth exploring by the new government. As for the so-called 'educated people living abroad', instead of discussing and complaining about Nepal from the depths of your couch as you nurse a betsy to give a glass of wine, should give serious thought to making an actual contribution to Nepal. It doesn't have to be to jeopardise your careers and dreams.

Beed's words 'Everyone wins—returnees get the capital, the same happens and Nepal gets professional expertise from its own.'

L Mathema, by email

SURENDRA LAWOTI

I fail to understand your *raison d'être* for publishing the photographs by Surendra Lawoti ('Life in a different light', #117). Was it because you guys couldn't come up with any worthy centred material? I don't know. But, correctly, the artist's purport was to capture life under two different cultures and juxtapose these cultures side by side. Well, the pictures fail him miserably. Take the picture titled 'Suntan' for

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Prasad K Mishra, Illinois, USA

ARTHA BEED

A South Asian Journalists Association poll in the United States showed that the Nepali expatriates are disenchanted with the Royal Nepal Embassy in Washington, with contrary to Artha Beed's opinion in 'Dispora dreams' (#119). In that poll, 82 percent of the respondents said the embassy 'did nothing' to help Nepalis, only eight percent said it 'did something' and ten percent didn't know. In my own experience, the staff are rude and unprofessional towards Nepalis. The embassy should also be more proactive in improving trade relations, making visa service more efficient, holding Nepal awareness programs, providing various support for Nepal to expand their business into the North American market. To borrow the king's words, this embassy is 'asakshman'.

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taken then and now is touching but I wanted to know more about Mr Berger as well, along with his Nepali subjects. For example, his own family life, his children or lack of them and their occupation or, at least, the number of books he has written or things he has done. A comparison would have been a better point about modernity. In the absence of his own life story, what we have been given smacks of old anthropology with its divide and conquer strategy and object of knowledge, between the knower and the known.

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FOUR WHEELS GOOD

Regarding the question of a constituent assembly, CK Lal states that everything such an assembly can do is 'a sovereign parliament can do better' ('Four wheels of democracy', #118). First of all, a parliament would need the correspondent mandate from the electorate. A normal parliament, like a renewed or a newly elected one, doesn't have this clear commission and thus lacks legitimacy. This is what CK Lal is completely disregarding (but thanks to Puskar Bhupal for his clear clarification in 'Revolutionary reform', #119). By asking for a constituent assembly, the Maoist are not claiming more than any democratic force in Europe. The Swiss people, for instance, would also start an insurgency if they weren't allowed to vote on every modification of their constitution. From a European point of view, the basic fault of Nepali democracy since the jana andolan is it never elected a constituent assembly. In the history of Nepal the people have never been accorded this fundamental right. They could neither choose those who made their laws, nor could they influence national referendum. Redressing this issue will not only legitimise the new constitution, but also drain all legitimacy from the violent Maoist movement. Legitimacy is the key element that needs to be taken more seriously in this debate.

Thomas Benedikt, Kathmandu

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- example: the caption itself notwithstanding, how on earth does that picture depict a Nepali enjoying his sun on top of a bathroom in the Illinois river? In 'Rahul' I see a well-fed pouter of a kid about to bully someone and not a hip-hop fan who'd expect the Maoists to be friendly with his friends. 'Dhira!' must hate his family and this country from the bottom of his toes because he ain't certainly happy about going back home after six years! The more of them all is an absolute banal photograph of a room titled 'Shree'. The only two pictures that have some sort of a potential are 'Thanksgiving' and 'Sany'. The picture of turkey and dal-bhat served together in Thanksgiving could have been an excellent metaphor, except one wouldn't know the ingredients of a dish captured in this photograph without reading the caption. The same holds true for 'Sany', neither the temple nor the bride herself is visible. Bottom Line: Why would a paper of your reputation publish such rubbish—too after asking your subscription fees?
- Sudip Pokhel, Malignan**

INTERNATIONAL JUGGLING?

I was quite surprised at the results of Weekly Internet Poll #59 as published in the Nepal Times issue of 15-21 Nov. The percentages as per the actual poll (still accessible at [www.nepaltimes.com](http://www.nepaltimes.com)) are presented below with the corresponding figures published in your paper in parenthesis:

1. Interim all-party Government - 24.9% (33.4%)
2. Constituent assembly elections - 33.4% (32.7%)
3. Reinstatement of Parliament - 9% (24.8%)
4. None Of Above - 32.7% (8.1%)

The discrepancies are quite serious. Are the mistakes a result of editing or a result of an attempt at intentional juggling of figures?

**Bijaya M Sherehan, Balaubaur**

EL SALVADOR

While it is true that there are some parallels between El Salvador and Nepal, and also a lesson or two for Nepal from the peace process in the Latin American country, Himanta Thapa's article ('How to talk', #119) has some historical inaccuracies. It looks like Thapa has stretched the analogy to fit his argument. Aside from the obvious similarities, there were also other realities which make the comparisons slightly inappropriate. For instance, he has completely overlooked the role of the Roman Catholic church in the peace process, a role which was probably more pivotal than any of the other factors involved. I don't know what a parallel institution to the church would be in Nepal, but maybe the first lesson for Nepal is to look towards the homegrown solution?

G Gianoli, Kathmandu



# Knock on wood



It's going to take more than luck to rescue the tarai's remaining forests.

resources are cut off, while new migrants who were responsible for deforestation, directly or indirectly, are now the legally recognised owners.

Unfortunately, there is no alternative to mobilising the communities for forest protection. "Since we are not the officially recognised protectors of the forest, we have seen the forests looted before our eyes," says Ganesh Shrestha, a resident of Dangayana, near Siraha. 4,000 in Kailash Chhatwari, a resident of dense hardwood sal has been allotted to a community of 1,600 households, most of whom are new migrants from adjoining hill districts. This has deprived the indigenous Tharu communities, traditional users of the forest from their source of livelihood. There are bound to be problems when a common resource for indigenous groups is shifted to the control of relatively recent migrants.

Studies show one mature sal tree can fetch an equivalent of three-year earnings of labourers, and the imbalance can be glaring. The indigenous communities are fighting a case against this claim, but there is little chance of their rulings being reinstated.

"Community forestry in the tarai has helped create distrust and distance between the migrant communities and indigenous communities. In the hills, this done this could in future trigger ethnic clashes," says former Bara District

by DANIEL LAK



HEMLATA RAI IN BARA... nly patches remain today of what was once a wide ribbon of dense hardwood jungles along Nepal's southern plains. The forests of the tarai are today confined largely to protected national parks. Everywhere else there is encroachment and habitat destruction.

Tarai forests are vanishing at an alarming 1.3 percent a year, and what is more worrisome is that the community forestry formula which worked well in the hills doesn't seem to do as well here. The reason: recent migrations from the hills have displaced indigenous groups, and there is a need to meet national timber requirements.

"The community forestry concept needs some modifications in the tarai," says Megh Raj Sapkota of the Bara chapter of the

Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal. "It doesn't have to be scrapped altogether." And here in Bara, a new project is trying to come up with a modified method to let local communities manage forests.

Even till 15 years ago, Daka in Bara used to be surrounded by dense forest. Over the years, as the population grew and settlements spread, forests began to recede. In 1964, forests covered more than six million hectares of the tarai, it has now shrunk to 4.2 million hectares. The history of this destruction can be traced back to the nationalisation of forests after 1960 and their central management. Timber was seen as a limitless natural resource, and the tarai as a limitless receptacle for hill resettlement.

More than 100,000 hectares of forests in the environmentally sensitive Siwalik hills were cleared for resettlement by 1985. Today, the destruction is more from development projects and illegal encroachment.

When the idea of community forestry was tried out, it seemed like this would work just like in the hills. Village groups are leased a patch of forest to be managed, protected and reforested. In turn, the communities have a say over use of fodder, fuelwood and timber from their forests. In the hills, the lesson was that forest protection was impossible without the involvement of local communities.

The community forestry concept involves villagers living in the vicinity of forests as its rightful users and deprive distant villages of access. In the hills, this is fine since communities and forest patches are usually located next to each other,

making the handover relatively straightforward.

However in the tarai, the forests are bunched up on the slopes of the Siwalik hills to the north while the most dependent groups are in isolated clusters miles away to the south. Indigenous people who were traditional users and direct beneficiaries now no longer live close to forests. The influx of hill migrants that began in the 1960s following the eradication of malaria have cut them off from their traditional woodlands.

Good results from the hill encouraged several of the 20 tarai districts to transfer forests to communities. Jhapa in the east has already handed over more than half of its forests for community management, but the indigenous Rajbanshi have been left out of the process. Their rights to the natural

Development Committee chairman Chhatu Prasad Yadav. There are already signs of this happening. Last August, Tharus and Pahads had a confrontation in Bara's Birauwathi which locals believe was a physical manifestation of this growing distrust. To be sure, the issue had political overtones since the actual clashes were triggered when the Tharus blamed the Pahads of sheltering Maoist insurgents to attack a Tharu parliamentarian. But it was the forest that got burnt.

Involvement of communities is vital for not only conservation but also for the smooth forest management. A Finnish-funded project in the mid-1990s tried to introduce a community block forest management: compartmentalising the stands and harvesting mature hardwood trees in an 80-year cycle.

Though technically sound, this proposal got scrapped because locals were not consulted. The communities realise that without learning up with the government "their forest" would not be protected from timber smugglers. Seven hundred hectares of tarai and Siwalik forests here are still under government ownership.

Weak management within the official framework and a lack of political commitment is encouraging illegal felling of trees to supply indigenous communities. In the hills, this done this could in future trigger ethnic clashes," says former Bara District



Sal logs being transported out of Sabbaia forest in Bara district.

year in timber exports, and some forestry management experts believe handing over this resource rich forest to a small community could create an imbalance in distribution and a loss of government control.

Despite a government directive that slowed down distribution of forests to communities three years ago, district level forest offices are under tremendous pressure to hand over more forest patches especially in areas previously identified for potential community forest. SP Joshi, District Forest Officer of

Bara says the biggest challenge remains a confidence crisis between the locals and the bureaucracy. "If the District Forest Office get control, our forests will never be safe," says Nimal Bhandari, a promoter of community forestry here. Presently, the government is trying to bring various groups together to discuss a new concept of "collaborative forest management" under the Biodiversity Sector Programme for Siwaliks and Tarai (BISP-ST) funded by the Dutch aid group, SNV. The modification of community

forestry for the tarai will, the designers hope, eventually prepare the government and local communities to work together. It would also pave the way to implement operational forest management plans in the central tarai. The main thrust will be on commercially harvesting mature trees to contribute to national coffers.

Megh Raj Sapkota concludes that community forestry in the tarai does not need to be scrapped despite its flaws. ♦



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## DOMESTIC BRIEFS

### Cut-off date for SAARC summit

Islamabad has asked the SAARC secretariat in Kathmandu to confirm participation of its members in the proposed 12th SAARC Summit to be hosted by Pakistan in January 2003 by mid-November, according to a report in the Dawn newspaper. Islamabad said it needed time to prepare for the summit scheduled to be held in Islamabad from Jan 11 to 13, sources said. All members except India and Bhutan have confirmed participation. Officials at the ministry of foreign affairs expect that New Delhi would most likely respond after a civilian government was placed in Islamabad. Acting Indian High Commissioner in Islamabad, Sudhir Vyas told the paper he had no indications from New Delhi about the Indian participation in the summit, hinting at some delay in the formal announcement in this respect. "It is difficult to predict," Vyas is quoted as saying.

### Bihar-Nepal bus service

Buses from Nepal and India may soon be able to enter each others' territories in a proposed agreement between Patna and Kathmandu, according to Bihar's transport minister Awadh Bihari Choudhary. He told radio that the agreement will be finalised "soon". Nepal's foreign and Bihar state-owned bus service will operate routes through border points like Joghani, Rasaul and Kakarbhitta. Passengers from Bihar will not be allowed to board Nepal buses within Bihar, he said.

### Maoist threats

The Maoists have warned anybody found involved directly against their 'people's war' of dire consequences. Popular Nepal comedian, Santosh Pant, who was given an ultimatum to resign within a week complied and stepped down from his post as junior officer at the Department of Military Intelligence at the Royal Nepalese Army. Pant usually plays lead roles in a popular entertainment programme, Hipo Aajaka Kura, aired over the state-owned Nepal Television once a week. The Maoists targeted him for another tele-serial he produces for the army which dramatises actual life stories of captured Maoists.

### Cancelled again

Expectations of a diplomatic breakthrough in the sense of disengagement of US-Nepal since one of its 275 is in Brunei for a mandatory "C-check". The company has already cancelled all its flights to Dubai and Bangalore till the plane comes back. "Our international flights will get back to normal from 25 November," airline deputy director Dipak Manandhar told us. Meanwhile, the other plane has been trying to make up on existing routes, sometimes even flying to Delhi at five in the morning.

### Marathon men

If it wasn't for an encounter with a group of armed Maoists asking for money, it would have been a perfect day for a group of runners taking part in the Annapurna to Everest Marathon. In the latest update, marathon organisers say the race was interrupted by Maoists and Triuli. The runners who returned to Triuli were unfazed. They were not aggressive and the encounter was rather funny, says race organiser Bruner Poirier. More than 30 runners from eight countries and 5 Nepalis are taking part in the high altitude race from Annapurna Base Camp to Everest Base Camp. Billed as the "ultimate test" by organisers Himalaya Race Association and Mandala Trekking, the Himal Race kicks off the commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ascent of the world's highest mountain. Organisers say the runners, who have raced through major Himalayan passes, including Thorung La, Larkya La, Laubincingha and Chuguma La, should reach the foot of Everest by 25 November.

### US citizens warned

The US embassy hosted a meeting for American citizens on 19 October to discuss the murders of two embassy guards and the security situation in Nepal. The Maoists reportedly claimed responsibility for the killing of the two guards, Ramesh Manandhar and Deepak Pokhrel, and US investigations linked the murder weapons to Maoist sources, according to US embassy officials. The latest US State Department warning on Nepal, updated 4 November, advises that "the random, indiscriminate, and unpredictable nature" of Maoist violence "increases the likelihood that Americans in Nepal could be caught in the wrong place at the wrong time." The US Federal Bureau of Investigation is currently investigating the murders of Manandhar and Pokhrel with local authorities.

## HERE AND THERE

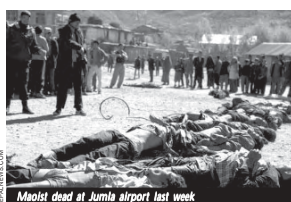
# The road less travelled

There are only two plausible outcomes to a close confrontation: the utter annihilation of one side and its point of view, or compromise. This is the situation in which Nepal finds itself right now. It's time to admit that those are the stark choices before the nation. The latest images of fierce fighting should only serve to hurry the ultimate decision that must be made by Nepal. And only that I mean all Nepalis, not just secret cabal sitting in ornate rooms or jungle glades. The next step to be taken must be with the consent of the people, who are, after all, sovereign.

Choose the first of those two courses of action, and it's more than obvious that even more violence, degradation and despair will follow—a time that makes the previous seven years seem tranquil by comparison. Choose the second and you enter into fearfully unknown territory with the risk of failure ever present. Look around at the world's other violence-prone hot spots and marvel at how long it's taken them to come to their personal fork in the road, their choice between a misty but somehow hopeful trail over a high pass to the unknown world of compromise, or a descent along all too familiar paths into a valley of fear and death.

Sri Lanka took nearly 25 years before bold steps, truly bold steps, were taken. The high trail, if you like, taken by Ranil Wickremesinghe's government earlier this year, was chosen through compromise—an election pitted his demand for peace and compromise with the Tamil Tigers against the stance of President Chandrika Kumaratunga party in favour of more war, more weapons deals, more destruction. So, Wickremesinghe has obviously made the right choice. Tourism is booming, so is foreign investment. South Asia's most advanced country is on the road to recovery and the somewhat longer journey towards ethnic harmony and peace.

How about South Africa? For years the privileged, white elite resisted calls for racial and economic justice from the black majority. Any who were aware of internal events in the 1980s will remember the obstinacy and arrogance of successive governments who would brute force against the



Maoist dead at Jumla airport last week

NEPAL NEWS.COM

## What will we do when we come to the fork in the road?

administrations in their own versions of Rukun, Rolga and Jigarkot. Clearly, Nepal's security chiefs would dearly love to emulate the successes of their Peruvian counterparts but there are immense dissimilarities between the two countries and their access to resources and intelligence information. So yes, force and guile did defeat the guerrilla tactics of the Shining Path. But the cost in lives was enormous. The damage to the Peruvian body politic is probably irreparable in our lifetime.

And then there are countries that resist choosing either path but fight on in a horrid dynamic of perpetual bloodshed. This, conceivably, could be our fate here in Nepal but it's not a choice made willingly or sensibly. It comes from ignoring reality and from the mistaken view that the status quo can somehow suffice. It comes from underestimating the gravity of the crisis or the abilities of opposing forces. Sudan, Africa's largest country, is in a long running civil war that has left 2 million people dead. Liberia in West Africa, home of the child militia who have chopped hands from 60,000 people in Liberia, Colombia, Latin America and elsewhere, now its cocaine-fueled killing field. Does anyone seriously want to add Nepal to this list?

Perhaps I should stop looking for inspiration and choices for this country from around the world, perhaps the globalisation of ideas is spurious, only personal money matters and we get precious little of that. Perhaps our situation and everything about this place is, as many insist, unique. But as a resident of this land of sorrows, I can only continue to plead for open minds, realistic points of view, and, ultimately peace. Let's take the high road. ♦







# The hush of centuries

You have seen the museum, here comes the book. Now you can take Patan Museum home with you.

KUNDA DIXIT

If you thought Patan Museum was great, here comes a book that is almost as exquisitely crafted as the real thing. You can tell both the book and the museum were a labour of love for the author and architect, Götz Hagmüller. Long-time valley resident and nearly-naturalised Nepali Austrian, he supervised the transformation of the Patan Museum from a crumbling building to a world class repository of religious artefacts.

Hagmüller has also taken a chapter to compare the dimensions and spaces of the Keshav Narayan Chowk complex with the Hapsburg-era National Library in his native Vienna, and the author tries to imagine the motivation of the Malla kings and the imperial Hapsburgs. He muses why people always sit on the benches outside Patan palace in the afternoon sun, and not in front of the buildings in Vienna.

Not that this Austrian connection to Nepal is anything new. In fact, it goes back to 1660 and the visit to the Valley by the Austrian Jesuit priest, Johannes Gruber. The traveller presented Pratap Malla with a telescope, a depiction of which can still be seen on a stone relief at Hanuman Dhoka where a child on the lap of the queen is peering through the eye-piece. Several centuries later, we saw the arrival of Austrians like Carl Pruscha and Eduard Sekler who cultivated a respect for the living heritage of Kathmandu Valley and shared a worry about its future.

Hagmüller is the last in this line of illustrious Austrians passing through Nepal. He is often asked why he has decided to live and work in Kathmandu Valley. One of his answers is "It is the semi-darkness between shadow and light that inspires."

And you can see that interplay of light and shadow in the sacred spaces of Kathmandu Valley, in the ancient palace complexes, and they have also been delicately woven into the restoration of the Keshav Narayan Chowk into a museum. When direct sunlight does come in, it is on the monochrome ochre of the brickwork and the tiles of the courtyards so that the ambience is bathed in a soothing pink afterglow.

The pages of Hagmüller's book walk us through these courtyards and corridors of the old palace, and we are told by Usha Ramani in one of the chapters of how we brush against "the hush of centuries".

Hagmüller was helped by curator and authority on Himalayan art, Mary Slusser, who has written several chapters on why the museum was designed as it was: the debate over light and dark, over spaces and how much intervention is possible while still being honest to textures and layers of history. The project's intention was to create a museum "within the cultural context of its collection as an integral aesthetic whole." And how marvelously they succeeded in doing that.

**Patan Museum**  
**The Transformation of a Royal Palace in Nepal**  
Götz Hagmüller  
Serindia Publications, 2002  
Language: English  
Price: Rs 3,800 (hardback in book stores)  
Rs 2,400 (soft cover only at Patan Museum)

**Patan Museum Guide**  
Patan Museum, 2002  
Lalitpur  
Price: Rs 1,000

**Patan Sangrahalaya**  
**EK Chinar**  
Patan Museum, 2002  
Lalitpur  
Price: Rs 300

This is a place like no other. In which no other museum in the world would you find visitors bowing to worship some of the figures on display? The elegant exhibits, the harmonious lines of the corridors blending with balconies and courtyards, the painstaking restoration of the outside, all make this museum a work of art in its own right. There are clever little touches like a wind chime that tinkles all the time over the entrance because a hidden electric fan is blowing at it, the cushioned sitting area near the windows from where Malla kings must have looked out at Krishna Mandir and their subjects, the gap between the ceiling and the wall in the display area to show the way in case the lights go off.

The display themselves are rare and priceless treasures of Hindu, Buddhist and Tantric religious objects, some of them items that were stolen from Kathmandu and recently returned, like the 12th century Uma Maheswar sculpture brought back from a museum in Berlin two years ago. And alongside human-crafted figures are those made by god: an ammonite fossil 60 million years old which is revered because the shiny petrified remains of the spiral pre-historic mollusc looks like Ganesh's trunk.

Götz Hagmüller's book, *Patan Museum: The Transformation of a Royal Palace in Nepal*, is not one of those covers usually sold in a museum gift shop. It is more. The pages tell the dramatic story of the restoration process with many before and after illustrations, guest contributions on Kathmandu Valley, on antique artefacts, and even on the architectural planning of the café inside the museum. It is not just a museum goer's companion. It is also a guide to the endangered heritage of Kathmandu Valley. The book's being launched on 1 December, and is being produced as part of the Patan Museum project with funding from the Austrian donors. There will be two editions, soft cover and hard cover. In addition, the Austrian government is donating 3,000 soft cover copies to the museum so the proceeds can be used by the museum. The hard cover edition is available internationally.

Available in the market already is a handy museum guidebook: *Patan Museum Guide*, which is a shortened version of the more expensive coffee-table book. Its Nepali translation, *Patan Sangrahalaya, Ek Chinar* will be launched on 1 December. Both are published by Patan Museum.

Hagmüller's passion for his subject shows in the books, his careful attention to detail from the brass crepe perdue museum sign to the planning of earthquake-resistant steel brackets so that it would be in harmony with the surrounding carved wooden pillars.

## The Valley's ancient heart still beats

RAMYATA LIMBU

Götz Hagmüller remembers driving around Ring Road in the early 1970s when it wasn't a traffic clogged artery, but a beautiful circuit of endless pebbly fields and poplars that rushed by in a blur of fresh air. Three decades later, the Valley is an assault on the 63-year-old Austrian conservation architect's aesthetic sense.

But unlike most others who just complain, Hagmüller decided to stay on and do something about it. It is the work of people like him that we have been able to save what is left of the unique palette of Kathmandu's urban space. Here and there, in the niches of the bahals and alleys of Patan and Bhaktapur you can still see Kathmandu's ancient heart.

And it is still beating.

Hagmüller came to Nepal 30 years ago to work for the German-funded project that transformed the ancient kingdom of Bhaktapur into a World Heritage Site. Over the next 12 years he worked with Nepali and German engineers to restore 200 monuments, and the project helped upgrade the city's water supply, sewage, planning and economy so that the conservation work would be sustainable.

Hagmüller's snail project was much smaller and much more focused: the restoration of Patan Museum. Today, the museum is a must-see for Nepali school students, tourists, local expats, visiting dignitaries and heads of state. A medieval palace, the courtyard and the buildings were painstakingly restored to their early glory, the interior completely redone into a modern

Museum keeper

As his eyes wander over clean glass-encased exhibits, Jai Krishna Shrestha is filled with a sense of pride. "We're small but we're unique. You'll find everything you wanted to know right here, very clearly and very easy to understand," says the museologist in charge of the city's best-kept museum.

Since he took over as director of Patan Museum when it opened in 1997, Shrestha has overseen the management, exhibitions, and the maintenance of this semi-autonomous, self-sustaining project. Till a year ago, the museum had an annual surplus of Rs100,000 from entry fees, sales from the museum shop, the restaurant, and publications. But earnings this year have gone down because of the tourism slump. Even so, Shrestha is happy with the response of visitors. Nothing deters dedicated culture enthusiasts, large groups of school children, and an increasing number of young Nepalis from visiting the museum. Last year 75,000 children from schools around Nepal visited. Besides being a repository for rare religious objects, the museum has a very strong educational role. Exhibits include an entire section on the fire perilous loss process and the reprocess method of metalcraft, a comparison of the various monuments in Kathmandu Valley, the spread of Buddhism in Asia and one on stupa architecture. The museum's strength is in its architecture, the display of exhibits, and the clear, precise bilingual labels to all exhibits by art historian Mary Slusser.

Shrestha has a degree in Nepal history, culture and archaeology, and has one complaint. The Lalitpur sub-metropolitan city recently decided to collect entry fees to Patan Durbar Square right next to the museum premises. "It's not a very good idea and discourages potential visitors who might want to visit the museum but feel that paying two entry fees just within a couple of feet is a waste. We've asked the city that if they must collect town entry fees, let them be further away from the museum."

Today, the museum is governed by a semi-governmental board and is self-sustaining through funds raised from entry fees, a restaurant, a museum shop and an exhibition hall. Hagmüller, who still pops in to see that the display shelves are dusted, the premises maintained and the toilets spotless, can't avoid a twinge of concern. "If the management gets corrupt and careless, then it's bound to collapse," he says.

Hagmüller's current project is also funded by the Austrian government and is the restoration of an urban area not from the Malla but the Rana period: the Keshav Mahal Gardens in Kathmandu. The gardens stand at the entrance of Thamel, the Valley's lucrative tourist strip, and the government had planned to tear down a neo-classical facade to erect a row of commercial shutter shops.

"If some of us hadn't walked by that day, it would have been gone," he recalls. The restoration is scheduled for completion next year, and Hagmüller who strongly believes in combining heritage conservation with the means to maintain it, hopes the entrance fees and a small on-site café will help in the upkeep.

Hagmüller's determination to restore and preserve Kathmandu's rich cultural and architectural heritage is shared by his inspiration to the changes brought about by modernity and unplanned development. Despite conservation efforts, illegal, ugly unplanned structures are still flooding zoning laws and building codes. While toothless and poorly-funded Archaeology Department looks on helplessly, "Kathmandu is looking more and more like Vladivostok," he says.

Conservationists like Hagmüller have long given up trying to save the whole of Kathmandu. It is too late for that now. And it is challenging enough just to save the old urban cores of the three towns, and the smaller villages in the valley. But even that will be quite an accomplishment.

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# Look, no opposition!

Across the world, there is a creeping authoritarianism among those who rule, coupled with a growing unrest of the ruled.

America's mid-term elections provide the latest example of an expanding phenomenon: democratic governments that face no effective challenge by an opposition. More precisely, this phenomenon entails the growing number of democratically elected political leaders who do not confront alternative leaders able to gather the disaffected into a viable opposition.

The phenomenon by no means confined to what once was the political right. Britain's Tony Blair, for example, has been almost as much the self-destruction of the opposition Conservative Party. For the third time in seven years the Tories are descending to their own leader, without any viable alternative leader for the party anywhere in sight.

In Germany, Gerhard Schröder's narrow victory is made secure by the intense soul-searching now underway among the defeated Christian Democratic opposition, as well as because of the moral collapse of the CDU's junior partner, the Free Democrats. Even more starkly unbalanced political landscapes can be found in France and Italy, where neither President Chirac nor Prime Minister Berlusconi need fear their challengers; indeed neither has a challenger to speak of.

Moreover, this situation is not confined to Europe. The self-destruction of the Congress Party has left Indian government unopposed by any political threat from outside its own ranks. In Russia, President Putin

besides his country's elected Duma like Gulliver over the Lilliputians. How and why has this happened? How, in particular, can this situation be explained in view of the fact that today's increasingly headstrong government are, for the most part, not towering leaders whose charisma shields them from opposition? One reason is the ongoing personalisation of politics that is taking place everywhere in the world.

Whether someone is charismatic or not, voters want a figurehead, and preferably one with celebrity value. This "celebrity" may be based on personality, as with Blair and Berlusconi, or on circumstance, as with Bush and Schröder and Putin, but it is part and parcel of the new politics of media relations.

Behind this, however, lies a deeper change to democracy. The end of ideology has been invoked so often that one hesitates to repeat the phrase. Still, it is a fact that in all cases of governments without effective opposition it is not easy to formulate an ideologically viable alternative policy to challenge the leaders.

Mr Putin is perhaps the most extreme in this regard, but Blair and Berlusconi are not far behind in possessing this "policy immunity". Their personal political qualities, in any case, not least with each other, whatever their traditional political affiliations may be. It is difficult to slip them out of their offshoring alternative policies in any field.

However, this condition may not last. In at least two respects, alternative policy options are



Voters in Indonesia

beginning to emerge, and they may one day dominate public debate. Domestically, there is an obvious difference between advocates of a "European model" of social and market capitalism and others who adhere to the neoliberal "Washington consensus" that Europeans associate with America's economic model. Internationally, the clash between unilateralists and multilateralists is not confined to the United States. Some see it, in present circumstances, as a clash between peace by negotiation and active, even pre-emptive intervention.

Then there are the great unspoken issues. Law and order is on the agenda of most governments, but many voters feel that it still does not address serious crime. Immigration is regarded as a deep threat by many people, so that denunciations are increasingly able to marshal resentment and grassroots support.

Thus, despite their political quiet, major cleavages between apparently unchallenged leaders and shifting popular moods may be gaining strength below the surface. Another takes the form of "opposition by media". This has become an issue in a number of countries, and it has led some governments

(as President Putin did recently) to try and curb freedom of expression. The tale they tell is one of the failure of democratic institutions as they now stand. This tale is further underlined by the growing role of the "street", of demonstration of public protest, of focusing on particular issues but really directed against unchallenged government.

There is a worrying combination of creeping authoritarianism among those who rule with a growing unrest of the ruled. As often the case, there is no patent medicine against this syndrome. However, the crying need for an effective institutional, usually parliamentary, opposition is evident. Governments without opposition pose a threat to democracy itself.

There is no need for domestic democracy at least as much as a readiness to attack whatever "forces of evil" may exist elsewhere in the world. ♦ (Project Syndicate)

(Ralf Dahrendorf, the author of numerous acclaimed books, is a member of the British House of Lords, a former Rector of the London School of Economics and also a former Warden of St. Anthony's College, Oxford)

## Indian enrolment up

WASHINGTON—India has become the largest source of foreign students in US universities and colleges after 11 September according to the annual report, "Open Doors" from the Institute of International Education (IIE). About 67,000 Indians were enrolled in US tertiary-level schools in the last academic year, up by 22 percent over the previous year, surpassing even China. The total number of foreign students grew to a record 583,000 last year, an increase of 6.4 percent over the 2000-2001 academic year. Overall, the most popular fields of study for foreign students last year were business and management, engineering, mathematics and computer science. About half of all foreign students specialised in those subjects. IIE reported declines in the enrolment of students from predominantly Muslim countries, mainly from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Indonesia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Less dramatic falls were reported for Kuwait, Malaysia, and Egypt. Slower processing of visa applications from most of these countries and greater concern about personal safety in the US may have affected enrolment. Institutions of higher education in Canada, the UK and Australia are likely to be the chief beneficiaries of this trend. (PS)

## Mum's the word

MONTREAL—Concordia University has banned all public discussion of the Middle East since a planned speech by former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in September was cancelled after clashes with police. Netanyahu's speech was cancelled after pro-Palestinian protesters, including some non-students, rushed the doors to the hall, clashing with riot police who used batons and pepper spray to repel them. The highly unusual ban on speeches, rallies, posters, exhibits and information tables about the Middle East has been controversial.

University officials are now going to court to block a talk on "Peace and Justice in the Middle East" by two politicians, MPs Svend Robinson and Libby Davies and well-known activist Judy Rebick, who were invited by the Concordia Student Union (CSU). All three are known supporters of the Palestinian struggle for a homeland. CSU President Salame Friesinger said they opposed the moratorium and believe the tensions between pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli supporters should be brought into the open.

Student demonstrations usually proceed peacefully at Canadian universities, but Concordia in downtown Montreal, at Canada's largest Jewish and Arab populations, has a reputation as one of the more radical institutions. (PS)



# Three cheers for the "Three Represents"



Members of retired China's President Jiang Zemin's theory of the "Three Represents" is life. Pundits scorn the theory, which says that the Communist Party should not only represent workers and peasants but also society's "advanced productive forces, culture and interests." They deem it wholly inadequate to China's mounting problems of inequality, corruption, and lack of democracy.

These critics are right to point out the theory's shortcomings, and the nauseating way that "Jiang Zemin Thought" is promulgated does remind of Mao's Cultural Revolution. But they miss the key point—"Three Represents" marks

by seeking to replace the dictatorship of the proletariat. Today China faces a choice between the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" and the "Three Represents." The choice is clear to me.

The big contribution of the "Three Represents" is, for the first time, a ruling communist party giving up—of its own volition—the idea of class warfare. The gist of the policy is protecting the interests of capitalists at the expense of others, but ensuring capitalists aren't automatically excluded from China's political process.

Of course, the status of capitalists will improve once the "Three Represents" is implemented. But it will not be the

Jiang Zemin's parting gift may offend some democratic sensibilities, but it's a trivial price to pay to make the future more secure and peaceful for a billion plus Chinese.

expense of China's working class. At present, private firms employ more of China's working class than state-owned enterprises (SOEs). With a fraction of the resources of the state-owned enterprises (SOEs), private firms employ much of the proletariat, produce goods demanded by proletarian consumers, and, because of their superior performance, safeguard the interests of the proletariat by actually paying their bank loans.

Why most pundits miss the fact that workers are protesting, not in the liberal provinces of Zhejiang and Guangdong, but in the socialist bastions of the northeast, is a mystery. Workers don't protest against menial jobs in capitalist

Viennas but against no jobs in socialist Shengjia. The government can't pay unemployed workers their pensions because socialism has bankrupted its finance. Indeed, in many Chinese regions, proletarian savers by actually paying the tax contribution of a single

private firm can exceed the combined tax revenue from all SOEs.

Moreover, describing China's moderate face as a "plutocracy" is grotesque. The term is commonly applied to Russia's oligarchs, who grew rich through political connections, corruption and shady business deals. Of course, some private entrepreneurs in China grew rich like that. Most, however, grew rich through hard work, innovation and efficiency.

Some of China's biggest private entrepreneurs come from extremely humble backgrounds. Many like the Hope Group in Sichuan, hail from China's impoverished interior and rural areas because in the 1980s and 1990s, the central government curtailed private sector activity in urban centres as to minimise competition with SOEs. The countryside was left with more freedom because the central government never thought that the entrepreneurs there could succeed.

Those who think that entrepreneurs got rich because of their political connections could do a drastic re-evaluation of their position based on the basis of outcomes rather than the processes that produced those outcomes. They fail to realise that cozy relations are often the result, not the cause, of business success. Those who succeed command respect and leverage with the government because of their business acumen and the fact that they beat their competitors. Only a few entrepreneurs "make it". Many, as everywhere else in the world, fail on the way.

Defectors of the "Three Represents" also have their ideas about democracy backward. They fail to see the dictatorship of the proletariat was actually a straightjacket on workers as everywhere else.

Only a vibrant private proletariat class can some day bring democracy to China. A market economy based on private property rights is an economic democracy, and only a matter of time before political democracy follows. This optimism is based on the idea that democracy comes from forcing the state to share power with those it controls directly. Capitalists control wealth and wealth creation. They are able to demand returns on their tax contributions and have their greater accountability from their governments.

The "Three Represents" may offend the sense and sensibility of some. But it is a trivial price to pay to end tomorrow China's future more secure and peaceful for millions of Chinese. ♦ (Project Syndicate)

(Yosheng Huang is an author and an Associate Professor at Harvard Business School)

## Change of guard

BEIJING—China's Communist Party, the world's largest political movement with 66 million members, is changing its image of a revolutionary party committed to violent class struggle in favour of the more mellowness representative party of the whole nation. After a week-long congress, the party announced policies embracing capitalists and elected a younger generation of leaders. The 59-year-old Hu Jintao, an enigmatic party apparition who, under the outgoing party chief Jiang Zemin was deputy general secretary and vice president, heads the new party leadership. The Politburo Standing Committee, China's highest ruling body, was expanded from seven to nine members, all men in their fifties and early sixties who are deeply committed to turning China into an aggressive, high-technology market economy. Despite a softened stance towards capitalists, the handpicked leaders pledged to adhere to Marxism, Leninism, Mao Zedong thought and Deng Xiaoping theory for "a long time to come". Outgoing Communist Party chief Jiang's "Theory of Three Represents" was praised for fostering reform. Hu described it as "the fine image of a party that advances with its times". Jiang retains a key position as chairman of the powerful Central Military Committee. (PS)

## Vajpayee takes a stand

NEW DELHI—Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, considered the moderate face in his pro-Hindu, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), moved to defuse a confrontation between fundamentalist groups in western Gujarat state and the Election Commission, a constitutional body. The crisis began after Chief Election Commissioner James Michael Lyngdoh ordered a ban on religious processions in Gujarat—the scene of a pogrom against the minority Muslim community earlier this year—in the run-up to state assembly elections scheduled for 12 September. Leaders of the BJP and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) condemned Lyngdoh as "anti-Hindu" and VHP leader Pravin Togadia announced the "Vijay Yatra" or victory procession would take place despite a state ban. This is the first time Vajpayee, in the nearly four years since he first became prime minister, has taken a firm stand against Hindu fundamentalist groups such as the VHP, which have provided the muscle and the ideology for his party. The VHP called for 6 December, six days before election day, to be observed as "victory day" marking the tenth anniversary of the demolition of the Babri Masjid. (PS)

## Tannery pollution

DHAKA—Hazaribag, a densely populated 25-hectare residential area at the western periphery of Dhaka, has become a dumping ground for the past half century for some 200 riverside tanneries that crowd the area. The government shelved plans to construct a central waste treatment plant in favour of a relocating the entire industrial complex outside the city perimeter, but no one knows how long this will take, or if it will actually happen. Experts say Hazaribag's future is killing the Buriganga river with chrome and other chemical residues, roasting oxygen in the river water. The corrugated iron sheets used as roofs and walls of the lower-middle class houses in the area are corroded by hydrogen sulphide and ammonia gases generated during tanning. Workers are directly exposed to health hazards from various chemicals, but factories rarely give them gloves, masks and boots. Even when they do, workers are careless about using them. Leather is one of Bangladesh's top export earners, bringing in \$250 million annually. Around 90 percent of the country's leather goods are processed in Hazaribag. Most factories are medium or small-scale ventures and lack the resources to invest in a waste treatment plant. (PS)

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# Brain drain is good for you

Societies that take in "brain drained" scientists and others benefit enormously. Innovative and entrepreneurial French Huguenots established mightily to the launch of the industrial Revolution in Britain. American universities benefited mightily from refugee German Jews fleeing Adolf Hitler. Today's Silicon Valley would not be what it is without its brilliant Chinese and Indian entrepreneurs.

The Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETH) has the highest number of Nobel Prize winners of any institution in the world, not least due to the fact that 35 percent of its faculty is foreign. From Corbida 1300 years ago to California today, the most intellectually stimulating places are crossroads for bright people from different cultures.

Societies that fail to attract foreign brains stagnate. Take Japan. Japan's homogeneity helped create the economic nationalism that drove the country for several decades, but today most of Japan's universities, research institutes and laboratories, think-tanks and elite publications, suffer from sclerotic inbreeding. Japan's current lethargy is due, in part, to the in-breeding legacy of Japanese intellectual life.

But despite the process impoverishes countries that export their "brains" it depends. Spain, for example, saw its best minds drained away for the centuries, notably following Flanders' victory in the Spanish Civil War. When Franco died in 1975, Spain's future path was not obvious, as evidenced by the attempted coup of February 1981.

Spain's transition from poor, dictatorial, marginalised state to a prosperous, thriving democracy with a reversal of the brain drain came as history's success stories. Indeed, many of Spain's best minds have returned home. More importantly, foreign brains now drain in Spain.

Historically, Ireland has been a big exporter of people. Poverty and the rigid social control of reactionary Roman Catholicism made the country inhospitable to intellectual life. To Britains and America's great advantage, because both received many bright Irish fleeing the stifling intellectual life of their homeland. As generally happens, the less intellectually endowed remained behind.



Yet, from Third World poverty levels two decades ago, Ireland has surpassed its former colonial master in GDP per capita. Becoming a committed European player, fostering foreign direct investment, including venture business, promoting financial services and IT resulted in a formidable brain drain reversal for Ireland.

After Chiang Kai-shek retreated to Taiwan in 1949 to form the Republic of China in opposition to Mao's People's Republic, he sought to maintain his dictatorial regime but was made to recognise the importance of building Taiwan's economy as a strength to the Republic. Thanks to generous US aid—Taiwan was for several decades second only to Israel in the amount of American aid received—Taiwan could send its best university students, especially engineers, to study abroad.

Now Taiwan has the highest proportion of engineers to total population in the world. Many Taiwanese engineers studied in prestigious American universities, with the result that in Boston people sometimes refer to MIT as "Made in Taiwan" rather than the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. As late as the 1980s, only two out of 10 Taiwanese who studied in the US returned home, due to its bleak social, intellectual and political environment.

They used to call MIT "Made in Taiwan". No more.

Taiwan did several things. By establishing science parks it provided a good environment for R&D, followed by deregulation. Last, but not least, it had a dictatorship to usher in democracy. In the 1990s, thanks to its booming brain, Taiwan became a high-tech powerhouse.

South Korea's story over the last 50 years parallels Taiwan's story. The military dictatorship established by Park Chung-hee in 1962 adopted an aggressive economic development policy, partly to contain North Korea. The Park government recognised the importance of investing in education, including primary, secondary and tertiary.

The problem for a dictator in building universities is that students are needed, and students often protest. Once Korea's students overthrew the dictatorship of Park's successor, Chung Doo-hwan, Korean scientists, engineers, economists and others, returned home en masse, bringing knowledge acquired in the US with them.

So a brain drain can be a good thing for recipient countries and also for brain exporting countries. Good, that is, if the drain is reversed one day. Most people everywhere prefer to stay home, or return home, rather than live in permanent exile. Kimchi is simply not as good as Los Angeles as Pusan, nor is chopstick as good as Manchester as is Hyderabad.

Brain drains put enormous pressure on brain exporting countries to improve their governance, their institutions, and their economic and social freedoms. Such improvements are the ultimate test of a successful society. ♦ (Project Syndicate)

(Jean-Pierre Lehmann is Professor of International Political Economy at IMU, Lausanne, Switzerland, and Founding Director of the Evian Group, a coalition for global liberal governance.)

## WANTED – some professional staffs

### Training for Employment (TIE)

A project of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) Implemented by Alliance Nepal, a private consulting firm

TIE project was developed three years ago with the aim to improve the training programmes of public and private training providers in order to enhance the employability and productivity of their graduates by narrowing the gap between the supply and the demand side of skilled people. TIE is a meso level project, which supports technical training providers in order to strengthen their institutional capacity, improve communication and linkage between the training providers and entrepreneurs, and to enhance the quality of training and other services.

Alliance Nepal/SDC is looking for some dedicated and professional staffs (Programme Officer level) for the implementation of the second phase of TIE (January 2003 to December 2006) in following professional areas and required performance parameters:

1. Institutional Development
2. Vocational Education and Training
3. Information management including networking
4. Financial services and private sector linkages
5. Labour Market

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- Post graduate degree in relevant discipline
- At least 5 years of working experience in any of the aforementioned areas
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Candidates are advised to visit the web-site [www.alliance.com.np](http://www.alliance.com.np) to know more about the project and before submitting the application latest by 6<sup>th</sup> December 2002.

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## ABOUT TOWN

## EVENTS

- ♦ **French Film Festival** organised by Alliance Française of Kathmandu, dedicated to the portrayal of women in French cinema. 28 November-1 December at the Russian Cultural Centre. 241163
- ♦ **Pass the Butter**, The Sterling Club HAMS presents a comedy by Eric Ide at the British Embassy Hall. 7PM, 5-7 December. Tickets: Rs 800 (including dinner). All proceeds to the AWON Scholarship Fund. 410583
- ♦ **AWON Holiday Bazaar** Gift items, children's games, food and drink. 10AM-5PM, 7 December. Entry: Rs 50, free for under 12s. Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu.
- ♦ **Summit Christmas Bazaar** Textiles, wood carvings, ceramics and barbeque. 4-9PM, 13 December. Free entry. Summit Hotel. 521810
- ♦ **Surya Golf 2002** Pokhara 22-23 November and 26-30 November Gokarna Forest Golf Resort

## MUSIC

- ♦ **Live music** by Catch 22, Friday nights at the 40,000 1/2 ft Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, Thamel. 414336
- ♦ **U2 live in Boston** with dinner and drinks at Moksh, Lalitpur. 22 November. 528703

## DRINKS

- ♦ **The Coffee Shop**, Hotel de l'Annapurna introduces a fine range of world class coffees from Kenya, Brazil and Colombia.
- ♦ **Paddy Foley's Irish Pub** A wide range of drinks and food. Live music on Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday nights. 416096.

## FOOD

- ♦ **A Taste of Africa** experience a night of music and food at La Soon. 7PM till late, 30 November. Dinner and dance. Rs 699 per person. 535290
- ♦ **Winter Specials** with Chef Kirolo. Smoked salmon soufflé, duck breast, hot mulled wine at Kirolo's of Kathmandu, Thamel. 250440
- ♦ **Italian Food Festival** with special Italian Wines. 11:30 AM- 4:30 PM from 16-24 November. Patan Museum Café and Summit Hotel. 526271
- ♦ **Vegetarian specialties and clay oven pizza** at Stupa view Restaurant & Terrace, Boudha. 460232
- ♦ **Barbecue** at the Terrace, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. Rs 550 plus taxes. 7PM-10PM. Complimentary entrance to Rox Bar. 491234
- ♦ **Taste of Beijing** Roast duck and other Chinese meat, fish and vegetarian delicacies. Beijing Roast Duck Restaurant, Brendra International Convention Centre. 468589
- ♦ **Tukhe Thakali Kitchen** Buckwheat, barley, bean, and dried meat specialties. Also brunch with porridge and pancakes, all raw material from Tukhe village. Darbar Marg.

## GETAWAYS

- ♦ **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
- ♦ **Birdwatching, short hikes at Bandipur**. Rs 1,850 per person with dinner and breakfast. Rs 925 per kid 5-14 years Shivapuri Heights Cottage, info@escapes2nepal.com, 370616
- ♦ **Writing Retreat** Full board package. Aesthetic living, innovative thinking, creative writing and nature at Park Village Resort, Boudhanikanta. 375280
- ♦ **Bardia Bonkers** Freshwater dolphins, giant tigers, elephants, safaris, rafting, evening cocktails, traditional food, junglebasecamp@yahoo.com.

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**NEPALI WEATHER** by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

Generally fair throughout the subcontinent, as you can see in this satellite picture taken on Thursday morning. However, there is inversion haze over the Indo-Gangetic plains which is a seasonal feature and likely to get worse as the minimum temperature plummets. We detect a faint westerly front over Afghanistan, but it seems to be moving north-eastwards towards the Pamirs. A low pressure area moving into the high plateau may bring precipitation next weekend. For the valley, look for chilly mornings with mist, and afternoons with weak sunshine.

**KATHMANDU VALLEY**

Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu
22/07	21/08	23/07	22/08	21/09

## BOOKWORM



**Journeys: an Anthology** Robyn Davidson, ed  
Picador India, 2002  
Rs 472  
Journeys departs from the predictable routes of the travel genre to explore varied terrain. We encounter an astonishing assortment of people—at leisure, at war, in grand luxury and great discomfort, running away and coming home. Contributors include Simone de Beauvoir, Elizabeth David and Vincent van Gogh.

**Women and Governance: Re-imagining the State from a Gender Perspective (Nepal Chapter)** Indira Shrestha, Krishna Hazbhetu, Shrii Shakil, 2002  
Rs 250

The authors discuss how relations between the state and women have changed at historical junctures. A vital issue is whether the socio-cultural milieu allows women to be politically mobile. Their feminist stance questions the position of women to use opportunities granted by a liberal political atmosphere.



**The New Revelations: A Conversation with God** Neale Donald Walsch  
Hodder and Soughton, 2002  
Rs 440  
Seventh in the Conversations with God series, Walsch offers solutions to the aggression and dogma troubling the world. He attempts to understand the crisis facing the world and optimistically teaches change is possible, not through political or economic means, but by opting for the Five Steps to Peace.

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**M. Night Shyamalan** is the "Master of Suspense" for a whole new generation. Signs, his latest movie, succeeds in bringing us an old-fashioned suspense thriller, a refreshing detour into the twilight zone, in an era when special effects is king. Graham Hess (Mel Gibson) is a preacher turned farmer, a single parent raising two children after the death of his wife. One morning, the family awakes to spherical symbols moved into their crops. Is it a prank, a sign from god or circle-happy aliens? Hess is compelled to investigate, changing the lives of his brother (Joaquin Phoenix) and the children (Rory Culkin and Abigail Breslin) forever.

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Sun-Fri	2000-2030	chfs sVf - :d;fdos /Jf llof ax
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Sat	1930-2030	cfrf/ /Jf /f - e[6rf /Jf 74 : xfo[
Sat	2000-2030	s6glts d-r

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# We all make each other

## Our culture's riches and penury



Kedar Man Yonhiti by Ann Hunkins and two Kathmandu vignettes by Wayne Antzitz

and refinement they have (so far) let us be.

What was revolution? What did it look like? How would it come? And once it came, where would it stay? What would it eat?... Unlike always explained, without any irritation, as such as he could: "See, after the revolution there'll be democracy in our country. And after democracy everyone will get to study, to learn how to read and write. Everyone will be able to eat, sharing their portions with each other. No one will stay hungry, no one will die helplessly because they can't buy medicine". Ramesh Vikal, "Gyane Under"

If we were to be political, we could say that Antzitz is giving representation to the subaltern; his body of work poses a challenge to our body politic. The day laborer poses a challenge to the art lover, the blue collar worker, the intellectual. If we were to be more personal, we could say that Antzitz is encouraging us to maintain a fearless view onto ourselves and our society. Looking straight at weathered hands and cracked heels, sun-stained faces and work-stunted bodies could open our hearts if we let it. We could leave the gallery wanting to restore dignity to those we have cast off.

The subjects of Ann Hunkins' photographs, by contrast, include some of the most distinguished personalities of Nepal: writers and poets, playwrights and novelists, women of letters, Daulat Bikram Bista, Dev Kumari Thapa, Banira



Giri, Manju Kanchuli, Dhruva Sapkota: these are the men and women entrusted to speak for us all. The streets which are exhausted having taken many children to school having left many sons to border trenches having returned many fathers from their offices yes, all these streets I carry on my shoulders Barag Kanki, "The Mountain"

Their literature captures the perplexity of our times, the dispossessed who haunt us, our

moments of disappointment and deliverance. Hunkins is intimate and imaginative in the way she portrays each writer, capturing them at moments garulous, reflective, interior or watchful. Her portraits highlight the individuality of each person, and remind us how lucky we are to have these writers amid us, enriching our times with their work.

What complex worlds reside in each of these writers—live repositories of our culture? And what complex worlds reside in the dispossessed who live in Kathmandu's public places—also live repositories of our culture?

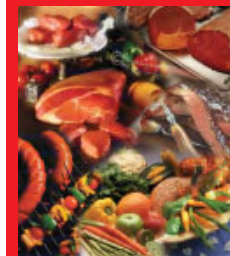
By exhibiting Antzitz's and Hunkins' photographs side by side, Siddhartha Art Gallery allows us to celebrate our contemporary culture's riches and to account for its penury.

Things are so far gone now—with each new birth a martyr is born a funeral march is born a shroud is born You're seeing it this, aren't you? Dinesh Adhikari, "The Other Side to Belief"

Review by Manjushree Thapa

(Wayne Antzitz's "Rule of Way" and Ann Hunkins' "Witness Seen" are on display at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal, all 4 December. Antzitz and Hunkins will give a poetry reading at the gallery on Sunday, 24 November, at 4 PM.)

## Sunday Lunch at Rox Restaurant



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## Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

## Two wheels good, four wheels bad

Like most other freedom-loving Nepalis, this scribe and other like-minded pharisees were busy last week voluntarily and totally out of our own free will observing a three day pen-down strike which thankfully enabled me to wriggle out of writing this column. (Half Fooled you into thinking I'd emigrated to New Zealand, didn't I?)

For this, we owe a debt of gratitude to the Organisers. Let's hear a round of applause, ladies and gentlemen, for the Organisers.

So, instead of sitting around uselessly trying to bring out a newspaper, we zoomed around the empty streets in motorcycles with license plates covered by signs that said: "Off To My In-laws To Feast On Poleko Masu And Beer And Play Marriage For Three Straight Days, And If You Have Any Problems With That, Well, You Can Go Stuff It." Or words to that effect.

This is the beauty of living in a democracy: we can get away with saying anything ridiculous that comes to our minds, even if it makes absolutely no sense at all. And everyone has a fundamental right to declare a three-day national holiday just for the heck of it, and as a carefree and freedom-loving people there is nothing we like better than to actually have to do no work.

But, we must remind readers that democracy is facing grave threats. There are forces right here amidst us who wanted to take away our basic human right to go around the city using improvised explosive devices to blow up garbage dumps every morning. That is why we at the weekly *Red Corpse* (motto: "The pen is mightier than the penknife.") approached Comrade

Carbuncle for an interview so he could elucidate on some of the finer points of the forthcoming indefinite holiday season.

Q: Mr Comrade, sir, you have said that last week's three-day holiday was a grand success. Would you care to elaborate?

A: First of all, let me use this opportunity to thank the *Red Corpse* for giving me a chance to hold forth on the party line, and also greet all readers on the 88th anniversary of the Great October Proletarian Revolution.

What was the question, again?

Q: Never mind, what exactly are the rules of a bunne?

A: It's very simple: two wheels good, four wheels bad.

Q: How about three wheels?

A: Both good and bad. Anything that has three wheels, and has wings is OK. Everything else is not OK.

Q: How about rollerblades?

A: Only if you are wearing a helmet and elbow guards.

Q: I see. And is it all right to only half-open a shop?

A: That's right, you can let customers come in through the back door, or keep the shutter half open. Just don't push it all the way up.

Q: And can I take a sick relative to the hospital on a mobike?

A: Sure. Just cover your license plate with a sign that says you are going to your in-laws to feast on poleko masu and beer and play marriage indefinitely, and don't let the cops catch you.

Q: Thank you, Comrade Carbuncle, and have a nice future.

A: You too. ♦



## NEPALI SOCIETY

## Bold and beautiful

Even if you are not a coach-potato (or maybe because you are) you will be glued to the television set when Sumitra Kayastha comes on screen. Her programme, *Jeevan Ek Rang Anek* (Life's different shades) profiles interesting personalities. So, for a change, we thought we'd profile her.

As anyone who has watched Jeevan will tell you, Sumitra is not just a pretty face. As anchor she has the knack of bringing out the best in every person selected for the interview. And, would you believe it, Sumitra has never been

formally trained in this line of work?

Married at the age of 15 when she was a student in high school, Sumitra worked hard to pursue her education as well as build her career. Five years ago, her daughters encouraged her to take part in the Mrs Nepal contest, a beauty show with difference. Thanks to her confidence and charm, the crown was soon on her head. Since then, as they say, there has been no looking back.

She dabbled in radio for a bit, but Sumitra is a personality naturally suited for television, and she soon migrated to audio-visual.

Jeevan delves into various aspects of the lives of her interviewees: their struggle, their effort to adapt, fit in, or rebel as the case may be. What keeps her going is the tremendous feedback from her viewers: from people who are encouraged, enthused and inspired by her and the people she interviews.

Sumitra wants to try new things, and she is coming up soon with another program, *Prasna Chinha* (Question Mark) also on Channel Nepal which will mainly focus on gender issues.

"It's basically going to be a talk show to discuss social discrimination against women in our society," she said. Is she going to interview men, too? "Sure," she says, "it is the men who need more to be sensibilised."



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