Early one year after he wrested power away from an elected prime minister, King Gyanendra is now poised to discuss a truce with the political parties. The king returned to Nepal this week after nearly 17 days to find his country again on the brink of war, and his subjects fearful and apprehensive about the future. The Nepali public is afraid that the Maoists are about to demonstrate their military dexterity by unleashing a new round of slaughter. Recent bombings and assassinations in the capital are seen as a sign of things to come.

The king is expected to use the next week to get back up to speed, while the parties take a rest from their vigorous defiance of a governmental ban on assembly. But next week, the king is expected to meet political leaders in ‘an’ party’ diplomacy to find common ground. The main purpose of such rapprochement will be to send the Maoists the message that constitutional forces are now united.

If the Maoists are truly serious about a political solution, this new unity will help in reaching a concrete agreement in any future talks to end the insurgency. If they are not, it will prove that the Maoists really want a military settlement, and the government can respond accordingly. It is likely that the Maoists will try to drive a wedge between the parties and the king in the coming weeks. As in the past, however, it will not be easy for the parties to reach an agreement on the formation of a new government, and the king may also find their proposal unsatisfactory. Giri Prasad Koirala’s demand that parliament be reinstated will not be easily acceptable to the king, since it will make Koirala and his Congress too powerful for the palace’s liking.

The king may therefore listen more to the UML, RPP, and the Dahal Congress. The UML may have gone along with the Congress to fight “terrorism”, but it would prefer to have an all-party government under its own leadership. Koirala agreed to endorse Madhav Kumar Nagp as prime minister in return for political favours, but that promise may now have lapsed. Being so close to power, it is also likely that the parties will start bickering again and the palace could try to take advantage of this. However, the situation has changed since the last time the king tried to find a suitable premier: there is unprecedented international pressure on the parties and palace to patch up. Both have realised that they can’t deal with the Maoists alone.

In addition, there has been a shift in the American position from unqualified support for the king’s hawkish actions to a position that is closer to the Indian stance on accommodation between the parties and the king. This new convergence has yielded a ‘roadmap’ that is still a bit murky. But after next week’s meetings it may clear up sufficiently for us to see the way ahead.

Rajendra Dahal is the editor of Himal Khabarpatrika.

Involve Maoists in development?

NABIN SINGH KHADKA

To address the underlying causes of the insurgency, the government needs to deliver development to remote villages. But many of them are under control of the Maoists, whom the government has once more declared terrorists. Now, the government is under pressure from some of Nepal’s donors, who support 75 percent of the development budget, to involve Maoists in grassroots projects. Government ministers have said privately that they find the idea absurd. At meetings with donors on Wednesday and Thursday, the government had a tough time convincing them the situation was under control and it was capable of taking development to the people. Most foreign-funded aid projects have been disrupted, and Nepal’s 30 year achievements in child health, literacy, water supply and forestry are seriously threatened. Local bodies have been without elected leaders for more than a year, and most VDC secretaries have fled to the safety of district headquarters after the ceasefire collapsed 27 August. Much bilateral aid has been frozen pending the reinstatement of VDCs and DOCs.

The government has proposed forming all-party village committees, and donors suggest Maoists could be included in them. “Let an all-party or cross-party committee be the solution,” says Danish Charge d’Affaires Gert Minecke. “In their stronghold areas, the rebels could be included, and elsewhere it might not be necessary.”

The government says yes, but political parties aren’t so keen.

Rudger Wenk of the European Commission delegation agrees. “If the idea stops violence, why not bring in the Maoists as well?” Ironically, the Maoists have said they don’t think much of the idea, stressing their priority is the revolution. Yet, some donors believe if Maoist-supporters in villages are brought on board—even by camouflaging them as community user groups—it could pave the way to resume local development work.

Multilateral donor agencies echo the same message. “Everyone should be involved to make the development projects move ahead,” says the new AGB’s Country Director Sultan Hafeez Rahman, citing the example of Sri Lanka where the Tamil Tigers were involved in project implementation. “The idea is to broaden participation so the people benefit,” Sultan said. Wednesday’s consultation meeting focused on the World Bank’s $70 million Poverty Reduction Strategy Credit, and the IMF’s $70 million Poverty Reduction Growth Facility for three years.

There has been an escalation of violence while the missions from Washington are in town, and government officials are jittery. But Shankar Sharma of the National Planning Commission feels team members are satisfied. “If they are positive, the other donors will be too,” Sharma said. The government has tried to convince donors its project budget will not be diverted to security. But budgetary support is different, and some donors are worried their poverty-reduction support could become “fungible.”
live and let live

I will soon be a year since an elected prime minister was sacked and King Gyanendra took over the reins of power. There were questions about the constitutionality of that move, but the majority of people gave their king the benefit of the doubt last October because he vowed to restore peace. His handpicked government kept that promise, and by January a trust and peace talks were declared, justifying the royal move in the public eye.

Cast adrift, the political parties took nearly two months to muster enough unity and energy to counter the king’s move, and even then it has been a relatively restrained agitation. The party leaders were unable to completely convince Nepalis that their anti-regression campaign was about restoring democracy and not about returning to Singh Darbar. And except for one Congress senior, the party that was in power for the longest period since 1990 showed scant remorse for squandering our hard-earned freedom.

If the January ceasefire legitimised the king’s October Fourth move, the breakdown of the truce three weeks ago and the dread of full-scale violence is now forcing a royal rethink. The same message is coming from around loud and clear from the international community: there is no other recourse than for the palace and the parties to live and let live.

But it really needn’t need foreign ambassadors to tell us what has been painfully obvious: forces guided by the constitution must be on the side, otherwise it will be too late to side that doesn’t believe in it. A parliamentary democracy within a reformed constitution governed by a compromise acceptable to all. The trouble is that all three sides so far want a winner-takes-all format, and more has been taken than offered.

This layered fight needs a sequenced solution, and the first order of business is to find an accommodation between the palace and the parties. All indications are that the king has retained some new ideas, and with Mars now safely retrograde, signs are good that an accord can be reached. There are all kinds of options before the king can go back to pre-22 May 2005 and restate parliament, to pre-4 October 2000 and give Sher Bahadur Deuba his back, to pre-30 May 2003 and accept Madhav Kumar Nepal who was the candidate endorsed by the five party alliance to succeed Lekhendra Bahadur Chand or go back to 11 October 2002 and restart the game of musical chairs.

None of these options is going to resolve the Maoist problem overnight. But the king must choose the one that will hand power back to the peoples’ representatives. It is in his self-interest to re-extend the buffer that the monarchy needs to protect itself from the forces that want to overthrow it.

Despite their bravado and capacity to saw mangeh, the leaders of the Maoist movement know that this is not a war that will be easily won. They agreed to the truce in January to try to see if they could get what they wanted through negotiation.

Negotiators drift clot from the threat of military prowess in the field, and the talks broke down on 25 August because the Maoists realised that the government side hadn’t been softened enough. They are now taking the violence up a notch by upping the ante.

The only alternative is to fight until there is no Nepal left.

Shooting messengers

Those who live in mortal fear of the truth see journalists as enemies.

D aniel Pearl, Maan Dara, Gyanendra Khadka. All journalists killed in the line of duty. In an age when business, celebrity and international event reporting have become the three main areas of these, these journalists stuck to what a hard-nosed hack is supposed to do: inform the public honestly and fairly. Those who live in mortal fear of truth eliminated them. Perhaps it has something to do with the risks involved in being an independent professional that the number of journalists willing to be embedded with power is on the rise. The propagation of superficial, sterile event reporting that the nameplate, “You decide” is more rewarding than trying to do the hard work of investigating the fomosa web media feeds that observing our own doing down fact is enough, and someone else should explain and interpret.

Explaining and interpreting is getting to be dangerous business. And the disincentives for free, fair and fearless reporting are increasingly frightening.

The market, the media and the military are now very much united. The media has to be wary of these days. Militants of every hue, driven by a stubborn doctrine of the rightfulness of their aims, are ready to wage dangerous enemies of the press.

Daniel Pearl was a Jewish American reporter with the Asia Wall Street Journal who had a deep understanding of the grievances that drove down. His assassins were right-wing, pro-democracy, anti-communist, Christian. Gyanendra Khadka (pic. inset) was a reporter in the Sangh Sindhu pokharp who was taken away from a school meeting this weekend, tied to a volleyball pole and shot.

Many in Kathmandu said: Gyanendra, the king; ‘What are you playing tricks with your history?’ and commoners bearing royal names have to learn to live with violence. Gyanendra Khadka was a commoner with an uncommon touch. He was a teacher in a local school and a reporter for the state-run RSS news agency in Madhresh. His colleagues considered him a fearless reporter, and it says something about the state of fear that gripped the journalism profession that none of them are now willing to stand by their memory when blatant attempts are being made to tarnish his reputation.

As usual, the Maoists accused Khadka of being an informer. Just like they did after killing scores of others such as trade union leaders, human rights workers, or other citizens working to improve the lives of their communities. Even if there was some truth in the allegations it was no occasion to kill him so mercilessly. Fellow journalists, who were so forthcoming in censoring the security forces for the deaths of Krishna Sen last year, haven’t been a vocal in denouncing this murderer.

Khadka’s complicity in helping the army are circumstantial—even the Maoists haven’t suggested that he fought against the king or carried a weapon, or was a member of the Maoist politburo, an activist of violent politics and the chief-of-police of the armed insurgents. Despite all that, Sen didn’t deserve to die. And the cold-blooded murder of Khadka is no less unmanly.

When it comes to persecuting journalists, however, the state cannot claim the moral high ground. A year ago, a journalist supposed to have been sympathetic to the Maoist cause was made to disappear from Jalibire in Sindhupokharp. The Maoists have killed one journalist each in Kalku and Morang. Nobody knows why Idwors Budhanlosi (Kanchan Piyarkh), Navarg Sharmar or Ambika Timilina were killed.

A journalist’s ID doesn’t confer immunity on the person who holds it on behalf of the public. For the powers that be, it has always been mightier than the pen. Journalists are killed, and the rest of us just shed silent tears and remember Bhupi Sherchan’s words:

“O, the dead departed, try living, the ordeal of it.”

LETTERS

LIVE AND LET LIVE

I will soon be a year since an elected prime minister was sacked and King Gyanendra took over the reins of power. There were questions about the constitutionality of that move, but the majority of people gave their king the benefit of the doubt last October because he vowed to restore peace. His handpicked government kept that promise, and by January a trust and peace talks were declared, justifying the royal move in the public eye.

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If the January ceasefire legitimised the king’s October Fourth move, the breakdown of the truce three weeks ago and the dread of full-scale violence is now forcing a royal rethink. The same message is coming from around loud and clear from the international community: there is no other recourse than for the palace and the parties to live and let live.

But it really needn’t need foreign ambassadors to tell us what has been painfully obvious: forces guided by the constitution must be on the side, otherwise it will be too late to side that doesn’t believe in it. A parliamentary democracy within a reformed constitution governed by a compromise acceptable to all. The trouble is that all three sides so far want a winner-takes-all format, and more has been taken than offered.

This layered fight needs a sequenced solution, and the first order of business is to find an accommodation between the palace and the parties. All indications are that the king has retained some new ideas, and with Mars now safely retrograde, signs are good that an accord can be reached. There are all kinds of options before the king can go back to pre-22 May 2005 and restate parliament, to pre-4 October 2000 and give Sher Bahadur Deuba his back, to pre-30 May 2003 and accept Madhav Kumar Nepal who was the candidate endorsed by the five party alliance to succeed Lekhendra Bahadur Chand or go back to 11 October 2002 and restart the game of musical chairs.

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The only alternative is to fight until there is no Nepal left.
The ceasefire is off, the country is back at war. We seem to have come full circle to 23 November 2001 when the first truce was unilaterally broken by the Maoists after three rounds of fruitless negotiations.

At that time the Maoists took the war onto a new level by attacking the army base at Chachka, inflicting huge losses. This time, they have already given us an hint of what lies in store: a campaign of assassinations and bomb attacks right here in the capital, designed to spread panic and fear. Unlike previously, most of the ambushes and raids on police stations in the past two weeks have taken place in daylight, indicating a greater confidence among the Maoists about their ability to make their getaway and melt back into the population. The blanks and assassinations of the past weeks may be a warm-up exercise for the big one expected as precursors to the three day national strike on 18-20 September.

Meanwhile, in the midst of the ceasefire frontal battles continue, with the army even using helicopters for airborne attacks on Maoist positions. Although the army’s intelligence about Maoist hideouts and movements seems to have improved, the assassination of its senior psywar counter-insurgency expert in Kathmandu shows that it is still deficient. Curiously, the Maoists appear to be holding back from launching a full scale offensive on military targets in the Kathmandu Valley. This could be because they are waiting for the political parties—agitation to be over, or it could be that they feel their present strategy of high level assassinations, national strikes and terror tactics will suffice in softening the hardline stance of the army on the issue of a constituent assembly to craft a new constitution.

When they agreed to a truce in January, the Maoists declared that they had achieved a “strategic equilibrium” with the army. For the sake of showing that the revolution is progressing on track, they now have to prove that they are on a “strategic offensive”. In Maoist parlance, the strategic offensive stage precedes military victory. Paradoxically, however, the Maoist leadership has concluded that for internal and external reasons, this is a militarily unnecessary war. It therefore considers attaining the constituent assembly-objective through talks as its primary goal at present.

The Maoist leadership’s rationale for going back to war was to put additional pressure on the army-palace axis; it must therefore have dedicated that pressure was not high enough during the talks. But the Maoists now need to reconcile the contradiction between strategic offensive in the military arena and victory through negotiations for a constituent assembly in the political arena.

As usual, as with all the goings-on in Kathmandu, international geopolitics casts a long shadow. The Maoist leadership's 'divide the enemy and take the war onto a new level' move is about to launch an urban guerrilla war on Lima. The Maoists are still playing the three-pronged battle for state power is deadlocked because each seeks the help of the other to isolate the third, but none can agree on the terms because everyone wants to gain overall control over the others. There are few signs of a rapprochement or even a two-way agreement between any of the factions. The anti-monarchist Maoists and the king appear to have irreconcilable differences, but the king and the political party leadership could strike an accord if only the king gave the green light and agreed to bring the parties back within a constitutional framework.

The Maoists want a safe landing, but they can’t agree to anything less than a constituent assembly since otherwise they will find it hard to explain to their own cadre what all the fighting was for. Both sides realise that there may be a military victory in this conflict, but it will leave the country in such ruin that it won’t matter who won.

Puskar Gautam is a political analyst. This comment was translated from his Nepali original.

**COMMENT**

**Offensive strategy**

This war will leave the country in such ruin, it won't matter who won.

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Laotians who were killed. Never mind the social destruction. That war was beaten by such means. Nonetheless, many, many members of Eisenhower’s ostensibly left of centre administrations, headed by John F Kennedy and largely unheeded at the time and the architects of permanent war prevailed and democracy. Bigger by far, the president privately believed, than the permanent war footing—a situation emulated by many of her allies, discredited reasoning to Iraq, has been used to put the United States on a state of ‘permanent war’ which has been the situation in the United States and other Western societies since the Al Qaeda attacks of 11 September, 2001. President Bush’s war on terror, lately extended by now—instituting the country’s lapse or what some fear is potentially the country’s uniqueness that should ever worry us, however menacing it may be that the local elite and opinion formers seem unable to learn from the mistakes of others. No, it’s the way that the downward spiral in the kingdom bears far too much resemblance to the pace of life elsewhere, with few of the other mitigating and compensating elements.

**NATION**

**12 - 18 SEPTEMBER 2003**

**Nepal Times #162**

**A people’s hospital**

It took the determination of one man to build Nepal’s best-run community hospital.

Once a year, Shrestha spends two weeks in Austria to raise funds through lectures and programs. He is a popular draw on the European medical speaking circuit and his life has even been the subject of documentary films in Austria, Germany, France, Switzerland, Holland and Luxembourg. A few young German students were so inspired by his story that they raised about 15,000 euros last year from cycling from Germany to Beijing and Kathmandu.

For those of us who are used to dirty, smelly and dark hospitals, Dhulikhel Hospital is literally a breath of fresh air. It is bright, airy, and spotlessly clean. Patients who cannot read are asked to follow coloured strips of black, yellow and red paths for their various treatments.

**HERE AND THERE**

by **DANIEL LAK**

In a state of permanent war

It’s not Nepal’s uniqueness that should ever worry us, however menacing it may be that the local elite and opinion formers seem unable to learn from the mistakes of others. No, it’s the way that the downward spiral in the kingdom bears far too much resemblance to the pace of life elsewhere, with few of the other mitigating and compensating elements.

Consider for example what some fear is potentially the country’s uniqueness that should ever worry us, however menacing it may be that the local elite and opinion formers seem unable to learn from the mistakes of others. No, it’s the way that the downward spiral in the kingdom bears far too much resemblance to the pace of life elsewhere, with few of the other mitigating and compensating elements.

Consider for example what some fear is potentially the country’s uniqueness that should ever worry us, however menacing it may be that the local elite and opinion formers seem unable to learn from the mistakes of others. No, it’s the way that the downward spiral in the kingdom bears far too much resemblance to the pace of life elsewhere, with few of the other mitigating and compensating elements.
Condemnation

Amnesty International has condemned Monday’s series of explosions in Kathmandu Valley that left one schoolboy dead and injured more than a dozen others. In its press statement, the London-based human rights organisation said that the timing and places chosen for the blasts could have resulted into more civilian casualties. ‘Given the bombs went off between 9 and 10:30 in the morning—just as offices were opening—we are concerned that these bombings were indiscriminate and likely to kill or injure civilians. We question whether sufficient measures had been taken to prevent such casualties,” it said. The explosions happened at six government offices in Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur. Amnesty also condemned the killing of a journalist and teacher, Gyaneendra Khadka, in Sindhupalchok.

Irrigation

Under intense donor pressure, the government has finally implemented the new irrigation policy that has three main components:
1. To declare irrigation areas in the country. The Department of Irrigation says of the around 1.8 million hectares irrigable land, only one million has been irrigated, with 40 percent of the land receiving year round irrigation. The National Water Plan’s draft shows that only 700,000 hectares of land was irrigated in 2001.
2. The second, which has drawn much controversy, is the issue of subsidies. The new policy has done away with subsidies but farmers believe the move will adversely affect Nepal’s agro-production. Tarai consumers are complaining that competitions from India’s Uttar Pradesh and Bihar will flood the market with cheaper produce since the Indian government subsidises irrigation facilities for its farmers.
3. The third point of the policy is the prior-rights of water use. This means upstream users of water are guaranteed that they will get their fair share before water is channelled downstream.

Exit Karcher, enter Kahane

Matthew Kahane is the new UN Resident Humanitarian Coordinator for Nepal, replacing Henning Karcher who has retired. Kahane presented his credentials to Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa this week. From March 2000 until recently, Kahane served as UN Resident Humanitarian Coordinator in Tajikistan and has served with UNDP in Sri Lanka.

Ring for peace

A newly-formed coalition of activists ‘Children as Zone of Peace’ has announced a ‘Ring for Peace’ program (Ghati ko Ghati) on International Peace Day, 21 September. For two minutes, the whole country will echo with the sound of bells. As Radio Nepal broadcasts the noon peals of Ghanta Ghar, everyone will start to ring temple bells, doorbells, whistles, car and motorcycle horns and even bang their pans. “It is a symbolic wake-up call to urge the warring sides to refrain from involving children in conflict,” says the coalition. The call came on a week that at least four children were killed in bomb blasts or in crossfire. The UN has declared 2001-2010 as the international decade for a culture of peace and non-violence for children.

Top boss award

A 12-member board of advisors for ‘The Boss Top 10 Awards’ met last week and decided on the format for the financial and qualitative analysis of participants in the top 10 awards for Nepal businesses and entrepreneurship. The Boss magazine, which is sponsoring the awards, has sent the application form to Nepali companies, and says there has been a good response so far. Qualitative analysis and interviews will start this week.

DOMESTIC BRIEFS

Irrigation

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Immigration

Visas for visits. Austria’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Alois Mock reached Kathmandu on Monday to show around inter-Alumni of Sri Lanka and Kathmandu-based foreign dignitaries in Nepal to seek ways to bring around foreign dignitaries to showcase that the government has finally implemented the new irrigation policy that has three main components:

Domestic briefs

1. To declare irrigation areas in the country. The Department of Irrigation says of the around 1.8 million hectares irrigable land, only one million has been irrigated, with 40 percent of the land receiving year round irrigation. The National Water Plan’s draft shows that only 700,000 hectares of land was irrigated in 2001.

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Durga Rajbansi lives in constant fear of men. Ever since two years ago, when she left her home in Dhulikhel village, Nejpur, to come to Kathmandu in search of a job, she has been victimised by them. She doesn’t trust them anymore.

Durga broke down and cried many times when we talk to her, and hugs her infant son protectively as she speaks in a low voice about the cruelty she has seen in her short life.

Her sister and brother-in-law found Durga job in a Rostow carpet factory. The owner promised free meals, a place to stay and Rs 20 for every kilo of wool she spun.

Some days, Durga worked 21 hours from 4-1 AM, determined to quickly earn enough money so that she could go back home with her savings. But the job was a trap.

Six months last, Durga had earned Rs 15,000 but the carpet factory owner refused to pay her. At Daudi year before last, she asked the owner for a few hundred rupees to buy new clothes. But he said it was Durga who owed him Rs 1,200 for food and lodging.

She had no money, and was then locked up in a dirty room and told she would not be released until she paid up. “It was worse than a prison,” Durga recalled. “I didn’t have any choice but to go with Hari.”

A month later, they married at Dakshinkali. “I thought my life would get better. I hoped that this was when her life would get better.”

Within a week of her delivery, Durga found Hari was seeing another woman. When she confronted him, he beat her up,icioning her to drink water. Durga found out Hari was seeing another woman.

While she was drinking, he knocked on her door saying he had to discuss something important. As soon as she opened the door, a group of six or seven men came in and raped her.

The villagers heard her screams and came to investigate, but were told by the owner she was a prostitute who lured men to her room when her husband was away. A month later, Hari turned her out and started treating her well. He even took the rape case up and started treating her well. She was left at the mercy of the owner.

One night, while she was sleeping, Hari got angry and screamed, “I’m now at peace, I don’t trust them anymore. I’m now at peace, I don’t trust them anymore.”

Renu Sharma and a group of women lawyers at the Women’s Foundation are preparing their case to find justice for Durga Rajbansi. Fifteen years ago, when they were still schoolgirls, Renu and her friends started sheltering survivors of violence and providing legal assistance to them. Women survivors were given education and training skills to help them get a new start on life.

The major challenge to our legal system backs strong laws against violence on girls and women,” says Renu. The perpetrators are released, and they just go back to their old ways of beating up women. She knows that many of these she puts behind bars are likely to come after her for revenge. A sex trafficking gang once surrounded her and a friend in Indra Chowk and demanded that she withdraw her case against them. She left one of her companions with them, and ran to Hanuman Dhoka police station. Renu turned the tables on the men and had them arrested.

Renu and her family know they put themselves at risk, but they have taken precautions. “We have all been trained in martial arts and have to be at all the time,” she says. Her shelter had to be moved to five different places after the activists were attacked by men accused of beating and exploiting their wives, daughters, or employees. The Women’s Foundation now has branches in 12 districts.

Survivor

A two-year nightmare of slavery ends for Durga Rajbansi, and for the first time in her life she dares to hope.

Crusader

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Women’s Foundation are preparing their case to find justice for Durga Rajbansi. Fifteen years ago, when they were still schoolgirls, Renu and her friends started sheltering survivors of violence and providing legal assistance to them. Women survivors were given education and training skills to help them get a new start on life.

The major challenge to our legal system backs strong laws against violence on girls and women,” says Renu. The perpetrators are released, and they just go back to their old ways of beating up women. She knows that many of these she puts behind bars are likely to come after her for revenge. A sex trafficking gang once surrounded her and a friend in Indra Chowk and demanded that she withdraw her case against them. She left one of her companions with them, and ran to Hanuman Dhoka police station. Renu turned the tables on the men and had them arrested. Renu and her family know they put themselves at risk, but they have taken precautions. “We have all been trained in martial arts and have to be at all the time,” she says. Her shelter had to be moved to five different places after the activists were attacked by men accused of beating and exploiting their wives, daughters, or employees. The Women’s Foundation now has branches in 12 districts.

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So you are a BDS provider…

By ASHUTOSH TIWARI

What do you make of Nepalis drinking more? Does it encourage others to also introduce themselves as “BDS providers”? I for one, would be quite confused. Are there really entrepreneurs and businesspeople—the ones who sell specific, professional services to private sector firms—and, as such, have no excuses but to face the rough-and-tumble of the marketplace? Or, are they simply smooth-talking, donor-savvy, Syroam-of-all-tracks with mile-wide smiles who have simply mastered the fine art of uttering the magic words “I am a BDS provider” so that they can seduce a largely gullible donor agency to throw money at them? Such questions must take an urgency now as more donor agencies jump in to partner—either indiscriminately, it appears—with NGOs and private firms in services, what they call Business Development Services (BDS) to raise both income and employment rates across Nepal. My fear is that unless donor agencies working to strengthen the sector in a commercially viable manner, start collaborating more, following the fundamentals of how to help develop markets for services, in a few years they may be stating at distortions and inefficiencies in the markets. The so-called “BDS providers” will be unable to function without additional subsidies. The very term BDS, referring to a bundle of services such as consulting, auditing, marketing, designing and other such must-have business intangibles, may mean different things to different people, thereby essentially creating a big conceptual confusion. To avoid such a scenario, I suggest the following to all those involved in—or the jargon goes—BDS market development in both urban and rural settings across Nepal.

Down coordination: Internationally, donor agencies have joined forces to put out a booklet that serves as a guideline on how to develop commercially vibrant market services for businesses in developing countries. Naturally, however, donor coordination meetings are notorious for more style than substance. Conceptually challenging questions are avoided and everyone is eager to get along with everyone else. In some cases, participants even cancel meetings at the last minute, showing that no matter how they hark about the importance of sharing information and knowledge, they have neither the time nor the interest to actually learn from one another. Still, with the recent advent of an informed BDS Practitioners’ Forum, there is hope that at the very least, there will be an agreement on what different terms mean in what context and discussions among donors will be conceptually consistent.

Principles matter: Some donors, especially those whose strengths are in the areas of relief provision, seem to think that most BDS principles do not apply when they work with urban businesses in Nepal. True, in practice, Nepali case may present certain linkages to the standard principles. That’s to be expected. But this is no excuse to throw the principles out the window and go down one’s own idiosyncratic path, just to return later to lump one’s activities under the BDS umbrella. The principles, derived from basic micro- and macroeconomic reasoning and based on incentives, can be applied when working with, as the International Committee of Donors (ICD) point it, “any type of enterprise, anywhere in the world”. That’s why, starting from the principles, the situations in practice due to Nepali’s geographical or institutional uniqueness should be taken up by publications which put out ideas that pose conceptual challenges to the existing theories. These are two ways donor agencies can learn to be less impressed by those who identify themselves—not by their singular professional competence but—by that commercially meaningless sentence “I am a BDS provider”.

The spirit of the things

In the year that Manvendra Singh has been the sales manager for Nepal for Seagram Manufacturing Ltd, he has seen the company’s profits double. The teetotaler talked to Nepal Times about branding, anticipation of Dasai sales and the effect of politics on consumption patterns.

Nepali Times: Are Nepalis drinking more?

Manvendra Singh: Yes, I think so. It is traditional, and it is accepted. In general, Nepalis don’t lose control. The most important thing is that they know how much they can drink and how to carry themselves. Drink responsibly—what we say.

Seagram’s has mastered the market for brown spirits. How do you do it?

Since Seagram’s come from a multi-national background, our style of working is a bit different from domestic companies. We are very selective. We never compromise on quality and we have a lot of patience. The company is comparatively very new, just five to six years old in India as well, but we have swept the market because of our organisation, ethics and the environment in which the company operates. We don’t spend a lot on advertising, but in whatever we do we try to maintain and sustain the quality of Seagram’s Royal Stag. For example, cricket was not a very popular game in Nepal, so they introduced the Tenner to the country and it really clicked. People appreciated it and now there is more involvement with cricket in Nepal, especially with the recent under-19 international victory. Wouldn’t football have been a better choice than cricket?

We have three themes with Royal Stag. We’re associated with Jagi Nepal, the best cinema in the country, where we have special Royal Stag Mega Cinema: 2003. Mega Cricket was a relatively new concept for Nepal. We are immune to these things because in most countries, even in India, advertising alcohol on TV is not allowed. To some extent, this is good. How much has the ban on TV advertising affected your sales?

Advertising is done according to need. The last three years we have done a lot of advertising, especially around Dasai. The festival also arrives with colder weather, when people enjoy their drink more.

Until the country is in a stable position no one will really be in the mood. The political situation is an advantage. But the macro-environment is also important. Does the arrival of Dasai mean a spike in sales?

Yes, I think so. It is traditional, and it is accepted. In general, Nepalis don’t lose control. The most important thing is that they know how much they can drink and how to carry themselves. Drink responsibly is what we say.

ECONOMY

Strictly Business
Suited and booted

With Dasai just around the corner, let’s check out the wardrobe options for the Nepali Man.

VIRGO BLACK

Whether he be tricked out in claura-saural and Nepali apo in the middle hills, in down jacket and legging leading a riddling group in the higher abodes or urbanly attired for the city, the average Nepali male is a snazzy dresser. Fashionista catch on fast in the cities and towns where access to cinema and in more recent times, TV, is easily available. Aficionados of the Indian film industry, whether in the local cinema or off the idiot box, garner ideas straight off the screen. Hence, a plethora of black n white shirts currently to be seen on male backs, at least in the cities and towns.

So what makes a dresser dressy now that the age of grunge is out of the picture, let’s define what is meant by the terms ‘casual’, ‘smart-casual’, ‘informal’ and ‘formal’.

‘Casual’ generally means comfortably dressed for lounging about. This could mean a pair of shorts, pair of jeans or old trousers, a t-shirt or pajamas worn with a loose shirt. The jean-jacket is still around though the style surfaces more in brushed velvet or coloured cottons than in the traditional blue denim. Denims have been around for a long, long time and it seems that they’re here to stay.

‘Smart-casual’ means you don’t need a wide range of clothes, just about any choice of clothing is acceptable though short or full-sleeved shirts tucked into regular trousers would be more expected. And a pair of neatly socked and shod feet if not in shoes, at least in smart sandals. ‘Informal’ does not mean come-as-you-are. No, no, no, no. It means ‘wear-a-suit-and-tie’ and is the expected formal for things like weddings, engagements, business meetings in the upper echelons of management or if you’re employed in one of the classier hotels or restaurants.

And then there’s ‘formal’ wear. That really means a tuxedo or at the very least, a black suit with a white shirt and tie or a cravat. These are meant for the city, the average Nepali male is a snazzy dresser. Fashionista catch on fast in the cities and towns where access to cinema and in more recent times, TV, is easily available. Aficionados of the Indian film industry, whether in the local cinema or off the idiot box, garner ideas straight off the screen. Hence, a plethora of black n white shirts currently to be seen on male backs, at least in the cities and towns.

For casual and smart-casual wear there is nothing worthier than blue jeans. Denims have been around for a long, long time and it looks like they’re here to stay. Everyone has to have a pair or two...or three, and just about anything, goes with them. T-shirts, body-fit for those with the youth and pecs to go with them, the consoling ‘bush’ variety for those of us over-the-hill, so to speak. The casual cut of the blue jeans has extended not only to copies in all shades of denim but to other fabrics with satin and velvet finishes and rather popularly, to the ‘camouflage’ in a variety of combinations that go way beyond the greens and browns of the forest. One can even buy t-shirts in similar camouflage to go with the pants. The jean-jacket is still around though the style surfaces more in brushed velvet or coloured cottons than in the traditional blue denim. Denims have been

depending on the particular shade, has its limitations to pastel shades and derivatives of brown, yellows, creams, greens and the like. Gray trousers go well with shades of blue and match well with shirts in various hues of pink. Blue goes well with lighter shades of the same, some pinks and daintily with yellow. Avoid the dowdy mismatching of browns with grays or reds. It’s good to refer to a colour chart even if you’re not the arty sort.

Socks, unless they’re white sports types and worn with jeans or casual trousers and track shoes, should match the colour of the trousers and though there is a range of coloured shoes now available to us men, most of us still hang on to the standard of black and brown, the former being the far more versatile in such a going with just about any choice of clothing you choose to wear, except for brown. If you’re wearing brown trousers or anything in the variety that tends towards that shade, use a pair of brown shoes. Have a pair of fancy blue shoes I picked up in recent travels but unless I’m wearing a pair of blue or grey pants, they sit on a shelf collecting dust. And yes, one last thing: match your belt to your shoes.

Virgo Black is the pseudonym of a lifelong denizen of Kathmandu with a lot of international and domestic travel underneath his voluminous belt.
asai is a time for Nepalis to get a new set of clothes. Thanks to rapid globalisation Nepali men are breaking through the fashion glass ceiling that has long dictated women have couture and men have clothes.

No offence, but the circa 1970s safari suit, the too-tight daura suruwal and that corporate uniform of pleated trousers and polyester shirts accessorised with a garish tie, gilt tie pin, fake Rolex and white tennis socks peeping out from above leather shoes just have to go.

It just takes a well-heeled courageous step to go from mundane to marvellous. Yes, even here in Kathmandu where Men in Black suits seem to be de riguer for weddings and ‘casual’ translates to khakis or jeans teamed with a white t-shirt printed with a billboard size logo featuring fake crocodiles. Whilst most wallets cannot afford the real thing it’s important to be able to tell a bad fake from a good one. Just like it is to find a good men’s tailor who knows his inseam from his interlock.

The valley’s Savile Row is definitely Putalisadak. Both sides of the street are lined with readymade and tailoring centres that cater exclusively for men. Most stock Indian and foreign fabric along with Indian ‘masters’ who cut the pattern and attend to fittings. Big plate glass windows reveal clean, polished interiors—not a frill or furbelow in sight—in fact everything seems to spell out this is a man’s world. These are safe havens where they can mull over an Italian silk double-breasted affair like Al Pacino in Godfather, or the Achkhan suit that Shah Rukh Khan sported in his last blockbuster.

With 25 years of menswear experience behind them, Dormeuil set up shop here six years ago. Kathmandu customers have become a lot more knowledgeable says manager Anil Bajracharya, “In the old days, customers bought whatever we ordered. Today, they demand brands like Yves Saint Laurent, Versace, Hugo Boss, Christian Dior, Pierre Cardin… You name it, and we have the guaranteed originals.” He is confident that his salesmen can help customers pick exactly what they want. Measuring tape draped for ready access around the neck, they help colour blind customers settle on a complimentary shade of fabric. After the design is finalised, the in-house tailor can have a suit ready in 24 hours. A good suit costs Rs 5,000 and up, but the Dasai discount helps matters. Splurge on a stylish tie with the difference.

Just across the street, The Raymond Shop stocks the hugely popular Indian range. This is exclusive Raymond territory and no other brand is let in the door, unless worn by a customer. Park Avenue, a readymade line in suits and trousers is available in the standard colours. For a more relaxed fit, they have Parx, trendy casual wear including t-shirts, jeans and cargo pants. But if made-to-order is what you want, manager Rameshwor Shrestha guarantees the best work in town using only Raymond’s material—right down to the thread. For Dasai, gift vouchers ranging from Rs 100-1000 should prod more stubborn men into a new look.
The terrorist attacks on New York and Washington of September 11 2001 profoundly changed the US, spawning a new focus on foreign policy. The Bush administration's new national security strategy, issued in September 2002, identifies the combination of terrorism, rogue states, and weapons of mass destruction as the primary threat confronting America. Most people agree with President Bush about the urgency of the task and the need to act now before words become empty and gestures symbolically perform a pretence of action. The American people have also joined in the commitment to limit the use of military force and to promote stronger and more effective international institutions.

JOSEPH S NYE, JR

WORLD

Two years later, it is clear America must rejoin the world.

The demand was given a new immediacy after it won backing from former WTO ambassador for the Dominican Republic, Federico Courtney. He said that he was speaking from first-hand experience of such tactics. The developing countries in the WTO “are not free to speak out as we wish,” Courtney said at a meeting organised by the NGOs to present their demands. The NGO group, which includes ActionAid, Christian Aid, Friends of the Earth, World Development Movement, and WWF-UK, has presented a set of practical suggestions to ensure greater transparency in negotiations at Cancun. These suggestions include:

- All negotiating meetings should be announced at least six hours in advance to the entire membership through a daily calendar.
- No country is excluded from meetings.
- The chairs of negotiations should be neutral and elected by all the member countries, not handpicked by rich nations. At present there is an increasing influence on chairpersons, which gives unprecedented power to hand-picked individuals.
- Ministerial meetings cannot be extended without warning or agreement. There must be a cut-off time because small delegations have no capacity to stagger their human resources.
- Negotiators should be allowed time to eat and sleep. At Doha some meetings continued 36 hours at a stretch.
- Negotiating documents should accurately reflect the views of all WTO members, and not just the EU and the US. The WTO secretariat must be neutral when members are in disagreement.
- We have witnessed first hand at Doha how the WTO process is manipulated by strong countries,” Tom Crompton from WWF-UK said. “We have had too many of these mini-ministerial meetings of hand-picked ministers,” he continued. “This has been done in a way that excluded the vast majority of WTO members.”
- EU officials have said that the demands made by the group of NGOs cannot be met. “The people at Cancun have been backed by the European Union. However, their proposals have not been backed by the European Union or the United States. The situation has not changed substantially in our own ends.

The new unilateralists make a mistake in focusing too heavily on military power alone. True, America’s military power—backed up by a budget equivalent to the next eight countries combined—is essential to global stability, and an essential part of the response to terrorism. But the metaposition of war should not blind us to the fact that supressing terrorism will take years of patient, unprecendented civilian cooperation with other countries in areas such as intelligence sharing, police work, tracing financial flows, and cooperation among customs officials. Military success in Afghanistan addressed the easiest part of the problem. At Qaeda retains cells in some fifty countries. Rather than proving the unilateralists’ point, the partial nature of the success in Afghanistan illustrates the continuing need for cooperation. Similarly, it was much easier to win the war in Iraq than to win the peace.

The problem for Americans in the 21st century is that more issues and forces than we can count are converging. America must decide whether it is more cost-effective to mediate and indecisions to countries and to multilateral institutions than to win the peace. America must recognize that power tends to erode. Effective, in use can be counterproductive. America must decide how to ensure that the US maintains a list of agreements that it is difficult to make the decision-making process for 146 countries,” Crompton acknowledged. “But our proposals are very specific, procedural things.”

At Doha, he explained, ministerial meetings were extended, and many ministers from smaller countries had to leave because they could not prolong their stay. “This may sound a trivial procedural matter, but meetings must finish when scheduled,” he said. “Developing countries are hopelessly out-gunned from the start,” says Peter Hardstaff from the World Development Movement. “In negotiations at Doha, the EU had over 500 delegates. Mauritius two and Haiti, the poorest country in the western hemisphere had none. The whole system should be geared to helping these countries have a voice, in a constructive way to silence them. The bullying, behaviour and lack of real rules at the WTO would disgrace a villageubble club.”

The NGO arguments have been bolstered by the publication of a book Behind the Scenery by WTO Director General, Runa and Aileen Kwa. “Arm-twisting through a combination of threats and inducements to countries and ambassadors was a key feature of the process leading to the agreement of Doha,” the authors say. “Only the rich have real leverage, while most developing countries are so desperate for trade opportunities, aid, debt reduction etc that they have little choice but to succumb. The NGO report claims that the US maintains a list of ‘unhelpful’ developing country trade negotiators. It is said that the supposedly neutral WTO secretariat has often misinformed developing countries about the position of others.

The report says that at some point in the past the European Union has belittled the position of, among others, “caved in under pressure and succumbed to the wishes of a few countries.” The only weak link the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund also admitted that Tanzania would receive external debt relief of three billion dollars over time.

Granted, multilateralism can be used by smaller states to restrict American freedom of action, but this does not mean that it is not generally in American interests. By embedding US policies in multilateral frameworks, America can make its dispositions more potent, use leverage, while most developing countries are so desperate for trade opportunities, aid, debt reduction etc that they have little choice but to succumb. The NGO report claims that the US maintains a list of ‘unhelpful’ developing country trade negotiators. It is said that the supposedly neutral WTO secretariat has often misinformed developing countries about the position of others.

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By JOSEPH S NYE, JR

Sanjay Suri in London

A group of leading development organisations have asked for an end to “arm-twisting” tactics at the meeting of trade ministers in Cancun. The British-based non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have asked Patricia Hewitt, the British Trade Secretary, to ensure transparency and fairness at the talks this week.

In doing so, they have joined 11 African nations which came up with a similar demand three weeks ago. However, their proposals have not been backed by the European Union or the United States.

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This week, trade ministers are gathering at Cancún to advance the Doha Development Agenda. They carry with them the aspirations of millions around the world who hope for economic advancement rest on opportunities in the global economy. Trade is driving forces for economic expansion in developed and developing countries alike. Promoting the growth of trade is essential for global economic prosperity. And the Doha negotiations are a central pillar of the global strategy to achieve the Millennium Development Goals: a strategy to reduce poverty by giving poor people the opportunity to help themselves.

Aid for trade

'The achievements of the WTO’s predecessor, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, were considerable,' says Wolfensohn, the World Bank’s president. 'But the key challenges now lie with governments. All have to do their part. Rich countries have to lead in areas now blocking the talks, particularly agriculture. Middle income countries have to contribute as well, reducing tariffs that affect not only their own citizens but other developing countries. And low-income countries, even as they receive more aid for trade and win more time to implement WTO rules, have to assume new responsibilities of participation in the international system.'

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, among its members the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development say the international community now has an opportunity to help the world’s poor.

On a foundation of good governance. Realising the benefits of greater trade will require complementary efforts. On the supply side, this means investments in infrastructure necessary to ensure that the products of the poor can reach global markets and, in the longer run, investments in education. And it means policies to safeguard the interests of the most vulnerable in society. Both often require external technical and financial assistance. We are ready to help. All our organisations have stepped up efforts to provide ‘aid for trade’ in support of a positive outcome of the Doha talks. Together, we have the mandates, the resources and the expertise to assist countries in managing the adjustment pressures that can be associated with more open trade.

But the key challenges now lie with governments. All have to do their part. Rich countries have to lead in areas now blocking the talks, particularly agriculture. Middle income countries have to contribute as well, reducing tariffs that affect not only their own citizens but other developing countries. And low-income countries, even as they receive more aid for trade and win more time to implement WTO rules, have to assume new responsibilities of participation in the international system.

Working together the international community has an opportunity to help the world’s poor. We should not let it slip away.
Many blame technical issues for the failure of the peace talks, but we believe that the entire range of national and international tension and class and political power-relations must be taken into consideration. Tilting matters do not decide the fate of talks that involve a people’s rebellion which seeks to change a two-century-old monarchy. The political agenda presented by the government and the national and international powers has a vested interest in retaining the king’s power. The old regime under the leadership of the king dilly-dallied and then came up with a hastily cobbled-together plan that spoke about progress and change in the government but just wanted all of the old power structures to remain intact. Our agendas are poles apart and do not have an immediate meeting point. This was the main political difference that led to the failure of talks. The old regime is creating the illusion that there isn’t much difference between the two political agendas. They even assure the people that a few additional rounds of talks will overcome differences.

Due to the struggle for people’s rule, the majority understand that the monarchy and the army are the main barriers to institutional development. This is why we stressed the direct participation of the king or his representative in the talks. Instead, the king instead chose to stay behind the scenes to call the shots. When we were at a critical juncture he left the country on the excuse of a health check-up. His latest move proves that he is either playing into the hands of foreign powers or is involved in a conspiracy to misuse the talks as a means for selfish strategic gains. Whatever the circumstances, the king’s role in the talks has been negative.

Even parliamentary forces did little other than offer lip service. It was ironic to see them wishing for the failure of the talks just so that they could once again assert state-power. If only they had risen to the level of a constituent assembly, the king would have been under tremendous pressure and the implications of Article 269 would have been felt today.

The monarchy is standing at its most critical juncture today. There is a strong possibility that the monarchy, which has already lost the peoples’ support, will militarily use the help of a foreign power and launch a final fight for its existence. It will either declare military rule or use parliamentary forces as eyewash. If the king, ordered by foreign masters, appoints Sher Bahadur Deuba, Madhav Kumar Nepal or any parliamentary leader as the prime minister, their status will be no different from that of Lokendra Bahadur Chand and Surya Bahadur Thapa. The 1991 Constitution is dead and it will be impossible to revive it. During delivery, the labour pain is severe, but soon a healthy and original people’s rule is going to be born. It can’t and won’t be stopped.

Within two weeks of the end of the ceasefire, Nepal is once again a war torn nation. Helicopters are in action in Parbat, Baglung and several western hill districts. The villagers in Khotang, Pachthar, Taplejung and other districts cοnfront the usual arrests and killings. Reports are filtering in that innocent people have been killed in army action in Sardih, Salyan and Lahin. The calls for independent investigation into the actions of the army have yet to be heeded. There is a palpable atmosphere of terror across the country.

In Tarkaju, Hungang, VDC, 18-year-old Mohan Gopal Gurung, a grade eight student at Sarawati Secondary School, was killed by an army patrol, according to a local human rights activist. In two weeks he has been arrested and he was dragged to Chautahauli bridge where he was found dead.

Politicians believe the brutality of this war will exceed previous levels. Since the beginning of the ceasefire, the government has imposed curfews in 35 districts. The people are keeping vigil, waiting for the next wave of attacks.

The tragedy is that many think they will die at the hands of the army patrols who will write them off as rebels.

There are also reports that several party workers have been arrested after they were falsely accused of being Maoists. It is believed that Kanal Raj Bista, a member of Nepal Trade Union Federation, was arrested four days ago at Sandhup and locked up at Jawalakhel police station. Such indiscriminate arrests are an act of backfire against the government.

The Maoists have also intensified their attacks in the villages. People who do not support the party are beaten and not allowed to enter or leave their homes. The Maoists have prohibited members of other parties from running programs and activities. While the state rules with an iron fist in Kathmandu, the Maoists are doing the same in rural areas.

Revolution devours children
Kathmandu, 10 September

What kind of political game are the Maoists playing by targeting the innocent? We are not sure whether the Maoists will ever apologise for killing 12-year-old schoolboy Dipak Gurung, or whether they will consider this just another minor incident of their ‘people’s war’. For now, the Maoists think they have gained political might and military strength by exploding bombs in public places. But the future will prove they were wrong.

The Maoists have put all the blame on the government for the failure of the peace talks. Even those sympathetic towards their ideals and politics are condemning their brutal and inhuman methods. What kind of image does this revolution portray by killing a young boy from an ‘underprivileged family’?

If the Maoists fail to apologise unconditionally to the parents and society, it will prove they do not care about their irresponsible behaviour. The Maoist organisation and its workers should realise that such irresponsibility will cost them public support.
Chandrakala Newar, one of a small number of established Nepali women poets of today, upholds this admirable tradition. Her first poem, Spectacle, in her collection Avarice in peace, Life in killing, Contentment in tears, Purity in blood, transforms ordinary objects into items that demand our attention. Examples of this include a meat and rice vendor’s stall, a street cleaner with his straw baskets, a clothesline, and the sun catching the straw baskets of a street cleaner—none of it is mundane viewed through Damien Murphy’s lens.

Some of the strongest pictures are of shops and their interiors. They are imbued with all the magic of Aladdin’s caves. Cast in rich shades of vermilion, the shops echo the sacred colour of the city. They are imbued with all the magic of Aladdin’s caves. Cast in rich shades of vermilion, the shops echo the sacred colour of the city.

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FESTIVALS AND EXHIBITIONS

- A day in Lazimpat: Photographs by Damien Murphy at the Lazimpat Gallery Cafe, Lazimpat.
- Sizzle and Summer Show: Paintings, prints and photographs by well known local and international artists from noon to 7PM, Tuesday through Sunday at Gallery 9, Lazimpat. 436944
- 21st century is the century for art and peace by Govinda Prasad Shah ‘Azad’ at the British Council, Lainchour 14 September.

EVENTS

- Latin Night on 12 September at DJ Yves. African Night on 13 September with DJ Aye at Via Via Cafe, Patharpal. 4435184
- Lazimpat Film Show: The King of Masks (directed by Wu Tian Ming) 16 September, Red Firecracker, Green Firecracker 18 September, 7PM at Lazimpat Gallery Cafe. 4428549
- Skool Disco Costume Party 8PM on 20 September at Club Kinlo, Thamel. 4412821
- Changa Chai 2060: Kite flying competition at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot. 6.13, 17 September. 4410632

MUSIC

- 1974 AD Live Saturday 4PM onwards at Moksh, Jhamshikel. Entry Rs 200.
- Catch 22 live at the Rum Doodle.
- Cadena live 7.30PM Wednesday, at Upstarts Jazz Bar, Lazimpat.
- Thunderbolt at Rov Bar on Fridays. Happy Hours 6-7PM, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu.
- Fusion at Dwarika’s now featuring Abhaya & The Steam Injuns every Friday, 7.30 PM onwards. 4794688

DRINKS

- Happy Hour Buy one get one free at Splash Bar & Grill from 5.30-7PM. Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu.
- Latin Night on 12 September with DJ Yves. African Night on 13 September with DJ Aye at Via Via Cafe, Patharpal. 4435184
- Buy one get one free at Splash Bar & Grill from 5.30-7PM. Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu.

NEPALI WEATHER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What you breathe</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>&lt; 60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ok</td>
<td>61 to 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unhealthy</td>
<td>121 to 150</td>
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<td>Harmful</td>
<td>351 to 425</td>
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<td>Hazardous</td>
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KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

Last week’s average PM10 levels in all monitoring stations in the Valley (except Patan Hospital) was below national health thresholds. The rains ensured that the air remained clean, but these are the last few weeks of breathable air. Once the rains stop, the level of fine particles, which are very harmful to human health, will start rising and this means more respiratory illness among Kathmandu residents. A study released last week showed that if we were to reduce the concentration of fine particles in Kathmandu air by just half, we would reduce mortality by 10 percent and hospital admissions by 30 percent.

Visit Ground Zero Fine wines, designer candles, cards, gifts, stationery, wooden items, perfumes and more. Darbar Marg, opposite Hotel de l’Annapurna.

Visit Femmelines, the Exclusive Lingerie Store for ladies undergarments, nightwear, bathrobes and more. Staffed with 15 sales staff, Sarita Shrestha, Pulchowk, 547428. Rs 840

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Starting Thursday, 18 September 2003

BOOKWORM

Translating Development: The Case of Nepal Manjani Dharman Dharman (ed) Social Science Press, New Delhi, 2003 Rs 840

According to this book, sustainable development that must attend to every economy, environment and society of a country is achievable. The contributors to this volume provide information on how this can be done drawing on their experiences at the grassroots level. What they write is remarkably readable and offers guidelines for development planners.

The Glory of Nepal: A Biography of Bangladesh Narendra Raj Prasad Prasad Prakashan, 2003 Rs 350

Biographies are tried, it’s so easy to miss the mark. One of the best evaluations of Prasad’s work is undoubtedly the subject praising the literary effort of the author. And so it is with Prasad’s work. The legendary Lain Singh Bangdel lauds this biography as, “seven praised, this book makes good reading”. That’s recommendation enough.

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

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At a time when human rights are under the spotlight in Nepal, a Nepali activist has been elected president of the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT), a network of over 200 centres around the world that offers treatment to victims of torture, and also engages in prevention and advocacy.

The executive board of the IRCT elected Bhogendra Sharma to the post this week for a three-year term. The 45-year-old has been active in Nepal’s human rights movement over the past two decades, and is president of the Kathmandu-based Centre for Victims of Torture (CVICT).

“arsha said in a phone interview from Copenhagen. “Besides treatment, prevention and awareness, we will have to work more closely with civil society and governments.”

Torture as a means of exacting information or confessions has long been rampant in Nepal, but incidences have soared since the insurgency hotted up. Most victims of torture tend to be suspects who are usually innocent, and who face harassment and physical and psychological abuse in the hands of their captors.

Sharma now has to find time to chair the international body to work in his area of choice and commitment while providing treatment and rehabilitation to victims in Nepal, and lobbying with the political parties here to avoid this brutal and inhumane behaviour. As president of IRCT Sharma will need to persuade the United States and the Europeans to eliminate torture as well. Fortunately, unlike other international advocacy organisations, the IRCT has just been awarded the prestigious Conrad N Hilton Humanitarian Prize for 2003 that comes with a $1 million cheque. The award will be presented to IRCT in New York next week in the presence of the Dalai Lama.

While Sharma is excited about his global responsibilities, he is worried by the deteriorating human rights situation back home in Nepal. He told us: “There is no military solution to the Maoist insurgency. We must work towards addressing the underlying causes of conflict and create an overwhelming constituency in favour of peace.”

(Bhagirath Yogi in London)

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Also in Patan is Reid & Taylor, the new clothiers on the block. Just a year into operations, it already has a steady middle-aged clientele who want a quietly moneyed look at bargain prices. The Indian label caters to the image conscious working man.

Just off the main road and into Bagh Bazar is Shrestha Tailors. Located directly opposite the all-girls Padma Kanya Campus, it seems a strange place to open a men-only establishment but Hari Shankar says business has not been hampered. Over a period of six years he’s seen more and more Nepal men ask for English and Italian material. “But that’s just for the coats,” he says. “For trousers they want Indian material.” It keeps the cost down. When he began, Hari Shankhar remembers, all clothes were tailored. Then came the readymade rush, but now its back to the old ways. “Except it’s a lot more expensive than readymade today,” he says with a faint chuckle.

Far and away from the bustle, up on the second floor of Bishal Bazar in New Road is Glamour Tailors & Clothiers—a bastion of male tailored clothes for the last 17 years. Shahid Alam is an institution; he has fitted suits for the Valley’s most prestigious names. Alam has the good taste to refrain from name dropping, although there are rumours of royal patronage. His son Safraj Alam modestly says there haven’t been any complaints. Glamour also stocks a variety of readymade Indian and European shirts. This is the year of the long straight-point collar and tapered trousers that break clean at the shoes. And pleats are as passé as safari suits.

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**A man’s measure**

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**Faux pas**

- White socks with formal shoes? Not unless you’re going as Michael Jackson to a costume party.
- Wear a printed tie with a printed shirt only if the look is bohemian chic.
- There’s only so much a three-piece suit can disguise.
- Explore your feminine side. Real men do wear pink.
- Invest in nice shoes. Women always notice.
- Jewellery—less is more.
- Perfume is to be used sparingly.
- Never, but never, pair suspenders with a belt.
My 18-point demand

The greatest thing about living in a democracy is that we all have the right to be demanding. Anyone, including you and me, can come up with a list of demands, and launch an incrementally escalating protest for the government to fulfil at its earliest convenience.

So, on behalf of 24 million Nepalis and in the interest of upholding our free democratic way of life, I humbly submit below my own 18-point list of demands which the powers that be will ignore at their own peril. If these demands are not met with immediate effect, I will begin a phase-wise program of civil disobedience which will culminate in a violent pen-down strike over the Dasai-Tihar holidays:

1. The government should, right this minute, regain territory ceded to the East India Company in the Sugauli Treaty, restore the country’s pre-1814 boundaries and make Nepal greater again.
2. Ok, ok, let’s at least get them to agree to give us back Kalapani.
3. Never mind, just make sure for now that Border Pillar no 138 on the Mechi River is moved 20m to the east and restored to its original upright position.
4. The government should immediately scrap all unequal treaties with the international community, beginning with the 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation.
5. Having said that, and come to think of it, why not keep that one, and opt out of the Kyoto Protocol instead. Yeah, all together now: Kyoto Protocol Murdabad! Chief of Protocol Jindabad!
6. Our sixth demand is that all our previous demands including the 137-point ultimatum delivered to the Ministry of Re-education, Self-criticism and Aquaculture be fulfilled without further ado.
7. Otherwise we may be forced to list all those 137 demands right here point-by-point and that may take till midnight, or until the cows come home, whichever happens later.
8. Oh yes, can I have a coffee, please? Black without sugar.
9. Make available Journalist Discounts on all international and domesticated flights with immediate effect, otherwise we will create nuisances on board that may endanger the safety of fellow passengers and ourselves, for which the air crew will have to bear full responsibility for the consequences.
10. We’re only up to 10? When are we ever going to get to 18?
11. So, moving right along to the next point in the agenda: we demand that these demands be taken seriously with a pinch of salt. If not we will go on a hungry strike and skip afternoon snacks until the country is restored to its pre-October 4 glory.
12. All political leaders will have to sign a prior consent form before they get their fraternal and maternal organisations to launch decisive protests, so that the authorities are apprised of the exact modus operandi while taking them into custody. Tick applicable box: When arrested, I want to be under:
   i) Court Arrest
   ii) House Arrest
   iii) Cardiac Arrest
13. Everything in Nepal should be free of cost, and all noodle packs must have diamond necklaces.
14. This agitation will be temporarily suspended on weekends, during Dasai and by the UML for ‘technical reasons’ without prior notice. Management is not responsible for the consequences.
15. The next three demands (no 16, 17, 18) are non-negotiable. They can never be met, but they will not be disclosed at the present time because we reserve the right to bring them to public notice at a later date. Look at it from our point of view: if you meet all of our demands, how on earth can we keep on declaring indefinite countrywide strikes in future?