RAHUL SINGHAL was studying in her room when she heard gunshots. Family members started screaming. When she got there, the 16-year-old found her father lying in a pool of blood. Two Maoist assassins had killed Hari Ratna Singhawal, a police officer at Gahiti Tol in Bhaktapur two weeks ago. Hari Ratna, 38, was the sole supporter of a 15-member clan, including his wife and six children.

Maoist leader Prachanda’s statement this week that the group will no longer target ‘low-ranking’ security personnel may bring a halt to killings like these, but it is already too late for many. There are thousands of Nepali children who have witnessed horrific murders of their loved ones, forced to watch torture, survived gun battles inside their classrooms or suffered bereavement. If the conflict does not wind down, these numbers will grow, and child rights activists say there is almost nothing being done to address the psychological trauma the children continue to suffer.

Reshma went into post-traumatic shock after witnessing her father’s murder and for a week her mind segued into temporary amnesia, unable to recognize even close family. Her four younger sisters don’t sleep well, and are plagued by nightmares. Nilu, 14, once the most soft-spoken among her sisters, now talks by nightmares. Nilu, 14, once the most soft-spoken among her sisters, now talks like her mother. Her younger sister Nilima, 12, is more controlled. “I want to be a police officer like my father and serve my country,” she says.

NARESH NEWAR

Which way?
The October Resolution

There is something in the air at Tilhar of the glass half-filled or empty. The Maoist violence and army crackdowns are intensifying, but there are the stirrings of a peace breakthrough. Nepalis are getting positive, even hopeful. There is growing weariness with the daily scene of earth and death. And there are new war fatigue. The Maoists are down, buses are back up, and instead of the lash they are now using the gun. For the first time in the seven years of insurrection, Prachanda’s storm troopers are on the defensive, shoving soft targets and shooting. Tacticians of terror have always been counterproductive. It alienates people from the ‘cause’, assuming there is one. But who is going to sell that to a group that will physically eliminate anyone who disagrees with the party line? The nether zone in the other camp is no less counterproductive. There is a needless arbitrariness in state violence: forces of law and order all up in villages pressuring everyone is a Maoist until proven otherwise, entering schools full of children under covering fire. Using a firearm when a scalpel will do. There has been an unprecedented militarisation of society, but the security forces are organized by both the army and the Maoists in its primary mandate of protecting citizens.

Sooner or later, the true horror of Dorchana and Madhubhara will force the Royal Nepali Army to do some soul-searching. It is a disciplined army renowned for honour and saluting the dead, and it can’t keep its image intact if it doesn’t reform itself. One of the possible corrections could be a decision to subject itself to civilian control. If the defence forces in Turkey with its long martial legacy can do it, why can’t we? During Tilhar, hope is permitted. Most Nepalis never agreed with the war being waged for their liberation, but their opinion didn’t matter to those who prosecuted it. Now, civil society has started footing this popular yearning for peace. An internet poll on Kangaline this week shows more than two thirds of respondents think the situation in the country is as bad as ever (56.17 percent) or remained the same (16.62 percent) since the royal takeover. What the people need now is to be able to make matters in the country, and exercise their right through political representatives: the mainstream parties agitating for the promulgation of the constitutional law.

A challenge such as the Maoist insurgency is also a challenge for us. If it is getting out of hand, it ceases to be a crisis—it becomes a hardship that people learn to live with. In seven years, Nepali society has learned to live with the terror of insurgency and counterterrorism.

We will have to work to make no one fall in the trap of forgetting we are in the midst of a war that has taken more than 85,000 lives in 17 years. Luckily, however, Nepali society has learnt to grow up and learn to solve our own problems.
Here comes the sunshine
introducing the new SANTRO Xing

Presenting the Next Generation Santro. All new Santro Xing.
A stunning example of modern automobile design and continuous customer feedback driven advancement.

Tall, wide and uniquely different, the new Santro Xing has a distinctly European styling, while its sleek lines and pleasing curves and contours will capture your heart. The compact outer dimensions, combined with its sporty stance, will ignite your passion of driving into the sun and make it stand out in a crowd of old hatchbacks and jelly bean shapes. So step into the Santro. Add sunshine to your life.

The new Santro Xing comes with all new looking feel exterior and interior styling. That, coupled with new advanced features, offers the best comfort and luxury in your favorite compact car. New bigger and brighter clear headlamps, smiling radiator grille, power operated rear windows with child lock and lots of other smart features like the seat under tray are the hallmarks of your Sunshine Car.

The Santro has evolved significantly across all demographic segments, the Santro Xing combines a fresh new attitude with elegant revisions to the exterior and interior design. Sporting new flowing aerodynamic body lines, large integrated bumpers, stylish new headlamps and large sporty tail lamps, it raises the bar in this hotly contested segment. The plush new interior comes with a cushy 3-spoke steering, new instrument clusters, front and rear power windows, luxurious new upholstery and more.

Positioned to extend its popular appeal across all demographic segments, the Santro Xing combines a fresh new attitude of fun, warmth and ‘sunshine’ with the comfort, convenience and dependability that the Santro has always been known for.

The Santro has evolved significantly over the years, both in terms of engineering and design, the most recent change being the global launch of the 1.1 liter DLI Epsilon engine option in March 2002, and the introduction of the Automatic Transmission and ABS options in September 2002. Hyundai Motor India will treble Santro exports this year to 23,000 units with the European market accounting for 15,000 units.

Since starting production in October 1998, Hyundai Motor India has grown into India’s second largest car manufacturer. Santro is the best seller in the B-segment and E-segment sales charts, respectively. The company recorded combined sales of 111,051 units during the calendar year 2002, and has sold over 400,000 cars in a record time of 55 months since Job One rolled off the lines in October 1998.

Avco International, the sole distributor for Hyundai vehicles in Nepal have imported almost 2,000 vehicles so far since December 1999. Other popular Hyundai models in Nepal include the Accent, Matrix, Sonata, Santa Fe and Terracan and the H100 micro bus. Recognizing the fact that service is the major differentiating factor in their success, Avco Service centre has recently launched a 5 years free service program for all Santro Xing purchased in the new future.

FINANCE:
- Upto 80% financing available with Himalayan Bank Limited @ 7.99% p.a. for 5 years.
- Rs. 99,990/- downpayment EMI Rs. 14,708 for 7 years with Laxmi Bank

AFTER SALES:
- Special Offer - 5 years FREE Servicing
- FREE pick up & drop facility to & from AVCO Service Centre by our after sales team.
- Hyundai Mobile Service

Colours Available

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- Upto 80% financing available with Nabil Bank Limited @ 8.5% p.a. for 5 years.
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AFTER SALES:
- Special Offer - 5 years FREE Servicing
- FREE pick up & drop facility to & from AVCO Service Centre by our after sales team.
- Hyundai Mobile Service

Showroom open on Saturday-come for a FREE test drive this Laxmi Puja.
Enough is enough

How to stop a war that no one wants before no one can stop it.

I t is easy to see where the problems of our national crisis lie: in the three power centres unwilling to give an inch. We know what needs to be done: we need a triangular negotiating table so the three can sit together till they find a way out. The riddle wrapped in an enigma is: how do we do it?

Such is the mistrust, the lack of political will, the refusal to compromise, that even if we got the three political forces to sit around a table it will not guarantee a solution. In fact, what we may get is a full-fledged firefight. Each of the three power centres is bent on enforcing its will through brute force or agitational tactics. The people of Nepal are left out of a war that everyone is fighting in their name. The long-suffering citizens of this country are bearing the brunt of the murder and murther, the displacement, the joblessness and dislocation caused by a collapsed economy.

No one believes there is a political solution, yet they fight. Everyone knows political disagreements are taking the country down, yet they refuse to agree on anything. They know what needs to be done, and don’t even take the first step towards it. Even though rationality doesn’t seem to work anymore, there are some logical points all three parties need to bear in mind:

- **The Maoists**

  - Parts of Nepal may be feudal, but the Nepali people are now alert citizens of a democratic country who are used to their freedoms. This is the 21st-century Nepal; democracy, human rights and peace may look like they are a shortcut, but they breed an all-consuming counterviolence.
  - Nepal’s geopolitical reality is that sustained governance is only possible by taking up an unbiased, neutral and peaceful path. Our giant neighbours will not tolerate instability beyond a certain point.
  - Destruction of national infrastructure or private property doesn’t help the Maoist cause. Social disruption, instead of hastening the revolution, will complicate matters beyond control.
  - An armed struggle may have been justified if there was a totalitarian regime. Democracy has been sidelined, but it’s not dead. Changes in the constitution, even the plausible, can be done through future referendums. You don’t have to kill Neplad and destroy Nepal to achieve that goal.

- **The king**

  - We need to see more evidence that the palace and the government are honest about upholding democracy. Make a genuine effort to bring the Maoists to the mainstream, an offer the parties can’t refuse, and declare a timetable for general and local elections.
  - The king must now take the major political parties into confidence before nominating an interim government, and not expect everyone to join the government once he nominates the prime minister. Such a government should then be given authority to induce peace, and hold elections within a timeframe.
  - The king should agree on a referendum on some of the main demands like the constitutional monarchy, and the crown’s powers over the army.
  - Appointing ministers, key constitutional posts and local body administrators make a mockery of multiparty democracy. It is spreading disarmament, and it should stop. The Nepali people know their fundamental rights and want to decide who is going to rule over them and how.
  - Tempting as it may be in such turbulent times, the king must keep himself above politics and power and let the forces elected by the people play the game of politics.
  - The government must urgently create conditions for the Maoists to lay down their arms and disband the militia in exchange for the army returning to the barracks. This would be the first step in the process of restarting the electoral process.

- **Political parties**

  - The major political parties must own up that they are partly responsible for the mess this nation is in, and undertake a commitment to the people that they will mend their ways. During the last 12 years, the parties have neither been responsible nor accountable. Their mad governance has pushed many Nepalis to blame not just the parties, but democracy itself. The parties need to earn back the peoples’ trust.
  - All political parties advocating constitutional monarchy must unite with the king to form a united front to draw the Maoists to the negotiating table as quickly as possible, ensuring lasting peace.
  - The unity of the five-party alliance must not be allowed to collapse at the first sign of a tussle for ministerial positions. It has gone beyond cabinet positions, now it is about the survival of the nation. Once the country comes back on track, they can go back to playing petty politics, but, please, this time with parsimony and all.

- **Enough is enough**

  - Parts of Nepal may be feudal, but the Nepali people are now alert citizens of the democratic country. We need a political solution, yet they fight. Everyone knows political disagreements are taking the country down, yet they refuse to agree on anything. They know what needs to be done, and don’t even take the first step towards it. Even though rationality doesn’t seem to work anymore, there are some logical points all three parties need to bear in mind.

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DHAWAL SJB RANA

DHAWAL Shumshere JB Rana is the former UML mayor of Nepalgunj.
from p 1
In the last seven years of the ‘people’s war’, more than 7,000 children have been affected. Human rights groups have kept track of the number of children killed, abducted and tortured—but little is reported or done about the most serious problem facing young survivors: their trauma. Despite the cry for help, no organisation has investigated the psycho-social effect of the conflict on children. Some groups are working with orphans, internally displaced children, but the need is far greater than those isolated and unaccompanied efforts. Child psychologists have noted two traits in children suffering post-traumatic shock: intense fear and absorption in self. Four-year-old Pradhan. It makes children distracted, moody, not interested in studies, or sometimes more prone to violence.

A seven-year-old student of ST Xavier’s School. His school was traumatised by the images of rows of Maoist dead on television. He stopped going for classes. When he finally mustered the courage to go back to school, he would cry in fear. It took long sessions of counselling from his teachers and constant support from friends and family before he felt safe again. The Maoists targeting of schools, attacks on schoolteachers, closing down of schools all over the country have also given children the impression that schools are war zones. This has spread far and panic among young children who see themselves as targets of violence. It remains to be seen if Pradhan’s promise will mean that the schools will reopen and the children will get a chance to study normally. Blush Mahat, alumnus rights activist based in Nepalganj says children in the rural islands are especially badly affected. “I have met many children who feel in constant fear that they might get killed at any time, while walking to school or playing outside,” he says.

The Maoists threaten and use abusive language on children when they come to force them to join meetings or take adolescents away for forced recruitment and training. On the other hand, the security forces pathetically wrong children and teachers who refuse to tell them where the Maoists are. They keep quiet out of fear of reprisal from the Maoists, but the security forces take the silence to mean sympathy or support for the rebels. “The children are caught in the middle,” adds Mahat.

Dipak, a 17-year-old from Salyan was taken for interrogation by the security forces. He was tortured for almost two days and was finally let go after his interrogators decided he really didn’t know why his father was missing from the village. Perhaps the most traumatised are Maoist soldier children who are subjected to propaganda, physical hardships and the horror of surviving when so many of their young friends die in battle. Even if they want to escape, they can’t,” says Gauri Pradhan, a psychologist at the anti-torture group, CVICT. The children are trapped: they fear getting arrested or being killed by security forces as much as they do as the communal stigma should they desert and go home. Child soldier Rabi and his friend joined the Maoists out of curiosity. After helping the rebels attack some villages, Rabi started having doubts. When he tried to quit, his own friend threatened to kill him. Now, even if he tries to escape, he feels his community will not accept him back. Child psychologists say that although there have been no studies, they don’t want to rush into the subject because they fear it will only end up making too many generalisations. “It could stigmatisate an entire age group or population as being psychologically damaged,” says Marc Jordan of CVICT, who is preparing a training manual for psychological counselling for children affected by armed conflict. He and his fellow psychologist believe that before anything else, it is critical to mobilise the community first. “When the problem goes straight up to the psychologists, it is end up overstated and too psychological,” Jordan told us.

CVICT says the most important way to deal with children’s trauma is to allow them to continue with their regular routine like going to school, playing with friends and providing care.

The most tragic case in recent months has been the gunbattle at Shiva. A Higher Secondary School in Mithahara in Dinsdag two weeks ago. The school is now closed because no one dares to move the rotting bodies of Maoists from the classrooms. Many children have moved to Siddulpur or to the rural areas to escape. Psychologists say if the school continues to be closed, the parents, children and teachers will not get a chance to collectively come to terms with the tragedy and it will worsen the psychological risk for those who saw their friends being killed and injured. “If the school and community give enough emotional support and care, it will help the students,” says Jordan.

But much emotional support from the community is exactly what is missing in many parts of the country. Village schools are closing down, children are estranged from parents who are on the run from the Maoists and the army, and many are migrating to cities where they end up on the streets, to begin another cycle as street children or day labourers. CVICT is sounding alarm bells. Says Gauri Pradhan: “This is an urgent crisis. Our children are being sold off of their childhood, we can’t stand their future as well.”

Some names of children in this piece have been changed to protect their identity.

CWIN: 4278064
CVICT: 4373902

From l-r: Reshma Singkhawal (front row, second from right) at home with her family in Bhaktapur. Four-year old Shanti waits for her father (a former soldier killed in an encounter) to come home in Rahun. A grieving widow of a policeman with her children, also in Rahun.
As medicare improves in Nepal, the haemorrhage of referrals abroad is abating.

The lack of proper facilities is the only justifiable reason for referrals according to Bharat Rawat, Executive Director at Norvic in Kathmandu. But he admits it is an uphill battle to convince patients they can trust local treatment. He refers less than five percent of his cases, and only those that entail risky procedures. Other than updating facilities and skills, Rawat believes Nepal’s medical profession could do with a communication skills makeover: “Talk to patients, give them respect, let them call you on your phone and don’t hide the truth from them.” He has noted a trend in the tide of Nepali heart patients going abroad and estimates that the percentage of patients is from 80 percent to 80 percent three years ago. “I try and convince Nepalis that we can provide services that are as good, if not better, than some hospitals abroad. The next step is to convince insurance companies that travellers and expats living in Nepal can get quality care at cheaper rates, avoiding the risk of transportation,” says Rawat.

“Recently, I’d even like to establish a facility in Nepal as a medical destination.” That may take some time, but one unidentified Nepali-in-Canada says, “We must improve the diagnostic capabilities of facilities in Nepal, which is the only reason for referrals abroad.”

What’s more important: peace or supremacy of arms?

even human rights problems as the recent incidents in Darumah and Diti seem to indicate. This, in the end, is why the Nepali state, in whatever form it chooses to present itself, should now be honest with the Nepali people about its military aims in the fight against the Maoists. Because if this is all out war, as it seems to be, then war rules and those rules must be respected. Even more, those who investigate the conduct of war need respect and even more, those who investigate the conduct of war need respect and the answers are probably even tougher.

In our doctors we trust

The Nepali people deserve no less than to know that their country is going to be made safe, that soldiers and the police will be fighting more, not less, in the weeks to come. Yes of course, the Maoists too should make their intentions plain, whether they get a definitive diagnosis and the treatment prescribed. But reliability of lab testing in Kathmandu often poses a limiting factor. Without proper diagnosis, treatment becomes difficult.

What’s more important: peace or supremacy of arms? 24 - 30 OCTOBER 2003 NEPAL TIMES #167

B

ig cities are not what we

Here in Nepal, there’s a sense of limbo at the moment. While the level of violence has been alarming in recent weeks, there’s also been the steady stream of body count press releases from the Defence Ministry that there was before the ceasefire earlier this year. Perhaps that’s because, as one Nepali newspaper reported a ministry spokesman as saying, the army doesn’t tell the Ministry what it’s doing anymore. Or perhaps it’s a danse macabre by the world’s international community. That may take some time, but one unidentified Nepali-in-Canada says, “We must improve the diagnostic capabilities of facilities in Nepal, which is the only reason for referrals abroad.”

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SUMNIMA UDAS, NATALI SANDERSON

A Dipankara Buddha stolen from Patan’s Nag Bahal nearly two years ago finally flew home from Vienna on Thursday night just in time for the Newari New Year. The Buddha’s odyssey began when a German art dealer tried to sell it for $180,000 to the Ethnographic Museum in Vienna three months after it was stolen (See Nepali Times, ‘Lost-and-found Buddha’, #94). Due to the rare quality of the image, the museum staff was immediately suspicious, and scholars in Nepal identified the gilded copper image as one of the 108 Buddhas that are paraded through Patan at the annual Samyak festival.

The art dealer relinquished claim to the figure, allowing the Austrian government to secure the Buddha in police custody. It was kept in the lobby of the Vienna museum, where it was worshipped regularly by Austrian Buddhists, while legal wranglings between the Austrian and German authorities delayed repatriation.

Experts say the Dipankara case illustrates the global trend that stolen artifacts are no longer acceptable for sale on the international art market. Still, less than ten of the countless religious objects stolen from Nepal have ever been returned.

“What upsets me most was that this image was stolen out of a living tradition,” says Buddhist scholar, Alexander Rospatt. “It shouldn’t go back to a museum here, that would defeat the whole purpose of the exercise.” At Nag Bahal this week, local guthiyas said their Buddha had gone on a ‘little vacation’ and they heard rumours that he was coming back soon.

Case closed

Long before the Supreme Court of Japan sentenced Govinda P Mainali to life imprisonment this week, his case was already making headlines in Japan and here in Nepal Times (Here comes the story of Govinda Mainali, #89, Radha visits Govinda in jail, #77). In 2000, Mainali was acquitted by Tokyo District Court but the verdict was reversed eight months later by Tokyo High Court. His retrial and unnecessary detention sparked protests from human rights groups. After a protracted battle in court and several attempts at extradition to Nepal, Mainali was found guilty of murdering a Japanese woman from Tokyo Electric Power Co in 1997. ‘Unlawful Govinda Prasad Mainali lodges another appeal, the Tokyo High Court’s ruling that he be imprisoned for life will be final,’ reports Japan’s Mainichi News.

Abducted

British Army Lieutenant Colonel Adrian Griffith was with his team on a regular recruitment drive for the British Gurkha regiments when he was abducted by the Maoists last Sunday. The first foreign national to have this dubious honour, Griffith was taken hostage with four Nepali officials in a village near Baglung. Forty hours after their ordeal, the entire team was released. Griffith is now back in Kathmandu and the British Embassy has stated it is investigating the matter.

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Dipankara comes home

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A Dipankara Buddha stolen from Patan’s Nag Bahal nearly two years ago finally flew home from Vienna on Thursday night just in time for the Newari New Year. The Buddha’s odyssey began when a German art dealer tried to sell it for $180,000 to the Ethnographic Museum in Vienna three months after it was stolen (See Nepali Times, ‘Lost-and-found Buddha’, #94).

Due to the rare quality of the image, the museum staff was immediately suspicious, and scholars in Nepal identified the gilded copper image as one of the 108 Buddhhas that are paraded through Patan at the annual Samyak festival.

The art dealer relinquished claim to the figure, allowing the Austrian government to secure the Buddha in police custody. It was kept in the lobby of the Vienna museum, where it was worshipped regularly by Austrian Buddhists (see pic), while legal wranglings between the Austrian and German authorities delayed repatriation.

Experts say the Dipankara case illustrates the global trend that stolen artifacts are no longer acceptable for sale on the international art market. Still, less than ten of the countless religious objects stolen from Nepal have ever been returned.

“What upset me most was that this image was stolen out of a living tradition,” says Buddhist scholar, Alexander Rospatt. “It shouldn’t go back to a museum here, that would defeat the whole purpose of the exercise.” At Nag Bahal this week, local guthiyas said their Buddha had gone on a ‘little vacation’ and they heard rumours that he was coming back soon.
### NEPAL IN THE FOREIGN PRESS

**Nepal Times: The Guardian**

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### NEPALI TIMES

### September 2003

Ian Porter

British must act to contain all-out war in Nepal

W hile world attention is focused on US and British military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, just along the Himalaya, a low-intensity conflict in Nepal is on the verge of becoming a disastrous all-out war.

The Maoist insurgency, which started in 1996, has led to a conflict that is likely to be unassailable—or, as Tony Blair's special envoy, Sir Jeffrey James, put it, there is no "acceptable military solution".

The British envoy's analysis cannot be lightly dismissed. Nepal's relationship with the UK goes back nearly two centuries and centres on the exportation of Nepalese from marginalized ethnic groups as Ghurkhas. Its longstanding cooperation with the royal Nepal army means that British intelligence is second to none in Nepal.

But the Bain's conditionalities for lending have received a lot of flak for being impractical. Actually, it was precisely the very conditionality that turned out to be impractical; nor just in Nepal. But at the same time, if Nepal didn't learn from best practices in the region, the developments here were met and so we upgraded the lending. It means, essentially, that there is a small group of people in Kathmandu who keep the government paralyzed and who are not interested in helping the country.

The main reason for the government's paralysis is that all meaningful decision-making power lies with the army and the king. The paralysis is that all meaningful decision-making power lies with the army and the king. The paralysis is that all meaningful decision-making power lies with the army and the king. The paralysis is that all meaningful decision-making power lies with the army and the king.

Ian Porter is a pseudonym for an official in the British Department for International Development (DfID) and the Foreign Office and Downing Street, as she fiercely opposed the move.

There are 62 member countries who own the World Bank as shareholders. The US and Japan are the two largest shareholders. The US constitution says that the bank's headquarters must be in the capital city of the largest shareholder, therefore, the headquarters is in Washington DC. But, if for some reason Japan becomes the largest shareholder, the office will move to Tokyo. The role of the Management Board and shareholder countries have been articulated in the constitution. No single country has the veto right. We are not an instrument of the US. We take each of these interventions as an opportunity to sit with intelligent people to try and understand what we can do.

India and China have had a very close relationship for years but the US believe it is time to push India and China to the table in a weakened position. The US policy appears to be increasingly in disarray. The British ambassador and the senior DfID official in Kathmandu, have both been recalled to London to try sort out the mess. It seems Sir Jeffrey needs some help after the king refused him an audience during his recent visit.

The US special forces have trained a quarter of the Nepalese army twice, with five killed in one attack and 25 killed in the other. The US has now called for an independent official inquiry.

Amnesty International has long reported on the iniquitous way in which the Nepalese security forces have traditionally enjoyed, and the senior army official in charge of human rights issues last month that the prosecutions for human rights violations are out of the question during the conflict in any case. The commission has made several visits. It seeks to establish the real world. It seeks to establish the real world. It seeks to establish the real world. It seeks to establish the real world.

The body is ill for the compelling. While the security forces are in their training, they are in control. The aim of the body is to establish the real world. It seeks to establish the real world. It seeks to establish the real world. It seeks to establish the real world.

The British government appears to have become comfortable with these developments, happy to play the good cop to the bad cop role that the current US administration wants. The British government appears to have become comfortable with these developments, happy to play the good cop to the bad cop role that the current US administration wants.

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While every country is prone to a certain degree of corruption, in Nepal, for many, many years the procurement process has been a nightmare. The government has a problem with corruption. The procurement process has been a nightmare. The government has a problem with corruption. The procurement process has been a nightmare. The government has a problem with corruption. The procurement process has been a nightmare. The government has a problem with corruption.

Fiercely opposed the move. There are two military helicopters to Nepal last year, reportedly another nail in the coffin of Clare Short's difficult relationship with the Foreign Office, the Department for International Development (DfID) and the Ministry of Defence—and thus is proving a lead to the international community.

The British ambassador and the senior DfID official in Kathmandu have both been recalled to London to try sort out the mess. It seems Sir Jeffrey needs some help after the king refused him an audience during his recent visit.

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### September 2003

Ian Porter

### Britain must act to contain all-out war in Nepal

### Escalating conflict between Maoists and the army threatens catastrophe.
Bridging the gap

Japan has decided to extend a grant of $24,200 to build a 22m steel truss bridge over Changlung Khola at Charaha Village in Dolpa. Charaha is on the trade route between Upper Dolpa, Jomsom and Tibet, and is also on an intersection for commuting to and from the district headquarters at Sunauli. In spite of the importance of this village, all it had was a temporary wooden bridge that was often swept away during the monsoons. The area is familiar to the Japanese because of Eivai Kowaguchi, the first Japanese to visit Nepal in 1899, who stopped there on his way to Tibet. Makoto Nebuka, a Japanese writer who visited the area frequently, has studied Kowaguchi and reintroduced Dolpa to the Japanese people through his writings. Nebuka and his friend in Japan have donated construction material. The labour and other locally available construction materials will be contributed by CBCC. The Japanese government will bear transportation costs of major construction materials.

Instant solutions

For fast loans up to Rs 400,000, Everest Bank Limited’s new joint venture with Punjab National Bank sanctions schemes against mortgage of immovable property in Kathmandu and other selected urban centres. The term loan is repayable in convenient monthly installments in a period of 60 months and the overdraft is reviewed every year.

Kollywood night

Nepal’s music industry through various sponsorships and events, is now giving the film industry a much needed boost through the Lux Film Awards 2060 presented by Hits FM 91.2 on 29 November this year. Organisers say the event will have stringent needed boost through the Lux Film Awards 2060 presented by Hits FM 91.2 on 29 November this year. Organisers say the event will have stringent

NEW PRODUCTS

LONDON TO KATHMANDU: Pepe Jeans, London, are now available at Mark Clothing, Kathmandu. This new readymade outlet has been set up at Dharmapath and stocks a wide range of shirts, t-shirts and pants, that are also available at Roots Fashion in Putali Bazaar. Yogen Stapal, the director of the company, says the collection is ideal for hip young things and upwardly mobile executives.

T-SHIRT STATION: From simple mono-colour text to bright graphics, Graphic Station’s new showroom at Kupandol is the perfect place for professional results. They are ideal for brand t-shirts but are quite happy to collaborate on special one-off personalised pieces too. All t-shirts are 100 percent cotton, colour fast and designs are guaranteed not to peel off or fade.

Golchha Furniture Solution showroom, a Golchha Organisation enterprise, recently opened its doors in Trinakhu. They offer a wide range of practical, affordable and modern solutions for your interiors.

MAKOver: This week, Johnnie Walker Red Label revealed a stunning new 21st century incarnation of the world famous Scottish whisky. The main label has a radiant red ‘hot-spot’ in the centre and the Striding Man figure has been ‘liberated’ from the label at the bottom. The bottle is much more open and less cluttered too. Happily, the company hasn’t tampered with the taste, ensuring that while our old friend may look spiffier, it still goes down easy.

Brings out the star in you
Despite a tourism slump, the people of Manang are upbeat about the future.

KUNDA DIXIT e MANANG

This time of year, the Manang valley is a patchwork quilt of yellow and brown. The village elders have met to inspect the opening bukhedbar and millet, and decided that harvesting will begin tomorrow.

The scenic autumn colours hide a serious social dislocation. Decades of depopulation, the migration of Manangis to Kathmandu and beyond, has taken its toll. Many of the fields are fallow, there just isn't enough manpower for the harvest, so hundreds of villagers have moved up from Barpak in Upper Gorkha for the harvest season. Even before the sun rises behind Pisang’s towering cone, the workers are on the terraces. The fields rise up like a staircase from the fishtailing Manang valley up to the base of the cliffs that form the northern ramparts of the Annapurnas.

It’s back-breaking work and they start it all day, cutting, gathering, threshing with no time to admire some of the most spectacular scenery on earth. Thick forests of fir and spruce serrate the skyline. High above all this are the knife-edge ridges, fluted crests and terracing blue streaks of the hanging glaciers on Annapurna.

Along the flat and wide trail from Humde southwards to Manang, there are a few trekkers this season to take in all this. On a normal October, there would be 300 tourists a day, walking up towards Thorung La and Jomsom. This season, there haven’t been more than 80 daily doing the traverse. The end of the casetree on 27 August and the security situation downhill valley in Lamjung discouraged many. The adventurous came nevertheless, but were blocked by the Manangdi bridge below Dhupantai that was damaged by a rockfall in mid-September. Information and rumours travel quickly up and down the trails, and now reports are rife of rampant Maoist extortion in Chhomrong at the other end of the Annapurna circuit. Many who can afford it are planning in fly out from Jomsom instead of walking to Pokhara. In the lodges at night over dinner, trekkers exchange experiences of their encounters with Maoists: the courteous requests to donate to the revolution with a gnarled pushing from below the shirt. Receipts for Rs 1,000 bearing portraits of Mao, Lin Biao and Mao and denouncing American imperialism have become the new take-home souvenirs of a trek in Nepal. Most take the encounters in stride, it is the alldowade they are more worried about.

Many Manangis who returned to their home villages after the trekking bonanza of the 1990s are now in gloom. “We struggled a lot to make tourism work here, if it goes on like this all our investment will be wasted,” says the ex-DDC chairman Michung Gurung (pic, below). “And if tourism goes down, we go down.”

Even though what happens in Kathmandu has such direct impact on the economy and development of Manang, its politics and home-tread foods remain here. Even the Nepal Congress chairman of Manang DDC, Phunjo Gurung, says there are no partisan causes here. “People are less concerned about politics, they just want things to get back to normal so the tourists start coming again,” Phunjo, who runs one of Manang’s classier restaurants, specialising in Mexican and Italian cuisine. Phunjo is impatient to get back to work the people elected him for, but says his party bosses in Kathmandu wouldn’t understand this. When he was DDC chairman, Phunjo worked closely with the Annapurna Area Conservation Project to upgrade the trekking trails, build and repair bridges. Today, every VDC in Manang is connected by new suspension bridges. Every VDC in Manang is connected by new suspension bridges. Trekkers who want to go on side trips have safe and well-marked trails and the community forestry program has revived much of woods around Pisang.

Revival of tourism would also reverse the trend for outrunmisation as more Manangis come back. There is a perception in Kathmandu that Manangis are all rich,” says Phunjo, “but the reality is different. Here you have to struggle, but if you work hard it has rewards.”

Karma Tsering (pic, below) started the first bakery in Manang in Begga, and says he and his family can survive from farming even if tourism completely dries up. “You don’t need as much money here as you do in Kathmandu, you have to work hard, but you can make a living from the land,” says Karma. But he adds that he doesn’t have to get up at three every morning to start baking bread like he used to five years ago.

Sonam Tapkey is making off to his field on the slopes above Braga, carrying lunch for his Buypak harvesters. He has time to do this because there are few tourists in his Hotel New Yak. With his John Lennon spectacles and film-star good looks, Sonam has no regrets about leaving Kathmandu. “Why live anywhere else when your home village is so beautiful, the air and water is clean?” he asks with a wide grin.

For Sonam, tourism has been the impetus to farm vegetables, sell a tasty health drink made from high-altitude wild seabuckthorn berries, and run roadside shops. All this will suffer if the tourism slump continues. “We have cabbages here that are 10 kg, cannot of three kg, if there are no trekkers we have to feed them to the hores,” says 75-year-old Tashi Tensing. Manang returned to tourism that is real problem is that people are not helping their village, and they don’t want to come back. Michung Gurung, who returned to Manang in 1977 after trading between Bangkok, Penang and Singapore, agrees that the Manang diaspora only donates to monasteries and shrines. “With the money they give gompas, we could upgrade schools and healthcare posts in all VDCs here,” Michung tells us. Most of those who have returned to Manang have had to leave behind their children in expensive boarding schools in Kathmandu or India. They worry that their children are alienated from Manangi culture, language and festivals and act like foreigners when they come home for holidays.

Because of the tourist dump, it is also getting difficult to pay the school fees. With an average per capita income four times the national average, there seems to be no reason why quality schools can’t be set up in Manang. But there may have to wait for the return for the next generation of wealthy international Manangis who want to get back to their roots.

Michung has also served as DDC chairman and has long stopped expecting anything from Kathmandu. “They don’t care for us, whatever we need to do we must do ourselves,” he says. Indeed, most recent development in Manang has been because of local initiative. The airfield at Humde was carved out from a hillside by local people 15 years ago, the two power plants that supply electricity were set up locally but demand has outstripped supply and the turbines need repairs so there is power in Manang only on alternate nights.

Tripple Gurung (pic, below) is a Manangi who flies for Yeti Airlines, and has been trying to promote tourism to his home valley. He flies regularly into Humde from Kathmandu, and agrees that tourist numbers would grow if the flights could be made more regular. He has set up the Manang Youth Club to carry out conservation work, and is the prime mover behind the Destina- Manang Year 2004 campaign. He sums it all up. “People don’t know that 30 minutes from Kathmandu you have this unspoilt mountain paradise, and it is income from tourism that will ultimately help us preserve our culture and our way of life.”

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Meet me in Manang

The Destination Manang 2004 campaign is trying to bring in tourists to this trans-Himalayan valley with the slogan: ‘See you in Manang’. It has a calendar of festivals throughout next year, and is promoting the valley’s accessibility, its superb scenery and its comfortable lodges.

For most trekkers, Manang is just a transit point for acclimatisation before climbing up to Thorung La on the Annapurna Circuit. They rush through Manang and have no time to take in the serene ambience of this uniquely picturesque region. The Destination Manang Campaign is out to change all that. “We want to show that Manang is worth going to even if you aren’t doing Thorung La, there is enough to see and do in Manang itself,” says Tripple Gurung, an airline pilot.

Humde airport is only 30 minutes from Kathmandu, and Yeti Airlines currently operates a scheduled flight every Saturday, with charter roundtrips during the week. Royal Nepal is set to resume its Pokhara-Manang flights soon, but don’t bet on it. The flight skirts Himalchuli, rises up the narrow gorge of the Marsyangdi before the valley opens out in Upper Manang. The airfield at 3,200m is an ideal place to start a week-long trans-Himalayan holiday.

It is a pleasant two-hour walk down to Pisang along meadows and pine forests. There are great views of the north face of Annapurna II which is directly above the village, and is a good place to acclimatisate if you have just flown in. There is a grassy view of Swarga Dhar (literally ‘door to heaven’), a geological oddity that has turned a 1,300m high mountain into a near-perfect hemisphere. Swarga Dhar would probably work very well as a parabolic antenna to scan the universe for radio transmission from extraterrestrials.

Next day, walk to the monastery in Upper Pisang, have lunch at one of the numerous restaurants facing Annapurna II, and then on to a cluster of houses that is Gyaru at 3,800m. The trek from Gyaru via Ngawal to Manang is the high road that offers a grand panorama of the entire north wall of the Annapurnas. Take side trips to the numerous pastures on the north side of the valley, including the holy Kecho Lake at 4,800 m where the Annapurnas are reflected on the waters. Descend into Manang and Braga, and eat at the numerous restaurants, bakeries, just lie in the sun, or go see a movie at the video parlour (currently showing: Into Thin Air and Caravan). Another day trek from Braga is to climb as far as you can up a spur of Annapurna III to Mitip Reepa’s cave and see if you can spot the bow that the Buddhist saint is said to have left behind. The road up from Manang, past the bulldozed remains of the lateral moraine of the Gangapurna Glacier, has spectacular views of a turquoise green lake.

All this will acclimatisate you for the tough trek to Tilicho, one of the world’s highest lakes at 5,100m. It is a three-day roundtrip from Manang via Kangshar, and only for the well-acclimatised. We have it on good authority that the view of the lake and the Grand Barrier on a full-moon night is a spiritual experience that will cleanse your soul for the rest of your life. Tilicho Lake has become a pilgrimage spot for Indians who regard it as the famous body of water mentioned in the Ramayana where the crow gave Garuda a piece of his mind.

The Destination Manang 2004 campaign hopes to capitalise on the variety of pilgrimage, trekking, nature and festival attractions of Manang to bring in at least 20,000 visitors to the valley next year. Manang can be a destination not just for overseas visitors, but also Kathmandu-based expats and Nepali tourists for whom this can be an ideal quick and scenic one-week getaway. There is something for every season: archery contests, harvest festivals, monsoon pilgrimages, trekking and mountaineering all year round, and even heli-skiing in winter. After this, if you still want to go to Thorung La, be our guest.
The ancestors of the Himalaya

The Himalaya sits on top of another mountain range that is 10 times older.

TUSCON, Arizona, USA - The Himalaya were, all now, thought to have been formed 55 million years ago when the Indian subcontinent plunged into the Asian landmass, but new discoveries show that the mountain range is part of a 500 million-year-old mountain system.

American geologists say the Himalayan mountains reached their present heights by piggybacking on another mountain system even older than the range that includes Mt Everest, suggesting that they have been formed between 450-500 million years ago, rather than the range that includes Mt Everest.

The findings of the UA scientists are published in the September issue of GSA Today, a scientific journal of the Geological Society of America. (www.geosociety.org)

"Not only are the Himalaya Mountains any another range, they are still moving up," said George Gehrels, a geochemistry professor studying the phenomena. "But erosion keeps the peaks from getting much higher."

The findings of the UA scientists fly in the face of conventional theories and force scientists to revise ideas on the region's tectonic history. The revised geologic history also challenges Earth scientists to rethink ideas on global climate change and the global shift in atmospheric chemistry of about 55 million years ago, Gehrels said.

It's important to the scientific community to understand the link between mountain building, which causes carbon dioxide loss and changes in climate, to changes in seawater chemistry, which is believed to be caused by erosion from the mountains spewing into the sea.

"We live on a very dynamic planet," Gehrels said. "And it's not only dynamic now, but it's always been dynamic."

There are 12 major tectonic plates on Earth and many smaller plates. India, a tectonic plate itself, is moving northward on top of another range right now and we would love to rethink the global climate change that has happened between mountain building, which is believed to be caused by erosion from the mountains spewing into the sea.

"Our model is based on observations that, between 450-500 million years ago, rocks in the Himalaya were pushed down to great depth and metamorphosed," Gehrels said.

"We live on a very dynamic planet," Gehrels said. "And it's not only dynamic now, but it's always been dynamic."

There are 12 major tectonic plates on Earth and many smaller plates. India, a tectonic plate itself, collided with Asia 55 million years ago, Gehrels said. V-shaped patterns on boulders along river beds in the higher Himalaya were formed some 500 million years ago when the India Plate collided with an yet-unknown land mass, said Gehrels, who has been working on the project for 10 years. The age of the rock is determined by plotting the decay of uranium over lead.

The ancient findings are significant not only because of their age, but also because it causes scientists to rethink the global climate change and the shift in atmospheric chemistry. The Himalaya Mountains shed enormous amounts of sediment that flow from the river systems into the oceans, which causes carbon dioxide loss in the atmosphere and in return cools Earth's climate.

"Taking away carbon dioxide is like taking a blanket off of the Earth," Gehrels said. "It causes the entire Earth to get a whole lot cooler."

Though it may not feel cool, the fact is that during most of Earth's history there were no polar ice caps. The eroded sediment that is swept away by mountain building and piggybacking on another range is 10 times older than the range that includes Mt Everest.

"We might have found the answer for why Earth's climate and sea composition changed drastically at this point in time," Gehrels said.

There are two pieces of a jigsaw puzzle and our goal is to put the other half," Gehrels said.

"There are still a lot of unanswered questions because we are looking at half a mountain range right now and we would love to find the other half," Gehrels said.

"There are two pieces of a jigsaw puzzle and our goal is to put this together," Gehrels said.

"This definitely may have played a role into what is in the ocean," Gehrels said. "We might have found the reason for why Earth's climate and sea composition changed drastically at this point in time."
transnational terrorist groups that "dismantle, fully and without delay, (known as SAMs).

shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles man-portable missiles, such as production, transfer and brokering of to adopt strict domestic export APEC member economies had agreed the Bangkok Declaration stated that the about the WTO were rich in rhetoric but short on specifics. To combat terrorism, for instance, the Bangkok Declaration stated that the APEC member economies had agreed to adopt strict domestic export controls, to secure ideology and to take domestic actions to "regularize the production, transfer and brokerage of man-portable missiles, such as shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles (known as SAMs)."
The leaders also agreed to "dismantle, fully and without delay, transnational terrorist groups that threaten the APEC economies". They committed to establishing "a regional trade and financial security initiative with the Asian Development Bank, to support projects that enhance port security, combat terrorist finance, and achieve other counter-terrorism objectives".

In keeping with the focus on security, the APEC members also expressed concern, although implicitly, about security threats to the region posed by North Korea. They committed to "eliminate the severe and growing danger posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction". Such an overwhelming area of concern meant a continuation of a trend that first occurred at the 2001 APEC forum hosted by China, followed by last year’s meeting in Mexico. The pattern, which emerged in the wake of the 11 September terrorist attacks in the United States, indicates a further shift away from the free-trade vision of APEC, affirmed in Bogor, Indonesia, in 1994. At that summit, the developed member economies committed to opening up to free trade and investment by 2010, while the developing economies were given until 2020 to achieve this goal.

On the WTO, the declaration stated that APEC "affirmed the primacy of the multilateral trading system" and agreed to support free-trade rules shaped by the Doha Development Agenda, which was supposed to enable developing countries to gain a secure foothold in the world economy. That included APEC backing attempts to abolish "all forms of agricultural export subsidies, unjustifiable export prohibitions and restrictions, and commit ourselves to work in the negotiating group on rules in accordance with the Doha mandate".

The significance of APEC’s views on the WTO was lost on the leaders of Thailand and Chile in the wake of the fact that this week’s meeting was the first major international gathering after the WTO’s dramatic failure in Mexico. The "message from us is important: that the WTO talks should continue," Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra told a press conference at the close of the APEC summit. "All of us are committed to free trade. We feel there is some room to open the doors that were closed in Cancun," Chilean President Ricardo Lagos Escobar told the media. However, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad was more circumspect, stressing a point he has come to be known for—that what the world needs is more fair trade, not free trade. "Free trade may not be fair but free trade can be fair," he told the press. "We need to insist on an equitable system.

Among APEC’s members are developing countries, such as China, and developed countries, such as the United States, who lined up on either side of the bitter debate in Cancun that led to the WTO talks’ collapse. The fact that the animosity from Cancun is not reflected in APEC’s declaration "has to be welcomed," says Asia Day’s of the Bangladesh development agency Oxfam. "If there is no commitment to support the multilateral trading arrangement that genuinely addresses developing country concerns, it is good."

(IPS)

Exorbitant Rx

HOCHIMIN CITY – Vietnam is finding out that there is no easy cure for the problem of rising drug prices. On 1 October, the health ministry was to implement a circular requiring all medicine products, whether local or imported, carry stickers showing their retail prices. But the implementation of this new rule has been moved to 1 January 2004, after eminent doctors and drug experts voiced their concerns about whether the health ministry’s scheme was pragmatic and feasible.

The circular was aimed at addressing a situation where “prices have increased by 17.4 percent so far this year, 10 times the rate of most goods,” said Vu Cong Chinh, a member of the group of health ministry experts in charge of drafting the circular on medicine price management. It also classifies medicines into three categories: drugs for national programs, essential medicine and popular drugs. The government will put a cap the prices of essential drugs and leave the prices of those in the final category to the drug vendors. However, leading pharmacists and doctors say a wider program is needed to address the problem, and that controlling prices is only part of this effort.

Dwindling females

NEW DELHI – Indian families trapped between the traditional bias toward male offspring and the need to limit family size, end up aborting female fetuses after getting illegal sex-determination tests. The Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostics Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act came into force on 14 February this year, but doctors and private clinics still disclose the sex of an unborn child for a fat fee. At present, anyone who seeks help for sex selection faces conviction and imprisonment for a three-year period. The state-level medical council debar the medical practitioner, if convicted.

According to “Mapping the Adverse Sex Ratio in India,” the new UNFPA pocket, India’s child sex ratio—the number of girls per 1,000 boys in 0-6 years of age group—declined from 945 per 1,000 in the 1991 census to 927 per 1,000 in the 2001 census in a downward trend continuing since 1961. In an attempt to strike a balance, last year Haryana’s Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala announced a new family planning scheme. Couples get paid 510 a month to support one female child and half that amount to support a male child if they opt for sterilisation afterwards.

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**No threat**

Yumesh Shresta, Rajbiraj

Rumors of Maoist emotions and search operations by security forces forcing trekkers to return from the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAPA) are unfounded. Neither trekking operators nor locals faced such difficulties on the Annapurna trails. Locals at Ghandrak and Bhumsera say many tourists are carrying on with their treks. They confirmed Maoist rebels in the region have dispersed after collecting donations. Most rebels are satisfied with what they receive. There are, however, cases of opportunities posing as Maoists who harass tourists for donations. People who have reportedly manhandled locals, and they fled the area. The Treking Agents Association of Nepal (TAAN) said a Spanish tourist confirmed security forces had indeed conducted search operations at Pun Hill, but only for a day. The association’s regional chapter in Pokhara says no tourists have returned from the Annapurna region because of the army or the Maoists.

**Room for more**

Chucha, 20 Oct

Dali make up the lowest number of students in Nepal’s biggest university. Only 7,086 students attended Tribhuvan University in 2002-2003, there are only 16 dalits, out which only 10 attend regular classes. The next time to the university only during examinations. Out of this number, there is only a single female dalit student. Durga Subba who graduated recently says things are improving for her community although “the low turnout of students paints a dismal picture.”

Khagendra Basstel, a dalit trade union leader, says they want a dalit as a student representative and she wants her dalit students to represent them. But the college is closed because of its bad management. All of them have nowhere to go.

**We will continue.**

Sushil Koirala, Nepal Congress general secretary in Sagatkh Janastas, 18-24 October

People may have the impression that the political parties of the dissolved parliament have slowed down their movement. We have not. We chose not publicise our protest program during the Dasai and Tihar festival. We will finalise the future direction of our movement before Tihar. We will continue.

We toned down our protest because of several reasons: Maoist rebels returned to jungles and resumed violent activity when our movement was gaining momentum. The government imposed curfews in many districts and prevented people from entering in the capital. Since there were restrictions on travel, people could not participate in the movement. Despite that, tens of thousands of people turned out on the streets during our week-long protest. We did it peacefully and in a disciplined way.

Have the two governments directly formed by the king been able to solve problems in the country? They couldn't even establish their legitimacy. In the meantime, the security situation has deteriorated. There are no signs of peace anywhere. I see no positive results from this government.

As long as there is violence, murder and terrorism, we cannot imagine going to the ballot. How can the government say it can hold elections? One must understand that the government had to make nominations for leaders at local bodies because it could not hold elections, and furthermore, they won't be able to if the present situation persists. If that's the case with local elections, how can we think about general elections?

The arrest of our co-general secretary Govinda Raj Joshi by the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) has everything to do with political vendetta. The investigation of abuse of authority (CIAA) has everything to do with political vendetta. The government had to make nominations for leaders at local bodies because it could not hold elections, and furthermore, they won't be able to if the present situation persists. If that's the case with local elections, how can we think about general elections?

The ambassadors seem to lead our leaders. "We will continue."

**Out of control**

Sanghu, 20 October

The Maoists have gained notably around the world for their violent activities in non-military zones—destroying infrastructure, forcing children to attend cultural programs, burning Red Cross resources, attacking social workers, bombing banks and extorting from even poor people. These activities have been going on for a long time, since their people’s war began, and worsened after they broke the truce with the Deuba government. After series of protests from the international community and human rights activists, the Maoist leaders announced they would abstain from excessive extortion and killing. But the militants remain virtually uncontrollable, saying change is not possible without destroying the old regime. Their side-stepping responsibility by saying all they do is follow orders.

It begs the question whether Prachanda was just pretending when he talked of peace. He could have easily controlled his people by categorically stating his commitment to a peace agreement.

The Maoists, who always talk about achieving their dreams about a perfect Nepal, are set on destroying the nation and its citizens. The Maoists did have popular support, but the people are dominated, not motivated by the Maoist guns. Once they are disarmed, the public will probably be less afraid of the Maoists. If the Maoists challenge the state, why hasn’t the state taken action? If their leaders don’t remain in their cadre, the Maoist party will self-destruct.

The ambassadors seem to lead our leaders.

-Industrialist Basanta Chaudhary in Jandharana, 23 October

**Quote of the week**

The ambassadors seem to lead our leaders.

---
Tuesday 26 April, 1977

Sundarijal

After all, they took me to a specially constituted court set up specifically to try my case on camera. In the morning, immediately after breakfast, the Major came inside to inform me that as I had been arranged to be taken to the court the lunch would be served before 11 AM. I was in the bathroom doing my daily very early when the information was conveyed to me. I had very little time to arrange my thoughts and things. But they came after 2 PM, which I thought was time past for myself to be taken to the court; hence I was preparing to press my washed clothes. As Anu Chaudhary also came along with the Major + told me that his order of my detention under the Security Act had been withdrawn and asked me to certify the withdrawal. When I asked him for a written order of withdrawal, he said his verbal statement was enough. I signed the typed certification, the tho was not wholly satisfied by his statement. I agreed with him that since a written order of detention had been served, its withdrawal order should also be in writing. But he wouldn’t listen. Immediately after I signed the certification of withdrawal I was taken out of the camp - brought to the court (at Singhur Darbar) in a police jeep escorted by another jeepload of armed police. My 1st outing in 4 months. The outside of the camp appeared to be a small fort with sinister looking tangle of barbed wires, which reminded me of...

POETIC LICENSE

Back at Sundarijal >46

The compensation of the people. Everything in the court seemed to be improvised and hurriedly put together. The court is constituted of one judge, with two office clerks—the judge is the district judge of the Narayani Zone—seemed to be a little nervous and self-conscious also and anxious to bodily fair. On the whole a good normal person, but lacks personality + may not be legally clever—and softspoken, but may not be strong enough to withstand the pressure from the govt. When the court sat, at the very outset I told that I was unable to participate in the legal proceedings as long as I didn’t get the services of a lawyer. He promptly said that I would get all legal facilities provided by the constitution—and a man immediately was dispatched to fetch Ganeshrai. In the meantime I pleased with the court that I should get all the normal facilities of an unindicted, including regular interviews with my family + also pleaded for the permission to them to come to this court. As regards interviews he said that he would see what he could do about it afterwards, but as far as their attendance in the court was concerned the special court the govt had to hold its sessions in secret, so outsiders wouldn’t be permitted according to the very order of the constitution (see 21.4.77)

[entry on page for 22 April]

(from 26.4.77) of the court. On this my argument was that family members were not outsiders and the secret session was not meant to be a session in purdah. The intention was to avoid press and the public. I further argued that since there was no specific order providing the attendance of family members, the judge was free to interpret the order of the govt in such a liberal manner as per my interpretation of the order. The judge said nothing clearly in this regard. As we were waiting the arrival of my lawyer the judge went to his chamber, permitting some kind of recess. In the meantime Ganeshrai came. He told me that he had moved the Supreme Court for habeus corpus on my behalf starting that I was in military detention, that I was being interrogated by the police on charges that had already been submitted to the court + that too when I was a prisoner under the Security Act—malafide detention, etc etc. He was expecting Supreme Court’s ruling on this writ application today itself. He also told me that foreign legal bodies like Amnesty International, Pen plus NAACP, were interested in my case + might attend the court as observers.

All this had an effect because when I was brought back to the detention camp the Major told me that he had just received an order from the police party to hand over the camp to the police and that the police party was expected any moment to take charge of me. The sudden withdrawal of detention order under Security Act, the withdrawal of the army as my jailer, my presentation to the court – all were suddenly decided with a view of the writ petition and the realisation on the part of the govt that what they had been doing was wrong + was definitely high-handed. If the court were as concerned as they should be for the citizens’ rights under law it should take this development too in consideration. After all, the compliance of the letters of law without meeting the demand if it is spirit is typically known as jafal and jihal. A jafal keeps his legal document in order but violates the law in spirit.

I was given a glass of lemon tea in the court room when the court was not in session. The court atmosphere was relaxed. I told the judge in the very beginning that when I am brought here, I became (see 24.3.77)

[entry on page for 24 March]

(From 21.4.77) relaxed and relieved, that I had been kept in solitary confinement under Security Act detention order, etc etc.

I was brought back to the detention camp at 6:15 PM. This outing had been too exciting and I felt a little tired. I was hungry also immediately after sat food to go to bed but I was too excited to sleep. At about 9:30 the Major came with DIG Chemjong and bade goodbye to me. At dinertime the Capt. Subedar + others had come to say goodbyes. I told them that they had been good to me + I thanked them all. The thanked the cook told him that I would always remember his hospitality. Though the very order of the govt the major I said—Major, I am very glad as I hope you will also be that the army is being relieved from police duty. The army is always used by the govt for their political opponent, and is made to perform the police duty—which is not what the army is for.” I further told him—“I am fighting for the dignity of the people of Nepal, for you, Major, for your brothers + for the future generation too. I wish you the best of luck. Goodbye, Major. He brought a writing table for me and said—I know you had been wanting a writing table, and the army was preparing to send one. But now that the police has taken over, I don’t know how long you will take to get a table. This is my table which I had been using here. It is a field table. I hope it will serve your purpose.” I thanked him. I saw Subedar was tearful. I also felt sad when they left. I seem to have grown a fondness for the men of the army. The DIG who has taken over charge also seems to be a good man—bespectacled, thin, totally devoid of a personality which is associated with a police officer—an atmosphere of cold authority is lacking in his demeanor. The atmosphere of the camp has suddenly changed. I took a tablet of valium. I want to bed, a little overawed with the events of the day and a little sad at the departure of the army from the establishment. I had started liking them, and they too had developed a regard for me + an understanding of our cause.

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15 - 24 OCTOBER 2003 NEPALI TIMES #167

24 - 30 october 2003 NEPALI TIMES #167

Back at Sundarijal >46

“I am fighting for the dignity of Nepals”
KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

Harmful 351 to 425
Unhealthy 121 to 350

What you breathe.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

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Average PM10 levels at selected points in Kathmandu 12-19 October in micrograms per cubic meter.
Source: www.mrp.gov.np

NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED

One of the tentacles of moisture from the south Indian low pressure system that is destroying cricket in Chennai will pass swiftly across our skies, but shouldn’t cause unyttad problems. High pressure and clear skies will dominate, although we are already beginning to see early effects of the Indo-Gangetic winter breeze hatched our way by the westerlies. So, expect glorious Tihar weather, misty mornings with clear skies, but shouldn’t cause untoward problems. High pressure and clear skies will dominate, although we are already beginning to see early effects of the Indo-Gangetic winter breeze hatched our way by the westerlies. So, expect glorious Tihar weather, misty mornings with clear skies.

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BOOKWORM

Himalayan Echors: a Septmebrantrath's Travene of Munsed and Inner Dolpo
Philip Swanson with Judith Freeland
Book Fair India, 1998
Rs 460

Known as the "Oldest Old Man in Treking", Sturgeon gives an interesting account of his adventures through the remote Inner Dolpo, an inner sanctum of the Himalaya that was opened to Westerners only in 1992. The septmebrantrath reveals the pleasures and pains of traversing this difficult terrain in an appealingly easy and conversational style.

Kingdom Beyond the Clouds: Journeys in Search of the Himalayan Kings
Jonathan Gregson
Pan Books, 2000
Rs 490

This is a travel narrative that both transports its readers to little-visited places and demystifies what they find there. Gregson journeys through Bhutan, Nepal, Sikkim, Mustang and Dharmasala in search of the region’s oftenchaotic leaders. Through his interviews, he learns that while there is a world of difference between their rules, they face many of the same challenges.

Courtesy: Mandala Book Point, Kantipur, 422771, mandala@csil.com.np

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For insertions ring NT Marketing at 9543136-36.
More than any other state in India, Sikkim has taken the quest of sustainable human development seriously. The concept is not a buzzword here, it means building on traditions, rich cultural heritage and natural resources. Landlocked Sikkim also knows that development is not possible without integration into the broader development process of the northeast states and the rest of India.

Since coming to power, the Sikkim Democratic Front government has turned the negative economic growth rate into a positive and vibrant growth regime.

Today, Sikkim is geared to develop its rich potential in the agro-industry, horticulture, medicinal plants, food processing, tea, animal husbandry, handlooms and textiles, forest resources, ecotourism, information technology and education.

Spreading well-being

After 1995-96, both the net state domestic product (NSDP) and per capita income have recorded a steady growth. Sikkim’s per capita almost doubled from Rs. 8,905 to Rs 16,143 during the same period, a commendable 13.55 percent growth per year. The state also recorded the highest economic growth rate in India during the Ninth Plan. In the 10th Five Year Plan (2002-2007) draft document, Sikkim’s economic growth rate of 8.3 percent is second only to Pondicherry, Chandigarh and Delhi. The state has the 10th highest per capita income among Indian states, and the 5th highest growth rate in the per capita net state domestic product during 1993-2000.

Farming roots

Sikkim has only 64,000 hectares of arable land, yet total food production has increased steadily from over 56,360 tons in 1981 to 103,000 tons in 2001. To enhance productivity of farmers and to regulate purchase and sale of farmer’s products, the government has established a regulated market in the state. It has also provided facilities for sale of farmer’s produce within the state at regulated prices. Sikkim has also been declared an Agricultural Export Zone enabling it to sell cardamom, ginger and flowers in national and international markets.

The state has paid attention to plant protection measures through available organic alternatives in policies adopted by the Departments of Agriculture and Horticulture. Chief Minister Pawan Chamling is deeply committed to environmental protection and feels that Sikkim’s mixed farming system and low consumption of chemical fertilisers could make an easy transition to organic farming. Whether it’s commercial large cardamom, exotic orchid, sweet orange or trenchant cherry pepper, typical buckwheat or unique pulses, they all are 100 percent organic Sikkimese produce. And with the initiative made by the chief minister, the state became among the first in India to encourage organic farming. Dairy production is also going up, thanks to help from the Swiss Development Agency.

Agriculture is the backbone of the Sikkimese economy, and it has shown a robust performance. The SDF government is now aiming for a much higher growth rate in all areas of agricultural production in the next few years with the aid of technological and marketing intervention.

Ready to take off

As a land-locked, mountainous state, Sikkim has to focus on developing high-value, low-volume products.

The development of handlooms and textiles has made a significant contribution to preserving its rich cultural heritage. Sikkim is systematically re-emphasising the more efficient use of cane resources. Landlocked Sikkim also knows that development is not possible without integration into the broader development process of the northeast states and the rest of India.

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Strength of learning

The state government aims to make Sikkim totally literate by 2015. The progress made in the arena of literacy so far has made the goal of zero illiteracy plausible. The literacy rate, which stood at 17.7 percent in 1971 is now already over 70 percent.

Literate population

In the crucial arena of education, primary school enrolment has dramatically increased due to a range of moral and physical support and incentives extended by the state. These include awareness campaigns, free schooling, textbooks and school lunches. Higher education and technical training opportunities are also being developed.

There has been a steady increase in the numbers of educational institutions, teachers, pupils in primary schools, students in secondary schools and trainers in technical institutes. Today Sikkim has possibly the best teacher-student ratio at all levels in the schools. The number of girls at schools has gone up significantly too.

Some educational milestones:

- A midday meal program for school children.
- Three state languages—Lepcha, Limbu and Bhutia—are now being taught at the University level.
- Adoption of the “Smart School” concept that emphasises quality education.
- Sikkim State Assembly passed a bill in March 2003 for the first university.
- Sikkim had only one college when the SDF government assumed office. Now there are more than half a dozen, including Advanced Technical Training Centre at Banlang (East Sikkim) and Centre of Computers and Communication Technology at Chisopani (South Sikkim).
- Computer education is being made compulsory in all schools from secondary level.
- School-going children are given stipends to encourage academics.

For the people

Impressive strides have also been made in health, women’s welfare, cultural and intellectual spheres under the SDF government. Women have been assisted in training for employment or self-employment. They are given special loans for small ventures, old age pensions and widow remarriage schemes among others. In health, the emphasis is on prevention rather than cure. There are health clinics in every village. Physically challenged persons receive subsistence allowance from the government.

The religious, cultural and intellectual dimensions of Sikkimese life have grown with secularism at its core. Sikkim’s culture has found new expression in its literature, folklore, music, dance and drama, and a range of national honours have been bestowed on eminent Sikkimese.

Affirmative action

After persistent demands made by the present government, the Limbu and Tamang communities have been included in the national List of Scheduled Tribes. Concerted efforts are being made to include all those left out in the list of OBCs and provide them with facilities. A decision has also been taken to grant a quota of seats for students belonging to communities other than OBCs for higher education and the government has expanded its reservation policy.

Tech-savvy

Chief Minister Pawan Chamling believes that limitations imposed by Sikkim’s topographical and geographical location can be changed by technology. Appropriate technological interventions will not only inject a major shift in the efficiency and productivity performance, but could also bring about a visible transformation in the quality of life. The SDF government has zeroed in on information technology with the creation of a new Information Technology Department and has prepared extensive projects to give highest priority to this field. The new department is now aiming for e-governance to make use of information tools for improved administration.

Investor friendly

Today, Sikkim is looking forward to a gradual but steady dose of investment from both within and outside the state. This is based on the introduction of various long-term policy interventions including fiscal concessions, promotion of private investment, attracting new investment, entrepreneurship development and disinvestment-privatisation of existing public sector units.

The Union Government has extended its new industrial policy for Sikkim on the lines of the existing North-East Industrial Policy. This includes excise and industrial policy for Sikkim on the lines of the existing financial concessions to 12 identified thrust areas in the state. They include ecotourism, handicraft and industries irrespective of where they are located in the state. In addition, the policy also entails granting financial concessions to 12 identified thrust areas in industries irrespective of where they are located in the state. They include ecotourism, handicraft and handlooms, floriculture, mineral based industry, agro-based industry and pharmaceutical products. However, cigarette, manufactured tobacco and its substitute, and brewing of alcoholic drinks and manufacture of branded soft drink and its concentrate have been excluded from these concessions.

A survey carried out by Business Today showed various parameters like the quality of electric power, social infrastructure and state government support in Sikkim have improved in the perception of investors after 1995. Sikkim has set up a Board of Investment under the chairmanship of the chief minister to implement a Single Window Policy, an apex body that examines investment proposals and give clearance at the highest level. The objective is to provide efficient services to the prospective investors by providing speedy project approvals, grant of facilities and coordination among government agencies. In addition, some areas have been declared Industrial Belts to facilitate the single window system.

Sikkim Literacy Rate (percentage)

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
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Two weeks after the Dasai winds down, Nepalis are gathering second wind for the next big festival: Tihar. This harvest festival is a celebration of life—animals are worshipped instead of slaughtered. Though many of the rituals remain intact, the origins of Tihar are murky. Theories abound that it is most likely rooted in animism associated with ancient harvest festivals.

As the story goes, there was once a king whose demise had been foretold. Following the advice of court astrologers, the king lit oil lamps through the night. Death, arriving in the form of a venomous snake, extinguished the flickering light. When the queen went out to appease the snake, he was so flattered, he decided to grant the king a longer life. Humbled, the king decreed an annual festival of lights. Today, the festivities are an elaborate five-day affair.

Yama Panchak, as Tihar is also called, began with Kag Tihar on Thursday when crows, who are considered pesky scavengers, are worshipped as the vehicle of the God of Death. If unpleased, these messengers of Yama Raj are believed to be harbingers of bad news.

Friday, Kathmandu’s dogs have their day. It is Kukur Tihar, the day dogs are gods. Even street mongrels sport elaborate marigold necklaces and vermillion on their heads. As Yama Raj’s gatekeepers, they ensure the soul’s journey to judgement.

Goddess Laxmi, guardian of wealth, is celebrated on Saturday. Cows, worshipped as her earthly manifestation, are bathed, blessed and the sacred thread of protection is tied to the tail. “On our farms, a cow that gives milk and manure brings wealth, which is probably why they became symbols for Laxmi,” explains Saraswati Jirel, a self-proclaimed expert on Tihar.

Women devote Laxmi Puja to cleaning house and replastering walls and floors with a mixture of rato mato and gobar. Tradition has it that the goddess deigns to visit only the cleanest homes and come evening, it’s time for oil lamps and leaving the doors open for the goddess to glide in.

Saturday is also the night of women’s bhailo songs for blessings, money and sweets. The men have their deosi on Sunday. In the old days, perfect strangers would call in at all the big, well-known families but in these troubled times, both bhailo and deosi are restricted to families and close friends. Word has it that groups have to formally register with the police and send out notices to the houses that they intend to visit.

Sunday is celebrated by various communities in their own way. Farmers worship their tools and their bull to keep the working animal healthy and safe. Most households perform gobiardhan puja on a mound of cow dung which symbolizes the mountains, and farmers pray for rain, fertile fields and an abundant harvest.

Sunday is also the Newari New Year, which began in 880AD, and the day of Mha Puja when we worship ourselves because each individual is believed to be an embodiment of the divine. Bhaktapur resident Janak Kakshyapati describes the scene at home on Mha Puja: “My immediate family members sit in a room, each with their individual mandap in front of them for a ceremony which can last for hours. We offer auspicious foods like boiled eggs and fish, fruit and decorations, first to the mandaps, then to ourselves.” This ritual of self-purification is performed in the same room as other family members, becoming a ritual that celebrates individualism, while strengthening kinship within families.

On Monday is the day sisters and brothers bless each other with long life and happiness symbolised by long multicolour tiks and chrysanthemum garlands. It is also a time for siblings to offer each other presents.

In the past decade or so, Nepali Tihars have begun to take on shades of India’s Dipawali. While purists frown on the old ways not remaining sacrosanct, the kernel will survive and continue because Nepalis are resilient and hopeful. This Tihar, all over the country, the lamps that are lit will also be for peace.
Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Life managing an Indian restaurant on the Philippine resort island of Boracay. Today, Ram is part owner and executive chef at a fancy Indian restaurant called Rama Mahal at the former US naval base at Subic Bay. His wife is the manager of the restaurant and his 16-year-old son helps out. The restaurant is popular among politicians, actors and FedEx pilots from the nearby airport. Ram has even trained a Filipino cook to do subcontinental food, and for the first time in 15 years this has made it possible for him to come home to Nepal to have a tearful reunion with his mother in Guimi. Ram is sad to see the violence and killings in his motherland, but thinks the country will come out of it. “It is just like the story of my life,” says Ram, his eyes glistening with emotion. “Just when things look hopeless and dark, a tiny light shines through.”

First, the main points

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I t has been a slow news day: there have been no major outbreaks of mysterious diseases, nor a whole lot of people have been killed, the Egyptian conjoined twins are sitting up, and Dear Leader Kim Jong Il looks like he is having another bad hair day. Sorry folks, it’s not much to report from the world-at-large today, we’re scraping the bottom of the barrel here. Still, a newspaper has to come out, and a newspaper, by its very definition, has to contain news. So, as a filler, we present below what is not happening, as far as we know:

No Peace Without End To Violence: Minister

The government has firm opinion that there can be no peace without an end to violence and vice versa, a senior minister has said. Speaking at an interactive program organised on the suspicious occasion of Kaag Tihar in Kathmandu yesterday, the Minister for What is Left Of The Physical Infrastructure And Social Welfare said His Majesty’s Government will present a conceptual whitepaper on whether or not we will ever get out of the current mess (fingers crossed) by early next year.

Envoys To Interfere Again

BY A CORRESPONDENT WHO REQUESTS ANONYMITY

KATHMANDU – Kathmandu-based ambassadors met Thursday to formulate a concrete plan of action on how to interfere some more in Nepal’s internal affairs. The British have decided to increase the Nepali prime minister’s take-home salary after taxes, and bring it up to par with a retired Gurkha soldier. Political party leaders immediately denounced the move as a gross interference in Nepal’s territorial imperative. “How about us?” asked one disgruntled politician. News of more interference by foreign powers is pouring in. The Thais say they want to have another go at filling disgruntled politico. News of more interference by foreign powers are as a gross interference in Nepal’s territorial imperative.

Mayor Unveils Plans

FROM THE SUB METROPOLITAN DAINIK

Kathmandu’s new mayor, Keshab Sthapit, unveiled the First Phase of his plan to turn Nepal’s capital into a Garden of Eden with his Zero Plan. Kathmandu’s new mayor, Keshab Sthapit, unveiled the First Phase of his plan to turn Nepal’s capital into a Garden of Eden with his Zero Plan. Keshab Sthapit, the First Phase of his plan to turn Nepal’s capital into a Garden of Eden with his Zero Plan.

Ministers Come and Go

BY A PALM RIVER

The Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies and Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs will, on the recommendation of the prime minister, will also look after the Ministry of Population, Environment, Physical Planning and Works and General Administration in the absence of the Minister for Population and Environment, and Physical Planning and World and General Administration who today left for Dhaka to attend an international conference on water and sanitation. The Minister will also take over the portfolio of the Ministry of Water Resources, Defence, Finance, Foreign Affairs, and Social Welfare and Family Planning. According to a statement from the principal press secretary since other ministers will be on holiday. “It is understandable that during Thar they want to put all their cards on the table,” the statement said.

No Shobraj News Today

BY ORIANE VATCHER

KATHMANDU – Numerous institutional alleged criminal, Charles Shobraj, was not sighted today, raising speculation that he may have again escaped from jail in Tihar. This is the first time in a month-and-half since the alleged Shobraj was allegedly apprehended after an undercover detective footprint by Kathmandu-based newshound that there is nothing to add on the case. “We’re not even in some fresh handkerchief, but he refuses to come out wearing them,” said a disheartened international photojournalist keeping vigil outside the jailhouse. “What will I tell my editor in Paris?”

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