“My city.”

Mayor Shapit, overcome by vertigo, sits at the parapet of Dharara.

NARESH NEWAR

On top of Dharara, Kathmandu’s Mayor Keshab Shapit suddenly gets dizzy looking down at his city.

“I can’t stand heights,” he says, but overcomes vertigo to show us from this vantage point some of his plans to make Nepal’s capital more breathable. His hands slice through the crisp morning air to point out the Bishnumati corridor, the Dhobikhola diversion, plans to gentrify Asan, to relocate the bus-stop and turn Bagh Bazar into a high-rise commercial centre.

When the going gets tough, Mayor Shapit gets going.

Keshab Shapit is a man in a hurry and wants to be known as a mayor who gets things done. In a country where most politicians are talkers, Shapit delivers. And he will literally bulldoze through the city to beautify intersections, broaden boulevards or create parks. And you better not be in his way. No wonder, during his first tenure as mayor, Shapit earned himself the nickname ‘Demolition Man’.

As soon as he was nominated mayor by the Thapa government last month, Shapit was back to where he had left off, pulling down the petrol pump at Bhotechhary to make way for a park. “This is my city. Let’s see who’ll stop me,” he says with characteristic bravado. And, except for those whose houses were directly in his bulldozer’s path, most Kathmanduites are happy to at last see a public official who actually makes things happen.

To be sure, most of Shapit’s plans are grandiose, like his project to raze Bagh Bazar and build highrise office blocks, buy Asan’s bahals to renovate them and turn the area into an IT centre, make a 50km garden along the Ring Road or build a megamall on Tinkune. Critics call him a megalomaniac.

“I don’t just demolish things,” says the mayor, “besides, you have to sometimes destroy to rebuild.” It is clear this is a mellower mayor than last time. The macho talk is still there, but Shapit seems to be undergoing a spiritual makeover: he is meditating, learning the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence and even taking lessons to do the fearsome Kal Bhairab dance.

When the going gets tough, Mayor Shapit gets going.

Heating up again

Tired of waiting for the palace to respond to their demands, political parties are once more on the warpath. They are organizing demonstrations symbolically on Constitution Day on Sunday, 9 November. They say they want to remind extremists of the left and right that “there is still a constitution in this country”. The five parties (Nepali Congress, UML, People’s Front Nepal, Nepal Workers and Peasants’ Party and Nepal Sadbhavana Party) which oppose the king’s takeover last October say they have already agreed on the next phase of their agitation which will include the government’s appointment of officials for local bodies. “There has already been an agreement on the protest programs,” says the UML’s Rajendra Pandey. “Soon we will work out days and timing.”

The parties had eased the last phase of their campaign, which they had said would be “decisive”, after pressure from Kathmandu-based envoys and assurances that the king may accede to their demands which include reinstatement of parliament. But the rift between the parties and the palace seems to be as wide as ever, at a time when the Maoist insurgency is intensifying.
**LETTERS**

**RM**
Sincere thanks for the story of Ram Pratap Thapa (Nepal Society, ‘The life of Ram’, #167). You are one of the few media which has understood that the largest part of NRNs today are made up of many such 'Rams'. It is a bitter reality, although many among us would not like to accept or understand it. Ram Pratap Thapa, Koln, Germany

**Sajal P Shrestha, Alabama, USA**

Civilians are not being told the truth about the war against them. I have no idea if all of the army patrols that visit the village can talk with the villagers.

**Pema Lhaki Vaidya, Patan**

We need to look at Nepal’s history. We can’t take this situation for granted. The process of democratizing Nepal is a long one. We must keep working towards it.

**Jeevan R Sharma, University of Edinburgh**

The paper looks like on Friday, it gives us an idea of what the Nepal’s situation is. The government needs to take its laws if it incapacitates a whole community. Instead of DNA testing to identify these fagile sperm donors, children of the Bad should be granted citizenship based on their mother’s name.

**STATE OF THE STATE**

The tarai tinderbox

It’s time to rethink strategy in the seething tarai

**by CK Lal**

A s we are dragged down this vortex of violence, we have been forced to shed our innocence. We were a country about which many have easily generalised about the gentle benevolence of its inhabitants. Nepalis were always quick to smile, bare our souls, say what we meant. Now there is only suspicion and fear. When we do restore peace, we don’t know how long it will take before we regain the traits that were once a part of our national character.

But what makes us hopeful is when we come across people like the anonymous Nepali who dropped by the office last week to offer to sponsor the education of Reshma Singhwal and her sister after reading our article ‘Keep kids out of it’.

**SUGA, Mahottari**
It’s been a year since the last Chhath column, and a lot has changed for the worse... In this framing, against the volatility of the grain market is now overshadowed by the fear of Maoist extinction. Earlier the boys ‘left’ to come around and be satisfied with a few sacks of rice, some dal or temporary shelter for some days in the village. Now, they demand cash payments.

In the cash-starved economy of tarai villages, the dread of Maoist cadre with receipt books is so great that many better-off farmers have moved to the district headquarters. Even VDC secretaries and rural extension workers refuse to visit, terrified by the fear of facing insurgents and their complicity war tax.

**Nineteen Thirty**, a novel about the Paths of French Revolution, Victor Hugo says that mountain insurgent fight for ideals while it is justifiable that propels forest-based rebels into taking up arms. In Hugo’s compromising pose, this difference arises because “...one must deal with precipes, the other with quagmires; the one is the man of flames and flowing streams, the other of stagnant puddles where populace lurks; the one has his head in blue sky, the other in the shadow.”

Not many Maoists of the Nepal hills measure up to Hugo’s ideals, but every rebel that you encounter these days in the tarai confirms his generalisation about the brutal nature of insurgency in the plains.

Mountainous terrain is ideal for hit and run guerrilla tactics, and a small group of dedicated fighters can make a disproportionate impact. But the tarai is made for conventional warfare. God is indeed on the side of the bigger army in the battlefields of the flatlands. Having demanded the mid-hills with their terror, the Mushahidus have been forced down to an area where their main enemy is geography itself.

The security forces, however, are not in a position to take full advantage of this. People, unlike the Mushahidus here, but their hatred for the insurgents doesn’t automatically translate into admiration for the security forces under unified command. Rebels are demoralised despite their gains, but enforcers of law are feared because of their weaponry. That is probably the biggest tragedy of all: civil wars the choice of figuring out which side is more dangerous.

Maoists may be brutal, but most of them are local youths. Their parents believe that give time, these misguided youngsters will mend their ways and come back. But in this village with a peace-time population of 5,000, nobody has even had a distant relative serving in the army. Most army patrols that visit the village can’t talk about the role of the forces of the ruler and his subjects have very little in common and even less to share. On top of that, there is the history of grievances that have piled up since the Rana regime through the Panchayat years. This erosion into open tension on the smaller of misunderstandings.

It is also the month of Ramadan for Muslim Nepalis. Believers who observe Ramzan quietly get up in the morning for Suhur, the pre-dawn meal that heralds the day of fasting. Naturally, there is some confusion in Muslim neighbourhoods. This attracts the attention of a security patrol. An indicator suggests that a soldier that Muslims can’t have the freedom of the last 12 years silence the entire community. At evening Iftar, the social convention is a tea party with family members compare notes about the barbarity of the Maujads and the cruelty of the military.

Security checks along the east-west highway are doing nothing to make villagers sympathetic to the government. Motorcyclists, bus passengers and commuters face needless humiliation and harassment at every checkpoint. One of our contributors points out that the newspapers are not acting as the cynical, uncharitable and ugly, journalists can’t be fencesitters while they are supposed to be observers, and we should just keep a bias in things of war: against violence, for peace and tolerance. And it is a bias for truth and transparency.

**The Nepal Times #169**

**The Nepal Times is a breath of fresh air.**

**Anil K Bansalkota Bansbari**

**News item on the net that a polyglot-based NGO is ready to conduct DNA tests to identify the identity of the illegitimate children of Badals.**

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**CIVIL SOCIETY**

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“The UN is ready to help in any way.”

Matthew Kahane has spent 33 years within the United Nations. The recently-appointed UN Resident Coordinator in Nepal talked to Nepali Times about how the world body could help broker peace in Nepal, oversee Bhutan refugee repatriation and restart development.

Matthew Kahane: When the Nepal delegation led by Ambassador-at-large Bhekh Bahadur Thapa met Secretary General Kofi Annan in New York, the latter welcomed intentions of the Neptune government to resolve the issue through discussion between Nepalese parties. He repeated that the UN stood ready to help in any way.

Is there a concrete role for the UN? Concrete steps in any such conflict tend to be very low key because confidence building is not an issue of a third party claiming a role for itself. Our programs, carried out at present under the general heading of peace and development, should be seen by civil society and all political actors as confidence building measures. When it comes to a role more specifically on political discussion, that is an issue that will have to wait a request from Nepal that involves all parties.

We have a Catch-22, then. For peace we need development, and for development we need peace.

I agree this is a very complex situation and I don’t believe there is going to be one single simple solution. I believe there is going to be a series of steps where the UN will have to wait a request from Nepal that involves all parties.

Matthew Kahane: What struck me was that the continuity of each UN activity depended on the Maoists. Clearly, all of them, at some point, have run into questions by people identified as Maoists. Permission to continue was given when they understood that the programs are particularly aimed at the poor and most disadvantaged. We have not felt that our programs had to stop, but much effort has gone into explaining them.

What about the human rights situation? There is a huge range of issues that I came face to face with over the last two or three days: issues like girls’ access to schooling, which is a fundamental right. I see there is great opportunity for action by Nepali society with the support of the UN and others. With regard to civil conflict, whenever there is this crisis, one gets an increase in abuse and neglect of human rights by all parties. The UN acting high commissioner to human rights called on all parties to respect basic human rights—rights to life, liberty and physical well-being. That is something where a great deal of education is needed but of course it is through the leadership of any armed group, whether it is the law enforcement agencies or the Maoists, that the basic principles of operations are respected.

Does the UN have a third party role between Nepal and Bhutan on refugee repatriation? What I understand is that we have an agreement between Nepal and Bhutan on a bilateral basis to move forward with the return to Bhutan of most refugees in the camps where the verification was first carried out. Normally, when refugees are repatriated, there is some mechanism to help them on their return to verify conditions are met. The international community believes a third party could be helpful, but it depends on Nepal and Bhutan. Nepal has clearly said it would welcome the idea. But Bhutan is opposed to it. Indeed.

The UN is often criticised for being top-heavy, and generating enough paperwork to build a ladder to the moon... And back (laughs). What obviously counts is the difference that one can make to the lives of individuals who are disadvantaged, deprived and are less well off. Reports that analyse situations are important, otherwise we go into things blind, deaf and make stupid mistakes. In many areas, you need to have a decent technical study of things. But, very often, I tend to think what is needed is to take what we know and get on with it rather than studying it again. You won’t find me promoting new reports extensively. I believe reports need to be very simple, short and succinct. It is not the volume that counts, the quality of facts and analyses matters.
Aid dependency syndrome

In Nepal's post-conflict years, the dependency syndrome has been exacerbated by the influx of aid agencies. These organisations, while providing essential services, have inadvertently created a culture of dependency among the local population. Nepalese believe that aid is the only means to overcome their socio-economic challenges, leading to a lack of self-reliance and entrepreneurship.

The syndrome is evident in various aspects of life:
1. **Economic Dependency:** People have become accustomed to aid, often preferring it to self-generated income. This has resulted in a decrease in productivity and entrepreneurial spirit.
2. **Political Dependency:** People expect solutions from aid agencies, rather than engaging in political processes to address their concerns.
3. **Social Dependency:** People rely on aid for basic necessities, reducing their resilience and adaptability.

To break this cycle, there is a need for a shift towards self-reliance and empowerment. The focus should be on developing local capacities, fostering entrepreneurship, and promoting self-sustainability through education and skill development.
This is not a school, it is a cemetery.

In his first press conference after taking over as prime minister five months ago, Surya Bahadur Thapa on Tuesday concentrated on how his government would disarm the Maoist rebels before holding general and local elections. The government would implement a new security plan to contain terrorism with a ‘civil military campaign’ and “unified command” between the Royal Nepali Army, Armed Police Force and the police. Although Thapa didn’t give details, a civil military campaign is expected to mean arming villagers to resist Maoists. There was no timeframe for elections announced, leading suspicious political parties of the dissolved parliament to smell a rat: they said Thapa was using the excuse of elections to prolong his tenure. But Thapa said he was setting up a task force to make necessary preparations for elections.

The plot thickened on the controversy over appointments to constitutional bodies with Thapa clarifying that the delay in the announcement was his doing. His government has been widely criticised for not making the appointments which have remained vacant for a long time, and parties have taken this as proof that the buck doesn’t stop with the prime minister.

**Where is Shrestha?**

The Royal Nepali Army’s Doti-based chief, commander Agni Shrama was attending the cultural managing committee when security forces, and abductions by the Maoists killings and an increase in disappearances by the army and the police has not yielded information on him.

After his school turned into a battlefield, a teacher named Bullet had to make the move into the school because they had intelligence that Maoist area commander Agni Shrama was attending the cultural program. The Royal Nepali Army’s Doti-based chief, commander Agni Shrama was attending the cultural program. The Royal Nepali Army’s Doti-based chief, commander Agni Shrama was attending the cultural program. The Royal Nepali Army’s Doti-based chief, commander Agni Shrama was attending the cultural program. The Royal Nepali Army’s Doti-based chief, commander Agni Shrama was attending the cultural program. The Royal Nepali Army’s Doti-based chief, commander Agni Shrama was attending the cultural program. The Royal Nepali Army’s Doti-based chief, commander Agni Shrama was attending the cultural program. The Royal Nepali Army’s Doti-based chief, commander Agni Shrama was attending the cultural program. The Royal Nepali Army’s Doti-based chief, commander Agni Shrama was attending the cultural program. The Royal Nepali Army’s Doti-based chief, commander Agni Shrama was attending the cultural program.

The army says it had to make the move into the yard. “This is no longer a school, it is a cemetery,” says Diamter Kumari Bika, whose younger sister died in the shooting. “Both used the school for their own purposes.” Ninth grader Dharma Kumari Bhuwaly hid in the school canteen after she was injured and stayed there till the firing stopped. Bishnu Bhurtyal hid in the school canteen after she was injured and stayed there till the firing stopped.

Maoist and security forces at Sharada High School in Mudhara say the Maoists came back to the village twice in the back and remains in critical condition. Only 80 of the 400 students were present that day because school had just reopened after Dasai. After his school turned into a battlefield, a teacher named Bullet had to make the move into the school because they had intelligence that Maoist area commander Agni Shrama was attending the cultural program. The Royal Nepali Army’s Doti-based chief, commander Agni Shrama was attending the cultural program. The Royal Nepali Army’s Doti-based chief, commander Agni Shrama was attending the cultural program. The Royal Nepali Army’s Doti-based chief, commander Agni Shrama was attending the cultural program. The Royal Nepali Army’s Doti-based chief, commander Agni Shrama was attending the cultural program. The Royal Nepali Army’s Doti-based chief, commander Agni Shrama was attending the cultural program.
A triangular peace park

No one wants to give an inch to revive Tinkune.

NARESH NEWAR

D o we always need a SAARC Summit or a big international brouhaha to make things happen in this city?

Two years ago, the government decided that the squabbling triangular intersection at Tinkune needed an urgent facelift as it would not be a national embarrassment before SAARC summiteers. So, within a fortnight it underwent a dramatic transformation. Shanties were demolished and tea shops moved out. Overnight, a picturesque lake had sprung up in the 50 ropani plot with a rock garden, an island festooned with prayer flags and an open space, its edges now reverting into a garbage dump, the squalid triangular intersection at Tinkune.

The person who pulled off that miracle was Renchin Yonjan, a self-described “social architect and entrepreneur” working with the Kathmandu Municipality then. Unfortunately, after the summit ended everyone forgot about Tinkune again. The edges have now reverted into a garbage dump, the lake has become a wallow for water buffaloes and a convenient site for locals to carry on with their morning business. Everyone tak-tak as they drive by, but Yonjan has remained committed to turning Tinkune into a symbolic peace park called the Basundhara Mother Earth Project. She is determined that this time, the upgrading will be permanent and maintained through a public-private partnership. Yonjan’s plan for the triangle incorporates the five elements of earth, air, fire, water and space, and is purposely designed to resemble the female reproductive system, complete with fallopian tubes.

Designed by architects and landscape artists, Basundhara’s three entry points will symbolise Positive Energy, Peace and Wisdom. The garden for wisdom will face the airport road and will be dedicated to Manjushree and Saraswati. It will also have a pond that will represent the primordial lake that was once Kathmandu Valley. It is time that the people of Kathmandu also have a pond that will represent the mission is to create a garden that will not just be an open space but also embody the symbols of peace and harmony that are so important for Nepal today,” explains Yonjan.

With funding from Eco Himal and inputs from young Nepali architecture graduates, Yonjan has now finalised her proposal which comes with a sustainability and management plan. It would cost only Rs 123 million to build, and she wants to start in January. She has pitched the idea to Kathmandu’s mayor Keshab Shhapit, but hasn’t heard from him.

The mayor, as it happens, has his own grandiose vision for Tinkune: a mega shopping mall with a 50ft figure of Manjushree at the centre. Shhapit says he is preparing a public hearing soon in which various plans will be presented to the local people of the area and to prospective private sector sponsors. “First we have to sort out the legal problems,” Stapit told us. “The real reason for the delay is political, the municipalities don’t want to pay more than Rs 3.2 million per ropani, and locals won’t accept anything less than Rs 5.1 ropani. And so the haggling goes on, Tinkune remains in limbo. “Governments have budgeted the amount, but never got anything,” says 70-year-old Dharma Nath Gajuri, a landowner who is leading a legal battle for Tinkune. Gopal Gautam, another Tinkune land owner is an angry man: “Don’t we have any rights at all? You can’t just come and take away our land.”

Mayor Shhapit says locals are just being greedy. “They should have taken the 30 lakhs when we offered it to them, after all their existing property has appreciated after the intersection was built.”

Until the legal battle over compensation is sorted out, it seems, Yonjan and her peace park plan will have to wait.

by NEETA POKHREL

Transactions that didn’t quite make it to the NRN conference.

The recent inaugural NRN and PNO conference was a strictly business affair. People of Nepali origin mingled with Nepalis of Nepali origin, non- resident Nepalis rubbed shoulders with resident Nepalis, and they all talked give and take. If we give you this, will you give us? Some of the deals struck:

- Nepal Passport and Free Visas = Rs 25 billion in investment
- Tax-free imports = 1 Home for Elderly
- This bartering was serious business. You give us passports and tax subsidies, and we will invest in the motherland. The government echoed it: only if you invest not less than Rs 1 billion. Still, it was a bargain and deals were struck left and right.
- There were some transactions that weren’t quite heard on the floor of the Statebaal/bistro. We understand that it is natural to get slightly distracted while dining and with the movers and shakers of the home country, and saying cheese with stalwarts from various political parties.

Here are some deals that didn’t quite make it:

- Cashing in on Nepali exoticism = Ten large scale hydropower plants in Nepal. While foreigners in any country have their share of difficulties, they also have the sheer benefit of being able to exploit their unique identity.
- Being an NRN till recently myself, I can tell you how we Nepalis don’t need icebreakers. Whether it is a job interview, dealing with clients or even a casual conversation at a bar, mention the word ‘Nepal’ and the conversation jump starts itself. We are the last thing the Buddha ate before renouncing materialism’. Calling it ‘Special Drumsticks from the Land of Everest’, or even: ‘the last thing Nepalese hoteliers I knew who created empires by selling skinny chicken and calling it ‘Special Drumsticks from the Land of Everest’, or even: ‘the last thing the Buddha ate before renouncing materialism’. Sure, exploiting cultural exoticism isn’t exclusive to Nepalis. Just look at the Irish, who have been spectacularly successful at it. But in Nepal’s case, what does the mother country get in return? Isn’t it worth at least 10 large-scale investments in joint venture hydropower plants?
- How about other forms of compensation? Every time a Nepali footballer or government official decides to overstay their visa and work in a gas station in Seattle, and technically become an NRN, what does Nepal get in return? OK, let’s agree on a compensation package for the motherland: One disappeared footballer = Two hospitals in Syangja.
- Then there are the hordes of Nepali students who stay on after college and join the brain drain. What does Nepal get out of investing in their high school education? Here is one possible barter arrangement: One state educated brain that drains = 1 school in Tehrathum.

The one that definitely didn’t make it was the proposed NRN hotel in Tinkune. Everyone tsk-tsks as they drive by, but Yonjan’s plan for the triangle incorporates the five elements of earth, air, fire, water and space, and is purposely designed to resemble the female reproductive system, complete with fallopian tubes.

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**ECONOMY**

workers who send money home on a regular basis. but we must not forget the 500,000 Nepali migrant abroad. All the participants understood their value and conference downplayed the issue of Nepali labourers they earn it. Sadly, the recently concluded NRN billion in remittances.

Nepalis come to the Middle East every day and suffer are not in accordance to the agreements they signed. I

They say Royal Nepal reflects the state of the country. They have a culture of excellence. They proved that nothing is impossible. The success of Emirates airlines and Dubai are correlated. They go in hand in hand. The same model can be replicated in Nepal. If the leaders want that to happen, the idea would work here as well.

How are Nepali workers faring in the Gulf? To help Nepals in Dubai, we established a committee with RNAC that will lobby for their cause. Hundreds of Nepalis come to the Middle East every day and suffer tremendous hardships. More than half of them, they do not receive what they were promised and the facilities are not in accordance to the agreements they signed.

These workers don't deposit their hard-earned money in local banks in Dubai; they send it home as soon as they earn it. Sadly, they remain in the dark. Nepalis would have become bankrupt. Every year they send home Rs 60 billion in remittances.

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What else happened at the NRN conference? The conference basically aimed at setting policies for non-resident Nepalis. For people like me, who have Nepali passports, there aren't many problems. But, for those who don't, they face many hassles when they come back to their motherland. Therefore, we believe if NRNs are provided with special identity cards, they will have easy access. But, I have a serious reservation about the way the term NRN has been defined. The definition says if Nepalis spend 182 days in foreign countries, they can be called an NRN. If you travel to the US for six months, can you call yourself an NRN? Only those who stay abroad for a certain number of days can be called an NRN. The conference basically aimed at setting policies for non-resident Nepalis. For people like me, who have Nepali passports, there aren't many problems. But, for those who don't, they face many hassles when they come back to their motherland. Therefore, we believe if NRNs are provided with special identity cards, they will have easy access. But, I have a serious reservation about the way the term NRN has been defined. The definition says if Nepalis spend 182 days in foreign countries, they can be called an NRN. If you travel to the US for six months, can you call yourself an NRN? Only those who stay abroad for a certain number of days can be called an NRN.

What did the conference achieve? It was something the government should have done long ago. But it promised that it would make rules for NRNs. I believe it will happen. There wasn't sufficient discussion on Nepali migrant workers in the Gulf. Any future policy must include them and recognise their sacrifice and contribution.

Sink or swim

Come 2004, Sri Lankan Airlines will fly to more than 20 Indian destinations after leasing aircraft from its investor, Emirates. That Airways and perhaps even its subsidiary will also network with a number of new cities in India. Theoretically, this means even if the flights are just weekly, India could have 4,000 tourists flying in and out every seven days. The three free trade partners have worked out a mutually beneficial arrangement that purrs Nepal in the shadow.

India’s attitude of “we are the best” is helping them forge ahead. Competition is fierce between Indian states to lure in tourists and industries. The mood is buoyant with the improvement in technology, transport and communication infrastructures. Even Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, Nepal’s neighbouring states that everyone loves to poke fun at, are shaping up. No one wants to be left behind.

Both India and Thailand are looking at strengthening ties with China, Post-Cancun, they’re also sending tentative feelers out towards Brazil and South Africa. As the US tries to find its ground in Iraq and Afghanistan, wooing both India and Pakistan close to presidential elections, it has more fires to fight at home— and not only the Californian conflagration. The Beed predicts this growing trend of wooing regional powers will pave the way for newer blocs sooner than we anticipate.

The inactivity in Nepal is in sharp contrast to the buzz in the region. By hosting George Bush and the APEC summit, Thailand has shown the world that it is a non-colonised, peaceful nation that can be the future neutral ground for trade as well as peace. Note: the birthplace of the Buddha can no longer claim this Unique Selling Proposition (USP). In Bangkok’s business circuit, the Beed was rapt to several conversations that all ran along the same line: Thailand has arrived on the global arena. It was apparent in the ramp ranges from trade to politics. It shows how a nation can rise above communal violence, a colonial past and bring in new, critical economic realities. What does this have to do with us? Plenty and conveniently, precious little. For the older and first free trade partner in South Asia, Nepal seems to have fallen into the regional blind spot, an irony that does not escape the Beed. As for how much we register on the Indian radar, a comment from an Indian business person sums it up:

“Nepal crops up only when we’re concerned about the ISI.”

As much as we need to separate politics from business, the Beed is pragmatic and realises the path to progress needs the renunciation of multiparty democracy. And we’d be wise to also heed our neighbours’ examples: networks, promote devolution of state power and seize the moment. ’Till that happens, we’ll just lag further and further behind the rest of the region and the world.
E

to predictions of a serious shortfall in tourists this season after the breakdown of the ceasefire, October has seen a rebound in trekking traffic—especially in the Khumbu.

days of cancellation in August, most trekking agencies and tour operators are surprised by the rebound and attribute it partly to the publicity of the Golden Jubilee Anniversary features of the first Everest ascent in May. Tourist arrivals by air in October soared 41 percent compared to the same month last year, and it is actually difficult to get airline seats into Kathmandu and inside Nepal.

“Tourists coming to Nepal have the attitude there are now very few adventure destinations in the world that are considered safe,” says Wanda Vivequin who leads mainly New Zealander trekkers to Nepal. “One of my clients said to me that if they took out of every single travel warning being issued by their embassy these days, they would probably never even leave their home town.”

Most trekkers this season have concentrated on the Everest and Annapurna region, and after reports of extortion on the Annapurna circuit many decided to go to Khumbu. “Everyone flew to Lukla and headed up, because Everest is considered safe,” explains Padam Ghale. The honesty seems to have paid off. Wanda: “I had a single client cancel a trip with me in the last three months out of fear of climbing into Nepal, largely because I have been able to put the conflict into some sort of context. In my home country of Canada, I often find myself going to great lengths to try and explain to people that in so many ways you have a greater chance of being run over by a bus or a car at home than you have of being harmed by the conflict in Nepal.”

Last month there were up to 300 trekkers a day doing the Annapurna circuit, slightly lower than normal autumn figures. Even though the Annapurnas have always got more trekkers than Everest, news of security concerns there have acted as a deterrent. “Agencies take a risk when we send people there, paying as much as Rs 1,000 per porter,” says Ganesh Bhaturia, owner of Pub Amsterdam and Boomrang Restaurant at Dhalbasa’s lakeside. “We get trekkers the most reliable and recent information and let them decide.” He has, however, presented the truth to his clients about potential risks, and let them decide,” says Padam Ghale. The honesty seems to have paid off.

Despite an initial spate of cancellations in August, tourism is booming: 41 percent compared to the same month last year, and it is actually difficult to get airline seats into Kathmandu and inside Nepal. Most protected areas in the world have clear, the porter was indeed a child. A kind of questions children ask on the trail, he asked foreigners the way as much as Rs 1,000 per porter, Rs 1,500 per sardar and Rs 500 per porter. In Simikot, the Maoists demand Rs 500 per porter, in the Annapurna it is Rs 1,000 per porter. (See ‘Letter to a young Maoist’, #168)

The turnover this season seems to have more to do with intense PR work by travel and trekking agencies with individual clients than any campaign mounted by Nepal Tourism Board (NTB). “We got straight to our clients about potential risks, and let them decide,” says Padam Ghale. The honesty seems to have paid off.

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Clockwise from top left: Garbage litters the trail again, overloaded porter near Namche and trekkers line up to pay their dues at the entrance to the park in Jorsale.

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Out of 25,000 young Nepalis who apply, only 230 make it into the British Army.

Gurkha regiments. Finally recruited into Britain’s

British army if we work hard we get a nice job,” he says. “But in the end, Santosh is an SLC graduate.

A candidate at the school where the selection is taking place, looks himself in the mirror at the start of a day of drills and tests. The 246 young men gathered at a school in Those Bazar are the cream of Nepal’s young men, the hopeful sons of the 300,000 former soldiers. They have come here to meet the British army’s recruitment officers and to have their height and chest expansion measured. Then the exercises are done under the scrutiny of the gala wallah, an old Gurkha soldier responsible for recruitment in the district. Every candidate must complete 12 chin-ups, twice what a British recruit must do at the end of his training. Sit-ups and squat thrusts follow. At every stage, more drop out. “I’m really nervous,” confesses Santosh Jagat Magar, 19. “I’ve been training for a year.” He casts an eye over the other candidates, and adds: “The other guys have been training for two to three years.”

Many who are unsuccessful return every autumn to the temporary selection centres that open up at this time of year across the hills. Like several of those gathered here, Santosh is an SSL graduate. “Even if we do college we don’t get a nice job,” he says. “But in the British army we work hard and we can earn a name and support ourselves.” For others, it means following the traditions of their fathers and grandfathers.

Ganesh Bahadur Sunwar is here to help the gala wallah with the process that his son is taking part in. “If he joins the army, he won’t have to worry,” he says. “He can stand on his own feet.”

Modern recruits have every chance of following their predecessors into action. Gurkhas have fought in all British war since the Falklands in 1982. Every Gurkha unit was present in Iraq during the second Gulf War. None of the candidates we spoke to said they were aware of the recent court action in London in which seven ex-servicemen lost their case against the British government for better pensions.

On the fourth and final day comes the ‘Mr Handsome Contest’, a thorough physical examination. Ninety-eight men have made it this far. After examining what seems like every inch of them, Jagat Ale will select 40 to progress to the next stage: Area Selection in Jiri.

Clockwise from top: Jagat Ale conduct a minute inspection for ‘The Mr Handsome Contest’. Gala wallah Jagat Ale measures chest expansion. Candidates needed to be able to expand their chest by 2 inches.

Mothers watch a candidate trying to do 60 sit-ups in two minutes or under. Maoist graffiti adorn the school building at the back.

Masquerade Ball

Single: Rs. 3,499/- nett
(Inclusive of a complimentary half a bottle of wine)

Couple: Rs. 5,999/- nett
(Inclusive of a complimentary bottle of wine)

Date: Friday, 14th of November 2003
Time: 7.30 PM onwards
Venue: Royal Ballroom
Yak & Yeti Hotel
Darbar Marg, Kathmandu

For more information and details:
Guest Relations Desk
Hotel Yak & Yeti
4-289 999 EXT 2763
Gopa Gomes (AWONS)
ggplango@hotmail.com
4 275 567
WASHINGTON – Some 70 US companies with good programs combined.

The investigation, which examined contracts awarded in 2003 through September 2003, provides the most complete list to date of US contractors in the two nations that were invaded by the US in its war on terror. The report, ‘Windfalls of War: US Contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan’, shows that Kellogg, Brown & Root (KBR), the subsidiary of the giant US oil services firm Halliburton, was the top recipient of federal contracts for the two countries, worth more than $2.3 billion. The CPI, which prides itself on ‘public service journalism’ and says it does not accept funding from corporations, labour unions or governments, said its research also found that dozens of lower-profile but well-connected companies also won big in the reconstruction bonanza. (IPS)

Shifting focus

Organisation of 160 advocacy and aid groups, called for a drastic overhaul of US foreign aid policy and warned that Washington increasingly views foreign assistance as a tool for national security, which is creating an expanded role for the military in delivering aid overseas. In the report, ‘Emerging Trends’, the consortium called on Washington to reverse that tendency as well as to fix red tape, improve transparency and achieve coherence between a mushrooming number of aid agencies. After the attacks on New York’s World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, the administration also created a National Security Strategy unit, diplomacy, defence and development, in which aid was officially tied to the self-styled ‘war on terror’. Chief among them is that Washington’s largest and most visible aid programs are now in Afghanistan and Iraq, two countries attacked by the United States in the past two years. They cautioned that trend is officially tied to the self-styled ‘war on terror’. The report, ‘Windfalls of War: US Contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan’, shows that Kellogg, Brown & Root (KBR), the subsidiary of the giant US oil services firm Halliburton, was the top recipient of federal contracts for the two countries, worth more than $2.3 billion. The CPI, which prides itself on ‘public service journalism’ and says it does not accept funding from corporations, labour unions or governments, said its research also found that dozens of lower-profile but well-connected companies also won big in the reconstruction bonanza. (IPS)

‘Biggest threat’

European citizens think that Israel poses the greatest threat to world peace, according to a survey released Monday by the European Commission. Fifty-nine percent of Europeans replied ‘yes’ when asked whether or not Israel presents a threat world peace. Comparatively, 53 percent thought North Korea, Iran and the United States a threat to world peace. Fifty-two percent said Iran posed the greatest threat to world peace, while 50 percent named Afghanistan and 48 percent Pakistan. The findings from the Eurobarometer survey ‘Iraq and Peace in the World’ have sparked outrage from Israeli authorities. Israeli officials said the survey was pro Palestinian and anti-Israeli and called for an immediate investigation. The report, ‘Windfalls of War: US Contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan’, shows that Kellogg, Brown & Root (KBR), the subsidiary of the giant US oil services firm Halliburton, was the top recipient of federal contracts for the two countries, worth more than $2.3 billion. The CPI, which prides itself on ‘public service journalism’ and says it does not accept funding from corporations, labour unions or governments, said its research also found that dozens of lower-profile but well-connected companies also won big in the reconstruction bonanza. (IPS)

Job market

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the administrations in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are geared toward exploiting power international IT conferences as part of the new process of globalization. By contrast, are aggressively pursuing market-friendly investment policies and attending politics of caste hatred and self-aggrandisement, Krishna and Chandra Babu Naidu of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Though other southern states, following Kerala’s example, are inching toward inequality between those two states and in any other part of the country. Their education systems have collapsed completely, leaving them without functioning college systems. While other southern states, following Kerala’s example, are inching toward total literacy, Bihar still has literacy levels below the 50 percent mark. And while the growth rate of the population remains constant, the number of people living below the poverty line in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar seems to be twice as high in any other part of the country.

Furthermore, while states like Gujarat are growing at the rate of 8.10 percent a year, the growth rates for Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are around 1-2 percent. And while Maharashtra, Delhi and Tamil Nadu have jointly attracted more than 50 percent of the country’s domestic and foreign investment in the last decade, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have accounted for less than 3 percent of total investment.

These figures are now threatening the very future of Indian democracy. Population figures reveal that nearly one in four Indians lives in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and while large parts of southern India have population growth rates below replacement levels, the populations of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are growing at around 2.9 percent a year.

At that rate, around 350 million Indians will be living in Uttar Pradesh alone by 2091. How long will the rest of the country share the burden of carrying two contrasting, overpopulated states? Will there be a day in the future when a Maharashtra or a Gujarat, a Tamil Nadu or an Andhra Pradesh decides that it would like to function as an independent polity, signing off its own free-trade agreements with neighboring countries because they do not want to be burdened by the welfare of these two states?

This may seem an exaggerated fear, but one can now see distinct India emerging: one that is outward-looking, market-friendly and development-oriented, and another that is inward-looking, caste-driven and overpopulated. The danger is that the contrast between these two Indias could shape our future politics and economic growth and bring greater misery and problems for all concerned.

Rajdeep Sardesai is managing news editor at NDTV, his piece was translated from his op-ed piece in the Danish newspaper in Bhopal.

A tale of two Indias

The result is that the statistical disparity today between these two states and the rest of the country is glaring on every possible social and economic indicator. There are fewer hospitals and schools per capita in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh than in any other part of the country. Their education systems have collapsed completely, leaving them without functioning college systems.

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India’s north-south divide still looms large.

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**Backdoor entry**

**Radhika, 1 November**

**DARCHULA** – Displaced animals are being supplied from India and Tibet to Nepal through the northern border of Darchula district. Despite quarantine laws for animals prior to entry, many sick livestock are already in the country. “It’s quite easy as there are open borders everywhere,” says Manag Singh Dhal of Sansaha.

The checkpost was established to prevent the spread of contagious diseases among other healthy animals. Experts say the sick animals pose a threat not only to other animals but to humans as well. Most of these sick animals are used for meat while some are used for milk and carrying loads.

**Fourth estate**

**Deshantar, 2 November**

Journalists in the mid- and far-west are being targeted by both the Maoists and security forces. They constantly face death threats if they don’t publish positive coverage of military and media operations. “Everyday we live in fear of getting killed not only at the hands of Maoists but the army as well,” says a Dang-based journalist from Space Time.

He added that most journalists don’t have telephone lines to send their reports to Kathmandu. “Those covering the conflict are under extreme stress on the job, and almost everyone is forced to carry favour with security officers,” says a Char传导 Nepal correspondent in Banka.

It’s a situation that encourages impunity because Nepal lacks information laws to protect journalists. Reporters claim their publishers do not provide enough resources or care about their security. “All they are concerned about is breaking stories and not how we manage to get it,” says another daily paper reporter in Banka.

Both the Maoists and the state should realise journalists are just doing their job. When journalists write a story with a, it’s a conflict-ridden area, the army accuses them of keeping ties with the rebels. And when the army organises a media junket, the Maoists threaten journalists for being pro-government.

Press papers were issued to media personnel covering the conflict with the assurance that they would be protected. No media journalist has been beaten up and their passes seized by the Maoists.

“Nowadays we just use our citizenship cards,” says a reporter from Nepal Samacharpatra in Dukhkhola.

**Tourists exempted**

**Kantipur, 2 November**

“All tourists are welcome,” read a Maoist notice at Ghorapani.

Written on the wall with red ink, the message hints that the Maoists may have stopped collecting Rs 1,000 ‘war tax’ from tourists. Trekkers have returned to Ghorepani, Tadapani, Ghotapuri in the Annapurna circuit. Things are taking a turn for the better since the Maoists stopped their extortion and the army halted security activities.

Although the figures are still quite low (200 tourists daily compared to 500 in previous years) there is still an air of optimism here. Locals, however, are still half the hook. Maoists are still targeting local hotels and lodges, many have been forced to pay up or leave. Teachers and government staff have to donate part of their salaries and the hoteliers have to pay Rs 10,000 every year for the revolution. Even small tea shops are not exempt.

**Bullet in the head**

For the last month and a half, a teacher in western Nepal has lived with a bullet in his head. On 21 September, a Maoist came to Nepal Ramayana Secondary School at Dor Dudi in Bara and ordered Kiran Raj Yogi to leave with them. They took the 31-year-old to the schoolyard and shot him, execution style in the head. Luckily, the teacher survived and was rushed to Lucknow Medical College in India but after initial treatment, doctors said they couldn’t disembowel the bullet. Now Kiran is in the district hospital at Galauti, Bardiya, Prabudh Muni. His head is paralysed down left side because of the bullet. Shanith Yogi, Kiran’s sister-in-law, said the Maoists were demanding them under great financial stress.

“We have already spent around Rs 10,000 in the treatment by borrowing from relatives. Taking him to another hospital for treatment is going to mean more expenses.” The government hasn’t helped at all. Kiran has an eight-year-old son and a six-year-old daughter.

**Elections are inevitable**

Chandra Bahadur Gurung of the RPP in Jana Bhabana, 3 November

The country is in shambles today because of bad leadership and no long-term vision after the People’s Movement’s 1990, which is why we find ourselves in this terrible predicament.

The government’s concept paper, envisaging sweeping changes in the country’s socio-economic situation through the constitution, has been welcomed by many quarters of society. The Maoists abandoned talks and resumed violence because they had other plans but we still believe talks are the only way out of this problem. Violence has reached a climax and negotiations must resume at any cost. The Maoist leadership seem to have realised that destroying national property and arbitrary murders are not endangering them to the public. This is Prachanda recently issued a press release announcing changes in their modus operandi. The Maoists have no other choice but to come to the table because the government is independent of their control.

The country lacks elected representatives at all levels. Therefore, this is the need of the hour. State power must be handed to an elected government. Elections are inevitable and we should all work towards bringing possible dates. These elections are important for the protection of democracy and the sovereignty of the people. It is wrong to say the present government is using elections as an excuse to stay legitimate. As a matter of fact, their days are numbered and it’s high time to step down.

Events over the years have proved that the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (UML) failed to rule the country well. The five arguing parties, including the NO and the UML, have complicated political problems in the country. We should be working together to raise Nepal out of the present crisis but everywhere you look, you’ll only see people with vested interests.

**Outline**

**Guerrillas in the east**

Bhupai Bhat in Spacetime, 1 November

It has already been four years since he became a Maoist guerrilla. He is just 18 and he has survived two deadly attacks in Jumla and Arghakhanchi. He has two bullet wounds in his chest and lower abdomen from the battle. Yet, Bir Bahadur Shahi wants to carry on fighting. Although he is from mid-western Nepal, Bir Bahadur is now in the eastern district of Sankhuwasabha. When he joined the Maoist fold, he was a seventh grader. He knows that he cannot pursue his higher studies now. But, he is confident that if his party can now. But, he is confident that if his party can

**QUOTE OF THE WEEK**

“… They all hope that one day their party will rule and similar stories of how they became Maoists. And seventh or eighth graders and they share almost even get to finish high schools. Most of them are Shahi. These are young boys and girls who did not

**Envelope Order**

Himal Khubarpatrika, 2-16 November

“I am responsible for the delays in the appointments to the constitutional bodies.”

-Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa in Kantipur, 5 November

**NEPALI TIMES #169 FROM THE NEPALI PRESS SELECTED MATERIAL TRANSLATED EVERY WEEK FROM THE NEPALI PRESS**
**Back at Sundarijal**

**"The king had high praise for me."**

**Jazz at Patan**

Back at Sundarijal. 

The king had high praise for me.

**BP Koirala has been handed over from army to police custody, and is no longer held under the Security Act. Things are more relaxed, but he is still in solitary confinement. He is worried about doctor’s orders not to drink tea, since he had turned tea preparation into a ritual in his cell. He is produced before the court again, and is happy to meet his relatives. When it is time to go, young Manisha hangs on her grandmother and insists on going to jail with him.**

**Wednesday, 27 April 1977**

[no entry]

**Thursday, 28 April**

BP 130/80 Sundarijal.

Dr Shrestha (police jail doctor) saw me + has prescribed some medicines for throat + liver + digestive disorder. He is a homely type of person, not inspiring great confidence as a doctor, but a man with common sense and Bie Prinxy Babu believes in minimum medication. He introduced himself as police doctor + I asked him whether he was in charge at the prison also. He said: yes. Then I asked him about Shailaja. He said: who Shailaja? I said: Achariya. Then he said his assistants had joined the jail regularly. Obviously he was reluctant to tell me about her. Otherwise there was no point in him asking me in the 1st instance which Shailaja I meant. DSP informed me that the army was refusing to allow the police the use of the refrigerator at the colonel’s place in the arsenal where perishable food meant for us needs to be stocked. The DSP didn’t know what to do now. Sundarijal has no market, hence everything has to be brought from Kathmandu, even vegetables. The officer here is perplexed. The doctor has advised me to give up tea + coffee altogether because of my heart condition. This is a problem. I don’t take coffee at all, but tea I need in the morning and in the afternoon, and I take it strong. In jail, this habit is reinforced. As a matter of fact it was not kept on tea or coffee altogether. I took it in the company of others. Since Sushila is extremely fond of it—admitted to it—I used to like it for her sake also. But here—particularly after GM was removed from this camp—I was made alone. I started taking interest in its and its preparation. I have almost made it into some kind of a ceremony, and I enjoy every sip of it. The whole process takes me about 45 minutes to 1 hour in the afternoon. I take some biscuits + a piece of cheese along with it. I bring everything in a nice tray from the dining room into my study. All this I will have to give up—and without knowing what other alternative activity could be devised.
The average air quality of Kathmandu Valley recorded an improvement last week with moderate to good air in all six air quality monitoring stations. Although Punta Sadak was slightly polluted, it was still the most-polluted area with daily average of 130 PM10 last Friday. The weekly average for Punta Sadak is 112 PM10, which is a considerable reduction from last week’s 168. The second most-polluted site is Patan Hospital.

KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

The most significant weather development this week is the arrival of the first westerly front of the season in the western Himalaya over Kashmir. A week ago India had now made its season migration south from the Tibetan plateau, which will push the frontal system away into western Tibet. But the change in wind direction will bring us slight respite from the Indo-Gangetic haze which has reduced visibility over the whole region, including Nepal. This paid week, the pollution front will move west into the westerly front, as it will bring down temperatures. The timely arrival of the westerly is a good sign that winter rain may be more timely.

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“I’ve already cut down on cigarettes and alcohol, and I’m on my way to becoming a pure vegetarian,” says Sthapit, dragging on his second cigarette on the parapet of the Dharara tower. Unlike his predecessor, PL Singh, who said he wanted to transform Kathmandu into Singapore, Sthapit’s plans are less ambitious. He would be satisfied if he could turn it into Bangkok. Without the traffic, “Or maybe Kuala Lumpur,” he says. “What Mahathir did to Malaysia, we can do in five years.”

Sthapit’s more immediate plans are to meet the challenge of the city’s population which has swollen by 100,000 in the last two years due to people fleeing violence in the countryside. This has put pressure on services like water, transportation, housing and garbage. These are problems that need national solutions pushed by the government, how can the city tackle them? The mayor’s answer: “Well, there is no national government, so we have to try to do what we can here.”

Besides, Sthapit thinks these problems will resolve themselves once the fighting stops. Even so, with proper planning he believes the Valley can absorb up to 3.5 million people. “If you look at Kathmandu from up here,” he says, gesturing at the jumble of houses over Khichapokhari, “you will see that the growth is horizontal, the solution is to go vertical outside the city walls. We can make this a vibrant, cosmopolitan city.”

Sthapit’s staunchest critics are rivals from within the left movement. In a television talk show last month, one of them called him a “dreamer”. Sthapit replied: “I have nothing to say to people who don’t dare to dream.” Another Sthapitism: “Nepal is not least-developed country, it is least-managed country.”

Back at his office, it is clear this is a mayor who doesn’t take no for an answer, and believes nothing is impossible. A team of engineers is poring over the Ring Road garden project and pointing out flaws in the plan. Sthapit brushes them off. “You’ll get everything you need, don’t use words like ‘impossible’, “ he tells them. Spread out on the desk in his office are bold new plans for improving the city: new streets to decongest traffic, a masterplan for more efficient garbage management, a scheme to enforce zoning laws in the city’s historical heart.

For this mayor, garbage is an opportunity, not a problem. His idea is to turn the limestone pit at the cement factory site at Chobar into a gigantic compost heap for the city’s organic waste and sell the fertiliser. “We could generate 40,000 tons of high-grade manure every year and sell it to fund our urban renewal plans,” he says, making it sound rather easier than it would be. But will that money be enough to buy up private property for his town re-planning? Sthapit has it all figured out: it is called “zero cost and value appreciation”. The compensation to people who lose property is that their remaining property will be worth five times more when an area is upgraded. The municipality is trying to put this formula to work on the Soaltee-Kalanki and the Min Bhawan-Battisputali link road, but with considerable resistance from sceptical locals. }
**Martial bliss**

By Kunda Dixit

It is when one’s wife starts taking martial art lessons after 20 years of marriage that one instinctively knows that this country is firmly on the path of militarisation. It also means, as I was to soon find out, that the term ‘martial bliss’ takes on a whole new meaning.

I knew my wife was making progress because her homework is to practice some of the more intricate lethal hand-to-hand combat techniques like chokes, throws and joint-locking manoeuvres on her better half, viz. me. A competent househusband who has always loved being kicked around, it behoves me to provide full encouragement to her latest interest. ‘Being a warlike species, the human race has been fighting each other tooth and nail since time immemorial. For instance, ancient murals depict men and women waving spears and swords and, later, Maoism. The tradition of martial arts allows one to land a high kick on anyone suspected of harbouring a germ warhead, which can be every second person in this city, and ask questions later. This is the doctrine of preemptively kicking ass.’

This is the doctrine that allows one to land a high kick on anyone suspected of harbouring a germ warhead, which can be every second person in this city, and ask questions later. This is the doctrine of preemptively kicking ass. The fact that martial arts have a solid theoretical foundation means that its techniques have been perfected as they were handed down from one generation of Black Belts to the next, right up to the Lagankhel Branch of the Aikido and Kyushushin Training Institute, where they teach you the doctrine of preemptively kicking ass.

Even when some pacifist emperor of the Middle Kingdom banned weapons, human beings found ways to tear each other asunder with their bare hands. This art was perfected in China, which through the ages has experienced Tzuics, Confuciansism, Shintoism and, later, Marxism. The tradition of martial arts is handed down from one generation to the next, right up to the Lagankhel Branch of the Aikido and Kyushushin Training Institute, where they teach you the doctrine of preemptively kicking ass.

Under My Hat

By Kunda Dixit

Even those who don’t personally know Father Eugene Watrin will recognise him as the priest on the bicycle on Kathmandu streets. Until last year, there was no slowing down this 82-year-young Jesuit. Rain or shine, day or night, Watrin would be pedalling away on the Tripureswor uphill without getting off. It’s a long way from Dayton, Ohio, where Watrin was born and raised! He joined the Jesuit order at 19. He knew it meant he could never marry, committing his whole life to the service and serving ties with parents, sisters and younger brother. Though the Vatican later changed the rules, it would be 21 years of living halfway across the globe before Watrin met his family again.

After nine years in India, Watrin was delighted when offered the chance of teaching in Nepal. In 1955, he began as hostel prefect at St Xavier’s College, the Lagankhel Branch of the Aikido and Kyushushin Training Institute, where they teach you the doctrine of preemptively kicking ass. Watrin was delighted when offered the chance of teaching in Nepal. In 1955, he began as hostel prefect at St Xavier’s College, the Lagankhel Branch of the Aikido and Kyushushin Training Institute, where they teach you the doctrine of preemptively kicking ass.

But if you will excuse me, I have a marital law class to go to.