This month, the number of Nepalis killed by fellow-Nepalis since the Maoist war began eight years ago crossed the 10,000 mark.

The human rights organisation, INSEC, is the only independent organisation counting. But it lists only verified deaths, and there are thousands more undocumented cases. On 28 July, the count reached 9,996. A week later, it was 10,112. Of those killed, 268 are children under 17.

In 1996, when a total of 61 people were killed, the nation was shocked. The death toll rose exponentially after the army entered the fray in November 2001, as the Maoists started using heavy weapons they captured. Non-combatant casualties soared as counter-insurgency operations resulted in disappearances, extra-judicial killings and deaths in crossfire.

The worst total was in 2002, where 4,648 people were killed, nearly one-fourth of them in the bloody month of May alone. The Maoists targeted civilians, grassroots politicians, social workers, businessmen and those accused of spying. INSEC says the Maoists have killed 3,469 people, while 6,643 have died at the hands of the security forces. Of the total, 4,141 were civilians, 3,479 were security personnel, about 400 were political workers and over 4,000 were Maoists.

The army admits 500 soldiers have died in the past eight years, and that 1,300 police have been killed. It says it has counted over 6,000 Maoist casualties in the past two years alone, not including an estimated 1,500 rebel dead carried away after major battles.

INSEC’s figures show that nearly half the people killed since 1996 have died in the past two years, and most of them after the breakdown of the second ceasefire last August. At this rate the total number of those killed is expected to reach 15,000 by this time next year. In the past five months, 608 people have already died, 341 of them since the formation of the four-party coalition on 2 June. Jagadish Dahal of INSEC quotes field reports as saying that the army now has a take-no-prisoners policy. “Maoists and suspected Maoists are usually shot on the spot,” he says.

INSEF’s Human Rights Yearbook 2004 also contained graphic details of Maoist brutality; victims tortured, beheaded, dismembered, bones crushed and axed. Lately, the Maoists have started threatening and abducting some human rights activists and journalists in the midwest. These tallies don’t give the numbers of those maimed, disabled or hospitalised. They do not count the hundreds of thousands of Nepalis who have lost loved ones. No one has an estimate on how many millions have been forced to leave their homes.

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Regression analysis

Despite the public awareness that the anti-regression movement has generated, it has undermined long-term chances by encouraging a limited interpretation of what is perceived as regression. Regression is defined as ‘a trend or shift toward a lower or less perfect state’. Any deviation from the eventual attainment or consolidation of a superior form of democracy, therefore, qualifies as regression. Although the cause of ‘regression’ has universal access accorded across political boundaries, proposed resolutions to it do not. The source of perceived regression in Nepal is an interpretation of Article 127, which allowed for Sher Bahadur Deuba’s dismissal and the nomination of prime ministers at the king’s discretion. To the casual observer, Deuba’s reinstatement two months ago would amount to a reversal of this ‘regression’. But, according to the alliance headed by the NC-G, the casual observer is wrong.

Depending on who one engages, there are different definitions of regression. Although the dissolution of parliament was not an extra-constitutional move, some previous parliamentarians maintain that its re-installation is the only way to end the regression. For Girija Koirala and his faction of four, it appears that ‘regression’ will continue until he himself becomes the prime minister. Despite the anti-regression rhetoric, this predisposition towards power-monogamy is hardly progressively self-righting. Democracy is easily manipulated by those with an agenda. The political office, especially in the presence of a compliant, silent majority. To expressly disassociate oneself from the political cocktail is of marginal value. To effectively voice dissatisfaction and enact a system of checks and balances, is where real value lies. Harnessing this value is not just a democratic imperative but it’s every Nepali citizen’s civic duty. The failure on our part as responsible citizens to challenge questionable motives also qualifies as a form of regression. Yet another regressive attitude is our innate tendency to blame others rather than accept responsibility ourselves. The political parties seem to find great comfort in blaming the palace for ‘regression’. They also find it convenient to sideline the issues that allowed for (or forced, some would say), a constitutional monarch to assume a politically assertive role. All the political forces in the country blame each other for the Maoist uprising. Meanwhile, the Maoists extracted most of their power base by capitalising on the
blame levied on former governments for their dereliction of civic duty. This blame game has all the elements of a vicious cycle that only a collective conscious can break. Perhaps a radically induced change in the attitudes of our leadership is required, followed by an immediate adoption and implementation of similar changes at all levels of societal strata. The sooner we are able to come to terms with our own misdemeanours the sooner this form of ‘regression’ will end.

Ironically, in the midst of all this confusion and chaos, the only actors who practice this literal interpretation of societal progressiveness. Sadly, though, when this test is expanded to include the means used by the Maoists to achieve their ends, it becomes an exercise in its own right.

To err it is said, is the human condition, to forgive, the most noble of virtues. But what if one continually errs? And does bestowing forgiveness upon those who repeatedly equivocate and engage in Machiavellian conspiracies constitute a virtue? In the minds of the wise?

For the sake of peace and that of future generations, cannot we hope that more of us will have the courage to choose virtue over aggression and by default, peace over retribution?

The current interpretation of ‘regression’ as that which can only happen to people despoiled by royal decree offers what is in statistical parlance, a ‘weak model’. There are simply too many variables in the equation for ‘regression’ to be explained by one factor alone.

In the absence of a functioning legislature, royal ordinances have become the only way to make or amend laws. The executive hanges by the thread of Clause 127 of a coromate constitution is and dependent upon royal mercy for survival.

The fourth estate is trapped between the state and the insurgents.

Civil society is sometimes called ‘the Fifth Estate’ but has become the only estate of last resort.

In the resulting anarchy, the courts could have been of no use.

But the judiciary is itself mired in an unprecedented crisis. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has finally succeeded in getting an insider appointed attorney general by the king, but a bigger battle looms to select competent and independent judges for 16 courts of appeal.

The positions of more than three dozen justices will fall vacant in the coming months.

The sort of people an appointed will affect the image of the judiciary. Many similarities between the bar and the bench in the past have dragged the judiciary through the streets. The resulting spectacle has damaged the people’s faith in the courts.

The judiciary is the guardian of the rule of law in an modern state, and we need to protect it from becoming the tool of those in power.

The courts of Nepal have been hamstring from the beginning. After the Shah Restoration in the 1960s, courts were named z yawalaya, the Sanskrit term meaning ‘house of justice’. Royal preceptors weren’t happy with the term, since their interpretation of Hindu scriptures made justice the prerogative of the crown.

The function of the courts under an active monarchy was to merely to pass on the orders of the divine ruler.

Preceptors prevailed over politicians, and the courts of Nepal were renamed adalat—a word of Persian origin meaning an office of the state that settled disputes. Thus, the agenda for the third estate was decided by semantics between the players of power politics.

The 1990 constitution left the institution of monarchy outside the preview of the judiciary. The supreme court remained an advisory court of justice, but a court of law.

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. redefined an unsullied litigant: “This is a court of law, young man, not a court of justice.”

For a court of law, procedure is the primary consideration and the act of justice is an afterthought.

It is assumed that if procedural features are closely scrutinized, the resulting decision of the court would somehow satisfy the justice criteria as well.

A court of law functions on the presumption of innocence which holds that a) everyone charged with a crime shall be considered not guilty until his or her guilt has been proven in conformity with the procedures stipulated by law established by the verdict of a court of law, b) the defendant shall not be obliged to prove his or her innocence, and c) the benefit of doubt shall be interpreted in favour of the defendant.

It is therefore not the function of the court to catch the culprit. It is there to ensure that the law’s dragged down to catch any innocents. Many of the perils of the 24/7 television and saturation coverage in the print is trial by media. Live reporting, instant analysis, and sound-bite opinion-on-demand leave nothing to the nuances of the law. The law therefore demands the instant justice of kangaroo courts.

Such certitude undermines the very concept of the court of law.

It is normal in a democracy to publicly discuss the merits of judicial decisions, but the institution of court and the character of judges should never be ridiculed. Politicians derive legitimacy from the people, and are therefore fair game. Judges need to be trusted as they have no recourse to the public to clear their name. Smearing judges with the brush used to tarnish politicians strengthens the insurgents who question the very system of governance and are using guns to bring it down.

The unwelcome over the court decision about the alleged drug lord William Gordon Robinson, a British national, (see ‘Nepal thrives as regional drug hub’ #198) irrevocably damaged the judiciary. In such cases, it’s best to let the law take its own course without undue meddling from the self-declared protectors of the public interest.

In addition, choosing judges of impeccable character would keep the courts beyond reproach.

Chinese One Child policy to solve this problem?

4. You advocate for a classless society, yet, stress that dictatorship of the proletariat and peasants is necessary for transformation of a society. In essence, your first variable justifies the need for the Communist Party’s political control over society. History is witness to the failures of this model in the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, and N Korea, where the parties have themselves become a class unto themselves and at times even spawned dynas-

ties.

6. Admit it, communism has failed or reformed itself. The Soviet Union has disintegrated. Marxism, never a showpiece of capitalism. Are you going to follow a more pragmatic political philosophy?

6. What happens to people who do not agree with your view point? Is going to be a freedom of expression, press and basic rights granted to the people? Do you believe in democracy?

7. What happens to peoples’ religion and belief systems?

There is no room for religion (‘state of the masses’) in your ideology. Can we still practice or not?

8. Right now you are on the opposing side, so it is easier for you to criticize and analyze the problems facing Nepal. If you become the rulers, you are going to have show results. How are you going to achieve that? Through the barrel of the gun or through democratic political participation? Second, how are you going to provide good governance?

We have read or are already familiar with the Red Book, so please give us real answers. Who knows the decision of our party is sound, practical, and ‘mato suhada’ many people like me and others may come to your fold.

SN Singh, email

NAALED: Re: Ajaya Dixit’s ‘Greed, Inc’ (Nepal Pan, #203). When the Enron scandal broke here in the US a few years ago, I was working in Nepal and observing an unfolding array of organized crimes and greed that embar-
rassed me greatly, especially give the efforts underway in Nepal to stem corruption in government. A Nepali col-
tleague, one of a growing cadre of Supreme Court advocates, observed wryly, “We have plenty of this corruption here in business and government here in Nepal, too, but the difference is that in the US those guys will go to jail.” It was heartening to see the news of Enron, Adelphi and Tyco executives, and Martha Stewart being nailed for their greed and criminal actions.

Only hope that the wheels of justice will soon do the same for those in the Bush Administration responsible for the shameful actions that have done so much damage to the US and around the world.

And also I hope that these examples encourage you in the Nepal government and the NGO sector to keep battling corruption and mismanagement in Nepal. The truth will set us free.

Malcolm Odei South Hampton, MA

CORRECTION
The review of Fahrenheit 9/11 in #208 was by Richard A. Zwellin.

Finally available in Nepal.

The classic analysis of the Old Mulki Ain.

“Barring a couple of articles in the 1960s and the 70s, which amounted to no more than scratching its surface, no scholar before Hoyer had turned his attention to tap the wealth of social and cultural material contained in the Muluki Ain in an exhaustive manner. Hoyer’s book is the first-thorough and lucid treatment of the ‘anthropology of caste’ in Nepal … It is obvious that no one else has studied the Muluki Ain either before or since Hoyer at such length and in such depth. This alone is enough to make the present book a landmark research with whose help alone we are able to know the structure of the macro-Nepali society of 19th-century vintage, its legacy running down to our own times still very strongly in every respect.”

—From the ‘Introduction’ by Prayag Raj Sharma

The Caste Hierarchy and the State in Nepal: A Study of the Muluki Ain of 1854 by András Hoyer with an introduction by Prayag Raj Sharma


IN BOOKSTORES NOW

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A traumatised

Antosh Prem Gir was only six years old when he saw the mutilated body of his father, who was killed by the Maoists in Dhangadi. His state of mind deteriorated. Generally a jolly boy, he changed into a quiet and aloof person who refused to talk even with his mother. He didn’t have an appetite and was haunted by nightmares. At night, he panted up and down the house because he couldn’t sleep.

His mother started to worry that her son was losing his mind and thought his condition would improve if she sent him away from the village. She reluctantly sent her youngest child to Kathmandu with help of a local social worker. Today, population is on the rise, yet they don’t consider it a serious health concern. Donor agencies, international organisations and local child help groups seem to think that the Nepali people are resilient and have the inner strength and family support to endure emotional hardships. But with killings and torture being everyday events in the news, many Nepalis appear to be numbed by the shock. This is worrying. “When people become desensitised about news of killing and start to accept that violence is part of life and society, it is a very dangerous sign,” says Bhogendra Sharma, director of Centre for Victims of Torture, Nepal (CVICT), which specialises in rehabilitating children and women traumatised by violence and bereavement.

Identifying and dealing with trauma victims is quite new for Nepal’s few psychiatrists and psychologists, who tend to use textbook knowledge of clinical practices to treat traumatic stress. “I learnt more in Nepali villages than what I was taught in the universities abroad,” says eminent psychiatrist Vidiya Dev

There is a house in Washington DC

The sad wreck of the Nepali ambassador’s residence in the US capital resembles the decline of the nation it represents

On a quiet, leafy street in northwest Washington DC sits a shabby, decaying house with a gold plaque on its door. The grass in the garden hasn’t been cut for weeks, garbage is strewn in the backyard, the paint around the windows is cracked and peeling. The plaque sign reads ‘Royal Nepalese Embassy’.

I strolled upon this sad little scene walking back from the nearby National Cathedral to my temporary home downtown. As I walked down the street towards the house, it was obvious that something was wrong. A shabby fringe of weeds and long grass protruded onto the sidewalk. Silence reigned behind the untended hedge. Windows were shuttered. All around are well kept family homes with children’s swing sets and toys on the lawn. It was a sunny Saturday afternoon, so parents and kids were out enjoying themselves.

Poor countries face big financial challenges maintaining a diplomatic presence in expensive places, and Washington DC is certainly one of them. The salary of an ambassador from a small, developing country would not tempt an American factory worker or landscape gardener. Just paying the monthly bills is often a challenge.

In Islamabad, where I lived for four years in the 1990s, diplomatic staff from African countries often supplemented their paltry recompense by selling contraband whisky to thirsty foreigners like me who didn’t have official permission to buy alcohol in the Islamic republic. A prominent South Asian ambassador in London once had to sell valuable paintings inside his embassy to pay for some roof repairs. His successor later assumed him of stealing rare works of art.

I have a lot of sympathy for people in this position, but the state of the Nepali ambassador’s residence in Washington is a disgrace. It reflects badly on a country far away that needs more friends and support, not the contempt of strangers. The American capital is one of Nepal’s two most important diplomatic postings (the other is New Delhi) and keeping up appearances is part of the job.

There are excuses to be made. His excellency, the late Jaya Pratap Rana, passed on a few months ago after a long illness which meant he was never really able to take up his post. He was well and lively when I met him at a conference of Nepalis in America two years ago. His successor has been appointed but evidently has not yet arrived, or hasn’t gotten around to issuing orders for maintenance.

Nonetheless, it all begs the question: what is the staff of the Royal Nepali Embassy doing on a day-to-day basis? They have, I’m sure, the usual duties of the diplomat networking, reading newspapers, searching for American investment in Nepal. I’m sure they could spare a little time to trim the grass around the ambassador’s residence and pick up some of the rubbish in the backyard.

Diplomacy, ultimately, is about appearances, and in Washington that is being allowed to slip badly. It’s been a long time since a happy crowd of power brokers and influential Americans toasted the kingdom in the garden while succulent seekh wizzled on the barbecue.

It’s hard to avoid linking the decline of the house and the nation it represents. Nepal’s elite has been absent without a doubt, and paying attention. The garden (the country’s hinterland) is unkempt, dangerous and depopulated. The house (the state) is a sad wreck, dry rot in all of the beams and corruption from the attic to the basement.

If someone, anyone, doesn’t do something soon, the whole structure could collapse and make things even worse in the neighbourhood. And I’m not talking about a house here. •
Menuka Koirala does not regret losing all her properly in Gorkha. The only thing she is sorry about is losing her husband.

He joined the Maoists and used to torture her constantly. He often threatened to kill her if she refused to work with the rebels, but she never thought he would actually do it. But after he started making serious threats, she decided to stay with her family in Gorkha was not safe either, so she came to Kathmandu. But even here, Menuka constantly lives in fear that her husband will track her down. “I was so mentally tortured that I did not even have the strength to live,” recalls Menuka, trying hard to control her tears. Although impoverished, counselling has taught her how to cope with the pain.

Sharma, chief of the Department of Psychiatry at Kathmandu’s Teaching Hospital.

There are no more than 50 psychologists in Nepal, out of which only six are qualified clinical psychologists. Every year, less than 10 students pass with a master’s degree in psychology from Tribhuvan University (TU) and most of them end up working in non-related commercial jobs. Only a handful actually focus on conflict-related trauma.

“One way to start addressing trauma and producing more psychologists. This is possible only when the government and non-governmental organisations create more jobs for them,” says Rebeckah Bazincharaya, who recently completed her master’s in psychology from TU.

CVCFT and a few other groups are training social workers to be psychosocial counsellors, and their numbers have grown. Their role is to identify people affected with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and give them basic counselling and refer them to counselling service centres run by non-government groups. Most government-run clinics deal only with mentally handicapped patients with severe brain disorders and epilepsy cases.

Social counsellors have been playing a key role in Nepal to help traumatised individuals get out of depression. “I was always obsessed with revenge but now I realise that will not benefit me,” says Nirmal Bista from Kalikot. He was only 18 when he saw his friends killed by the police during the government’s Kilo Sierra II operation in 1997. But Nirmal’s mental state worsened after the Maoists brutally beat up his uncle and abducted his father. His family sent him to Kathmandu when they realised Nirmal was determined to take revenge on the Maoists in his village. He received counselling at the activist group, Nagarik Awaj, and today he helps other victims of psychosocial trauma.

“Counselling helps a lot, not only by talking sense but also through the care and support of other people,” says Min Bahadur Raoul, also from Kalikot. The 18-year-old was abducted twice and forced to attend Maoist trainings, but managed to escape the second time. Today, with help from Nagarik Awaj, Raoul is more at ease and wants to help others like him through a new organisation called Orphans for Terror Victims in Nepal.

Small initiatives like these fill a gap left by the government’s neglect of the issue, but the need is much greater than what individual groups can do. In conflict regions, hundreds of thousands of Nepalis are coping with a level of violence that they have never been used to. And while the stress is on the physical harm caused by war, there is less attention paid to the psychological after-effects.

“The women and children are most vulnerable. They don’t know anything about trauma affecting their lives or about the psychosocial treatment available,” says Sushma Regmi, a psychologist.

If trauma is treated, there are serious physical health consequences as well. There may be loss of appetite, sleeplessness and sometimes even suicide attempts. “Timely orientation reduces the level of trauma and helps to lessen physical symptoms as well,” says Bichar Osti, a medical doctor who heads the rehabilitation section of CVCFT.

Unexplained somatic complaints are quite common but medical workers end up giving sleeping pills and pain killers without properly investigating the history of the patients. “The problem is that our health system is curative oriented and most of the health professionals can’t link the aches and pains with mental illness. The patient won’t say he is traumatised,” says Sharma.

Sharma and his team at the psychiatry department developed a Nepali model for community counselling, in which grassroots social mobilisers, teachers, community medical auxiliary workers and health assistants would be trained in ‘first-aid’ psychological care and would then refer patients to counsellors at district hospitals. This model worked effectively in treating teachers and students of the Sharda Secondary School in Doti, where several children were killed and wounded in crossfire during a skirmish last year. (“This is not a school. It is a cemetery, Nepali Times,” #169).

When Sharma proposed the idea of an integrated program to several donor agencies, it was turned down.

Psychologists accept that psychosocial intervention is more effective if community counselling and support to form a stable social environment is made. In Nepal’s case, there are already examples of teachers, traditional healers and local village leaders coming together to address the problem jointly. Says Dutch psychologist Mark Jordan: “They talk to me about Nepal is that there is a culture of helping each other and we should take the strength of the community into account.”

(Names of some patients have been changed on request.)
Nepali women by Nepali women

Emma Raynes was studying Nepali and anthropology in Nepal during the spring of 2003, when she hit upon the idea of giving point-and-shoot cameras to Nepali women to help her see things she couldn’t. Raynes says she chose Nepali women for her project because she found that women’s voices were rarely acknowledged. “I was searching for more knowledge about Nepali culture but also because I wanted to empower my subjects by giving them a way to speak about their lives with images,” she says.

The women that she decided to work with were friends, neighbors or people she met while traveling in Nepal. They were of various ages, castes, classes and places. Most of the women are from Kathmandu and the village of Tangtung near Pokhara. She gave each subject a camera, showed them how to use the viewfinder and the flash. She then asked them to photograph things that were important to them and things that they thought Americans did not understand about their lives.

A few days later, Raynes would retrieve the cameras and make double prints at a local photo shop. Finally, she returned to the women’s homes, gave them copies of their photos and discussed what they photographed. She told them she would take their pictures back to America to show them to family and friends. Some said: “Lau, tapai American nathai sab auna bayahadini.”

Raynes’ exhibition of Collaborative Portraits include both her black-and-white photographs and colour pictures taken by Nepali women. The portraits have captions with words that Raynes translated from Nepali. They were exhibited in three locations in the US during the past year: Bowdoin College in Brunswick in Maine, Buckingham Brown and Nichols School in Cambridge Massachusetts, and Soundtrack Studio in Boston. The project was funded by a fellowship from Bowdoin College Art Department.

Nepali Pan
Deepthi Sharma

Bijeay living in Tangtung, a hill village near Pokhara. She is the daughter of Tangtung villagers. She says that when she grows up, she wants to study in Pokhara and become a nurse like her mother. These are the photographs that she took.

“The mountains are very important to me because they bring water to the people in my village... and water brings us life.”

“I took this picture of my school book because school is the most important part of my life. I want to be a nurse like my mother. Her hands are also in this picture.”

Bijeay Laksmi Gurung 11 years old

Sumita Magar 18 years old

Sumita works at the lodge for trekkers that her father owns in Gyanepol. Her father owns a lodge for trekkers in the kitchen during trekking season and goes to school in the nearest town during the rest of the year.

“This is a Nepali washing machine.”

“I taught myself how to cook American food because that is what the tourists like to eat.”

“I love this photo of my sisters. I don’t like puja but I still believe.”

Nila Rai 25 years old

Nila Rai is my Nepali sister. When I was not in class, studying Nepal language, Nila and I would do puja together. She really loved to watch WWE wrestling and play jigsaw puzzles. These are Nila’s photographs.

“My mother teaches me many songs so that my grandmother could also like my songs.”

This is a Nepali washing machine.”

The exhibition at Buckingham Browne and Nichols school in Cambridge Massachusetts.

Bowdoin College and earned the Martel Prize from the Bowdoin College Art Department.

A new radiance

A centre for the intellectually handicapped in Kathmandu strives to make children independent and happy

Bilik’s maroon eyes search blankly for something, an identity marker, a sign of his existence. He is wearing his pants back-to-front, saliva dripping down his shirt. With great difficulty, he scribbles ‘A’ on a piece of paper. At 13, Bilkik can neither hear nor speak properly, and when he tries to stand up, he falls down. Holding on to his teacher’s hands, he stands up again and the teacher leads him to the bathroom.

Bilik is an intellectually handicapped child, one of the many who attend the Navajivot Kendra, a daycare centre for mentally handicapped children at Baluwatar.

Intellectual disabilities can be caused if the mother falls ill, takes too much alcohol or medications or suffers from a lack of iodine or other vitamins and minerals during pregnancy.

Mental disability is not mental illness. Mentally handicapped children are not ill, they just develop and learn at a much slower pace than normal children. Mild and moderately affected children can be educated to a certain extent.

Traditionally, Nepalis believe that mental disability is a curse of the gods and parents feel ashamed, hiding their handicapped children and restricting their opportunity to explore, understand and learn what they can.

What later became Navajivot Kendra was opened by an American social worker in 1978 with three boys and two girls. Parents and guardians who felt embarrassed and fearful of their children’s condition finally had a daycare centre providing training and guidance. The centre is now run by the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth with the mission to educate mentally handicapped children in Nepal so they can be independent and happy.

Sixty-five youngsters, ages six to 23, are currently attending Navajivot. The students are divided into seven groups according to their degree of disability, with each class having 8-10 students.

Specialised teachers provide physical and mental exercises to the children who stay at the school from 10AM to 3PM. They are taught to manage their own personal hygiene, household duties and social property.

Classes also focus on language and communication skills, story telling, painting, dancing, yoga, speech therapy and vocational training. In addition, there are health education classes for parents and students, weekly medical checkups, educational tours and picnics.

In spite of everything, parents, guardians and teachers understand that it is not reasonable to expect mentally disabled children to become and behave ‘normally’. But Navajivot believes they can be made more independent and responsible.

“We help the children reach the best of their ability. When they come here and work with other children like themselves, it builds up their confidence and they learn to be more independent,” says Bishnu KC, a teacher who has been working at Navajivot since 1978.

Most of the children at the centre were initially dependent on others even for minor things but, amidst compassionate teachers equipped with effective learning strategies, they learn to understand and follow instructions, take care of personal belongings and express themselves.

Navajivot children have won medals in International Special Olympics. Other alumni of the centre are now able to support themselves, and some even have part-time jobs in offices and agencies in Kathmandu. One is currently working at Bhit Bhent Supermarket, another is running a small shop near Sundhara. A lot of this is due to the dedication and commitment of the staff at Navajivot who have persevered despite many challenges and stuck to their motto: ‘Handicapped children may be victims of fate, but they shall not be a victim of our neglect.”

Deepthi Sharma has just finished Grade 11 at Lincoln School and worked as a summer volunteer at Navajivot Kendra this year.
Advising caution

International travel advisories could affect the healthy forecasts for tourism this autumn season

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

JAPAN’S TRAVEL ADVICE TO NEPAL

Travel advice to Nepal: Based on the current situation, we recommend travelers to
- Avoid visiting the rural areas
- Be aware of the security situation
- Check with the local authorities before traveling

Updated advice: The latest travel advice is based on recent developments.

THREATS TO TRAVELERS
- Criminal activities
- Theft
- Robbery
- Violent crime

Travelers should be cautious and follow the local authorities’ recommendations.

CAIRN strikes it big

EDMUND YUEN - The British Daily Telegraph Wednesday signed an agreement with HMG to explore five blocks for oil in the Chure Hills and tarai in mid-western Nepal. Cairn Energy has permission to explore for oil for the next four years and it will be granted another four years if it needs an extension. Department of Mines and Geology says the British company will invest a minimum of $80 million during exploration.

An official company statement in Edinburgh Thursday said Cairn is relinquishing rights to explore in designated national parks and wildlife areas. But the Worldwide Fund for Nature still says the prospecting could affect jungle corridors of the India-Nepal Tarai Arc Project set aside for migrating wildlife.

The Nepalese government follows an announcement on Monday of a forthright huge find in Rajasthan in six months by Cairn. The company is now valued at more than $2bn on the London stock market. Chief executive, Bill Gammell, is a friend of President George Bush and went to Fettes College the exclusive Edinburgh private school with Tony Blair.

Traveling with children

As part of a police campaign to purge the Valley of the commercial sex trade, on 9 August the police arrested 39 members of Blue Diamond Society (BDS)—an organisation that advocates the rights of sexual minorities. Members complained that they were not given food and beaten up while in police custody. Many sex workers and clients were also arrested. The same day from massage parlors. There is no clear law against prostitution and the only penalty, as per the civil act, is that the accused will have to pay between Rs 5,000-10,000 and serve three months in jail. The BDS members were not caught engaging in any form of sex work, but were still arrested by police. The police discrimination against the sexual minorities is evident and we strongly condemn the police violation of human rights," says Sunil Pant, director of BDS. In a bid to get public support and to pressure the government against the discriminatory attitude, BDS organised a peaceful rally in Ramta Park on Tuesday. Amnesty International sent out a circular to member organisations this week to urge the government and police to stop the harassment of transsexuals.

VDC secretaries resign

Under pressure from the Maoists, three dozen VDC secretaries have resigned in Dhading district. One of the secretaries, Thakur Prasad Sirkhada, said they had no choice because of death threats. Of the roughly 50 VDCs in the district, nearly 40 have been bought off by Maoist emissaries. The Secretaries of all village councils worked at the same office in the district headquarters until recently, but even then they faced Maoist threats. Elsewhere, more than two dozen VDC secretaries have urged the government not to give them the responsibility of running the local bodies. In a letter sent to the Local Development Ministry, VDC secretaries of Bagmati stated that the government was putting their lives at risks by giving them the authority to run the local bodies. After the government’s coalition partners couldn’t reach an agreement on the reinstatement of elected village councils, the government had recently instructed secretaries to run the councils.

EU peace mission

The European Union has called on both sides in Nepal’s conflict to end violence, agree on a ceasefire as soon as possible and look for practical measures to build confidence and create a climate for meaningful and sustainable peace processes. It has pledged full support to what it said was the “the new co-ordination government’s efforts to resolve the crisis in the country.” The statement urged all political parties to hold the EU and the US’s talks to consider the EU’s “positive list of conditions” and highlighted the EU’s “immediate human rights commitment without unnecessary delay” of the Memorandum of Understanding with the UNHCR.

The declaration was submitted to the Foreign Ministry on Monday. In it, the EU expressed its particular concerns, this time about Maoist violence and other practices, including terrorist attacks, the use of child soldiers, recruitment, abduction and forced induction. “It called upon the Maoists to cease these activities,” the declaration says. “The EU will monitor the situation closely and will calibrate its policies according to developments.” It told the EU and the US’s talks to consider the EU’s “positive list of conditions” and highlighted the EU’s “immediate human rights commitment without unnecessary delay” of the Memorandum of Understanding with the UNHCR. The EU expressed its particular concerns, this time about Maoist violence and other practices, including terrorist attacks, the use of child soldiers, recruitment, abduction and forced induction. “It called upon the Maoists to cease these activities,” the declaration says. “The EU will monitor the situation closely and will calibrate its policies according to developments.” It told the EU and the US’s talks to consider the EU’s “positive list of conditions” and highlighted the EU’s “immediate human rights commitment without unnecessary delay” of the Memorandum of Understanding with the UNHCR.
Indian handshake

After years of decline, Indian development assistance to Nepal is increasing again

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

Foreign aid to Nepal used to be confined to infrastructure projects, and Nepal’s rulers played off regional rivals India and China or superpowers the US and USSR to extract assistance for highways, dams and even cigarette factories. Later, aid was channelled more towards poverty alleviation and projects designed to lift living standards.

But Indian aid for large infrastructure projects diminished as European, Japanese and American donors dominated foreign aid to Nepal. By the late 80s and into the 90s, India hardly figured at all on the list of donor countries. But recently there has been a sharp upswing in Indian grants and aid projects to Nepal. With the Maoist insurgency and the danger of its spillover into India, Nepal’s development has become a strategic issue for India.

India is still investing in big projects: there are polytechnic institutes being set up in Hetauda and Morung, a project to upgrade feeder roads in the tarai, four border checkpoints at Birgunj, Bhairawa, Birhatagaur and Nepalgunj are being upgraded, the BP Koirala Institute of Health and Science in Dharam and Bir Hospital Trauma Centre are being expanded and a fibre-optic backbone along the tarai is nearing completion.

India is already Nepal’s biggest donor of military hardware to the Royal Nepali Army, with six helicopters, mine-protected vehicles, assault rifles and large quantities of ammunition. Even with joint venture investments in telecom, transportation or hydro-power, there are indications that New Delhi is encouraging Indian public sector corporations to be involved rather than private Indian companies.

New Delhi put economic cooperation with Nepal on a formalised footing with the establishment of the India Cooperation Mission, and also drifted away from large projects. It has increased its development cooperation assistance to Nepal in recent years to Rs 1.6 billion per year.

“In the mid-90s, efforts began to streamline this cooperation and focus not only on big landmark projects, but also ones that ensure that economic cooperation directly reaches the people of Nepal at a grassroots level through community development projects,” one embassy official told us.

In the past, India helped in building hydropower plants like Trisuli, the Tribhuvan Highway and sections of the Mahendra Highway, most of the airports along the taraí and major hospitals. Now, the focus seems to be more on helping district and village level schools and even hospitals by gifting ambulances.

All aid comes with strings attached, it’s just that some countries are better at hiding it. “Indian aid comes under India’s strategy to maximise benefits from Nepal’s natural resources,” says foreign aid expert Keshav Acharya. “This has been seen in the past and it is still valid.”

Past projects to build barrages along the border on the Kosi and Gandaki have become symbols of this attitude in Nepal: public perception, and this is why there are misgivings about letting India get involved in Upper Karnali, Budi Gandaki or the Kosi High Dam proposals.

Embassy officials confirm that India is interested in taking up several major hydroelectric projects. Money has also been set aside for maintenance of enhancements and other schemes like the Saptakosi-Sun Kosi Multipurpose Project. There are even bilateral efforts underway to revive political hot potatoes like the Rancheswor irrigation and power project, which is still stuck a decade after the signing of the Mahakali Treaty.

Aid pundits say initial Indian aid, like any other aid, used to be project-sited, but that today it is policy-tied. “The aid we receive from India reflects its foreign policy directive towards Nepal,” says Gananath Sharma, a professor at Tribhuvan University. “These policies follow various treaties Nepal has signed with India over the years.”

Indian officials, however, say their aid is driven by the need to look at mutual benefit and cooperation. “The emphasis has always been on core sectors such as education, health and development of infrastructure because we believe that cooperation in these fields will contribute to economic and social stability which will be mutually beneficial,” said an official.

Even so, as a neighbour that shares an open border with Nepal, India has often looked at Nepal through a strategic geopolitical lens. In his book Foreign Aid and Politics in Nepal, first published in 1985, Eugene Berman Milhaly wrote: “India planned to build more roads from the Indian plains into Nepal, to construct all-weather airfields in the vital Nepal plains (the only part of Nepal which could serve as a staging area for a force intending to attack India), and to carry out projects which could win support among the inhabitants of the plains.”

In that sense, experts say India’s real interest towards Nepal hasn’t changed. Much of Indian assistance still goes to the taraí, offsetting some of the neglect that Kathmandu has shown in the past to the region. One foreign aid expert told us: “It is a sort of buffer zone protection, they want the areas in their immediate vicinity to be developed.

If this geopolitics that drove aid in the past, the Maoist insurgency in Nepal and its links to Nasalalis across the border mean that for New Delhi peace, stability and development in Nepal have become strategic points. For this, experts note, a developed and prosperous Nepal should be as much in India’s interest as Nepal’s own.
There are three years to go for the golden jubilee of Royal Nepal Airlines, but it is unclear whether the flag carrier will even be around to celebrate it. The airline suffers an image problem caused by unreliable service. It does not compete in the domestic market, much of its potential earnings from the Gulf and East Asian routes have been lost to private operators leading domestic carrier and the preferredury planning, fleet structure, pricing and potential earnings from the Gulf and East Asian routes have been gifted to others and competition offsets its small size. The board of directors must be given room to grow, rather than allowing compensation through viable reciprocation.

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Directly related to the airline's financial performance is the implementation of the bank's strategy of cost management, which will require the airline to be more efficient and competitive. The board of directors must be given room to grow, rather than allowing compensation through viable reciprocation.

There is a way to make Royal Nepal Airlines airworthy again

The airline suffers an image problem caused by unreliable service. It does not compete in the domestic market, much of its potential earnings from the Gulf and East Asian routes have been lost to private operators leading domestic carrier and the preferred.
Crossing Chitlang Pass to get to Kathmandu from the tarai in 1950, French mountaineer Maurice Herzog looked up in surprise: ‘I saw huge cables going right across a valley,’ he wrote in his epic adventure book, *Annapurna*. ‘I wondered if it could be a cable railway. Indeed it was, the longest in the world, measuring nearly 19 miles. It provisioned Kathmandu and the surrounding neighbourhood, a population of some 150,000 people.’

Herzog was wrong about the world record. In 1919, Ropeways Ltd London had already constructed a 73.1km ropeway in Colombia. Still, the nearly 31km long Dhosing-Matathiri ropeway was an impressive piece of engineering, and it was the second ropeway built in Nepal. The first was the Swayambhunath Ropeway, a 4km cable system from a mine in Halchowk to Lamchaur. Rana Prime Minister Chandra Sumshere commissioned it in 1904 to cater to Kathmandu’s palace-building spree that was in full swing at the time.

The ropeway from Dhosing near Bhimphedi to Matathiri in the Valley had to cross two passes over 2,600m. During construction, English engineers found villages fleeing because rumours spread that children would be sacrificed at the foot of the treestiles before it went into operation. The Tri Chandra Nepal Tara Ropeway was finally opened in 1927 with a capacity of eight tons per hour. Indian freight was transported from Raxaul to Amlekhganj by train—46km railway was another one Chandra Sumshere’s ideas. Cargo was taken to Dhosing by lorry and then the ropeway hauled it to Matathiri.

‘I remember it going up,’ says Krishna Prasad Paniri in *Dhomen*. ‘We became a bustling village after that.’ He shows us the remnants of the foundation of the ropeway’s very first tower in the middle of a cornfield.

Two Rana-era godowns still remain, half-buried by the flashfloods that swept away the bazar. After the Dhosing ropeway decayed and died, the Americans built an even longer one (see review, p22). Krishna Prasad worked on that ropeway construction and was paid Rs 3 a day. ‘We carried up all the steel parts and assembled the towers and terminals on the spot,’ he recalls. ‘We had to climb up and down steep ridges in a long line to haul the cable in position,’ he adds, pointing to a question-mark shaped carrier still hanging on cables traversing the high above the valley.

The American-built 42.3km Nepal Ropeway started in Hetauda and ferried material to Teku, crossing what is now the Ring Road to Balsalu. Although the Tribhuban Highway opened for traffic in 1956, the Americans helped the Nepali government with the $6.4 million project because it would slash transport time, save cost and not be affected by the monsoon.

The bi-cable system (two continuous stationary track cables and two hauling ropes) was supported by 280 steel towers. It consisted of seven sections, with big terminals on each end to regulate carrier movement. Carriers could make the roundtrip from Hetauda to Kathmandu and back in 4 hours and 12 minutes, hauling 22 tons of cargo a day.

‘It was a great system, but difficult to operate,’ recalls Krishna Prasad, who continued to work for the ropeways for 14 years. ‘My terminal had 25 staff to push the incoming carriers to the traction rope of the next section. Every 90 seconds a carrier would arrive. It was extremely important to have good communication. If a section broke down we had to shut down the other ones immediately to prevent massive collisions.’

After the Hetauda-Kathmandu leg was completed, almost two decades passed before private groups and the European Union introduced new cable railway systems in Nepal. The Muskanamara Cable Car, which, since 1998, has carried people to a popular pilgrimage site from the Mahendra Highway, has proven that a well managed system can be profitable and deliver excellent

The sad ruin of the Hetauda-Kathmandu ropeway symbolises the shattered dream of electric transport.

MAARTEN POST in DHORSING
Clockwise from above: The rusting hulks of the towers of the ropeway at Chitlang Pass. The half-buried Rana-era ropeway godown at Dharsing. In Hetauda the terminal of Nepal Ropeway has become a playground for children. Krishna Prasad Panari in Dharsing points to the cables of a ropeway he helped build. A carter hangs like a question mark near Bhimphed exactly where it stopped eight years ago. Another carter is frozen in time on the outskirts of Kathmandu.

services. Unfortunately, Nepal Ropeway awaited a different fate. Mismangement and apathy took their toll and the ropeway stopped running in 1994. In Hetauda, goats graze in the terminal compound. On the other side of the mountain, in Dhakai, a man who is living directly underneath the ropeway says the buzzing sound he was so familiar with stopped eight years ago. Along the route, pieces of cable have come down, the terminals are rusted and crumbling and useful steel parts have been stolen, including six complete towers. Experts cite many reasons for the collapse of Nepal Ropeway. The open style carriages made pillage easy. A woman in Dhakai tells us that people used long bamboo poles to push sacks of food grains out of the carriages as they passed overhead. There is also a conspiracy theory which says truck owners sabotaged the ropeway. But the biggest problem was institutional: the ropeway was operated by the Nepal Transport Corporation (NTC) under the Ministry of Works and Transport, which were primarily concerned with building roads. Maintenance is vital for a ropeway, because the shutdown for one single day results in huge revenue losses and is disastrous for its reputation. The budget allocated to maintain Nepal Ropeway was not enough. It was overstuffed and suffered poor capacity utilisation. Although several studies showed hauling freight by ropeway was actually cheaper than transporting it by road, even government corporations like National Trading used trucks instead of the ropeway to get their supplies to Kathmandu.

In 1993, Nepal Ropeway proved its value for the last time after floods washed away parts of both the Tribhuvan and Prithivi highways, cutting Kathmandu off. The ropeway had lost two towers along the Rapti river bank, but with the help of the army they were restored in just 34 days and the ropeway could supply Kathmandu with vegetables and other food products.

But after the roads reopened, the promises for better government support evaporated and things went downhill fast. The NTC was dissolved two years ago and the ropeway has been shifted to the Ministry of Labour and Transport, but nobody really feels responsible anymore. Nepali cable car expert, Resham Raj Dhakal, says with an air of finality: “It is dead.”

Even so, Grade Eight students all over Nepal still have to memorise details about a glorious 42km pioneering ropeway connecting Hetauda to Kathmandu “in operation at present” (Eka Books, Our Social Studies, 2004 revised edition).
I had to do it all over again, and somehow we could go back to 1952 to plan Nepal's future, what would we do differently?

Harnessing hydroelectricity for transportation would be high on the list. From very early on, international and Nepali experts pointed out the simple wisdom of using the energy of falling water to run trains, trolley buses, trams and cable cars. Yet, we took the wrong turn back in the 1950s, and never really corrected that mistake. As a result, a country with abundant renewable energy is now crippledly dependent on imported fuel, a business that is run by an entrenched adulteration mafia.

Indeed, calculations show that why long-range ropeways built later failed despite potential and includes case studies of several rural ropeways that transformed people's lives. The book draws lessons for the future development of ropeways in Nepal, building on the experiences of the government-run Hetauda-Kathmandu Ropeway, Bhattebasa-Milkway, Barpark Ropeway and the immensely successful privately-run Manakamana Cable Car.

The other chapters analyse why early projects worked brilliantly, why long-range ropeways built later failed despite potential and includes case studies of several rural ropeways that transformed people's lives. The book draws lessons for the future development of ropeways in Nepal, building on the experiences of the government-run Hetauda-Kathmandu Ropeway, Bhattebasa-Milkway, Barpark Ropeway and the immensely successful privately-run Manakamana Cable Car.

Editors Dipak Gyawali, Ajiya Dixit and Madhukar Upadhyia conclude that the 'rins of unsustainability' were built-in into some of the ropeway projects. They propose a gaun-besi ropeway system to link hill towns to roadheads in the valleys below. These ropeways, if properly planned, enabled villagers to take advantage of the market, rather than the other way around... they do not replace roads, but exploit them more fully to increase traffic to and from remote hamlets, argue Gyawali and Dixit in the concluding chapter.

Indeed, calculations show that ropeways usually cost half as much as mountain highways per km to build, and are more than 20 times cheaper to maintain. It appears Nepal's Rana rulers were much more visionary about the potential for ropeways than our contemporary rulers. Iwasa Chandra Shumshere who installed a 22 km cargo ropeway between Dharsing and Kathmandu in 1924 (see p.10), although he appears to have preferred ropeways in order to retain Kathmandu's Valley's strategic inaccessibility from the Indian plains.

It took another 40 years for Nepal's second ropeway to be set up, and this time we needed the Americans to build it for us. The 42km Hetauda-Kathmandu Nepal Ropeway cost half as much as the Tribhuvan Highway on the same route to build. The government-run ropeway and the private trucks on the highway were bitter rivals, and in the end, the highway won. In 1964, when Nepal Ropeway went into operation, it pulled so much electricity from the grid that Kathmandu Valley's lights dimmed when it was running. But government apathy, mismanagement and neglect took their toll. The ropeway was never used to more than half its capacity northbound, and the cars always headed back to Hetauda empty. Although it showed its brilliant potential during the Indian blockade in 1968-89 and when landslides washed off both Tribhuvan and Mugling highways in 1993, Nepal Ropeway was finally closed down in 2001.

Since then, there have been numerous feasibility studies by the UN and others for long ropeways, to revive and privatise the Hetauda Ropeway, and to build cable cars for tourist areas like Namche and Hattiban. But the grandiose dreams remained dreams, while local initiative and expertise knew the ropeway's true potential for grassroots development.

Ropeways in Nepal examines in detail two of these bold experiments, created by pioneers who dared to think outside the envelope such as Bir Bahadur Ghale of Barpak in Gorkha and Madhukar Upadhya from Bhatte Danda in Lalitpur. Bir Bahadur ran a micro-hydro business selling power to his picturesque native village, a three-day walk north of Gorkha. But he could never break even because he could only sell power at night and his plant lay idle in the daytime. Then, while on a trip to Hong Kong, Bir Bahadur saw a cable car and got the idea of using his electricity to power a ropeway to carry goods from the valley up to Barpak.

When it was finally built with a grant from the British Embassy in 1998, the ropeway slashed portering time and brought down the cost of essentials in the market. The ropeway was so popular that passengers rode the cars even when repeatedly warned not to do so. A tragic accident killed four illegal riders two years ago and a few months later a flash flood on the Daraudan washed away the base station. Bir Bahadur has learnt his lesson and is rebuilding his ropeway. Madhukar Upadhya worked on a TV project in South Lalitpur where dairy farmers suffered because they couldn't take their milk to market. To preserve the milk, they boiled it down to khowar ghiu, decimating the surrounding forests in the process. The Bhatte Danda Milkway enabled farmers to take the milk quickly to the roadhead and on to Kathmandu considerably enhancing their income. But a village faction influenced by the truck lobby on the Karhi Highway, which is a major business, forced the ropeway to close.

However, when rains washed off portions of the highway in 2002 and the milk started to spoil, villagers vowed never to stop the ropeway again. Says Upadhy a, 'In response to collective constraints, individuals in a community innovate and pull aside differences during times of crisis.' Indeed, the political economy of south Lalitpur before the ropeway was interesting. Farmers living near the roadhead who could sell fresh milk got the most value for their product and were mainly Congress supporters. Those in the first valley where milk had to boiled down to khowar and ghiu tended to be UML, and in the farthest valley where there was no market for milk products, the peasants were Maoist supporters even back then.

The conclusion of Ropeways in Nepal is that long-range multi-stage ropeways and go for an 'arranged marriage' of hydropower projects with the capabilities of the suspension bridge industry. These are two sectors that Nepal has amassed a lot of indigenous expertise, and can be the building blocks of a national micro-hydro projects with the capabilities of the suspension bridge industry. These are two sectors that Nepal has amassed a lot of indigenous expertise, and can be the building blocks of a national micro-hydro projects with the capabilities of the suspension bridge industry. These are two sectors that Nepal has amassed a lot of indigenous expertise, and can be the building blocks of a national micro-hydro projects with the capabilities of the suspension bridge industry. These are two sectors that Nepal has
Weight off your club

Why and how you can use lead tape to get that extra edge

Many amateur golfers are fascinated by the thin strips of heavy lead tape they see plastered to the back of a pro’s club. They often ask me if lead tape can help them fix their own swings. Better players—those who hit a ball that starts straight but curves slightly at the end—can fine tune their ball flight by using lead tape to adjust the weight and balance of their clubs. However, lead tape isn’t a swing cure, nor will it straighten out a full-blown slice or hook.

On a shot that starts out straight, how the club face reacts at impact can determine how much the ball will curve near the end of its flight. By adding small amounts of weight to the toe or heel of the club, you will be surprised how the club face can square at impact and the problems of the ball being a fade or draw at the end can be changed. Adding a bit of tape behind the sweet spot can increase the height of shots. Also, lead tape can be used to fix that one club in the bag that feels different and produces a different ball flight from other clubs.

Below are some tips on how to tweak the flight of a golf ball by using weights. Lead tapes are available in rolls or strips. A one-inch strip weighs from 0.7-1.5gm, depending on the brand.

To hit the ball higher:
Everyone likes to hit the ball higher, which allows the ball to hover in the air for a long time. If your ball flight is low, then your distances will be low.

To enhance a draw or reduce a fade:
Add weight to the heel of the club helps rotate, or close the club face through impact. The larger the club head, the harder it is to square the club face at impact, which is why many of the latest oversize drivers feature extra heel weighting.

To reduce a draw or enhance a fade:
Add weight on the toe of the club will slow the rotation of the club around its axis. This should help you hit the ball straighter or get a ball flight moving slightly left to right.

Perhaps you can shape your shots away from the trees and bushes using these tips. Feel free to ask your golf professional for help on these modifications.

Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and Golf Director at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kollamdu. prodeepak@hotmail.com

Sneak preview

Plans for Friday’s dazzling opening ceremony at the Athens Games include ancient myths and goddesses

Nearly four billion people will watch the opening ceremony of the Olympics in Athens, and Greece is preparing to break a record of its own as the host of the Summer Olympic Games. A worldwide television audience of approximately 3.9 billion will watch the Olympics opening ceremony on Friday night. Athens will break the previous world record, held by the Sydney Olympics opening ceremony, which was watched by three billion people in 2000.

Friday’s opening ceremony of the Athens Games will start at 9PM local time (just past midnight in Nepal) and will last four hours. It will pay homage to Greek history and the classical period that gave birth to the Olympics: a Trojan horse, a giant statue of the goddess Athena and mythological figures sailing through a lake at the Olympic stadium.

The ceremony was supposed to be a national secret, but details leaked out after a dress rehearsal Sunday night with an audience of about 35,000 people, including employees of the Athens organizing committee and volunteers.

A taxi driver, who got a rehearsal ticket because his niece is working on the show, saw one third of the three-hour ceremony. The infused of the stadium was flooded and a giant statue of Athena, the city’s protector, rose into the stadium through a hole in the middle of the field.

The set then turns into a mountain, topped by an olive tree and volunteers dance around in costumes from ancient times. Hundreds of musicians beat drums and a performer dressed as a centaur, half-man, half horse, shoots an arrow intended to look like a comet.

At another point in the show, mythological figures sail on a boat symbolising the ancient story of Jason and the Argonauts, in which the hero and his crew hunt for the legendary golden fleece. The dress rehearsal also included a Trojan horse. In Homer’s epic, the Iliad, the horse concealed Greek troops who sacked the city of Troy.

Athens organizers have refused to reveal plans of the ceremony. Now, with details coming out, officials are stressing the real ceremony on Friday will be special because athletes will be there. “We cannot keep everything a secret. We know that,” Michael Zacharakas, an Athens 2004 spokesman, said on Monday.

“When people with tickets will be in the stadium, celebrating together with all the athletes... this is the important thing,” A dress rehearsal of the full three-hour ceremony was held on Tuesday with 70,000 spectators expected, giving officials a chance to test security, crowd management and transport issues.

Simon Govtelyn, producer of the opening ceremony for the Athens Olympic Games, said they will put up a better show than the Sydney Olympics four years ago. “I think so,” said Govtelyn when asked whether Friday’s opening ceremony will be better than that of the Sydney Olympics, which was highlighted by Cathy Freeman’s dramatic shoe in lighting the Olympic cauldron. But the British, whose wife and two daughters were also accredited to attend the opening, declined to disclose anything about the ceremony.
The resource curse
Why having natural resources isn’t always an asset

There is a curious phenomenon that economists call the resource-curse—so named because, on average, countries with large endowments of natural resources perform worse than countries that are less well endowed.

Yet some countries with abundant natural resources do perform better than others, and some have done well. Why is the spell of the resource curse cast so unequally?

Thirty years ago, Indonesia and Nigeria—both dependent on oil—had comparable per capita incomes. Today, Indonesia’s per capita income is five times that of Nigeria, while Nigeria’s per capita income has fallen. Both Sieram Leon and Botswana rivet in diamonds. Yet Botswana averaged 7.5% annual economic growth over the past 30 years, while Sieram Leon plunged into civil strife. The failure in the oil-rich Middle East is legion.

Economists put forward three reasons for the dismal performances of so many richly endowed countries:

First, the prospect of rich rents often induces official efforts to seizure a larger share of the pie, rather than creating a larger pie. The result is that growth is often too low, or at other times even negative, to absorb officially induced revenue shortfalls.

Second, natural resource prices are volatile, and managing this volatility is hard. Lenders provide money when times are good, but want their money back when, say, energy prices plummet. Economic activity is thus even more volatile than commodity prices, and much of the gains made in a boom unravel in the bust that follows.

Third, oil, and other natural resources, while perhaps a source of wealth, do not create jobs by themselves and unfortunately, they often crowd out other economic sectors. For example, an inflow of oil money often leads to currency appreciation—a phenomenon called the Dutch Disease.

The Netherlands, after its discovery of North Sea gas and oil, found itself plagued with growing unemployment and workforce disability (many found natural resource benefits to be more generous than unemployment benefits). When the exchange rate soars as a result of resource booms, countries cannot export manufactured or agricultural goods, and domestic producers cannot compete with an onslaught of imports.

Substantial natural wealth often creates rich countries with poor people. Two thirds of the people in Venezuela, the Latin American country with the largest oil deposits, live in poverty. Fortunately, as we have become aware of these problems, we have learned much about what can be done about them.

Democratic, consensual and transparent processes are more likely to ensure that the fruits of a country’s wealth are equitably and well spent.

We also know that stabilisation funds—which set aside some of the money earned when prices are high—can help reduce the economic volatility associated with natural resource booms. Moreover, such fluctuations are amplified by borrowing in good years, so countries should resist foreign lenders who try to persuade them of the virtues of such capital flows. The Dutch disease, however, is one of the more intractable consequences of oil and resource wealth. In principle, it is easy to avoid currency appreciation; keep the foreign exchange earned from oil, say, oil exports out of the country. Invest the money in the US or Europe. Bring it in only gradually. But in most developing counties, such a policy is a hard sell as helping someone else’s economy.

Some countries are trying to implement these lessons. Nigeria has proposed creating stabilisation funds, and plans to tell the natural resources in transparent, competitive bidding processes. Most importantly, the Nigerians are taking measures to ensure that the fruits of this endowment are invested, so that as the country’s natural resources are depleted, its real wealth—fixed and human capital—is increased.

Western governments can help with common-sense reforms. Secret bank accounts not only support terrorism, but also facilitate the corruption that undermines development. Similarly, transparency would be encouraged if only payments that are fully documented were tax deductible.

Violent conflict is fed and its effects worsened by massive sales of arms by Western governments to developing countries. This should be stopped.

Abundant natural resources can and should be a blessing, not a curse. We know what must be done. What is missing is the political will to make it so.

Joseph E. Stiglitz is Professor of Economics at Columbia University and a member of the Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalisation. He received the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2001.

Who’s afraid of Al Jazeera?

If democracy means giving people a free choice, then there is no doubt that the choice of most Arabs is for a television broadcaster that reflects their aspirations. In this sense, Al Jazeera is clearly biased, because it is run by Arab patriots and reflects Arab sentiment. But this is no more a crime than the fact that America’s media reflects America’s aspirations, and in times of war behaves like a cheerleader for US forces. The key issue here is whether Al Jazeera, as well as American TV stations, no more a crime than the fact that America’s media reflects America’s aspirations, and in times of war behaves like a cheerleader for US forces.

The Arab TV station is part of the solution

The Arab world has been the media's punchbag for years. The region's language has been used to prop up those in power, to undermind the drive for democracy in the Middle East. The world has looked the other way and, in the case of Al Jazeera, one of the most respected news channels, the channel had its reputation damaged.

Joseph E. Stiglitz, who has helped to advise the station, says the network is being unfairly targeted. He argues that the channel is not only providing a platform for democratic ideas, but is also helping to promote a sense of Arab unity and identity.

The station's coverage of the Arab world has been widely praised for its impartiality and independence. It has covered major events in the region, such as the Arab Spring, and has provided a valuable resource for those seeking to understand the complexities of the Middle East.

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letter to baburam

Letter to the editor in
Kantipur: 9 August

Reading Baburamji’s article in your paper on 6 August, I was reminded of his party’s excesses and activities which have typified the Maoist party. There may be very few people who freely agree with their criminal campaigns of murder and violence. Maybe there needs to be revolution not just in the monarchy and the ‘old regime’, but also within his party. The Maoists never cease calling themselves ‘communist’ but how can the kind of barbarism they have unleashed in this day and age be called ‘civilised’? Their extreme reaction to any criticism, extinguishing human life and tearing apart the fabric of Nepali society by planting seeds of terrorism—how can these things be called ‘communiti’? Ganesh Ghurav, who was burnt as an employee of the Maoist leaders, was shot. The chairman of the Renuka DCC, Bimal Hitchens, had his corpse desecrated. The ex-mayor of Gulariya was cut into three pieces while attending the funeral of a relative. Many police and soldiers who have gone home on leave have been killed. Why can’t they visit their families? Isn’t that their human right? They weren’t going to war, they weren’t armed. Is this just a way to show revolutionary zeal, or is it the revolution itself? Is this the way to create an environment for talks? Abducting thousands of teachers and students with scant regard for human rights? Why don’t you answer, Baburamji?

not a maoist

Kantipur: 9 August

PANCHYANA: 27-year-old Samas Rai was a farmer and lived with his two wives and two-and-half-year old son. On 3 August, some soldiers called him out of his house, blindfolded him and took him away. The next day at 9PM, they brought him and shot him dead close to the house. But they haven’t given his body back to the family. Samas’s father, Dil Bahadur Rai found blood stains, his son’s slippers and four cartridges at the spot where he was killed. Before killing him, the soldiers had brought Samas to his family, and questioned his wife Mina about why she, a Chhetri, had married a Rai. Mina sobs: “He was never a Maoist, why did they kill him? Why aren’t they giving us back his body? Who are they providing security to?” Samas’s second wife, Palitra, has a baby. “How will I take care of him now?” she says, Kushal, the head of the Maoist’s publicity wing in Sumri, Kushal, says Samas was not a Maoist, even though he was taken for questioning by the army last year.

TAXI TERROR

The tax strike on 30 July created a havoc in the capital. It was a day of anarchy and terror. Taxi drivers parked their cars randomly, gridlocking all main roads. This was a criminal act, proved by the fact that even ambulances were blocked. They did not even consider school children, who were sitting in their buses scared, parched and hungry. Many finally reached their anxious parents late in the evening. The six-hour strike also exposed police apathy and the inefficiency among the senior officers of the traffic; department to sort out the mess. There is no information about how the Home Ministry has reacted to such incompetence. It has not yet made any enquiries or held anyone responsible so far.

The taxi drivers’ demands were reasonable. They have the right to protest police harassment like weekly payoffs, seizing licences without valid reason, restricting entry of meter-
taxis inside the airport and so on. They say they were forced to take harsh action when they were unable to get government attention. But the extreme step taken by taxi drivers last Friday was totally improper. It was especially unjust for people needing emergency medical treatment and care. Many sick patients were unable to reach hospitals. Nobody should be above the law when they break such basic norms.

Home Minister Purna Bahadur Khadka aspires to build a clean, compassionate and disciplined police force. He should start by removing the corruption inside the airport that has deprived taxi drivers of their livelihood. The police should be able to treat the taxi drivers humanely. The taxi drivers should also set a good example by punishing those who cheat passengers.

PHOTOS: KISHORE PRASHAD POUDEL

Miss Nepal

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“Nepal Congress has been diverted from its course, which is why I am running for presidency.”

NC Leader Shalaja Acharya, in Himalaya Times, 11 August
Tea is addictive because it contains caffeine. Not all tea is good for you. Some teas contain agro-chemicals used in growing them. There is also a problem with synthetic estrogen found in chemical fertilizers, pesticides and utensils that may lead to impotence, low sperm count, uterine defects, breast cancer and other physical ailments. This is the reason that many Western countries have strict bans on chemicals and are turning more and more towards organically grown produce. The Germany-based International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement (IFOAM) is dedicated to promoting healthy and environment friendly farming practices.

Just try a little experiment: mix a little turmeric powder in a glass of water. In one of them, add a spoonful of an extract of ritha herb. Then add a few drops of your favourite detergent. Within a minute you will notice that the glass with the ritha will remain the colour of turmeric while the one with the detergent gradually turns blood red. This is exactly what happens to food that we ingest when it gets mixed up with artificial estrogen, which can enter the human food chain from tea grown in gardens that use chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

And yet there is a socio-cultural habit of the Nepalis, which force them to drink 8-10 cups of tea a day! This is a huge mistake. People make mistakes, but as human beings we have to learn from them. Intelligent readers like you needn’t be told what to do, I am just making you aware of the consequences of your actions.

In 1974, Dipak Prakash Banskota brought 5,000 seeds of Hybrid Chinese Teabushes from Darjeeling and set up the Kangchenjunga Tea Estate (KTE), which is a private limited company. This was a very far-sighted move. There are now 150 associated families working in the tea garden under the cooperative principle. The product here is the world’s only certified organically-grown Green Tea, which is refined in a specialised processing plant imported from India with the recommendation of IFOAM. KTE has become a model organic tea garden in the world, where German and French agriculture students come every year to do their internships.

The tea garden is unique not just because the majestic Kangchenjunga Himal forms its backdrop. It is situated between 2500-6000ft above sea level and has a great altitude containing vivid geographical features, vegetation variation. The highest organic tea garden in the world that is the pride of all. The tea is inspected annually by the National Association of Sustainable Agriculture (NASA) USDA- of United States and JAS- of Japan are also having accreditation of NASA, which are again entitling their certification to import KTE in their Country.

The tea is now being marketed worldwide, and it has been a big challenge to respond to specific market needs. Still KTE has persevered. “I am a warrior in the organic tea sector, I am a warrior who doesn’t know the meaning of defeat,” says Banskota.

This writer has also been actively involved in promoting organic green tea. “This is the third time I am trying to make a venture of marketing KTE Green Tea, especially. The reason I am so passionate about it is that the business helps the 150 farmers involved in the KTE and due to the importance of Green Tea, the farmers have staked all to growing tea, which is a cash crop, instead of paddy or maize. The government of course, thinks that just by giving the industry VAT-free status it has done a lot. It hasn’t.”

Effimax International, the worldwide marketer of KTE Organic Green Tea has placed a first order for Rs 7.5 million worth of tea. Effimax is a network marketing company, which has started its network in Nepal last year. Network marketing is a system, which penetrates the features of particular product from person to person. Considering such a system Mr. Banskota initiated to connect KTE Green Tea in the network of Effimax. The tea is being promoted and marketed worldwide to achieve a target of exporting 200,000kg green tea by 2005.

A patient had a heart problem and he was getting worried that the ailment persisted. His doctor prescribed hypertension medicine and told him he had to take it all his life. Then he heard that drinking green tea would help. And he started taking the tea regularly for six years. When he went to get a medical checkup in Bangkok, the doctors were flabbergasted. His blood pressure was under control and his heart functions were back now a healthy condition is as similar as 90% people have. “I have proof that it worked and I became a model of my own tea as well” says the patient, who is none other than Dipak Prasad Banskota.

Another exciting scientific declaration made by FDA, Canada i.e. caffeine, which contains less in Organic Green Tea helps to prevent heart problems.

By: Purna Pandan E-mail: bisam_baba@yahoo.com

Answers to Quiz:
1. Nepal
2. Kangchenjunga Tea Estate, Phidim, Panchthar
3. National Association of Sustainable Agriculture, Australia (NASA)
5. Founder Chairman of KTE and modern farmer specializing in organic green tea.
**FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS**

- Charcoal drawings by Youdbishth Maharjan at Indigo Gallery, 14-29 August. 4413850, www.asianart.com/indigo
- Contemporary Expressions from India Various artists celebrating India’s 50th Independence Day. 19-30 August.

**EVENTS**

- Hami Nepal Haun Party at the Rox Bar, 7PM onwards on 14 August. Rs 399 with drink. www.partynepal.com
- Children’s Carnival, 1-5PM on 14 August at Shambara Garden and Khet. Shangri-La Hotel, Lalitpur. 4441399
- 4th Bagmati River Festival II 21 August: Dunga Dala, corporate rafting challenge on 14 August. Drama competition for schools, 1PM onwards on 13 August at Kanya Mandir School
- Poem and Essay competitions for schools, 4PM onwards on 14 August at Padusagi Ashraya Photography competition for schools, 8AM on 16 August at Sharhanahu
- Movie projections. 4PM onwards on 16 August at Bhung Park.
- Movies 2PM onwards at the Alliance Française: L269, 15 August
- St Augustine’s (Kalimpong) School Day Celebration @ Hotel Nirvana, Thamel. 5.30 PM 28 August. Tickets Rs 250 for 1996 batch & later & Rs 400 for everyone else. 9581020267
- Surviving in culture Blue the Society Diamond. 31 August, 12 noon to 2PM, starting at Tridevi Marg. 4443500, 4445147. bluediamondsociety@yahoo.com

**MUSIC**

- Talking Woodstock Three-part mini-series on the 1969 Woodstock Festival. 15, 16, 17 August. 9-10PM on Hmtin912
- 1974AD Unplugged at Moksh on 14 August, 7.30 PM, Rs 300.
- Jatra Friday Nites Live music by The Strings. 4256622
- Live music at Moksh. A-Four Guitar Quartet Tuesdays and Full Circle on Fridays. 6PM onwards, free entry.

**DRINKS**

- Free drink deals at Red Onion Bar, Lazimpat
- Monsoon Wine Festival at Kinly’s, Thamel. Rs 15 per large glass.
- Lychee Martinis at The Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency. 4491234

**FOOD**

- Food Festival at The Café, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. Exclusive paratha. Gabru & Saller, 7 August-15 August. 4491234
- Delicious barbecue dinner every Sunday at Summit Hotel. 5231810
- Friday Nights at Subterrann Club Kinly. 4412821
- Farm House Café Nature with meals Park Village Hotel. 4375280
- Cafe Bahal Nepal cuisine Kathmandu Guest House. 4700632
- Vegetarian Creations at Stupa View Restaurant. 4482026
- Splash Wild BBQ Wednesdays, Fridays. Radisson Hotel
- Executive Lunch at Taror Restaurant, Dwarika’s. 4474488
- Sunny Side Up Weekend BBQ at Sofia Crown Palace. 4273999
- The Beer Garden Godavari Village Resort. 5509725
- Dwarika’s Thali Lunch at The Heritage Courtyard. 4474488

**GETAWAYS**

- Summer in Shivapuri Birdwatching and great views at Shivapuri Heights Cottage. steva@escapenepal.com, 9851051769
- Week & Wild Summer Splash Godavari Village Resort. 5509725
- Pure relaxation at Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge. 01 4361500
- Bardia National Park junglebeacamp@yahoo.com
- Golf at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa. 4402122
- Weekend Special at Park Village Resort, Budhanikhatra. 4375280
- Early Bird discounts at Shangri-La Hotel & Resort. 4412999

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**FOR SALE:** A newly constructed 2 storied furnished house on rent at Civil Homes Bhanarpal For details contact Sekhar 9851041293

**HOUSE ON RENT:** An apartment at Parkishan. opposite the American embassy, behind the petrol pump station, 1 master bedroom with attached bath, 3 bedrooms with semi attached bath, drawing room, dining room kitchen, store-room, pujya room, water room, air-conditioning and more. Total area of compound 7500 sq. ft. For details contact mobile no. 9851024874

**NEPALI WEATHER**

Has been a patchy monsoon with unusually uneven precipitation over Nepal. In Kathmandu, it had been a fairly normal July. In terms of total rainfall, it has come in sporadic bursts with dry spells in between. The weekend is going to see short, heavy bursts of rain. Rain more characteristic of bhadure jhari. But by midweek next week it is a monsoon pulse (satellite pic taken on Thursday at noon, red areas) which could bring us a sustained longterm rain. Expect hot and humid afternoons.

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**KATHMANDU VALLEY**

**Good**

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**KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY**

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**JAI NEPAL CINEMA**

**KE GARNE? WHATEVER? “But a Heraji - Drink tea with others.”**

- They have computers, and they may have other weapons of mass destruction.

**KE HERAJI?**

-“Drink tea with others.”
-“But it is necessary to drink tea with others.”
-“They can have computers, and they may have other weapons of mass destruction.”

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Marie's politics

The last thing Nepalis think when they meet Marie Ringler is that she is a politician. “You look like a rock star,” some say, others ask: “Are you a model?” But as a 27-year-old Green Party member of the Austrian federal state parliament for Vienna, Marie is used to such reactions. Here on a six-week placement with the US-based National Democratic Institute, she is preparing a report on ways to increase the representation of women in political parties in this country. We caught up with Marie during her visit to a school in Patan last week, where she asked a group of grade ten students how many wanted to become politicians. Only two hesitant hands went up. “The rest wanted to know what was so great about politics anyway,” Marie’s answer. “You are in the middle of things, you can’t just complain, you have to find solutions.” More hands went up: what makes a good politician? “You have to like people, care about them, you need a will to learn and listen to what people want.” And what does she think about Nepali politicians? Here, Marie is slightly diplomatic: “There is a very rigid hierarchy, a deference to seniority and there are hardly any women in politics.”

Now it’s Marie turn to ask the children some questions. “If you met the prime minister, what would you tell him?” The response comes thick and fast. “We are making progress.”

“Are you a model?” some say, others ask: “Are you a politician?” Marie Ringler is that she is a politician. “You look like a rock star,” some say, others ask: “Are you a model?” But as a 27-year-old Green Party member of the Austrian federal state parliament for Vienna, Marie is used to such reactions. Here on a six-week placement with the US-based National Democratic Institute, she is preparing a report on ways to increase the representation of women in political parties in this country. We caught up with Marie during her visit to a school in Patan last week, where she asked a group of grade ten students how many wanted to become politicians. Only two hesitant hands went up. “The rest wanted to know what was so great about politics anyway,” Marie’s answer. “You are in the middle of things, you can’t just complain, you have to find solutions.” More hands went up: what makes a good politician? “You have to like people, care about them, you need a will to learn and listen to what people want.” And what does she think about Nepali politicians? Here, Marie is slightly diplomatic: “There is a very rigid hierarchy, a deference to seniority and there are hardly any women in politics.”

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Do you ever Miss Nepal?

We got hints last week that Nepali women and men have at long last shed the shackles of patriarchy to stand head over heels and bear down a decorative gate set up for the Miss Nepal Beauty Pageant at the BICC and turn it into a burning issue.

I have it on good authority that some of the anarchists would have easily qualified for, and perhaps even won, the Miss Photo Opportunity, Miss Pyrotechnic or the Miss Dandruff titles. But they didn’t let such temptations distract them from expressing in no uncertain terms their firm opposition to anyone daring to have gorgeous and stunning hair at a time when the country is sinking into a quagmire. The protesters at Bijuli Bajar had reason to be mad as hell; they never stood a chance to ever be crowned Miss Nepal. Because many of them were men.

A beauty pageant is a rigorous process of separating the wheat from the chaff. After the gruelling Swimsuit Competition, which includes the Derriere Round and the Udder Round to ensure that all participants are in fact female, contestants are finally shortlisted for the Most Photogenic: Belly-button Category. In this manner, through a process of natural selection, they finally make it to the pinnacle of evolution, which is the climactic moment of the make-or-break Interview Round.

What I want to know is how come us guys don’t get to have such fun. When are we going to have our own Speedo Round? When is someone going to judge us by our looks? Why isn’t anyone interested in the size and shape of our pectoral fins? Why can’t I enter my glutus maximus in some competition and win a crown too? It is a travesty that in this day and age, when all known genders are supposed to be equal, there is not yet a Mr Himalayan Hunk Pageant.

In preparation for the day when we men, too, will qualify for beauty contests, I have already started taking coaching classes in how to answer trick questions that those heartless and cruel judges hurl at you during the Interview Round. The thing to remember is never to lose your poise, maintain eye contact with the members of the jury and deliver your memorised speech no matter what the question is.

For instance, if the question is: “What would you do if you were the prime minister?” And the answer to that is, you guessed it: “The most important thing is to restore peace in the country by talking a lot.”

Another question designed to throw off contestants is: “What is a Himalayan Legend?” The answer to this can be any number of things: a yak, a yeti, a yak & yet, the Red Panda, the Lesser Himalayan White-rumped Langur or even Amiko, but remember: you need to impress the judges. And the answer that will get you ten out of ten from all judges will be: “Um… unuh… right—the most important thing is to restore peace in the country by talking a lot.”

Then comes the clincher: “What would you do if you were the prime minister?” And the answer to that is, you guessed it: “The most important thing is to restore peace in the country by talking a lot.”

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