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Weekly Internet Poll # 157

Q. Should the government announce a unilateral ceasefire before Dasain?

Yes 64.6%

No 33.3%

Don't know 2.1%

Total votes:1,001

Weekly Internet Poll # 158. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Do you think the human rights situation in Nepal has improved or deteriorated in the past one year?

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Peace by peace

ANALYSIS by KUNDA DIXIT

As Dasain approaches there are indications that both sides will observe an unofficial festival truce, but prospects of peace talks to resolve the conflict are more remote than ever.

A purported statement from the Maoists declaring a Dasain-Tihar ceasefire on Tuesday turned out to be a hoax. Rebel spokesman Krishna Bahadur Mahara set the record straight by dashing off an e-statement, but that was followed on Wednesday by another release purportedly signed by Prachanda saying the original statement was correct and ‘action’ would be taken against Mahara.

Analysts do not rule out the possibility of army disinformation at work, and see signs of a rift in the Maoist hierarchy following the group’s plenum in Dang last month which reportedly rejected peace talks for now. The meeting was followed by strident anti-Indian rhetoric and an intriguing silence on the part of Baburam Bhattarai, who is said to have favoured a softer line on India.

The contradictions between central-level statements about ‘links to fraternal parties’ and recent attacks on the leftist United People’s Front in the mid-west hint at a breakdown in control. While the leadership calls on UN mediation, grassroots militia defy international condemnation of forced recruitment of school students, abduction of a Unicef staffer and looting of WFP aid.

In eastern Nepal there have been desertions by senior commanders disenchanted with the violence and hardship. And tensions are simmering between the Maoist central command and its regional autonomous units.

Despite signs of internal tension, the Maoist party is not about to split. One retired general told us: “We shouldn’t be trying to divide them. If you do that, there is a danger of the conflict spinning out of control, with ethnic-based warlords taking over.”

Nepal’s Maoist revolution is part of a wider international revolutionary struggle. The country is often cited in Maoist literature as a ‘showcase revolution’ and references are made to finishing off what Mao Zedong started in China. Frequent expressions of solidarity by foreign comrades, and reports of intimate links with Indian Maoists could indicate coordination of strategy on Nepal.

This outside dimension is now recognised by Indian intelligence, which, after eight years, has finally admitted that Nepali Maoists have a safe haven in India. Noted Indian commentators warn this is now more India’s problem than Nepal’s. Even so, Indian and Nepali Maoists are said to have met in Calcutta this week right under the noses of the Indians. The People’s War Group in Andhra Pradesh is trying to negotiate with the state government in Hyderabad, and whatever the outcome, it will be significant for Nepal.

In Kathmandu, there is a reciprocal hardening of stance in government and military circles. The brutality of Nepal’s war is beginning to attract international attention with rights groups issuing reports this week censuring both sides for widespread abuses (*see p8-9*). The hope lies in the only power centre that needs peace to survive: the political parties. Those on the streets and in Singha Darbar urgently need to stop bickering among themselves and, with the king, launch joint peace moves. ●

Hope is strongest when things seem most hopeless



DEEPENDRA BAJRACHARYA

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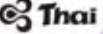
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DIASAPPEARED RIGHTS

We have now given up trying to believe that the two sides in this country's mad conflict ever want to stop fighting. Oh yes, they'll talk about peace, about "maximum flexibility" and how they don't believe in a military solution. They may suspend the slaughter temporarily over the holidays, but nothing longterm. It is as if their very existence now depends on extending the conflict—the military so it can bolster its strength, and the rebels because if the killings stop people they may turn against them. The palace doesn't want to compromise, and the comrades think forcing the people to live through this nightmare is the only way to realise their discredited utopian dream.

But if they don't want to stop the war, the least they can do is fight it according to the rules. There are laws enshrined in international charters that bind both state and non-state belligerents: if you must kill each other, go ahead, but don't kill unarmed civilians, don't summarily execute anyone (not even an enemy combatant) after capture, allow family members unhindered access to detainees, don't disappear people.

This is a dirty war, and impunity is rife. The guilty may be identified, but they are never caught and punished. The kill rate may have gone down this year compared to 2003, but the fall in fatalities is more than compensated by the extreme brutality of the murders—merciless

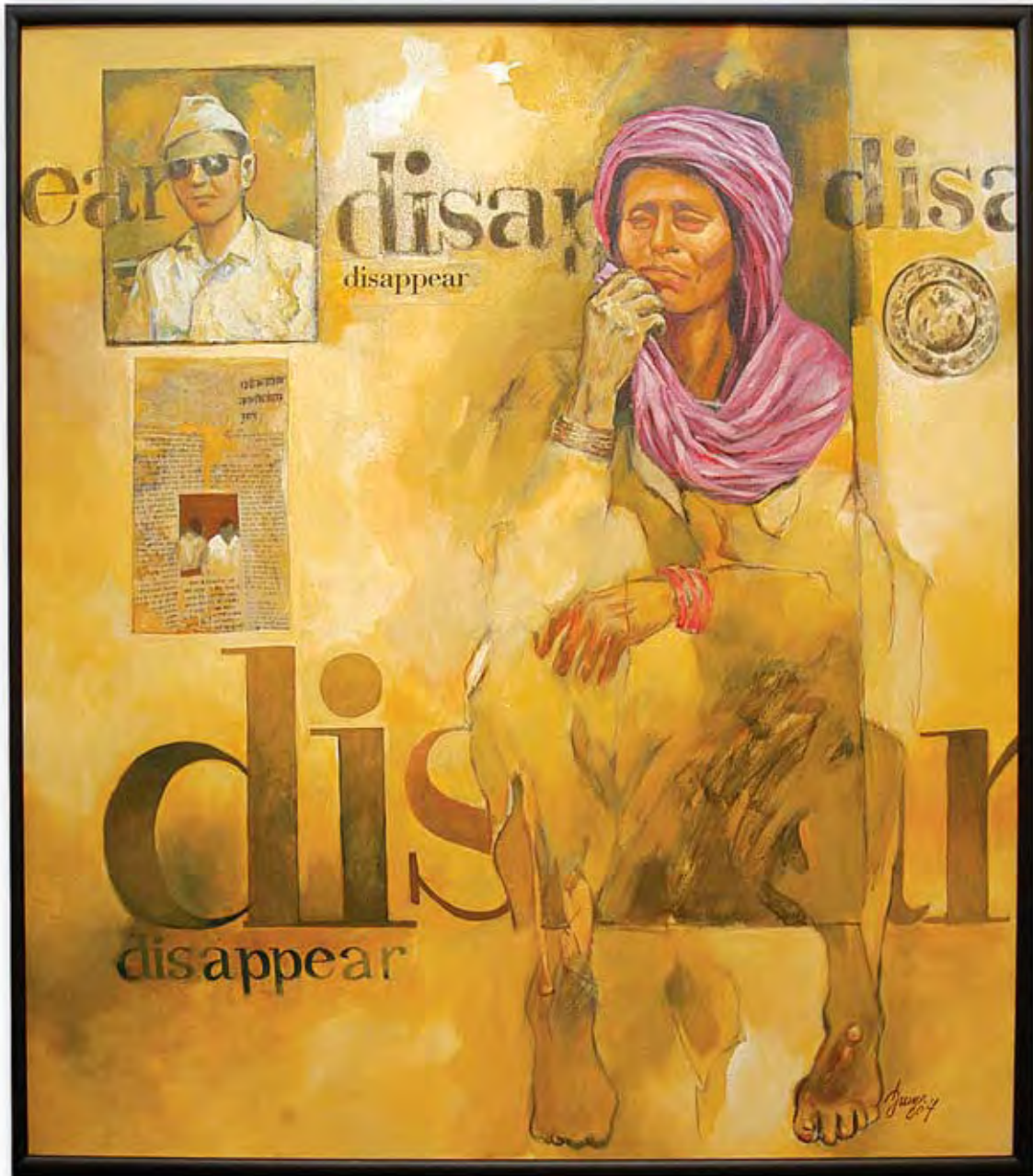
butchery that would make Dasai sacrifices look humane. Dozens of nails are hammered into a victim's skull one by one, decapitation in front of family, severing of limbs, multiple rape and the desecration of dead bodies.

And if there is a fate worse than death for relatives of victims, it is the disappearance of their dear ones, the prolonged and dead-end uncertainty of not knowing where they are, whether they are dead or alive.

It is not that we did not know all this was happening around us. Some of these atrocities have been chronicled in these pages in recent years. But the Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW) reports released this week puts it in perspective, telling the tale of a population caught in the vice of war. "Neither the government nor the Maoists are particularly concerned with the protection of civilians while they fight this dirty war," says the HRW report while documenting cases of extra-judicial executions.

The rebels are outlaws, we don't expect much from them. But a state can't say 'they started it first', 'they are worse', or 'they also do it to us'. A state party allowed by law to legitimately carry arms must answer to the laws of the land and international statutes to which Nepal is signatory.

The HRW report, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Civilians Struggle to Survive in Nepal's Civil War*, documents individual horror that adds up to a shocking national tragedy. (See p 8-9) The report recommends an early signing of a Human Rights Accord and its monitoring by the National Human Rights Commission. Abuse and impunity is no longer a fringe phenomenon, it is the core of this war. Reducing it will afford some protection to ordinary citizens, and may help lay the groundwork for a future peace process. It will not end the war, it may not end the violations, it will not end the despair and grief, but it will be a first step.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

'Disappeared' by Durga Baral, oil on acrylic

Last of the mandarins

History is just a collection of biographies of historic personalities

In the *Mahabharata*, Bhisma Pitamah cuts a sorry figure. He is tormented by contradictions between his convictions and his loyalty to the king. Since the crown and the country are one and the same for him, loyalty triumphs and he finds himself on the wrong side of history. Such is the fate of courtiers who have to

STATE OF THE STATE
CK Lal



serve unjust rulers out of a

sense of duty towards their country.

In the Nepali bureaucracy of the last century, Ram Mani Acharya Dixit was perhaps one of the first mandarins to wield enormous influence by virtue of his proximity to the all-powerful Rana Prime Minister Chandra Shumshere. Chandra used Ram Mani's native genius to keep the Mahila Gurujyu in check and ran the country with the advice of these two brilliant bahuns. With their help, Chandra amassed a fortune by making deals with the British over the recruitment of Gurkha soldiers and the mercenary services rendered by the Royal Nepali Army on the side of the British Empire.

Thirty years later, in Sardar Bhim Bahadur Pande, Juddha Shumshere found a young mandarin who could help him make money by clearing the tarai, setting up factories with public money, and running trading enterprises in discreet partnership with Newar and Marwari

entrepreneurs. But Juddha was too intemperate to command the loyalty of anyone for too long and ultimately had to go into exile.

King Tribhuban relied heavily on the Indian brown sahibs, Bhagwan Sahai and CPN Sinha. The two were always at loggerheads with the leaders of the Nepali Congress and this raised their stature inside Narayanhiti. During Rana rule, Narayanhiti used to be a punishment posting for bureaucrats. After the Shah Restoration, it became the sole power centre.

King Mahendra's kingdom was run like a fiefdom. In the beginning, he didn't have much use for the services of intelligent courtiers. But as Nepal opened its doors to the frigid outside world of the Cold War, he had no option but to take notice of family faithful, Padam Bahadur Khatri and scholar and thinker, Yadunath Khanal. In time, Sardar Yadunath served as our ambassador to China, India, and the United States at crucial periods of Nepal's relationship with these countries. He may have been spotted by King Mahendra, but he served King Birendra with no less distinction.

King Birendra had bigger plans. Initially, he let the wizened mandarins fade away and handpicked whiz-kids as crown jewels for their promise

rather than performance: Bhek Bahadur Thapa, Harka Gurung, Pashupati Shumshere, Mohammad Mohsin, and Mohan Man Sainju. But in later years, he also fell back on his own mandarins: Ranjan Raj Khanal as domestic affairs counsellor, Narayan Prasad Shrestha, the adviser on finance and foreign relations and Chiran Thapa as media manager. It's not yet clear who King Gyanendra's mandarins are, but our ambassador in New Delhi is one of them. Karna Dhoj Adhikari may be new to diplomacy, but he is a veteran of the Nepali bureaucracy having served in the ministries of finance and home before rising to the crucial post of chief secretary during King Birendra's rule.

Official Nepali history doesn't offer much by way of lessons to cope with the challenges of the future. However, the older generation of mandarins all wrote memoirs which offer insight into governance. And, as Carlyle observed, history is just a collection of biographies of historic personalities.

Ram Mani in his memoir, *Purano Samjahna*, records British India's intransigence. Sardar Bhim Bahadur in *Tyas Bela Ko Nepal* has written about difficulties of industrialisation in a landlocked country. Both wrote in Nepali, but Sardar Yadunath wrote in English and covered the entire gamut of statecraft, offering a ringside view of



KAMAL DIXIT

Nepali politics and diplomacy to the outsiders in his books: *Reflections On Nepal-India Relations*, *Stray Thoughts*, *Nepal's Transition from Isolationism*, and *Nepal After Democratic Restoration*.

The passing away of Sardar Yadunath Khanal (pictured, above) ended an era in the history of Nepali bureaucracy. The civil service isn't a calling for the best and the brightest in the land anymore. Now it is just a career option. Yadunath Khanal passed away peacefully on Saturday, and it was a mark of the man that he didn't want any fanfare and elaborate coverage to record his passing. All we have are his books to relive a tumultuous period of Nepali history of which he was such an important part. ●

LETTERS

CHITRAKARS

Thanks to Naresh Newar for that comprehensive tour de horizon of the Chitrakar clan's contribution to Nepali art ('Giving their art and soul', #216). Just for the record, there are two tiny corrections to an otherwise flawless piece. The original Chitrakar who accompanied Jang Bahadur to England and France in 1850 was Bhaju Macha Chitrakar and not Bhaju Ratna Chitrakar. And my grandfather, Tej Bahadur Chitrakar, accompanied Chandra Shumshere to England in 1908 and not 1905.

Madan Chitrakar, Kathmandu

STILL NEGLECTED

There is a line in Marike Heppe's Nepali Pan piece ('My second time', #215) where she says 'All this despite all the hardships that have piled up because of the Insurgency'. The condition in rural nepal was the same before insurgency and the fight Maoists have been putting up all these years is to close the economic gap between these poor villagers and Kathmanduites. The economic engine has slowed down only in urban areas due to insurgency but the rural area there has been no major economic impact because the poor have always been ignored. They were neglected before, and they are still neglected, nothing has changed for them. Even if the Maoists lose this war it will have made lot of people aware of the problem beyond Kathmandu. I hope the lawmakers can now focus more on these problems once the house is restored instead of only paving the road leading to their houses in Kathmandu.

Kiran Thapa, email

DANIEL

I am struck by an uncanny biblical parallel: wasn't it the prophet Daniel who saw the writing on the wall and warned his king of impending doom?

Our very own Daniel Lak has now rightly warned us of the great ruin that awaits us when the Big One strikes ('The Big One', #215). The sudden interest shown even by my otherwise unconcerned daughter, among many others, is an indication that Lak's readers have got the message about the dangers posed by earthquakes in Nepal. We can't prevent earthquakes, but we can be better prepared, and community organisations under NSET-Nepal have been set up for just that. It would be good if the media took time off from reporting beauty contests, fashion parades and changa chaits to see the excellent work that has been going on in disaster preparedness and mitigation.

Bibhuti Man Singh

Ward 17 Disaster Mgmt Committee, Chhetrapati

LAL SALAAM

C K Lal in his State of the State column seems to give more importance to the street protests in the name of so-called 'regression' than the Maoists problem ('Blind alley', #216). I think the present government represents a majority of the political parties and it should receive cooperation from all sections of the society including the ones chanting slogans against 'regression'. Lal seems to be exhorting parties in streets to conduct more bandas, jams, torch-rallies, tyre-burning activities etc where the right to demonstrate and speak of the agitators are upheld while common citizens' right to movement is curtailed via hours of traffic jams and prohibition to enter many parts of the capital where demonstrations occur. Lal should appreciate the present government and its allies for trying to create a favourable environment to hold peace talks. The only way out of the present political stalemate is the free and fair election of the house than its restoration.

Bikendra Shamsher Thapa
Kathmandu

● CK Lal is sounding like a broken record. When are you going to take him off his high horse so he can stop his self-righteous pontificating? Now, it is restoration of parliament just so that his mentor, Girija Prasad Koirala, can get back to power. King Gyanendra had to take the October Fourth move because the political parties were taking the country down the path of complete ruin. Now the same people are burning cars on the streets and blocking roads so they can go back to their antics—all in the name of democracy. Give me a break.

Gyan Subba, email

WHERE ARE YOU?

I was wondering what are Charitraheen Chelis are doing these days? They were conspicuously quite during Tij, the ultimate celebration of Nepali womanhood. I waited with bated breath, but alas they have chosen to keep quiet. After all, Bandana Rana spoke eloquently about Tij ('Tij with Bandana', #214) and her views made more sense to me than any other definition of Tij I had ever heard in my life. And one letter writer in the next issue chose to misinterpret it as Rana possibly having 'some personal prejudice against marriage and husband'.

Charitraheen Chelis, where are you when we need you? Why do you keep mum when we need you?

Sanjana Shrestha, New Road

BHOLA THAPA

I just want add to the views expressed by Bhola Thapa regarding about the operation of a Qantas subsidiary based on Singapore flying Singapore-Nepal sector with a view to providing a connection to/from Australia 'We are all waiting for a truce', #216). It would be convenient for tens of thousands of Nepali diaspora in Australia to travel back and forth to Nepal. At the same time, it would also provide a faster passage to Nepal for many thousand Nepalis from the most parts of the US. This makes such good business sense, I wonder why many airlines haven't acted upon it yet.

Santosh Aryal, Sydney

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"I can win."



NARENDRA SHRESTHA

Charles Shobhraj came into the dingy visiting area at the Central Jail in Bagh Darbar where he is serving a life sentence. He had agreed to speak to *Nepali Times*, but only about the Kathmandu District Court's verdict that he had indeed killed an American tourist in the Valley 30 years ago. He wore a woollen cap, not his trademark baseball cap, and had a pen hanging around his neck.

"Sobhraj does not speak much to other inmates and spends most of the time reading and writing on a computer in his cell. He behaves normally," said caretaker Santosh Karki, "and he has not been acting over-smart either." A computer and a tv set in his cell keep him engaged, and he likes to speak about international politics with jail authorities. They say Sobhraj's visitors include his lawyers and officials from the French Embassy. The alleged criminal, who has become something of a celebrity, has been requesting for a transfer to Nakkhu Jail because he believes he would be more comfortable there.

Jail warden Bhoj Raj Sibakoti recalls that Sobhraj seemed quite confident he would win his case and be freed. "But after the court gave the guilty verdict, his confidence seems to have been broken," Sibakoti adds. There was anger in Charles Shobhraj's voice when he spoke to *Nepali Times*, and most of it was directed against the Nepali court system. Excerpts of the exclusive interview:

How are you feeling these days?

How would you feel if you were sentenced without trial? There was no witness to prove me guilty. Page 12 of the court's judgement says that it was not necessary to call the witnesses because the case is 29 years old. This is an illegal decision. I can't believe such a decision can take place in today's world.

So, what do you do now?

On 27 September, my French lawyers filed a complaint at the United Nations Human Rights Commission secretariat in Geneva about my illegal detention. Nepal has made international commitments on human rights and civic rights. It has also signed the Vienna Convention. How can a country make such a judicial decision when it has so many international commitments?

Do you thing the appeal will be granted?

I am confident, and that is what makes me feel better.

And what about your appeal at the Appellate Court?

That is a different chapter (*dismissively*). The judiciary does not work here.

What are you doing these days?

I am writing. I have a computer in my cell.

What are you writing?

I won't tell you. Now, listen, all I have to say is about the judiciary here (*visibly angry*). I am shocked by the state of judiciary here. Can you see such a thing happening in India?

Are you writing an article ... or an autobiography?

Sorry, no go.

How is your health?

I am fine but the environment in the jail is not. They keep nine people in one cell as if they were fish in a can.

You have always been unruffled, but you look kind of agitated.

With the kind of judicial system here, you can be 1,000 percent sure to lose your cool. I know I have a strong case and I can win (*very angry*).

Do you still maintain that this was your first visit to Nepal, and that you were never here 30 years ago?

This was the first time I came here. I never came here before.

What was the purpose of your visit?

I came here to prepare a documentary on Nepali handicraft for a French company.

Which company?

I will not name it.

(Navin Singh Khadka)

"I couldn't

A Dutch diplomat's determination kept a convicted serial killer on the run and behind bars



JOHN MCBETH in JAKARTA

Twenty-eight years ago, Dutch diplomat Herman Knippenberg sat in his rented house off Bangkok's busy Sukhumvit Road pulling documents and photographs from a bulky green manila folder.

For several hours, stretching into that soft, long-ago evening, he described to this writer in astonishing detail the chilling story of a smooth-talking Vietnamese-Indian serial killer, a French national who had lured gullible young foreign tourists to their deaths in countries across Asia.

Frustrated by the Thai police's lack of interest of, Knippenberg, then 32, had done almost all of the investigation

himself, helped initially by what he called his 'action team'—three colleagues from the Belgian and American embassies and his so-called agent-in-place, housewife Nadine Gires, the killer's 22-year-old neighbour. It was only after Knippenberg had stitched the case together, carefully preserving his role from public scrutiny, that the Thais were prodded into action.

By then, 12 people had fallen victim to a killer who may have been the perfect real-life incarnation of one of fiction's most dangerous characters—a cultured, cunning, satanically handsome villain with a compulsion to do evil. Charles Gurmukh Sobhraj, now 60, gem dealer by profession, a fastidious, pathological

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forget Sobhraj”

END OF THE ROAD: Retired Dutch diplomat, Herman Knippenberg, poses with Sobhraj evidence that he had collected over the past two decades, at his home in Wellington in New Zealand the day after Sobhraj was arrested in Kathmandu last year (left). Victims Henk Bintanja and Cornelia Hemker (right) and Sobhraj with Leclerc in 1976.



Francophile fluent in five languages, is now in a jail in Kathmandu.

Sobhraj was arrested in India in July 1976 and jailed for 12 years for the manslaughter of a French student and an Israeli tourist, and for drugging 22 members of a French tour party who had dropped like flies in the lobby of a New Delhi hotel. But it is only now, seven years after Sobhraj eventually won his freedom, that Knippenberg believes justice has finally been served.

On 19 September last year, the day the Dutchman retired from the diplomatic service, Nepali police arrested Sobhraj in the casino at Kathmandu’s Yak and Yeti Hotel, two days after a local journalist had recognised him in the street. And in August this year, the Kathmandu District Court jailed him for life for stabbing 29-year-old American backpacker Connie Bronzich to death outside Kathmandu on 22 December 1975. Her Canadian boyfriend, Laurent Carriere, 26, had been murdered the day before, but that case was dropped because Nepali police couldn’t find the file.

The key evidence in rebuilding the Bronzich case came from Knippenberg’s four boxes of material, including yellowed photographs, extensive witness statements and

photocopies of embarkation cards, flight manifests and passports. Knippenberg kept these with him in a diplomatic career that subsequently took him from Thailand to the United States, Indonesia, Austria, Luxembourg, Greece and New Zealand.

“I couldn’t forget him, it was like having malaria,” the 60-year-old Harvard graduate recalls from his retirement home in Wellington. “Every couple of years or so something would happen that would draw me back into the case again.”

Because of the case, Knippenberg, a doctor’s son from a small Dutch town near the German border, never did finish his PhD dissertation on Thai counterinsurgency operations. But he was to prove himself outstandingly able in something he had never prepared for: police work. As one senior Thai police general was to tell him: “I think you’re a natural.”

Sobhraj, the object of four books and three documentaries, managed to elude the full weight of the law for so long because Thai police, in particular, could not conceive of a foreign serial killer preying on other foreigners. The Saigon-born Sobhraj took breathtaking risks, but he was also relying on the ineptitude of police in drawing links between seven brutal murders that took

place in Thailand between August-December 1975.

It was Knippenberg who made the connections. Once asked about the tenacious Dutch hunter he has never met, Sobhraj responded: “I don’t know what he has against me.” But the two have been bound together from the day the charred bodies of Dutch-born Indonesian Henk Bintanja, 29, and his girlfriend, Cornelia Hemker, 25, were found on a roadside north of Bangkok.

That was on 6 December 1975. Knippenberg, at that time a third secretary at the Netherlands embassy, was given the task of finding out what had happened to the two backpackers. It was to set him on a pan-Asian trail of murder, robbery, smuggling and deceit that consumed much of his spare time, even after he was told by his superiors to stop his detective work.

In the late 1970s, Sobhraj gave interviews in jail to author Richard Neville and, in 1984, to Bangkok-based journalist Alan Dawson. Sobhraj talked of, but didn’t actually admit to, the 12 murders he is alleged to have committed with two accomplices. Looking back, Dawson says, “He gave a reason for doing it that white people had enslaved Asians with drugs and he was getting his own back without actually saying he did it.” Of Sobhraj’s alleged

accomplices, his French-Canadian girlfriend, Marie-Andree Leclerc, then 31, has since died of cancer. Indian Ajay Chowdhury, 22 at the time of the murders, has never been caught.

By the time Knippenberg entered the picture, Sobhraj had already claimed his first five victims, most of whom had spent time at his Bangkok apartment. Astonishingly, on 8 December, 1975, the day the bodies of the Dutch couple were identified, Sobhraj and Leclerc used the passports of their victims to fly to Kathmandu. And when they returned to Thailand on 23 December, they were travelling on the passports of Carriere and Bronzich.

Urged on by Knippenberg, Thai police briefly detained the three suspects in March 1976, then inexplicably released them hours later. The following month, with Sobhraj and Leclerc long gone, Knippenberg was given police permission to carry out his own search of the Bangkok apartment. There, he found the personal effects of many of Sobhraj’s victims and eight kgs of medicines, including injectables and six bottles of an anti-diarrhoea medicine laced with rat poison.

By then the two were in Europe, but it wasn’t long before they were back in India. Nabbed

after the tour-party incident, Sobhraj spent the next 10 years in New Delhi’s Tihar jail. In March 1986, two years before his scheduled release, he escaped. He was later recaptured in Goa and given another 10-year sentence, avoiding extradition to Thailand where he would have faced almost certain execution. When he finally walked free in February 1997, memories had faded and so had the Thai arrest warrant, which had expired a year before.

Knippenberg was deputy chief of mission in Athens at the time. “I thought, my God, let’s not complain,” he says. “It was terrible, of course, because of the sense of injustice I felt, but at the same time I said to myself that after all the disappointments we had got more than we expected. Given the rate he killed, we had probably saved the lives of 50 young people or more by keeping him in jail.”

Sobhraj then lived for more than six years in the suburbs of Paris, revelling for a while in his notoriety. What made him return to Nepal is difficult to fathom. Knippenberg thinks Sobhraj knowingly took the risk to attract attention, letting himself believe, like many serial killers, that his superior intelligence would once again get him off the hook. Except this time, he forgot about a man who had never given up the hunt. ●

America’s gain was the world’s gain

America is making enemies and wrecking its economy by restricting high-tech job visas

Remember the heady days of the cyber boom in America? Back in the 1990s, when half the world was flocking to the Silicon Valley and its clones around the United States—Indians, Malaysians, Israelis, Europeans, Canadians, I dare say even a Nepali or two.

In those crazy, long lost days, nearly 200,000 professional, highly educated foreigners were welcomed into the United States every year to fuel its amazing high tech economy. That number was set by Congress and it was much, much lower than Internet entrepreneurs and people like Bill Gates wanted.

The H1-B visa became a holy grail for the engineering and electronic graduates

of the world. It was a work permit that allowed a company to seek out its expertise abroad because American colleges couldn’t provide enough quality of quantity to keep the software profits flowing. An advanced post graduate degree from one of the lofty Indian schools like IIT or IIM was a guaranteed H1-B and a top job in California.

Then came September 11th, 2001. Even though the technology boom had busted by then, demand for high quality foreigners had continued. American companies knew what they wanted. But Congress, which in the American democracy controls immigration numbers, reacted to the horrific attacks by cutting visa numbers by more than half. Never mind that the Al Qaeda killers didn’t have H1-B’s. Tamil Brahmin engineers and South African

code writers had to pay the price.

Now the US issues just 65,000 of the vaunted hi tech visas every year. The quota for 2005 was opened this past week, at the beginning of October.

And was exhausted in a single day. A single day! That’s how much American companies and foreign workers still want to connect. Companies like Microsoft and IBM are raising hell, demanding that more talented folk from abroad are a good thing for America.

Some are pointing out, accurately, that if US companies can’t hire the talent it wants, then the jobs themselves will leave. Indian firms like Infosys and Tata Consultancies have already taken over tens of thousands of American jobs by providing quality offshore services in India. Needless to say the cost is a fraction of what it would be in America. Infosys

and its highly competent fellow companies in south India, the back office entrepreneurs of Gurgaon and Mumbai, these are the winners when America slashes visas.

You could take this a step further by arguing that far from protecting the United States, restricting the number of job visas actually makes enemies for the country. Someone well educated but under employed in their homeland is more like to hate America than an engineer toiling in the white heat of the American dream.

For the record, I don’t need an H1-B visa to do my work in America. Nor would I qualify because I’m not well educated enough. But many millions of people in Asia, Europe and Latin America are. And they deserve better than to see their dreams dashed in a single day. ●

HERE AND THERE

Daniel Lak

Desertions and army action weakens the movement in the east

DAMBAR K SHRESTHA in DHARAN

Ever since Ram Bahadur Thapa ‘Badal’ took over as commander of the Maoists in the east, the numbers of Maoists killed in action or those who have deserted are on the rise. Badal took over after former Commander Mohan Baidya ‘Kiran’ was captured by Indian security in Siliguri last March. According to the Royal Nepali Army’s eastern headquarters, , 27 Maoists have been killed, eight were captured and eight surrendered between 10-24 September alone. Among the Maoists killed was the commander of the 15th Battalion A Company, Matrika Raut ‘Janak’ who was shot dead on 13 September in Sarlahi. The area commander of Siraha’s Bhagatpur area, ‘Seema’ was killed along with seven others, and in Solkhu’s Nicho area Maoist area-in-charge Ajay Sharma ‘Nepal’ and five others were killed. Security forces also killed Ghurmi Maoist Area Commander Parbat Bhattarai ‘Sushil’ and Ilam’s Maoist deputy, Hom Bahadur Godar ‘Bidur’. Raj Kumar Shrestha ‘Shakti’, Maoist area-in-charge of the 6th area of the 5th district in the

east, has surrendered along with his weapons and eight other people. The Tharuban Liberation Front secretary, Chatur Narayan Chaudhari ‘Prakash’, and Dhankuta’s people’s government Deputy Chief Panch Lal Rai, along with eight other people, has been captured. On 5 September, Maoist 6th Brigade commissioner of Siraha, Sher Man Kuwar, and alternative central member Mohan Chandra Gautam ‘Kumar’ were also killed. This steady attrition of senior Maoists has weakened the movement in the east. Colonel Raj Rana says 540 Maoists have been killed and 175 have surrendered in the Kosi Zone in the past 18 months and since the Ithari Division was established, over 1,000 Maoists have been killed and 600 have surrendered in the eastern region. The division has added 36 new security posts in the east, and have launched helicopter patrols of the eastern hills. Lieutenant Colonel Bindu Gautam said the army had asked villagers not to attend Maoist meetings, which would be subject to air raids. He didn’t say what would happen if the villagers are forced to attend the meetings, as they usually are. In response, the Maoists have been using psywar tactics to spread panic among locals by spreading rumours about imminent attacks on district

headquarters. They have followed these up with explosions and sabotage, but haven’t been able to carry out their threat of big attacks. For example, on 8 September, the Maoists issued a warning asking people to vacate the district headquarters of Ilam and Panchthar as they were planning an attack. The attack never took place and it later became clear that it was a part of the Maoist scare tactic. Eastern division Chief General, Pradeep Pratap Bam Malla, says: “No matter where the Maoists attack us in the eastern region, they know they will face huge losses.” ●

In the west, civilians are forced to march RAMESWOR BOHARA in SURKHET

Maoists have started using innocent civilians in an attempt to pressurise the government into peace talks. They are threatening teachers, the families of security forces and innocent civilians. More than 100 people from 28 families in Birat in Jumla arrived in Surkhet on 24 September after fleeing their homes. Most are women, children and the elderly and have been living for the past two weeks in a tent pitched across from the Red Cross building (pic, opposite page).

East-west

They said the rebels issued an ultimatum, ordering them to join the movement or pay Rs 100,00 per person, or else leave their houses by 12 September. The families first fled to Mugu a few nights before the deadline. The Maoists’ warning stated that if their demands were not met, the town would face an indefinite blockade and the rebels would also cut off its water supply. Ram Bahadur Buda left his homestead, fields and livestock and had no option but to flee. Chandra Budha is only 14 and broke his arm during a fall while walking to Surkhet along the treacherous trails.

Some of the villagers had some money and paid Rs 2,200 each to take a helicopter out of Mugu, but most are still stuck there. Living in Mugu for 12 days proved to be too expensive, so a lot of them moved down to the regional headquarter in Gamgadi. The refugees have approached government offices in Surkhet which oversee 15 mid-western districts, in the hope that the government will help them. But no assistance is forthcoming. “If the government is unable to provide us with food, clothes and lodging by Dasain, we have decided to



DAMBAR K SHRESTHA

Whole timer quits

Bhojpur resident and former area-in-charge of the Maoist 5th Eastern District of the 6th Area, Raj Kumar Shrestha (seen above with his son), used to be a NC member. In May 2001 he went underground and later was responsible for the kidnapping of UML student leader, Rajendra Rai. On 13 September, he surrendered with weapons and subsequently fled to India with his family. Excerpts from an interview:

Why did you quit the Maoists?
People are killed like animals. We had to threaten and frighten people to make them listen to us. We had to tell lies, saying that we were taking over the country and that we had done well for 85 percent of the downtrodden. Once I realised that nothing was going to be accomplished by all this, I decided to leave.

What was the situation of the party?
After the killings escalated, everyone was scared and tried to run away. We didn’t have enough weapons and lived in constant fear that somewhere, somehow the security forces would kill us. Now in Bhojpur there are less than 150 ‘whole timers’, most of them have left. Even the ones who remain are looking for the opportune time to leave the Maoists and surrender. The activists have become like trapped animals—if you’re a rebel, it’s at the risk of losing your life.

But the Maoists still control the villages, don’t they?
It only seems like that because the security forces haven’t been able to reach these places. The Maoists have been intimidating villagers with their weapons and death threats.

What are you planning to do now that you have left the Maoists?
I am going to India to find work there. Here it’s difficult to survive once you abandon the Maoists as they will hunt you down and execute you. It will be safer in India.

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insurgency



PRAKASH PANTA

commit collective suicide,” says a desperate Dhan Lal Buda.

Hari Krishna Buda says he is now more worried about surviving than about the Maoists. “I sold my wife’s jewellery and the children’s bangles to take the helicopter to come to Surkhet, but here there is no place to stay and nothing to eat,” he says. Relief organisations have been providing some food and clothing, but this is hardly sufficient.

On 21 September the Maoists forced 3,000 teachers and civil servants in Surkhet to openly surround the district education office to pressurise it into meet the rebels’ 15-day ultimatum to fulfil demands. One teacher at the march said he and others had been threatened by the Maoists to stage the demonstration. Previous protests had been much smaller, and the teachers said they had no option but to obey.

The Maoists are demanding the government turn down American aid for education, the security forces stop troubling teachers, students and schools and measures be put in place to make temporary teachers permanent.

Then on 26 September, almost 1,000 families in Surkhet were forced to send letters to the government demanding relatives working in the security forces be sent home immediately. The Maoists threatened to run them out of their villages if they didn’t. Amar Deb Giri of Birauni, who has a son in the army, has been forced to write a letter saying: ‘We want our sons back, the jobs aren’t important.’ Another parent told us: “If we don’t get our sons back, they won’t let us enter our villages.”

Bal Ram Acharya, whose son is a soldier, says out of sheer desperation: “They should send our sons back or hold peace talks immediately.” ●

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A climate of intense fear

A 102 page report by Human Rights Watch has painted a distressing picture of the human rights situation in Nepal, saying civilians are caught in the middle and neither side seems concerned about protecting innocents.

The report, called *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Civilians Struggle to Survive in Nepal's Civil War* was launched on Thursday by Senior Emergency Researcher, Peter Bouckaert who has traveled to many parts of Nepal to document cases of abuse (see interview, below).

The New York-based agency said that while both the government and the rebels have made repeated commitments to protect human rights, in practice both have ignored them. The government has rejected virtually all allegations of abuse by its forces, and the Maoists have responded to allegations of abuse by maligning their victims.

"Rampant abuses have created a climate of intense fear in Nepal's villages," said Brad

Adams, executive director of Human Rights Watch Asia division. "Because of Nepal's geography and poverty, Nepalis under attack or threat usually have nowhere to turn to for protection or redress."

The report says the government's tacit policy to 'break the backbone' of the rebellion has led to many extra-judicial killings and disappearances, making Nepal among the world's prime locations for forced disappearances. The Maoists rarely commit forced disappearances, the report adds, usually declaring abductees 'class enemies', and then executing them in the name of their 'people's war'.

The Maoists famously impose a "tax" on local villagers and travellers, while the government attempts to isolate the Maoists by trying to cut off their access to food and shelter in villages. Many soldiers use the license granted by their superiors in the army and police to engage in extortion and blackmail. Visiting hapless families, they often demand money to ensure

the safe release of their relatives from custody.

The report contains detailed case studies of extra-judicial killings, disappearances and abductions by both the security forces and the Maoists. It also describes the forced Maoist indoctrination of school children, teachers and the recruitment of children.

The report ends with recommendations to the government to take steps to ensure that security forces comply with the requirements of international human rights and humanitarian laws. It asks the Maoists to stop the abduction, torture and killing of civilians, members of other political parties and those who disagree with them as well as to stop extortion and using schools for recruitment and training.

The Human Rights Watch also wants the king to 'accept limitations placed on his role under the 1990 constitution...to elect their representatives at the local and national levels'. It wants the international community to keep up the pressure on both sides to observe human rights, and Nepal's arms suppliers to monitor the use of the weapons they supply. ●

Banke

19 June, 2003

Around 10:30 PM a group of men who identified themselves as Maoists came to the village of Bhandariya and rounded up about 14 men. They were taken to a spot along the main dirt road and tied up 'chicken-style', in a squatting position with their arms looped under their knees and tied up behind their ears. Villagers, including family members and children, were gathered around, watching. The Maoists shouted at the men, claiming that they had passed information against the Maoists to the army. Among other things, the Maoists said: "Three of our comrades were killed. We are fighting for you and you dare betray us." The villagers believe that this was a reference to an army ambush near their village in which some Maoists, including a senior commander had been killed. Half an hour, later some of the men were released. The Maoists took away four men: Jahara Sheikh, Triveni Prasad Baniya, Shaijad Ali Sheik and Chet Prasad Sharma. Shortly thereafter, villagers heard the sound of gunfire from the fields. They formed a search group, and found the bodies. All four had been shot and their legs and arms had been broken. Villagers noticed what looked like burn marks on Baniya's body. His foot had been twisted around completely. Jahara Sheikh had bullet wounds in his forehead and his temple. His eye had come out of its socket with the force of the bullet. One of the four men survived the shooting, although he spent six months recovering in Bheri Zonal Hospital. He is still unable to walk properly. (HRW report)

Kabhre

4 February, 2004

Devi Sunuwar of Kabhre was a witness to an extra-judicial execution by government forces and gave statements to journalists and human rights workers. Within days, her daughter, a 15-year-old



Peter Bouckaert (above, right) has worked as Senior Emergencies Researcher at Human Rights Watch in Chechnya, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Indonesia, Rwanda and Burundi. He has been in Nepal for the past month to help prepare HRW's report, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Civilians Struggle to Survive in Nepal's Civil War*, which was launched on Thursday. He spoke to *Nepali Times* about the seriousness of the crisis.

Nepal can't

How does Nepal compare with other human rights hot spots where you have worked?

What is disturbing about Nepal is that although it is a relatively low-intensity conflict in terms of the daily fighting that goes on, it is extremely deadly. A lot of civilians are caught up and are casualties, or are being disappeared. This is a conflict that has a very high impact on the civilian population. It is a difficult guerrilla war where it is hard to find the Maoist rebels, so a lot of times civilians get caught in the middle.

How different are the abuses committed by the two sides?

The kind of abuses committed by the Maoists and the government are very different in nature. What we find on the Maoist side is a very targeted campaign against certain categories of people like landowners, people who refuse to pay extortion demands people they perceive as spies and then there are peaceful political opponents from the RPP to the Congress and other political parties. They are extremely brutal in their methods that they use to control their areas. We have documented many killings by the Maoists which are basically demonstration killings: they are used to demonstrate to the population what happens when you oppose them. Particularly when the Maoists start targeting teachers and peaceful political opponents in the areas under their control, we get very concerned about their commitment to very basic issues of democracy and human rights.

And the security forces?

On the military side we find an army relatively unprepared and untrained to deal with the kind of military challenges they face. Travelling through Nepal from the east to the west, it becomes obvious how difficult it is to deal with an insurgency movement like the Maoists. We found that the army and the



ALL PICS: HRW

Dalit school girl named Maina Sunuwar, was accused of providing food to Maoists and was taken away by security forces. Since Devi was not home at that time, the soldiers left a message with her husband, asking Devi to come to the barracks to secure the release of their child. But when she went to the army, she was told that her daughter was not in custody. When the Human Rights Watch asked the army about Maina's whereabouts, it insisted that an inquiry had been ordered and that the girl was not in army custody. It claimed that Devi Sunuwar was a liar who had lied about her niece's execution and was now lying about her daughter's disappearance. Yet in April 2004, Devi was finally told by an international agency that her daughter was killed by security forces on the very day that she was taken into custody, a fact later confirmed to Human Rights Watch by the local district administration. Not only had the army denied the arrest when questioned by the Human Rights Watch, soldiers have been visiting the family's house regularly since then. Frightened by these visits and fearing another arrest and murder, the Sunuwar family left their home and are now forced to earn a living as migrant labourers. Currently, soldiers are still turning up, questioning neighbors about the family. (HRW report)

Kathmandu

15 February, 2004

Ganesh Chiluwal, a 35-year-old father of two, was gunned down in broad daylight by the Maoists for his work advocating on behalf of the victims of Maoist abuses. Chiluwal was an active member of the Nepali Congress and in 1998 he had been attacked by Maoists in his home village for his party activities. He was cut all over his body, leading to three months of hospitalisation. After this experience, he founded the Maoist Victims Association, an NGO working to help civilians who had been victimized in different ways by the Maoists. As part of this work, Chiluwal spoke out openly against the abuses suffered by the people who sought his organisation's support.

The Maoists started threatening Chiluwal directly. He received threats to his life through letters, faxes and telephone calls. His family asked him to stop, they knew from his first experience that the Maoists could be very brutal in their assaults. On 15 February 2004, as Chiluwal was leaving his office in Kathmandu, two Maoists on motorbikes fired five rounds of bullets into him. He collapsed and died almost instantly. The Maoists have since claimed responsibility for Chiluwal's murder, even posting his murder as a success on their website, Krishna Sen Online. (HRW report)

Network busy

Shame on the private sector

This week's pictures of serpentine queues to buy Nepal Telecom's pre-paid mobile phones cards shows that just divesting shares of a parastatal may not change its mode of functioning.

Some 50,000 SIM cards were sold in a few days and Nepali

ECONOMIC SENSE

Artha Beed



rent-seeking behavior was at its peak. When people didn't want to be in the queue, they could get cards by paying an expediting fee to Telecom employees, who were busy buying and selling cards at a premium.

Nepal Telecom was converted into a company but government diktats still prevail. No surprises there. Ministers have made noises about the privatisation process, but nothing has happened. But just offloading a percentage of shares to employees and the public does not change a company's strategic direction. The government must give thought as to whether it wants to preoccupy itself in running utilities when it has the much more urgent business of restoring peace to handle.

Telecom services in the region have grown at a phenomenal pace with consumers getting an array of services that they could not even dream of a few years ago. Messaging services in India are now a marketing tool and services over the mobile phones may be as extensive as the Internet. From managing virtual private networks to dating



KUMAR SHRESTHA

services, telecom companies add a few things every week to the bouquet of offerings. This has given opportunities for many enterprises that support these services or use these services as their backbone.

When telecom businesses are privately owned, it triggers an exponential growth in the economy. In Nepal, apart from the Indian state-owned consortium that has a presence, there isn't much from the private sector. License owners are more happy to sit on their licenses and look for the highest bidder than to turn the licenses into a legitimately lucrative business. The only private cellular license holder just gave assurances it will start the business following stories in the media that the license had changed hands.

The government has demonstrated just how poor a regulator it is when it couldn't even take action against the private license holder who did nothing with the permit for

years. The so-called 'apex bodies' of the private sector didn't utter a peep about this to put pressure on the government to grant more licenses or on privatising Nepal Telecom.

If Nepal's pace of development is to accelerate, telecom services need to have greater affordability and accessibility and that can only come by levelling the playing field and allowing competition. The Nepali consumer has the right to get world class service at the best prices. This requires more players in the market to meet demand and help create more demand for the industry as a whole. The private sector needs to work hard to pressurise the government to create the regulatory framework for more players, as well as to get the government out of the telecom business. Otherwise we will see more serpentine queues in the future and our mobiles will always say: network busy. ●

arthabeed@yahoo.com

resolve this crisis by itself"

unified command troops keep going into villages and the next day you read that a group of Maoists were killed in an encounter but when you go and investigate, those people were actually captured, they were under full control of the army and were later executed. And this is not Maoist propaganda that we are passing on, we actually went out and researched many of these cases, talked to many civilians and we found many cases in which Maoists were executed after they were captured. And that's a war crime, it is a very clear violation of the Geneva Convention and it is going on all over Nepal. I was just in Banke where there was an encounter last week in which two civilians were killed. They were part of a larger group which also included some suspected Maoists that were detained by the army.

Is the situation getting better or worse in your assessment?

Clearly there was a tremendous amount of human rights violations when the army was first deployed and the state of emergency was declared. Hundreds of people are still missing from that period and there are strong indications that many of those people were killed in army custody at places like the Chisapani barracks. The government has completely failed to investigate abuses by the army from that period and many of the commanding officers from those barracks continue to serve in relatively high positions in the army, which I think sends a message of impunity both to the army and to the population, which is fully aware of those who were involved. The situation has changed since that early deployment of the army, but there is still a high level of very serious abuses. Especially the

number of summary executions being carried out by the army are just absolutely unacceptable.

Do you think Nepal is capable of resolving the crisis by itself?

Nepal can't resolve this crisis by itself and it desperately needs the help of the international community. Nepali politicians have failed the people, the palace has failed in its duty, the security forces have failed and for sure the Maoists do not provide an attractive alternative if we judge them by their actions. It is important that the international community is unified in pressuring all sides in this conflict and bringing an end to the abuses, which are very much at the base of the conflict. Both the Maoists and the security forces are targeting and using civilians in their war effort. But what we see is a deep split within the international community. There are some like the European community which have taken a strong stance against the abuses by the government but they have been hampered to some extent by the much greater silence on the part of the US and, to a lesser extent, the Indian Embassy, which are major players in the country. States providing weapons must pressurise the Nepali government to abide by its commitments under international human rights and humanitarian laws, the Geneva Conventions.

Has international spotlighting helped reduce abuse?

The Nepal government is concerned and it tried hard last year at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to defend

its actions. Appropriations from the US earmarked for the Royal Nepali Army will now only be released if the Secretary of State certifies that it is complying promptly with habeas corpus orders and cooperating with the National Human Rights Commission in giving unimpeded access to places of detention. Although, the Secretary of State may waive these requirements if he determines that to do so is in US interests.

The international community must continue to be more involved and press the government to abide by its stated commitments. But it is also important for it to be united and have a strong stance on the abuses of human rights by both the Maoists and the government: not just broad statements but reacting to specific incidents, such as the recent call by the Maoists to close private schools which is having a tremendous impact on education all through the country as well as specific incidents of killing by the security forces. Help must be given to the National Human Rights Commission to monitor the conflict. Human rights abuses are no longer a side part of the conflict, but is integral to it and helps perpetuate it.

And what is your recommendation to the Maoists?

They should immediately stop abductions, torture and killing of civilians and comply with international humanitarian law. They must ensure that the rights to freedom of opinion, expression and association are safeguarded in areas under their effective control and stop punishing people for exercising these rights. They must also stop forcing entire communities to attend political indoctrination programs.



NARESH NEWAR in KHUMBU

MELTDOWN

The people of Khumbu see the effects of global warming all around them

SANDEEP C RAI



Dorje Sherpa

Every morning as the sun illuminates the fluted ridges of Ama Dablam, 80-year-old Dorje Sherpa sits quietly in front of his house in Dingboche and stares up at the mountain.

His eyes are moist as he recalls how his young daughter and grandchild were killed 12 years ago in a flashflood. The glacial lake below Ama Dablam burst and a wall of ice blocks, boulders and water crushed his daughter's house. Dorje and his wife were sleeping in the monastery when they were awakened by the guttural thunder of the avalanche. They ran out, and watched helplessly as the boulders smashed into the small house where their daughter and grandchild slept. "The gods must have been angry, why else would it have happened?" says Dorje, as his wife motions him to stop talking.

Like mountain people elsewhere, Dorje and other villagers here have never heard of global warming, which is causing the snow to melt, the glacial lakes to swell up and triggering avalanches and floods. Up here, the Sherpas blame themselves for paying less attention to dharma. Older Sherpas, including learned monks, are from the spiritual school and don't see the rational explanation to the changes that are transforming the Himalaya in their lifetime. In 1985, the Dig Tsho glacial lake near Thame burst and the flood rushed 90km down the Dudh Kosi, killing 12 people and destroying bridges, trails and Namche Bajar's \$1.5 million hydropower plant. There were rumours that someone killed an animal and threw it into the lake, and the angry gods punished the people with the flood.



Tenzing K Sherpa



Ang Maya Sherpa

"We try to explain to them that it is all because industrialised nations are burning fossil fuels," says Sandip C Rai, a climate change expert with the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF). "But it is hard to explain why." Scientists say GLOFs (glacial lake outburst flood) are caused when increased snow melt causes the glacial lakes to overflow or burst. "We were lucky that the flood occurred during the daytime. A lot of people could have died if this had happened at night," explains 32-year-old Ang Maya Sherpa, who was just a teenager then. Ang Maya, who took us on the eight-hour walk up to the lake, relates how the yaks tried to escape to higher ground but were swept away by the brown wall of water and ice. Nearly 20 years later, the scars of that terrible flood can still be seen on the banks

of the river. "Only humans survived that day, but lost everything," explains 85-year-old Lama Dorje in Ghat. He lost two houses, a huge tract of land and several cattle due to the flood. "All my houses and wealth is under that debris," says Lama Dorje, pointing to the gorge that formed when half the village was torn apart. There are fears that Imja Lake (*see pic, top*), across the valley, could also burst in the next five years. A team of Japanese researchers studying the lake have assured villagers that there is no immediate danger. "The younger generation is actually more scared because they know about global warming," says 21-year-old Tenzing K Sherpa, son of one of the five Sherpas who portered for the Hillary expedition in 1953. Tenzing was 12 when he started working as a mountain



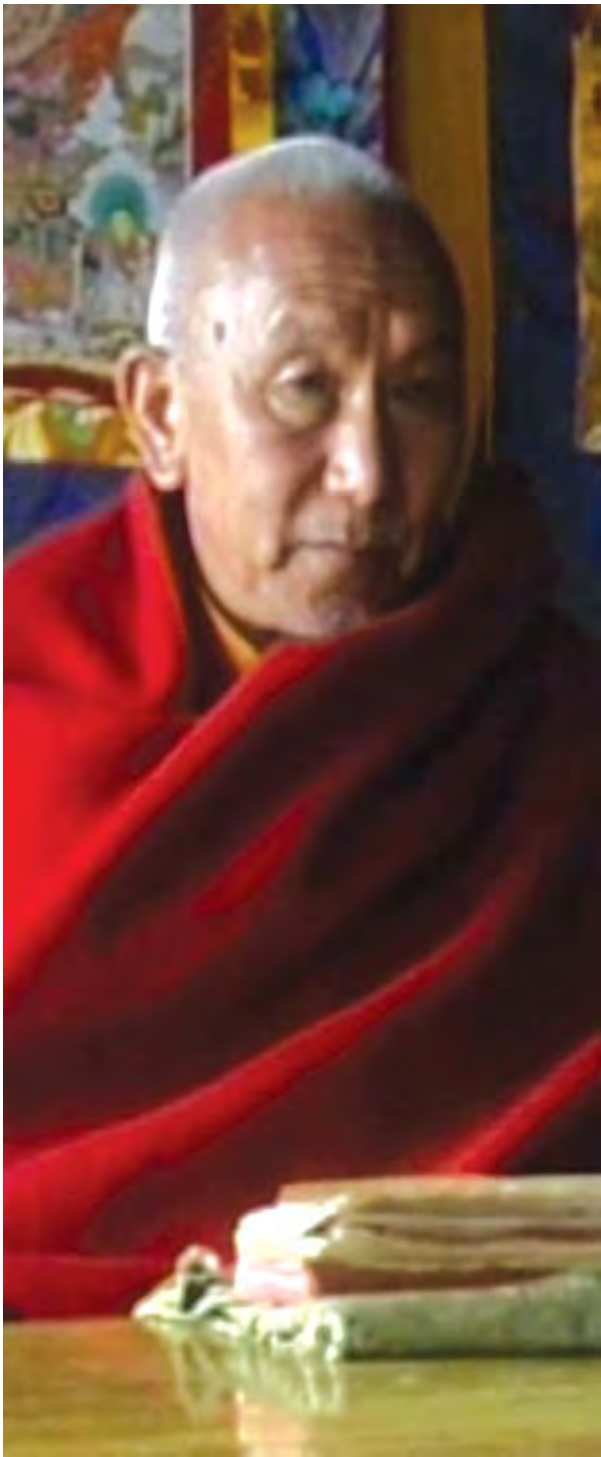
Lama Dorje



Soni Sherpa

guide, travelling frequently to Everest, Ama Dablam, Nuptse and Lhotse base camps. "My generation now understands that these things are not the Nepali people's fault, but because of excessive fossil fuel burning that is warming the atmosphere." Imja Glacier is receding at an astounding 10m a year as average temperatures rise. The lake, which was first observed in 1960, is currently 100m deep, 500m wide and 2km long and holds 28 million cubic metres of water dammed behind an unstable moraine wall. If the wall breaks, the entire Dingboche valley will be swept away. "Just imagine what would happen. We shouldn't wait for it, we should do something now," says 13-year-old Soni Sherpa from Khumjung School, who is here on an educational tour with her class and geography teacher. ●

"Fresh water will dry up"



The Rinpoche of Tengboche Monastery (left) is the most revered monk in Khumbu. The Rinpoche spoke to *Nepali Times* about global warming and its impact on the people.

The temperature of the earth is rising. This is not natural, it is man-made. People are becoming too materialistic and care less about mountains. Climbing Everest has become a fashion. All people care about is reaching the top of Chomolungma. You can see for yourself that climbing Everest has become so easy today, unlike before. Not only are people climbing, but even racing to reach the top. I hear that some climbers reached there in just eight hours. This is happening because there is less snow. Glaciers are shrinking rapidly and we must not depend on foreigners to do everything for us. This is our home. The people of Kathmandu should take care about what they do because it affects the rest of the country. The Sherpas of Khumbu may not know everything, but they are suffering the consequences of the people's greed. We mountain people should be careful and take precautions. It is high time that Nepalis started to depend less on foreigners. It is not the Nepalis but the foreigners who come here and tell us that our glaciers are melting. The solution for the people in the Himalayas is not to move down to the cities. They will have more problems there. Kathmandu already has a water shortage problem. If we don't save Khumbu today, our freshwater will dry up and the problem will be impossible to solve in the future. It does not help anyone if we remain indifferent to each other's problems. ●

ALL PICS: NARESH NEWAR



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Dogs celebrate World Animal Day

Unbeknownst to some of us in Nepal who have reached the pinnacle of evolution, World Animal Day came and went this week without much fanfare because no one remembered to place an ad in national broadsheets congratulating all animals in our kingdom on the auspicious occasion. Big mistake.

They are going to remember this lapse, our furry and feathered friends. They will not take it lying down, they will plot revenge and perch overhead waiting for the opportune moment and, taking careful aim, squirt salad dressing into your Caesar's. Even worse, Alfa Males will lie waiting in selected five-star loos in the city to pounce on unsuspecting journalists so they can pulverise their faces.



As we all know, Nepal would not be the same without its diverse flora and fauna. I don't want to name names here, but there are quite a few skunks and hyenas loose on the streets who give this country its unique character and aroma. Then there is one particular gnu who seems to be separated from his herd and has a swarm of gnats buzzing around him at all times. Underground, there are the burrower rodents who are busy digging tunnels under our vital statistics.

Moving on to the Class Aves, we notice that there is now a severe shortage of doves in the city. So many of them have been symbolically released in peace rallies in recent months that activists have been forced to switch to releasing chickens which have symbolically refused to fly off and have therefore been later barbecued.

The one species that celebrated World Animal Day with its usual gusto were Kathmandu Valley's dogs whose Annual Mating Season coincided with the event this year. Dogs and bitches from all walks of life were seen staging public interaction programs at major intersections, oblivious of the monstrous traffic jams that they were creating because entertainment-starved commuters stood around to provide moral support and to cheer them on.

Speaking on the occasion, a Sitting Member of the Standing Committee of the Raj Sabha said: "What our amorous canine comrades are doing today sets a fine example for the rest of us in our landlocked Animal Kingdom, after all, what else can we do in the current situation except stand back-to-back, hope for the best and wait for a speedy disengagement?"

What all this shagging means, of course, is that in the next three months the torch will be passed on to another generation of puppies whose responsibility it will be to provide us security in these uncertain times by howling all night and keeping militarily strategic parts of the capital awake. The puppies will one day grow up to be fierce guardians of the territorial integrity of the Garbage Heap they call home, so no outsider can ever covet sovereignty over the succulent water buffalo entrails it contains.

No commemoration of World Animal Day will be complete without a passing reference to the city's cattle population. Cows and bulls have been providing a yeoman's service to the Valley Traffic Police as four-legged traffic islands, often putting their life and/or limb in harm's way as they chew on their cuds and swat traffic violators with their tails.

In conclusion, I would like to once more thank the livestock, poultry and canine sectors for their contribution to national development and the process of natural selection. With this dedication, I have no doubt that in the very near future you will also reach the pinnacle of evolution like us. ●

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YAK & YETI KATHMANDU

Durga Baral's diabolical realism

When words fail us it is the images that reflect the ache in our souls



Durga Baral has been known in his native Pokhara for 30 years as a noted artist. But in the rest of Nepal, he is better known as the cartoonist, Batsayan.

Using post-1990 freedoms, Batsayan burst into the national scene with his biting cartoon satires in which he lampooned feckless politicians, poked fun at inflation, water shortages, and day-to-day travails. In doing so, he taught Nepalis to laugh at themselves.

"But as the violence got worse, and the conflict spread, I found that cartooning had its limits, I needed other ways to

express myself, and that is why about two years ago I went back to painting around the theme of violence," Baral said during the inauguration of his exhibition at Siddhartha Art Gallery last Friday.

Ever since Mukunda Saran Upadhyaya wrote his book of verse, *Prakrit Pokhara* and won the Madan Puraskar 40 years ago, this lake-side town in the lap of Machapuchre has been an incubator for artists. 'Pokhara is itself a poem/itself a painting/you don't have to ever write poems about it/or paint it,' versified Upadhyay in his award-winning book.

Today, Pokhara is even more of a hub for intellectual and artistic fervour, and a lot of it has to do with the fact that people like Durga Baral and the novelist Saru Bhakta live there. Pokhara is the only place in Nepal where people pay to attend poetry readings. After FM radios started broadcasting in Pokhara, four new digital recording studios came up and Pokhrelis were churning out music videos and CDs.

Creativity is easier when nature is such an inspiration. This idyllic valley, with its shimmering blue jewel of a lake and the pyramid of

Machapuchre soaring into the sky now has the fires of insurgency raging all around. And it is here that Durga Baral has been reading about and watching the horrors of conflict engulf his beloved land. Having decided that cartoons were not adequate, he returned to painting. Not just a one-off work, but an epic of 23 that chronicle the conflict which now make up the exhibition, 'The Faces of Time and the Colours of Sensibility' at the Siddhartha Art Gallery. In each of these searing images we see the pain the artist has felt in seeing his motherland suffer. Baral shares his anguish with us through the medium of art.

Such pain is unbearable, for all of us. And at times like that words are not enough. Images and colours deliver a more powerful impact, and sometimes we turn to the passion of poetry to convey the outrage and shame better. But when words fail us, as they often do these days, it is images that reflect the ache in our souls. And, it is in these haunting images that we unexpectedly find solace. It is a catharsis that somehow unburdens us, as if by sharing the pain of fellow Nepalis we somehow make it more bearable for all of us.

Other artists, poets musicians and film-makers have in their own ways begun to express the torment of being a Nepali at this time in our nation's history. But Durga

Baral's is an all-consuming passion: two years of hurt expressed in paintings that force us awake from our slumber, to sit up, take notice, and do something. "These paintings may have provided a personal catharsis for the artist, but it deliberately offers no respite to the viewer," says the curator of Siddhartha Art Gallery, Sangita Thapa.

In *Next Door's Tale*, *Through the Window* and *Entrapment*, we get a glimpse of how bereavement, brutality, cruelty and grief wound the living. The spirits, ghosts, corpses are always juxtaposed against those still alive and Baral bathes death in a contrasting warm glow that we associate with humanity, compassion and non-violence.

Other artists, like Picasso and Goya, also lived through civil wars and depicted them in haunting impressionistic works. Durga Baral has used everyday newspaper headlines, tales of disappearances, the gaping void that they leave behind in the hearts of their families, in a hyper-realism that Nepali art has never attained before. Maybe peace can be achieved by talking less, by reflecting more, and through reflection, building a common cause against the cruelty that overwhelms us. That is what powerful art everywhere compels us to do: it moves us to act. ● (Kunda Dixit)

The Faces of Time and the Colours of Sensibility is on exhibit at the Siddhartha Art Gallery the whole of October before moving on to Pokhara. 4218048

Badal pari ko desh ma

A musical tribute to Micky by his mother

Micky, as his family and friends fondly knew the late Captain Wangdi Lama, died young in the line of duty. Where others would have opted out, Micky had the courage to chose to do his duty.

I met Micky years back in a daal-bhat evening with family and friends. I recall him strumming his guitar and singing a popular folk song. He impressed me as a talented young man with a radiant smile, full of enthusiasm, out to win the world and

looking forward to everything good in life. Unfortunately the happiness and radiance he spread to all those

around him was to be short-lived. Micky died in July 2000 when the Twin Otter he was flying crashed into the mountains near Dhangadi.

On the fourth anniversary of Micky's death, a commemorative CD, *Samarpan Timima* was released before a gathering of family and friends. The album is a collection of nine songs written in dedication to the memory of her son by Micky's mother, Manju Lama. They are moving expressions of the themes of life and living, memory and uncertainty, sorrow and longing, journey and grief. The album consists of music composed by Nhyoo Bairacharya, Raju Lama, Uday Sotang, Suresh Kumar, Shreya Sotang and sung by Sukmit Gurung, Raju Lama, Uday and Manila Sotang, Shreya Sotang, and Nhyoo Bajracharya.

The lead song, *Badal pari ko deshma indreniko bshesma*, is a moving tribute by a mother to her son, which touched the



hearts of all at the launch ceremony at the Radisson Hotel last month.

'In the county beyond the clouds, dressed in rainbow hues, ...shine forever amidst the moon and stars...'

To the slow and gentle beat of Tamang selo, Raju Lama's powerful voice penetrated the hall with the song *Bharosa chhaina jiwanko* lamenting at the uncertainty of life:

'Life is uncertain; it may be today or tomorrow, Let us live merrily, we all leave eventually'

Melodious *Bhagyale satayo, karmale ruwayo* played in the background and sung by Manila Sotang reminds us of the vicissitudes of life:

'Fate has troubled me, destiny has given me tears, Oh, lord how you have subjected me to this lot,

gave me laughter for a while, tears for life left me neither to live nor to die'

A mother's painful reflection on the irreconcilable and untimely loss of her son is felt in all the songs:

'Incomplete life and its unfinished story, life is but an ever-flowing river' (Apuro jiwan ko adhuro kahani)

'I try to express my sorrow with trembling lips, i try to write the pain, words are lost' ("Pokhna khojchhu byathaharu")

The musicians rendering of Manju Lama's songs are deeply moving. Micky himself dabbled in verse and had written chilling reflections on life and death with seemingly prophetic lines before his death:

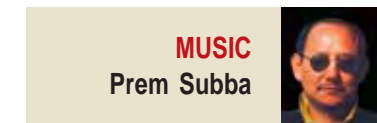
There wasn't much that I could have given For things I have shared But have moments hidden, Like down in the deepest seas.

Where mystery's of it has still to be opened Even if one may find it in time to come by. It will still be hard to tell what happened when and where? at a particular time when the clock stopped ticking there.

Like a rock shall I stand, and as quietest as the oceans can be. It will all be here, But in our memory. "

Micky died as he lived, a wonderful friend and human being, a worthy son, and a dedicated flyer who tried to do everything he did to the best of his abilities.

Prem Subba works for the UN in Suva, Fiji



MUSIC
Prem Subba



Indian anger at Maoists

Arjun Gyawali in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 2-16 Oct



Five years ago, an American political analyst warned India about the Nepali Maoists' growing influence in the region, but India did not take it seriously. The analyst had said that their growing power would affect about 10 Indian states where the Maoist struggle has been going on for decades. The analyst further warned that in a couple of decades, the Maoist revolution would affect the whole nation and ultimately India would become a communist country.

The analysis also mentioned that China would become a superpower in less than two-and-a-half decades. China's political ambition is to spread communism and there are reasons to believe that China may not hesitate to support the Maoists once they gain more influence. In all probability, both countries—large in size and population—would then be able to spread communism around the world. “This is why it is necessary for India to support Nepal in controlling the Maoists,” the American analyst added. This issue has caused serious concern for the US government, which is why Assistant Foreign Secretary Christina Rocca, responsible for South Asian affairs, had frequently travelled to Kathmandu and New Delhi to press India to take the analysis seriously. India still didn't consider the Maoists a threat—until now.

That India has changed its perspective on the Maoists is evident from its attitude towards the Maoist leaders, who no longer consider India a safe haven. The Maoist Central Committee decided to move their underground base from India to Nepal during their last meeting. This clearly indicates that they have lost all hope of using India as a refuge. This might be the main reason why the rebel leaders are pushing for peace talks with the government.

There has been confusion over the Maoist statements. First they refused to talk peace with the present government, stating, ‘We will not be having talks with servants of the old regime but with their master and through international mediation.’ Less than a week later, Krishna Bahadur Mahara changed this to, ‘Peace talks are possible if the government removes the terrorist tag and creates a proper environment.’ The question is, why did the rebels change their statement so quickly?

Obviously, the Maoists will never raise the issue of peace talks until they are under immense pressure, in which India has a big role. Mahara raised the issue of talks when Indian ministers from eight States were meeting with an agenda focused on Nepal's Maoist conflict and its effect on India. The State ministers held the meeting soon after Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba returned from his official visit to India. Since then, the Maoists have been lambasting the Indian government and it is believed that they are preparing a new military model to counter the Indian action.

As a new strategy to gain international support, the Maoists have been gradually spreading their political ideals in several European countries. Their members are already active in Germany and Belgium, making efforts to secure refugee status for their arrested senior leaders like Kiran, CP Gajurel, Matrika Yadab, Suresh Ale Magar and other central level leaders. They had been successful in sending some German lawyers to Chennai on 24 March for Gajurel's release. The rebels had even sought help from a female German lawyer to request the UNHRC in Geneva to assist in the rebel leaders' release. The rebels had also managed to gain active support through American citizen Arthur Parsi, a member of World's People's Resistance.

It is assumed that the Indian government took a stronger stance against the rebels after finding that the Maoists used India as a base to establish their links in Switzerland, German, UK, Italy and other countries in Europe to pressurise India to release their leaders.



Top Maoist leaders captured in Patna in May this year being transported to their jail cells last month. One of them shows a welt in his arm.

Women take over

Kantipur, 4 October

कान्तिपुर

The exodus of men-folk from the villages due to the insurgency has forced women in Doti to depart from tradition, even when it comes to performing the final rites after a person's death. Since there are no more young men left in the village, women are forced to carry dead bodies and cremate them—an activity that women have traditionally been strictly barred from carrying out. When an elderly man died recently, locals looked for young men to carry the dead body. But, since there were none, the women decided to do it themselves. And unlike in the past, when cremations used to take place at a river bank roughly six hours walk away, these days they are done closer to the village. Local priest Ramchandra Bhatta says the women are not strong enough to carry the dead bodies to the usual place for cremation, adding, “In normal circumstances, the cremation would never have taken place so near to the villages, but now we have no choice.” Locals say all young men have fled because of the threats from the rebels and the security forces. Earlier, young men used to carry sick people to health posts in dokos, but nowadays women do the work. Health worker Hikmatsingh Chopda says there has been a drop in the number of people coming for treatment. Life has indeed become difficult in these once male-dominated villages. The only work women don't do yet is ploughing the field, but if the men stay away from the villages for much longer, women will be compelled to do this as well. By this time of the year, young men would normally be returning to

their villages for Dasain. This year, hardly any of them have come back. The Maoists will forcibly recruit any young person they see, and even teenage boys have left.

Nepali shot

Nepal Samacharpatra, 4 October

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

Indian paramilitary force Special Services Bureau shot and seriously injured Sitaram Lodh. The Indian security force increased its presence here after the Deuba visit to Delhi, following reports that the Maoists were using the jungle corridor to smuggle arms. The SSB has established 21 posts across from Bardia to strengthen border security. Two other people who were with Lodh are now missing. The Nepali youths were shot at while collecting firewood in the Hasinpurkatti jungle on the Nepal-India border and Lodh was brought to hospital by locals, who found him unconscious in the jungle. “They shot me without asking any questions,” Lodh said from his hospital bed.

Flip-flop

Deshantar, 3 October

देशान्तर साप्ताहिक

UML General Secretary Madhab Kumar Nepal's contradictory statements between 28 September and 1 October: “Considering the big festivals like Dasain and Tihar, I have proposed that the government declare a unilateral ceasefire so that the Maoists can be brought in for peace talks.” (After the high level peace committee meeting on 28 September) “I have no idea who proposed the idea of a unilateral ceasefire and who rejected it during the high level peace

committee meeting.” (While addressing the Food Security Asian March in Kathmandu on 30 September) “Ideally, both sides should go for a ceasefire. If the Maoists do not make the move, the government must take initiative. If the government declares a unilateral ceasefire for 15 days, the sky will not fall down.” (While addressing a UML training program on 1 October)

These contradictions are typical of UML General Secretary Nepal. He never remains consistent for even a single day. The way he has changed his versions diametrically this time has made many suspicious. Even his own party colleagues and cadre are left wondering why Nepal is flip-flopping like that. Many believe this is a survival tactic. It is no secret that the UML has been on a tight spot after it joined the government claiming that ‘regression’ had been corrected. The government remains unable to convince the people that this is the case, and the law and order situation hasn't improved either. Worse yet, it has made the lives of the general Nepali public more difficult by increasing the prices of petroleum products.

Since Nepal knows what the government has and has not been able to do, sometimes he takes the offensive and at other times he is defensive. With contradictory statements on the unilateral ceasefire, he is trying to please both the government and the people.

Baseless

Former Inspector General of Police Achyut Krishna Kharel in *Nispakshya*, 30 September

निष्पक्ष

My judicial custody after I was implicated by the CIAA was a

Maoist: So can you hold talks?
Deuba: Yes!

Can you provide answers?
Yes!

Then can you show them?
Yes!

Maoist book: Prachanda six questions

Deuba's answer paper: Six answers: no, no, no...

समय Samaya, 7 October

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

- “Our party is serious about talks and we are even discussing a ceasefire during Dasai and Tihar.”
A statement signed ‘Prachanda’ which was sent to different media houses on 5 October
- “The statement issued in the name of our party chairman Prachanda is forgery and we want to make it clear that it is the old regime that is trying to create confusion.”
A statement signed with the name ‘Krishna Bahadur Mahara’ as a rejoinder to the first statement on 5 October
- “We refute the statement contradicting our central committee decision (that was released by Mahara). The party has already initiated a process to seek explanations from Mahara and the Comrade of Krishna Sen online.”
A statement with Prachanda's name in it, issued on 6 October

deliberate move to defame me. The commission has ulterior motives. On what basis did the commission file the case against me in the special court? It has no basis for such a move. I have not pleaded for the withdrawal of the case. If the commission can prove its charges, it can go ahead. The charge that I accumulated wealth through corruption is baseless. It is sad that even the CIAA files cases on an ad hoc basis. The evaluation has been wrong and unreasonable. I inherited a lot of property. The CIAA's analysis was I couldn't have made money from my houses because they cannot be rented out. Is there anyone in Kathmandu whose house has not been rented out and has simply remained vacant? If I had earned money through corruption, the CIAA should have been able to pinpoint the corrupt activities I was involved in.

15 years

Sanghu, 4 October



Thousands of Nepalis die without ever even seeing a hospital. Even so, there are some in Nepal who are fortunate enough to make hospital beds their homes for 15 years. Sri Maya Tamang of Kabre has been living in the women's ward and

Upar Gurung in the neurosurgical room in Bir Hospital for the past 15 years. Sri Maya's brother-in-law brought her to Bir hospital 16 years ago. She suffered from numbness in her limbs. During the course of treatment, the expenses rose, her disease deteriorated into paralysis of her lower limbs and her brother-in-law left saying he would come to take her home. He never came back. Every morning Sri Maya wakes up, plaits her hair, puts on makeup and sits in bed. Hospital employees tell us she even has a husband who comes to visit her, but no one offers to take her home. Every year, about 72 patients are rejected because Sri Maya has been occupying the bed for so long. She is only 45, so the hospital can't send her to the old age home, which only takes people over 60. Upar Gurung was badly injured in a car accident, and was brought to the hospital in critical condition. On regaining consciousness, he had amnesia and has forgotten everything about his life. Upar has endeared himself to the hospital staff and helps with cleaning and running errands. "If there was any organisation that would take responsibility for Sri Maya, it would ease Bir Hospital's burden immensely," says a hospital staff member.

'Disco bomb nite'

Jana Astha, 6 October



There was a reception at the royal palace at 6:30 PM to celebrate Princess Himani's birthday. Later that night, another party was organised at Hotel Annapurna by the son and daughter-in-law of Ketaki Chester, daughter of Princess Helen. Prince Paras and Princess Himani attended, but the prince left before the cake was cut. He headed off to Latin Quarter at Baber Mahal, where special guests like US Ambassador James Moriarty, Indian Embassy Press Secretary Sanjay Verma, Prabhakar Shumsher Rana, Pradip Bikram Rana, Sipradi Trading chief executive officer Saurya Rana, the ex-chief priest's son Sidanth Pandey and about 30 others had gathered.

A dinner was hosted at Baber Mahal Revisited around 8:30 PM and among the special guests were RPP leader Pashupati SJB Rana and his daughter, Devyani. Around 12:30 AM, a member of royal family arrived with 15-16 friends on motorcycles, and Devyani and her father ran into the group. Soldiers in the nearby barracks heard sounds of weeping. Someone was crying out, calling Devyani 'Bhauju'.

Soon afterwards, the prince went with his friends to Galaxy Disco at Hotel Everest, where Mahek Chahal, Indian star of 'Naya Padosin' was performing a dance. In the audience were Prabhakar Shumshere Rana's son Siddhartha and his fiancée Nilima Gurung. Also present were Kumar Gorakh Shumshere and Pradip Bikram Rana with his wife Chhaya.

As Pramod Bikram Rana went to the toilet he saw journalist Sagun Lawoti, son of RPP leader Padma S Lawoti, soaked in blood after he was dragged into the bathroom and beaten brutally. The two towels in the bathroom had been soaked with blood.

When Siddhartha saw Lawoti's state, he was shocked and started shouting, "What's going on here?" But even before he could climb up the stairs back to the lobby with his fiancée, they were both attacked. Siddhartha was beaten until his leg was broken. Nilima was also badly beaten. Pradip Bikram came to their rescue and saved them from being beaten further. Siddhartha is now in intensive care at his Himalayan Heights home near Soaltee Hotel. He will not be able to walk normally for a month. Nilima's face has been badly bruised and swollen. Lawoti's nose has been fractured. Siddhartha has filed a case against his attackers.



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Indian censors hold up *Fahrenheit 9/11*



Indian film activists have protested the country's censors holding up release of the award-winning documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11* in Indian cinemas.

"The censor board takes these senseless decisions because as a body it is irrelevant and completely behind the times," Shuddhabrata Sengupta of the media and research foundation, Sarai, said "The censor board itself should be done away with."

The film was supposed to be released in Mumbai, New Delhi, Kolkata and Pune on 15 October, but has reportedly been sent to a revising committee. No reason has been given.

Bangladesh editor murdered

DHAKA—Assailants wielding knives and traditional axes brutally murdered the executive editor of the Bangla-language daily, *Durjoy Bangla*, Saturday night in the latest attack on the press in Bangladesh.

Diponkar Chakrabarty, a veteran journalist who also helped lead several press groups, was on his way home in Sherpur, a town in the Bogra district of the northeastern Rajshahi Division, when as many as five assailants ambushed and decapitated him. No known motive has been established for the murder but police said the killers were "professionals" and suspect a left-wing extremist group. Already this year two veteran journalists have been killed in Khulna district for which the Janajuddha (People's War) faction of the Purbo Banglar Communist Party, claimed responsibility.

Helping at home

While the influential US ambassador to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad predicts terrorist attacks before the 9 October president elections, he, however, urged investors not to shy away from the war-ravaged country.

Khalilzad's assessment comes as he and other Afghan and foreign officials acknowledge that Afghanistan's security has worsened in the past weeks, with a number of attacks on international aid agencies and local officials. 12 reconstruction and aid workers lost their lives in Afghanistan between March and December last year. The number, however, increased to 59 between January and August this year.

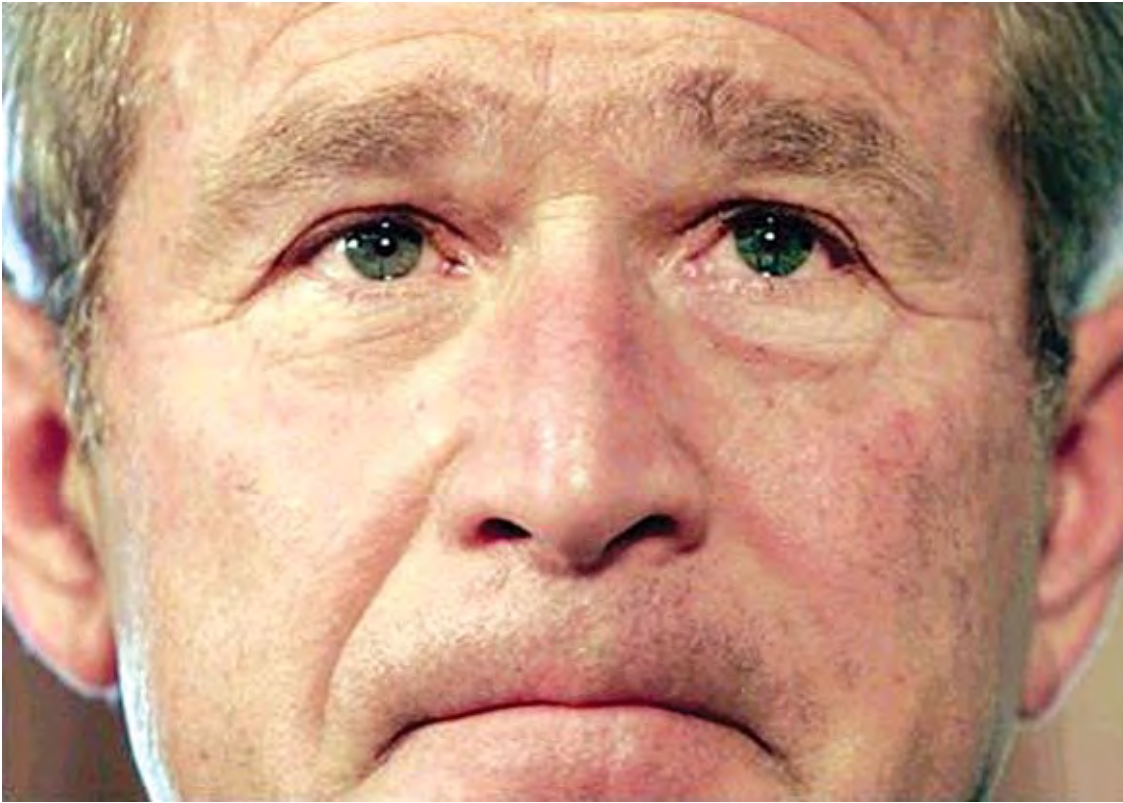
The UN-Afghan election commission says 10.5 million Afghans have registered to vote, although Guehenno acknowledged some may have registered twice. US-backed interim President Hamid Karzai is widely expected to defeat 17 challengers for a five-year term as the country's first popularly elected leader.

Khalilzad further said that, unlike the case with Iraq, the international donor community has delivered much of the aid it promised Afghanistan two years ago. The international community promised over \$9 billion for Afghanistan and has paid about a third of it. In the case of Iraq, the US Congress alone appropriated \$18.7 billion, but only about \$1 billion dollars has been spent to date.

The Afghan-born American envoy said aid from the international community can only rebuild Afghanistan's infrastructure. To build the rest of the country, he emphasised, Afghans around the world must chip in.

The richest Afghan community outside Afghanistan is in the United Arab Emirates, which is home to 150,000 Afghan citizens. (IPS)

Another reason not
George W Bush has been a failure not just in Iraq,



Many are surprised at how little attention the economy is receiving in President Bush's re-election campaign. But I am not surprised: if I were Bush, the

RIGHT SIDE UP

Joseph E Stiglitz

last thing I would want to talk about is the economy.

Yet many look at America's economy, even now, with envy. After all, annual economic growth—at an average rate of 2.5 percent—still looks strong compared to Europe's anemic 1 percent growth.

But these statistics mask a glaring fact: the average

American family is worse off. Median real income has fallen by over \$1,500, with Americans being squeezed as wages lag behind inflation and key household expenses soar. In short, all that growth benefitted the same group that had done so well over the previous 30 years and that benefitted most from Bush's tax cut.

For example, 45 million Americans have no health insurance, up by 5.2 million from 2000. Families with health insurance face annual premiums that have nearly doubled, to \$7,500. American families also face increasing job insecurity. This is the first time since the early 1930s that there has been a net loss of jobs

over the span of an entire presidential administration.

Bush supporters rightly ask: is Bush really to blame for this? Wasn't the recession already beginning when he took office?

The resounding answer is that Bush is to blame. Every president inherits a legacy. The economy was entering a downturn, but Clinton also left a huge budget surplus. But Bush squandered that surplus, converting it into a deficit of 5 percent of GDP through tax cuts for the rich.

The productivity growth that was sustained through the downturn presented both an opportunity and a challenge. The opportunity: if the economy was well managed,

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to re-elect Bush

but also in the domestic economy

the incomes of Americans could continue to rise as they had done in the 1990s. The challenge: to manage the economy so that growth would be robust enough to create the new jobs required by new entrants to the labor force. Bush failed the challenge, and America lost the opportunity because of his *wrong choices*. True, the economy was stimulated a little bit by Bush's tax cuts, and was probably stronger in the short run . But there were other policies that would have provided far more stimulus at far less cost. Bush's objective, however, was not to maintain economic strength economy, it was to push forward a tax agenda that shifted the burden away from those who could best afford to bear it.

Bush's failed policies have not only cost the economy dearly, they have left the economy in a far weaker position. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office agrees that even without Bush's new expenditure initiatives and tax proposals, costing trillions of dollars, the deficit will not be eliminated in the foreseeable future— or

even cut in half, as Bush has promised. Expenditures on which America's future economic health depends—on infrastructure, education, health, and technology—will be crowded out, jeopardising longterm growth.

Because fiscal policy did not stimulate the economy, a greater burden was placed on monetary policy. Lower interest rates worked (a little), but for the most part by encouraging households to refinance their mortgages, not by stimulating investment. The increased indebtedness of households is already leading to higher bankruptcy rates.

National debt, too, has risen sharply. The huge trade deficit provides the spectacle of the world's richest country borrowing almost two billion dollars a day from abroad, contributing to the weak dollar and representing a major source of global uncertainty.

There might be some hope for the future if Bush owned up to his mistakes and changed course. But no: Bush refuses to take responsibility for the economy. In 2003, having seen that its tax cuts for the rich had failed to stimulate the economy

as promised, the administration just prescribed more of the same medicine. It now promises to make those tax cuts permanent, which is one promise that Bush, if re-elected, will try to keep.

In August, I joined nine other American Nobel Prize winners in economics in signing an open letter to the American public. It is hard for any two economists—let alone two Nobel Prize winners—to agree on anything. But in this case our concerns overcome disagreements.

We wrote: 'President Bush and his administration have embarked on a reckless and extreme course that endangers the longterm economic health of our nation... The differences between President Bush and John Kerry with respect the economy are wider than in any other Presidential election in our experience. President Bush believes that tax cuts benefiting the most wealthy Americans are the answer to almost every economic problem.'

Here, as elsewhere, Bush is dead wrong, and too dogmatic to admit it. ● (Project Syndicate)

Joseph E Stiglitz is Professor of Economics at Columbia University and received the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2001

Dirty cleanup

The Kyoto protocol sets out three mechanisms to reduce emission of greenhouse gases: emissions trading, joint implementation and the clean development mechanism (CDM). At the heart of all three mechanisms are means for companies in the north to continue to pollute, but find ways to offset this pollution.

The joint implementation (JI) facility allows the countries that have ratified the protocol, from among a list of 38 'Annex 1' or industrialised nations, to implement emission-reducing projects or provide for carbon removals in other Annex 1 countries. In effect, however, JI would cover mostly industrial investments in Eastern Europe, so that the pollution at home could continue as usual while the company meets its obligations to cap emissions in an East European country at lower cost.

The CDM extends this principle to developing countries. A country from the North can take on a project in the South with claimed emissions capping facilities built into it. "The certified emissions reductions (CERs) generated by such projects can be used by Annex 1 parties to help meet their own emissions targets," the Protocol says.

The Kyoto Protocol says the CDM is expected to generate investment in developing countries, especially from the private sector, enhance the transfer of environmentally friendly technologies and promote sustainable development." Recent amendments of the CDM mean that companies from the North may not always have to offer technology to partner firms in developing countries. They can earn emissions certificates by planting trees instead.

Any additional emissions-cutting technology introduced by companies from industrialised countries in developing countries will come at a cost. CDM projects could mean that companies in developing countries end up paying towards the increased cost of new technology in a local project. Developing countries would then carry the burden of emissions reduction costs even though the Kyoto protocol formally exempts them from these measures, since the bulk of emissions come from industrialised countries. ●



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Talking golf

Tough terminology shouldn't keep you off the turf

The mechanics of golf, the golf swing and other advanced techniques may be useful to seasoned golfers, but for those unfortunate enough to be subjected to a bewildering conversation between hackers, exploring a few more commonly used golf terms would be much more useful.

Hazards – The bane of all those who land within them. These are

many sand bunkers and water hazards, including lakes, drains, streams and any other part of the course that has been declared as such. You'll often hear golfers

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



discussing how many balls were lost in water hazards and arguing on the proper place the ball should be dropped back on the course before the next shot is played.

Through the green – Ideally, the place the golf ball should remain after being hit before reaching the green, of course. This is the whole area of the golf course except:

- The teeing ground and putting green of the hole being played
- All hazards on the course (such as bunkers and water hazards)

Closely mown area – Usually, the place where the ball should be, which is any area of the course, including the paths through the green where the grass is cut to fairway height or less (approximately one inch).

Embedded ball – The rules permit a free drop when the ball is embedded in its own pitch mark in the ground in any closely mown area through the green. A ball embedded in a hazard must be played as it lies. If embedded in the rough, it should be played as it lies, unless the local club's rules permit a free drop. In Nepal, this local rule is almost always applicable in the wet monsoons.

Abnormal ground conditions – Does not refer to all the divots and holes made when trying to hit the ball. Neither is it any indentation made in the ground out of frustration. It is any casual water, ground under repair, or hole, cast or runway on the course made by a burrowing animal, reptile or bird.

Ball lost – A common phenomena that afflicts errant golfers. A ball is lost if:
● It is not found or identified by the player within five minutes after the player (or their caddie) started the search.
● The player has put another ball into play under the rules, even though he may not have searched for the original ball.

Ball in play – A ball is "in play" as soon as the player has made a stroke on the teeing ground. It remains in play until it is holed, except when it is lost, out of bounds or lifted, or another ball has been substituted, whether or not the substitution is permitted under the rules.

Out of bounds (OB) – Usually said with a grimace – "I hit the ball OB." This is an area outside the boundary of the golf course or a particular hole. Borders are usually marked with white stakes and lines on the ground. The road over the fence is usually OB. So are places such as the club house, practice range, parking lots, public areas and neighbouring farmland.

Next time you're subjected to an endless dissection of the game, impress the hard core golfers with some of these terms. Be warned however, to quickly move away, unless you're ready to be inducted into this marvelous game.

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



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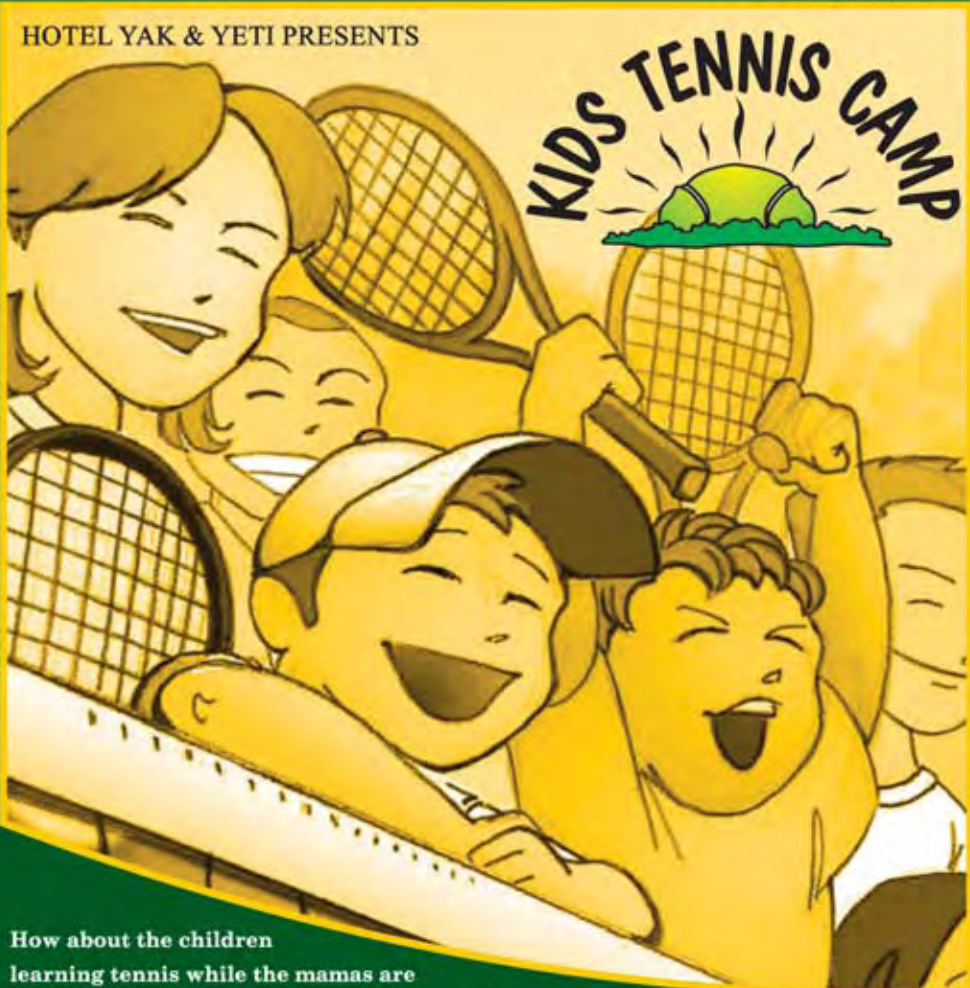




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"Lata ko desh ma gaando tanderi." (In a land of fools, even a man with a bad goatee can be a hero.)



The Adventures of HEROJIG
HELLO. NAMASSTHAY!
by jiggy gaton
Wuz up?

Our Heroji was shocked to find out that 4 out of 10 tourists in Pokhara this season were wearing **HEROJIG** tee-shirts.



Lies & Statistics
(there were only 4 tourists in the whole town!)

KE GARNE? WHATEVER.
But be a Heroji - Never Gamble Drunk
"Whose game was empires, whose stakes were thrones; whose table earth, whose dice -- human bones."
-- LORD BYRON, English poet, (1788 - 1824)
Next change:
Herojig notices that momos look just like edible hats.

Herojig's Adventures can also be seen at www.extreme-nepal.com #40©2061 by jigme gaton - read. love. write.

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **A Walk along Bagmati River** Paintings by Dagmar Mathes at Park Gallery, Lazimpat. Until 10 October. www.parkgallery.com.np
- ❖ **The Faces of Time and Colours of Sensibility** Paintings by Durga Baral at the Siddhartha Art Gallery.
- ❖ **The Expressions** Paintings by Umesh Shrestha, Hari Jung Bomjon and Sudan Kumar Singh at Nepal Art Council, Babarmahal
- ❖ **Hamro Prayas** Art exhibition by AVM School grades 6-10. 8-26 October at NAFA Gallery, Naxal.
- ❖ **Bangladesh Single Country Fair** 8-10 October at BICC, New Baneswor.
- ❖ **Hyundai Road Show** at Gemini Supermarket, Boudha. 9 October, 11AM onwards.
- ❖ **Kathmandu & Kaligandaki** Sales exhibition of original black and white photographs by Sugata. October 11-15 at Patan Museum, 10AM-4PM

EVENTS

- ❖ **Kathmandu Utsav** at Bhrikuti Mandap, 8-17 October
- ❖ **WAVE Music Utsav** Five days of music at Bhrikuti Mandap. Rs 25
Nep-hop Night—10 Nepali hip-hop artists on 8 October, 5-7PM
Acoustic Vibes—pure acoustic on 10 October, 5-7PM
Rock Your Senses—Robin and the New Revolution, Xmarica and Elysium on 12 October, 5-7PM
Punk and Metal—Anarchy and volume rule on 14 October, 5-7PM
The Blue Note—Kathmandu's finest blues on 15 October, 5-7PM
- ❖ **Moksh Festival** 12 noon-6PM on 9 October. Food, music and talent show to celebrate Moksh's 2nd birthday. 5528703
- ❖ **Big Night Out** at the Rox bar, 8PM on 9 October. Rs 400
- ❖ **Creating the causes of happiness** The Buddha's teachings on freedom. 9-10 October, 9.30 AM-4.30 PM at HBMC. 4414843
- ❖ **Kids tennis camp** at Hotel Yak & Yeti. Two hours a day for two weeks, starting 10 October. 4248999
- ❖ **Nepal-Israeli Business Seminar on Agro Technology** at the Hyatt Regency, 12 October at 9.30 AM.
- ❖ **Telecom Israel 2004** at the Hyatt Regency, 13 October at 10.30 AM.
- ❖ **Nepathya for the Disabled** 16 October, 5.30 PM, Khagendra Navajeevan Kendra, Jorpati. Entrance Rs 500 and Rs 1,000. 4470874
- ❖ **Changa Chait 2061** Kite flying at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot. 16 October. Rs 100. 4410432
- ❖ **Bluebird Festive Blast** Shopping specials for Dasain and Tihar at both Tripureswor and Lazimpat outlets.

DRINKS

- ❖ **Drin...king Utsav '04** Drinks of all types at the BICC, 15-19 October.
- ❖ **Reduced prices** on drinks for Dashain at Subterranea. Sunday to Thursday, free entry before 11PM. 4422999
- ❖ **Just Devine Dashain!** After office happy hour, 4-8PM all October at 'Jack Lives Here'-1905 Kantipath.

FOOD

- ❖ **San Miguel October Fest @ Soaltee Crowne Plaza** Unlimited San Miguel, Bar-be-que, dancing and games until 9 October at the Garden Terrace. 6PM onwards, Rs 779. 4273999
- ❖ **The Sizzling Stone Cooking Experience** volcanic stone cooking until 15 October at the Rox, starting 6PM. 4491234
- ❖ **Kebab Fiesta** at The Lounge until 25 September. 12.30 PM-3.30 PM and 6.30 PM-8.30 PM. 4491234
- ❖ **La Soon** Restaurant and Vinotheque, in the lane next to the Egyptian Embassy, Pulchowk for spacious indoor and outdoor seating. 5537166.
- ❖ **1905 Bow-Thai Promotion** Burmese-Thai Cuisine from Burmese Guest Chef Roshan. Every day, 6PM at 1905 Kantipath. 4225272



GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Dream Holiday** package tour to Malaysia during Dashain and Tihar. Marco Polo Travels and Quatar Airways, 2012345
- ❖ **Dasain Adventure Holiday** at the Borderlands Resorts, 16-23 October. 4701295, info@borderlandresorts.com, www.borderlandresorts.com
- ❖ **Summer in Shivapuri** Tranquil village, superb views and birdwatching. Shivapuri Heights Cottage, on the edge of Shivapuri National Park. Steve@escape2nepal.com
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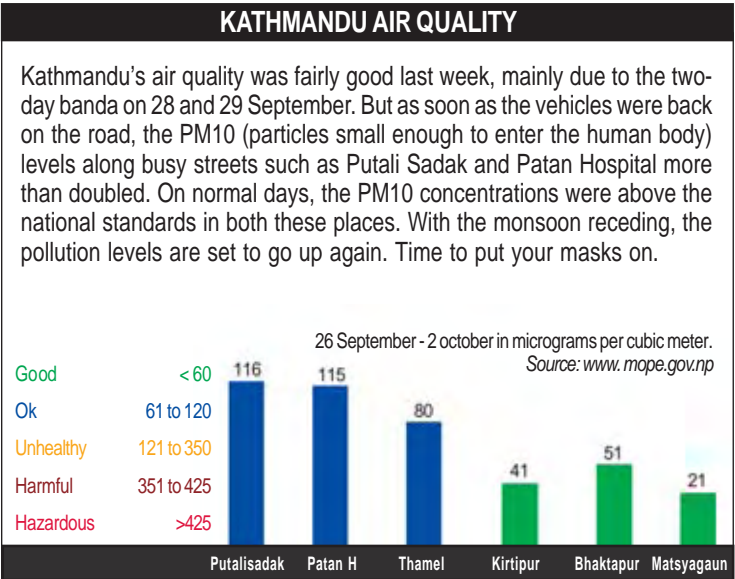
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NEPALI WEATHER



by MAUSAM BEED


This huge cyclone covering most of eastern India is fighting a tug-o-war with westerlies, but since it is such a huge system its effects will be felt in eastern and central Nepal into the weekend. We are in what meteorologists like me term a 'transitional' phase, which is inherently unpredictable with highly dynamic weather phenomena like Wednesday night's dramatic thunderstorm. This satellite image taken on Thursday at noon shows the tentacles of the cyclone still lapping at the Valley. The circulation is sucking in fresh and cooler northwesterly winds over Nepal, and this is trying to drive away the rain, but the moisture is persistent and will deliver light showers into the weekend.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Day	Weather	Temp
Fri	Sunny with clouds	27-18
Sat	Sunny with clouds	26-16
Sun	Sunny with clouds	27-17
Mon	Sunny with clouds	27-17
Tue	Sunny with clouds	28-17

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आफ्ना कुरा रेडियोबाटै मर्नौं

दक्षिण एशियाकै पहिलो स्वतन्त्र प्रसारण सेवा रेडियो सगरमाथालाई दिगो बनाउन यसको साथी बनौं।
रेडियो सगरमाथाको साथी बनेर रेडियो सञ्चालनमा यहाँले ठूलो योगदान पुर्‍याउन सक्नुहुनेछ।

साथी बनेपछि:
रेडियोबाट आफ्ना कुरा भन्न पाइनेछ।
सहलियत दरमा सूचना प्रसार सक्नेछ।
रेडियोबाट सघन्यवाद नाम प्रसार गरिनेछ।

(यस जानकारीका लागि कार्यालय समयभित्र रेडियो सगरमाथामा सम्पर्क गर्नुहोस्, फोन: ५५२८०८९, ५५४२२४५)

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KIRAN PANDAY

GO FLY A KITE: Participants in the Changa Chait festival ride the skies at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot on Saturday.



SANDEEP C RAI

NOSE ON THE GROUND: Airline staff inspect damage on a Sita Air Dornier 228 aircraft after it crash-landed in Lukla on 30 September, blocking flights to the starting point of the Everest trek for two days.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

PUSHING UP: Women candidates for 2nd Lieutenant positions in the Royal Nepali Army do push-ups on Wednesday in Kathmandu. This is the first time women are eligible for the post, for which there are a total of 782 candidates.



KIRAN PANDAY

INTER-GALACTIC: Mahek Chahal, star of *Naya Padosin*, at the Galaxy Disco on Friday an hour-and-a-half before a fight broke out in which Siddhartha Rana of the Soaltee Group and his fiancée were beaten mercilessly.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

YUMMY: Brigadier General Deepak Gurung tucking it in on Wednesday after news came that he had been promoted to Public Relations Director of the Royal Nepali Army.

On top of the world

It was when 18-year-old Payal Shakyia finally reached the summit at 5,000m and looked down at the Imja Glacier that she realised all the hard work was worth it. "I did it!" she shouted, "I feel like I am on top of the world."

Just two months earlier, she had already been to the top of the world when she was crowned Miss Nepal in Kathmandu. Now, as 'Conservation Ambassador' for the World Wildlife Fund for Nature Conservation (WWF), Payal went to see for herself how fragile the Himalayan environment is and why it needs to be protected.

At first, Payal admits she was nervous about climbing all the way to Island Peak, but she wanted to prove to herself that she could do it. "Beauty queens are usually considered brainless, but I wanted to show I was different," she says.

But Payal was beginning to feel the effects of altitude: a severe headache and nausea. She had pushed herself too hard to achieve her goal, and now she took the advice of the Sherpas and immediately descended down

to Dingboche.

Payal has come a long way from winning the Little Lady Pageant in 1993 to becoming Miss Nepal, and behind the frail exterior she is a determined young woman out to prove that women can achieve anything they set their sights on. WWF is working with Payal to raise awareness about global warming and its effect on Himalayan snow cover.

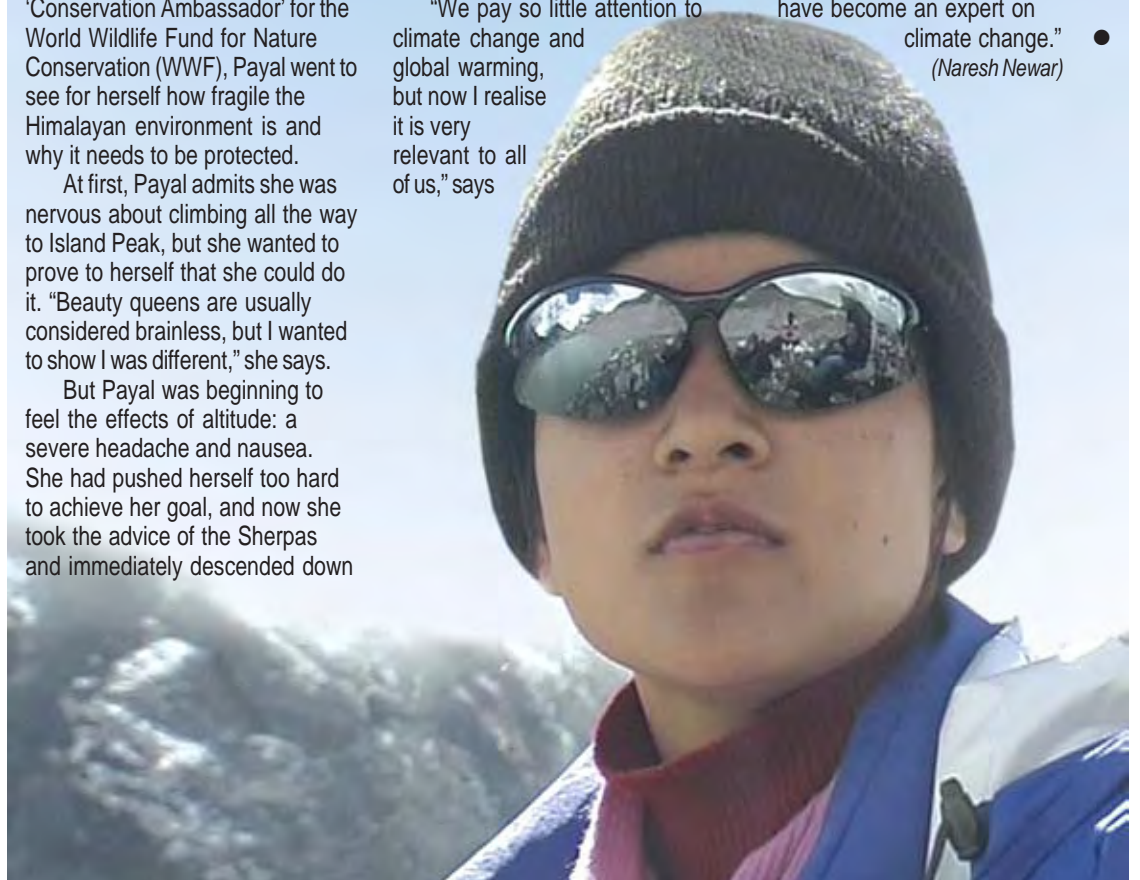
"We pay so little attention to climate change and global warming, but now I realise it is very relevant to all of us," says

Payal, "and there is nothing like being here to see how fast the glaciers are receding."

As soon as she returns to Kathmandu this week, Payal will begin preparations for participating in the Miss World pageant in China in November. She hopes someone in the jury there will ask her about global warming, and adds laughing: "I have become an expert on

climate change."

(Naresh Newar)



NARESH NEWAR

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