The peace industry

Is there a conflict of interest in the peace efforts?

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

The more elusive peace becomes, the more it seems to become an industry. Foreign conflict-resolution consultants and mediation experts are swarming all over the capital, sometimes rubbing shoulders in hotel lobbies with arms merchants.

At last count there were at least two dozen government and non-government outfits with the word ‘peace’ on them like the Peace Secretariat, High-Level Peace Committee, Civic Solidarity for Peace and Citizen’s Peace Commission.

The Americans have hired South African conflict expert Haines Siebert to advise government officials, political parties and civil society.

Britain’s DID has hired a slew of consultants for what it calls ‘mitigation of conflict effects’ and has spent 4 million pounds to promote peace. DID officials told us the money was used for “capacity building” in conflict resolution for officials, parliamentarians and civil society, research and conflict analysis and support for media.

Visiting British Minister of State Douglas Alexander, said in Kathmandu Wednesday: “Nepal’s problem should be resolved internally, and we will support such efforts.”

The Europeans hired two experts to prepare a report on conflict prevention assessment two years ago and another expert is arriving next month. The EC is releasing another report on the conflict soon.

“Everyone within and outside the country seems to be pushing their own agenda,” says a bewildered Peace Secretariat official. There is a distinct lack of urgency in the secretariat, and Information Minister Mohsin (see box) says it is setting up a ‘documentation centre’.

Actually, the Peace Secretariat is supposed to be a foundation for future peace process. Government officials are not comfortable about the formation of the Citizen’s Peace Commission, an umbrella organisation of peace groups.

“Why do you need a parallel organisation when a Peace Secretariat has already been formed?” asked one member of the High-Level Peace Committee.

Most people interviewed for this article agreed the government and the rebels are just paying lip service to negotiations. This week, the military launched a major air- borne and ground assault from Dang on Maoist strongholds in Rupakot and Rukum from Dang amidst reports of an imminent Maoist offensive in the west. Mediators are disappointed.

Krishna Jung Rayamajhi of the Civil Society Peace Commission says: “Efforts to bring the two sides together have not been encouraging, the response is distressing.”

Mohsinmism:

Is the peace secretariat just an eyewash?

It will take time for the secretariat to become fully operational. We are collecting documents for a peace archive. But we won’t wait, we will make peace overtures.

When do you expect results?

So far, we haven’t got any authentic response from the rebels for dialogue. The Dasain ceasefire was a gimmick, we are interested in a long-term resolution. Our twin mandates are to restore peace and hold elections, and we are serious about both.

But are elections possible?

If the Maoists respect the sovereign right of the people, they will allow them to vote.
The more discerning among you may have realised by now that we are a nation of animal lovers. With Pachupatinath as our patron deity, our zoological society has nothing to worry about. We shower considerable respect and devotion to our fellow creatures and this is evidenced in the way we pamper the higher mammals by allowing them free access to our national highways and street intersections. Every year, this adulation for our four-legged and feathered chums reaches a crescendo at Tihar when we set aside one day for specialised attention to each of them.

We start on Wednesday with National Crow Day to honour Yamraj’s roving ambassador and plenipotentiary. Devotees get up early in the morning and travel to the banks of the Bagmati where crows can be found perched on streetlight lamps and scavenging for food. We proceed to offer them a platter of sweetsmeats which they totally ignore because (despite its name) a sweetmeat is totally vegetarian and the crows would much rather dine on a plethora of rotting cadavers. But it’s the thought that counts, and how appropriate that at least once a year we recognise the valuable assistance that crows provide to the Kathmandu Metropolitan City as volunteer scavengers, and honour them in nationally televised ceremonies to decorate them with one of the nation’s highest civil honours, the Gorkha Dakshin Bahadur Third Class.

Thursday is when dogs are gods. This is the day we have set aside to worship man’s best friend and to reward Fido, Fuchihe and Lucky for being around when we need them most to provide us with security in these troubled times by yawning non-stop all night at everyone in general and no one in particular. But disregarding our own personal discomfort and sleep deprivation we get up at the crack of dawn on Dog Day to round up the neighbourhood dogs pack and feed them body parts of fellow animals, resisting the temptation to lace it with pulverised sleeping pills. Veneration of our nocturnal canine choir is a tradition that has been passed down to us from the ancient Egyptians who even built pyramids to immortalise dead pets. Giza has three of them: one for Fido, one for Fuchihe and one for Lucky.

Then comes Friday, which in our animal kingdom is reserved for none other than the holy cow. An indicator of the reverence we have for our national animal is the right of way we accord to them along our major thoroughfares. No other animal, not even the prime minister’s motorcade on its way to Gokarna for a much-needed vacation to read up on the constitution, has as much priority as the city’s urban cattle population. In fact, the prime ministerial motorcade had to make a slight detour into the sidewalk this week when a bovine traffic island at Jorpati refused to budge despite blaring sirens and commandos wielding Uzis. On Friday, let us show our cows that we care by putting an immediate stop to all this ballistic.

In conclusion, on behalf of all the animals who feel left out this Tihar, let me assure them that they are not forgotten. Ours is an inclusive democracy in which all animals have the right to have their day of recognition. So from next year’s Tihar, by royal ordinance, we shall also mark Musa Tihar, House Fly Day, the Day of the Vultures and the National Day for Monkeying Around.
Ballots, not bullets

When (or if) elections are ever held in Nepal, the country can tap the experience of dozens of Nepalis who have organised smooth polls in the world’s hotspots.

The latest is Afghanistan, where four out of eight provincial coordinators for the recently held elections were Nepalis working for the United Nations. Despite the killing of several voter registration officials, intimidation by militants and the threat of violence on election day, Afghans flocked to the polling stations. There was nearly 90 percent turnout, and the biggest surprise was that women came out to vote in droves.

Naresh Bhatta, who was provincial coordinator for the western province of Herat, was in the UN compound when it was attacked and set on fire on 10 September. Bhatta (photographed) lost all his belongings and records, but still managed to conduct the polls successfully.

“We had planned it very well,” says Bhatta, who is in Kathmandu for the holidays. “We divided up the constituencies into sensitive and non-sensitive and just tried to foresee every eventuality.”

The other Nepal provincial coordinators are Subhadrayak Shah, who looked after Kabul, Hari Prasad in Mazar-e-Sharif and Neel Kantha Upadhyay in Jalalabad. The only other serious incident took place after the elections were held and Hamid Karzai was declared winner when three UN staff were kidnapped in broad daylight from a Kabul street. They have still not been released.

Bhatta says the western province of Herat is “more remote than Humla” and conducting elections there was the most challenging thing he has ever done in his life. That means something because Bhatta has previously helped organise elections in East Timor, Cambodia and Kosovo. He will now be going to Iraq.

“Nepals used to be known for their bravery in battle, they are now known in the UN system as people who can administer and manage countries in transitions to democracy,” says Bhatta. The inevitable question: how about Nepal?

Bhatta says elections in Nepal can be held, if just needs to be planned right and there has to be integrity and political will. And he is willing to help if asked.

He adds: “We have to solve it with the ballot, not the bullet.”

When the United Nations to the women's role, the UN leaders praised the women's courage and resilience. The women were praised for their courage in voting, even in the face of danger. The UN leaders said that the women's courage was an inspiration to other women around the world.

The vote in Afghanistan was a significant moment in the country's history. The vote was the first in which women were allowed to vote, and the turnout was high. The vote was seen as a sign of progress and hope for the country's future.

However, there were also challenges. The vote was marred by violence and intimidation, with militants attempting to prevent people from voting. Despite these challenges, the vote was a success, and it was hailed as a significant milestone in the country's history.

The vote in Afghanistan was a significant moment in the country's history. The vote was the first in which women were allowed to vote, and the turnout was high. The vote was seen as a sign of progress and hope for the country's future.

However, there were also challenges. The vote was marred by violence and intimidation, with militants attempting to prevent people from voting. Despite these challenges, the vote was a success, and it was hailed as a significant milestone in the country's history.

The vote in Afghanistan was a significant moment in the country's history. The vote was the first in which women were allowed to vote, and the turnout was high. The vote was seen as a sign of progress and hope for the country's future.

However, there were also challenges. The vote was marred by violence and intimidation, with militants attempting to prevent people from voting. Despite these challenges, the vote was a success, and it was hailed as a significant milestone in the country's history.
History gave Yasir Arafat far more time than most leaders to achieve his mission. After all, as he fought for his life in a Paris hospital, he had been leader of the Palestinians for 35 years. Yet he left his people in a terrible situation, with no state, in the midst of a long war and with a bankrupt economy.

Comment

Barry Rubin

Looking back at his career, Arafat never really reaped from the belief that his life’s mission was to destroy Israel by any means necessary and replace it with a Palestinian Arab state. An independent Palestine that did not include all of Israel boded no appeal to him. Now, in the post-Arafat era, Palestinians must choose one of several strategies.

The moderate strategy seeks an independent Palestinian state as quickly as possible on the assumption that once there is no more Israeli presence or violence, the Palestinians can concentrate on constructive pursuits, including resettling refugees and improving living standards. But this is the view of only a small minority of leaders, notably former Prime Minister Abu Mazin and Mohammed Dahlan, who heads his own militia in the Gaza Strip.

The hard-line strategy is the traditional ideological approach championed by many Fatah and PLO veterans who returned from exile to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including Arafat. Their current leaders include men like Palestinian National Council head Salam al-Za’ran and Fatah ideological chief Sakh Habsak, who favour continuing to battle Israel until it is destroyed, at which point they will rule Palestine with a relatively secular nationalist regime. They look down at younger challengers and view the Israelis as a threat.

The younger generation of indigenous West Bank Palestinians, whose leaders began political activity in the uprising of the late 1970’s, embrace a militant strategy that views hardliners as burned-out old fogs enervated by corruption. Unlike hard-line secularists, the militants, whose best-known leader is Marwan Barghuti, the head of the Tanzim grassroots group in Fatah, are willing to work with the Israelis.

The militants argue that long-term continuation of violence will force Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories. Then, with Palestinians gaining the upper hand, they can conquer all of Israel.

Finally, there is the revolutionary Islamism espoused by Hamas, which seeks to continue fighting and using terrorism, regardless of how much time it takes till it defeats both Israel and Palestinian secular nationalists. Palestine will then be an Islamist state in which moderates would be shot and the old nationalist leadership forcibly retired or jailed for corruption. In the meantime, however, Hamas is willing to form alliances with the nationalists, particularly the militant faction of Fatah.

The problem for Palestinian moderates is clear: any leader willing to agree to a peace treaty with Israel would be opposed, passionately and even violently, by roughly 80 percent of the movement. A key question is: whether the Palestinian masses, fed up with their leadership’s bickering, corruption, and ineffectiveness, would make their wishes known to find an end to a conflict that has cost them so much. But none of the main leadership factions are proposing that the masses be consulted very much. Nor did Arafat leave in place any institutional mechanisms for doing so.

Moreover, the popular appeal of radical religion, ideology, and misinformation should not be underestimated. Few Palestinians are even aware that four years ago, Arafat turned down an independent state equal in size to the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip, in addition to more than 200,000 refugees and refugees compensation.

The main problem left by Arafat is the lack of any leadership at all. Rarely in history has a political movement been so deliberately set by its founder on a course toward chaos. Arafat not only leaves no successor but no order. Over the decades, the movement has developed a political culture of insubordination. Arafat presided over a sort of anarchy, encouraging or supporting undermining other potential leaders and ensuring that all authority (and money) ran through his hands.

Only if the post-Arafat movement decides that it really wants a Palestinian state in exchange for ending the conflict will there be a real chance for peace. Arafat’s departure may well mark the beginning of that process, but the transition to a new Palestinian leadership could take years and there is no assurance that it will be a moderate one.

(End of Report/Syndicate)

Barry Rubin is director of the Global Research Institute in New York City and co-author of ‘Yasir Arafat: A Political Biography’

Shining Path movement, and Elena Piquemal, his cellmate and lover, raise their arms on 5 November during the first day of his trial in Cusco, Peru.

The 69-year-old founder of Peru’s Maoist Shining Path terrorist movement, Abimael Guzman, faced a civilian court last week for the first time since he was arrested in 1992.

Guzman and his co-defendants brought the hearing to a halt when they stood and faced media cameras with raised fists. ‘Long live the Communist party!’ they chanted.

‘Globo to the Peruvian people! Glory to Manumis, Leninism, Maoism!’ Guzman’s Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) movement envisioned a classless utopia and included 73,000 people killed in the 20-year insurgency he launched in 1980. The vast majority were killed by the government or between rebels and the military crackdown.

The proceedings were stopped and cameras cleaned from the courtroom on 5 November. A philosophy professor at the University of Huamanga in Peru’s altiplano town of Ayacucho, Guzman believed that only a Maost doctrine could rid Peru of its feudal elites.

‘He has no regrets for what occurred,’ said Carlos Tapia, a former member of Commission for Truth and Reconciliation who has interviewed Guzman more than a dozen times in the past two years. ‘He feels the acts committed were justified because it was a war.’

Guzman presided over the bloody rebel takeover of his highland village in the Ancash region more than 12 years ago.

Weeks later, a group of soldiers descended on the town and shot Guzman in the eye when he tried to stop them from taking away his son, Epifanio, as a suspected guerrilla. While Guzman survived, his son was taken and he has not seen him since.

‘I want justice,’ said Cruz, now 54. ‘The trial is the first step towards truth.’

In the early 1990s, then-president Alberto Fujimori succeeded in passing laws to strengthen the trial process against suspected terrorists. Cases were referred to a military court presided over by hooded judges and closed to the public. Hundreds of suspects were found guilty and imprisoned, including Guzman, who was convicted of treason in 1993 and has been incarcerated since at his naval base just outside Lima.

Peru’s Constitutional Tribunal ruled his trial unconstitutional last year and overturned the conviction.

Under Peruvian law, Guzman can be held for three years as long as a new trial is held within that amount of time. To avoid having to release him in 2006, the government must secure a conviction in a public trial, and Guzman is being tried along with 17 other Shining Path leaders whose convictions were also overturned.

While there is little chance Guzman will be freed, Peruvian authorities are concerned he is trying to reorganise Shining Path to resume the armed conflict.

Colonel Benedicto Jimenez, a former leader of the national police anti-terrorism unit and the man who led the team that captured Guzman, said the prisoner has been sending orders in coded messages to his followers. Jimenez said he thinks Guzman may use the trial to reorganise his movement politically while several hundred of its large compatriots continue the military struggle, mainly from jungle bases.

Last year, a monitoring group, the Council for Peace, estimated there were approximately 730 Shining Path adherents still at work in remote areas. There have been numerous clashes with authorities in the past 18 months, particularly in Ayacucho.

Peru Interior Minister Javier Restegui has said there is also concern Shining Path is trying to infiltrate the education system, a tactic Guzman used in the 1970s to gain adherents and financing for his revolution. Steve Stern, a US-based expert on the group, said the danger exists it will return, but it could repeat the devastation of the late 1980s and early 1990s. ‘As an organised political machine, it is finished,’ he said. ‘But there is still the danger it can create a great deal of chaos.’

"Yasir Arafat leaves a vacuum and the absence of a viable successor to his leadership..."
and women’s rights activists. Wearing a leather jacket, red scarf and a gun on her waist, Bhushal is campaigning against Mohan Singh Bikrani, leader of United Centre-Masal. Not many know about Bhushal’s position in the party. Because she was involved in a scandal about her relationship with senior politician mentor Budaal, which is why she was unable to occupy a higher position in the Maoist party. “Finally, I am able to meet you all,” Bhushal says to the women activists of local NGOs. “It’s wartime and we need to move.” A few hours later, she walks off with Battalion 20 escorted by a female bodyguard. “It takes two hours to walk up that hill. Why don’t you come up with us?” Bhushal asks me but I refuse and she quietly treks up the hill munching packet of noodles. This is her fourth public appearance after going underground for over seven years.

Revere parliament

Nilambar Acharya in Kathmandu, 4 November

The pro-palace component in the government talks about elections. This is just a smokescreen to continue to obstruct the implementation of the constitution. The pro-monarchy side of the Maoists advocates a constituent assembly. This too, is nothing more than a word game. Both sides know that there will be no election or constituent assembly without peace talks. In fact, the royalists do not want elections and the followers of Prachandapath are not for constituent assembly. Both want the state power system. If any of them win or strike a deal for power sharing, the possibility of the country holding a democratic election either for the parliament or the constituent assembly is nil. How can we expect peace, democracy and the restoration of the people’s power from both forces under such circumstances?

Both know that without proper implementation of the constitution, talks will not take place. Followers of Prachandapath say, “We do not support the idea of reinstating parliament, we will not allow elections to take place and will not speak to any nominated government.” Royalists say, “We will not allow the reinstatement of parliament and we will not revive the constitution.”

Like the Prachandapath followers, they have been harping about being flexible for talks. One party says it is ready to talk on anything but multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy. The other claims to be revolutionarily representing the people but is not ready to reactiviate the constitution. Whatever kind of flexibility is this? How can talks be held and between whom? And, more importantly, how will they bring peace?

The prime minister has repeatedly said on state-run television that the House of Representatives can’t be reinstated because of the verdict of the Supreme Court. A group that is pro-military, royalist and propaganda and another that belongs to the Maoist camp have both been taking undue support of the apex court’s verdict. The Supreme Court has found it difficult to guard its own integrity in the absence of parliament since the Robinson episode. It has remained silent even when official agencies have wrongly pointed out that after the Supreme Court’s verdict it has become difficult to bring the constitution back on track. Should it not have contended that there was never a decision saying the House of Representatives can’t be reinstated? Even if it deems that such a decision of its integrity is unnecessary, it should have reverted to judicial activism.

If the Supreme Court can’t take a stand at a time when the derailed constitutional process needs to be normalised for peace, then what? For the rest of the political spectrum, the question is not whether parliament can be reinstated. It is whether the hurdles to implementing constitutional provisions will lessen or increase after the reinstatement of the House. Will the House be able to actually meet if reactivated? If it can, should it be made to decide the solution to the present conflict? Should democratic normalisation be allowed? The parliament is a meeting point among political parties, government and the people, between people’s representatives and the king. Such contacts are the need of the hour, whether for peace, amendment of the old constitution, or for drafting a new one.

We hear about the need for unity among constitutional forces, more so between the king, government and parties. Only when all provisions of the constitution begin to function normally can one believe that the derailed constitutional process needs to be normalised for peace, when will it? For the rest of the political spectrum, the question is not whether parliament can be reinstated. It is whether the hurdles to implementing constitutional provisions will lessen or increase after the reinstatement of the House.
Taxed to death

Sharad KC in Surkhet

S
urkhet’s businessmen are forced to register with the Maoists and pay taxes to both government every business with a monthly turnover of Rs 100,000. The local deputy chief of the rebels says Surkhet businessmen are paying anywhere between Rs 25-Rs 5,000 a month.

For Maoist land registration, people are supposed to go further up the road to Babyanchaur. The Maoists also have their own vehicle registration done in Ramnath and Mehdakuwa in Surkhet.

CDO Tilkaram Sharma admits he knows about the Maoist taxes, but his administration can do little to stop it. Chairman of the Surkhet Association of Industry and Commerce Tek Bahadur Bhaduri says no one dared to defy the Maoist order to register.

“The villagers know the Maoist rule and they make sure that they buy things only from shops and business houses that have registered with them,” says Tulshiram Upadhyay of Maya Plastic and Suppliers in Birrendranagar. “It makes it necessary for us to register with the Maoists.”

Bus operators face the same problem. The chairman of the Association of Bus Operators in the district is Home Minister Purna Bahadur Khadka’s brother, and even he would not be able to plly his buses without paying off the Maoists. However, when asked he did not wish to comment.

Local businessmen seem happy with the Maoist efficiency. They have also been fed up of extortion from people pretending to be Maoists, and this way they are safe. “Now we just pay once a month, we don’t get harassed by pretend Maoists,” he says.

All this used to happen in Maoist base areas. With the registration in Surkhet, the Maoists seem to be testing their reach in government areas as well. After King Gyenundera’s recent visit, all government offices are being shifted from Nepalgunj to Surkhet, and this is the Maoists’ way of thumping their noses at the state.

Ambushed child

Nanda Buda, one-year-old, trolled on the bloody floor to wake her mother Bidra. She was hungry. But her mother was dead, killed by a Maoist booby trap in their village in Humla. Bidra was killed instantly while her daughter survived. Her husband Jay Chandra recounts finding his wife and how he collapsed on seeing her dead. The Maoists tried to kidnap Nanda but Jay Chandra woke up and stopped them. “We are not going with you. I have lost my wife and don’t want to lose my daughter too,” Jay Chandra recalls telling them. “The rebels forced him to leave the village.” Today, he and his three young daughters are living in Surkhet with hundreds of other refugees from Humla. “So many reporters have come and I have told them my story, but no one has helped,” says Jay Chandra.

Mourning in Dasain

While Home Minister Puma Bahadur Khadka celebrated ifa at his home in Surkhet, dozens of displaced villagers from Mugu and Jumla were living in tents nearby. They had no food and were begging from house to house. “What Dasain are you talking about when we don’t have shelter or food to eat?” a frail looking Chandra Buda asked. “We aren’t celebrating anything.” About 200 villagers from the two districts are now living in the open here and more are coming since the Maoists intensified their ‘join us or leave your homes’ campaign. Most victims were subsistence farmers. The Surkhet district administration says it doesn’t have money to take care of them.

Minister Khadka drove to them in a line of escort cars and assured them the government would fly them back to their homes in a helicopter and spend away leaving the bewildered refugees in tears.

The Maoist checkpoint at Baddichaur of Surkhet

Maoists, and take provisions and goods up to their areas unless it has been bought in a registered shop, and this is an added reason why everyone has registered.

“The villagers know the Maoist rule and they make sure that they buy things only from traders now pay two taxes: one to the government and the other to the Maoists. Thirty km outside town in Baddichaur (which the rebels have renamed ‘Himal Municipality’) is the Maoist contact office for surkhet businessmen to pay their revolutionary tax, for people who need Maoist ‘visas’ to travel to Jumla, Kalikot, Archham and Daiikh. Those travelling without visas have to face interrogations and are sent to labour camps to dig tunnels.

When the rebels began registering businesses in the district on 17 September, businessmen gathered at Baddichaur. The rebels had issued a notice saying no one was allowed to run a business without registering with the ‘new regime’. As a result, 1,100 businessmen in Surkhet have registered, whereas only 900 businesses have been registered with the Surkhet Association of Industry and Commerce.

Tax collection is more than the government’s revenue department. It is amazing what the fear of the gun can do.

Businessmen are supposed to pay their Maoist tax by the fifth of every Nepali month. There is a flat rate of Rs 100 a month for a

Ambushed child

Nanda Buda, one-year-old, trolled on the bloody floor to wake her mother Bidra. She was hungry. But her mother was dead, killed by a Maoist booby trap in their village in Humla. Bidra was killed instantly while her daughter survived. Her husband Jay Chandra recounts finding his wife and how he collapsed on seeing her dead. The Maoists tried to kidnap Nanda but Jay Chandra woke up and stopped them. “We are not going with you. I have lost my wife and don’t want to lose my daughter too,” Jay Chandra recalls telling them. “The rebels forced him to leave the village.” Today, he and his three young daughters are living in Surkhet with hundreds of other refugees from Humla. “So many reporters have come and I have told them my story, but no one has helped,” says Jay Chandra.
FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

What are left of our traditions are becoming hollow rituals of an ersatz civilization. The original function of harvest festivals, the celebration of plenty and family bonding have given way to trivial give-and-take of the marketplace. Dasi and Tihar are the only days in the year when government-sanctioned bands have a brief respite. There is a curfew for bhaiyo and deusi; and defying a firecracker ban the Maalsi blew up the first floor of the Sanchaya Kosh Building on Tuesday. Aside from the bubble of the capital valley and a few cities, the festivals have lost their luster. The people are in no mood to celebrate.

Still, Tihar is also a celebration of sibling reunion. A chance for sisters and brothers scattered by conflict to get together at least in their hearts. And an opportunity this weekend to look beyond the family to all Nepalis as our own sisters and brothers.

It is in these times of murky gloom that we inevitably take comfort in symbolism: the terracotta cup in which we pour mustard oil, dip the wick and light a lamp. It will burn all week of comfort in symbolism: the terracotta cup in which we pour.

Weekend to look beyond the family to all Nepalis as our own sisters and brothers.

Sisters and brothers.

In this time, this is the least we can do to bring some hope and cheer to the people.

And as a reflection of the times, new Nepali Soul is emerging. Soul was the musical outsourcing of American blacks forced to cities of the North and represented the distress of displacement. It sings of suffering, separation, loss of hope, bereavement, and melancholy with occasional self-mockery. People uprooted from their homes for reasons beyond their control find comfort in songs of love and longing.

Unprecedented numbers of Nepalis have been displaced from their places of birth in the last decade. It is the biggest involuntary migration in Nepali history. And they have taken to Nepali Soul to find their moorings.

The Nepali Diaspora audience craves with the sound of rhythm and blues and goes ecstatic with 1974 AD’s Jepp Je bhanu janai baijan jai malai. Yo maan ta meen Nepali bai. The logic of the success of this song is simple: play it on your car sound system with a Nepali Ilag sticker while you drive on endless expressways of an alien land to assert your belongingness to a faraway home.

The Nepali Diaspora is lapping up music from home like never before. It’s not just established names like Nepathyu and 1974 AD performing in front of home sick comptarios, even greenhorn musicians talk about the overseas market as a separate category altogether. Nepali singers regularly go on diaspora tours. Bahin Pradhan, Yam Baral, Naya Bajracarya and Raju Thalugahar entertained a Nepali crowd of around 500 in Woolwich Public Hall in East London recently after a successful UK tour. Imagine a Nepali guard in Iraq listening to Ram Krishna Dhakal sing Bikoona utthare bitthikai bhoon dikhala paainye. Last week, Deepak Bajracarya became the first Nepali singer to be net-cast directly from his studio in Kathmandu.

More are sure to follow in his footsteps. Meanwhile, the local audience in Nepal is swooning to an emotive mixture of rock, jazz, disco, and folk—the fusion of it all that makes the Nepali Soul.

We have not seen Ram Bajrangi and Bhadra koyjumto ma will make you long for the place. These songs celebrate the Pashupatinath remembrance of things past.

Till a few years ago, very few listeners bought Maithili cassettes. Now Rupa Jha and Rama Manjhi have become such familiar names in Janakpur and Rajbiraj, and few remember Udit Naneyan Jha’s early Maithili renditions for Radio Nepal. Rupa Jha’s Chaita haisahe ko parnau chhunis of gender bias rampant in Mahila and doesn’t fail to bring tears even to growing eyes.

This year, play-time for desai and bhalo have been severely curtailed by the administration, but keep your ears tuned for the fresh. rendering Rato mato, chipilo bato sung to the tune of Buffalo Soldiers.

Singing of love and longing

Displacement and diaspora have set off a burst of creativity in Nepali music
ROYAL TUKA
I was taken aback to read ‘Royal tika’ that you translated from Jana Astha (K20). It is utterly ridiculous blackmailing police officers for not attending the Dasain royal tika. One can’t be forced to attend, people should attend out of their own free-will. Why should absent officers be asked to furnish an explanation for not attending? If it is compulsion then this signifies that there is oppression. Even more astounding was the revelation that officers who didn’t go to the palace may be penalised by not getting promotions and being transferred. Do promotions depend upon the duly, valor, discipline of the officer or on sycophancy?
Milan Gurung, email

BUSHWACKED
Daniel Lak’s Here and There column ‘It’s over’ (#220) is much appreciated. Unlike most Kerry supporters in Nepal his reaction is tempered with wisdom. Depressed Kerry wailahts in Nepal are arguing that 55 million people did not vote for Bush, and he has no mandate. America is doomed, the world is doomed. Even your editorial ‘Bushwhacked’, (#219) that wanted America is doomed, the world is doomed. Eighty percent of Nepalis to vote in US elections is sour grapes. Eighty percent of Nepalis who have returned from the US are Kerry supporters and they point out that we are stupid and at least Kerry followers that the American people are becoming the next president. Stupid and at least Kerry followers that the American people are becoming the next president. Saddam Hussein’s reaction to the current political situation in Nepal, it is laughable that you think Americans are ‘bamboozling their way with petty minded insensitivity’. Unfortunately your paper gives a one-sided view of such results lead to fallacious interpretation because it could be the result of a biased question. Why not? Elsewhere in the poll questions is that the answers like ‘corruption’, ‘poverty’, ‘jobs’, ‘dictatorship’, ‘suffering a weak president who can’t give us leadership for changes’, Bush built his victory on a coalition of fear and religious bigotry. When the economy stirs, the moral contradictions of his position emerge, and his wars appear increasingly ‘un-winnable’ that coalition will fragment. Over 50 million of us have the luxury of a clear, unencumbered moral position. Be patient, work hard. His recent win hands us a clear opportunity for real sustainable victory. Marcus Moench, USA

FEDIX
This is to clarify the incident described in ‘Spinal conference in Nepal’ (#20). An emergency medical kit sent through Federal Express USA four years ago did not arrive on time in Kathmandu due to the problems of using a courier service to transfer a medical item. Federal Express did not have any authorised service provider in Nepal during that time. However, Mr RM Singh of Everest Express USA four years ago did not make it scientifically. It is not enough to be scientifically. It is not enough to be satisfied with a methodology which quantifies respondents, we have to be clear how and where those respondents were chosen, how they were interviewed and by whom. Each enumerator in the Himalmedia Pol (‘Yes and no’, #218) seems to have spent 10 hours a day interviewing respondents, which is too long for accurate data collection. Only 40 percent of the respondents are women, which is below the central government’s projection of 48 percent females. The poll lists don’t ‘know’ and can’t say in one category even though it mean completely different things. Another weakness of the poll questions is that the possible answers to questions can have multiple interpretations. You can’t have socio-economic answers like ‘corruption’, ‘poverty’, ‘jobs’ and be asked with political answers like ‘Maoists’, ‘king’ or ‘NC’. It is like comparing apples and oranges and doesn’t aid clarity in the responses. And in the question ‘What is a meaningful solution to the Maoist crisis?’ the choice of answers include ‘talks’, ‘coalition government’, ‘all-party government’, ‘reform’ constitutional amendment’, ‘UN intervention’, ‘military suppression’, ‘reviving parliament’, ‘Indian role’ and ‘other’. These answers don’t include ‘king’s role’. Why not? Elsewhere in the question ‘Can the king do anything to resolve the crisis?’ If you do not get a generic answer like ‘Can the king do anything to resolve the crisis?’ or ‘How can the king resolve the crisis?’ which leads to understanding the crucial role of the king. There are other biased questions like ‘Who is actually ruling the country?’ in which 49 percent said the king. The question after that is ‘Are you satisfied with the current government?’ to which 68 percent said ‘yes’ and 27 percent said ‘no’. These are pre-emptive questions which nudge respondents to furnish preconceived answers. Analysis of such results lead to fallacious interpretation. How they got the results is like ‘Can lead us to conclude that 83 percent of the people are not happy with the king’s role’. This should be a supplementary question: ‘Are you happy or unhappy and why?’ You conclude that the respondents in Kathmandu Valley are confused, whereas in actual fact it shows your poll design is ‘bias ridden’.
Sudhindra Sharma and Pawan Kumar Sen, Kathmandu

LETTERS
NARESH NEWAR

T
his is their last week here. The US Peace Corps is packing up to leave Nepal after nearly 42 years of service. Only a handful of senior managers are busy emptying their offices. The library, artistically designed by the volunteers, is now a cold empty room. On the top floor, a large number of Nepali personnel are attending the employment-counselling program for job prospects in other organisations. Several have worked here for nearly three decades certain that the most dedicated American social organisation in Nepal would never close down.

Training officer Sherry Russell looks sadly at Maharajgunj from the Rana mansion behind the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where the US Peace Corps moved two years ago. “I’m going to miss all this,” she says with a sigh.

The organisation does not want to lose the building and is now planning to lease it out to other organisations so that the newly decorated office with its well-designed furniture and beautifully painted walls will not go to waste.

“This is not the end of our era but just a suspension, we’ll definitely come back once there’s peace in the country,” Peace Corps’ country director David O’Connor says, more to reassure himself. “The suspension of the program was very difficult to experience but now all of us understand this was necessary.”

The organisation was concerned not just about the Americans but also the safety of their Nepali staff, who might get into trouble if they continued working with an American program. Most of them have to work with communities in remote villages where the Maoists have declared war on “American imperialism.”

Some NGO partners of the Peace Corps received threats from Maoists and American volunteers were beginning to feel the pressure although they knew the rebels had not hurt foreign nationals. Until a month ago, about 84 American volunteers ranging from teenagers to 60-year-olds were working in Nepal. After the blast at the American Centre in Kathmandu on 10 September, the US Embassy in Kathmandu told family members of the diplomatic staff they could leave if they wanted to and said the Peace Corps was being suspended for six months. Although the advisory on family members was lifted last week, the Peace Corps pullout stands.

After the suspension of the program, the volunteers went to Bangkok for a conference to relocate in other developing nations around the world. Unable to cope with the thought of leaving Nepal for good, each of them wrote their wishes on a large Nepali lokta paper and dispatched it back to Nepal. Their office took the hundreds of wishes to Kathmandu’s most significant monasteries and temples. The paper of wishes remained unopened.

During the Bangkok conference all they wished for was peace in Nepal and the return of the US Peace Corps to the kingdom. Senior lamas at Swayambhunath and Boudha blessed the volunteers.

Leaving in droves

After the Bush victory, liberal Americans want to emigrate

Daniel Lak

MEXICO — Amid the triumphant scenes on the right of American politics, liberal gloom and angst is as thick as London fog. These people thought that George W. Bush might actually pay for what they saw as his incompetence, arrogance and apparent inability to do more than one thing at a time. They were wrong, and now they’re depressed.

So depressed actually, that many are thinking of moving. That’s right. American liberals, some of whom give champagne socialism a whole new cachet, want out. In Canada, my native land, immigration websites are swamped with queries from Boston, Berkeley, Greenwich Village and Seattle. Some wag rewrites the map of North America; rethinking the ‘Red State-Blue State’ divide and encompassing Canada.

As for my American friends, and I have many, it’s not so easy. Canada doesn’t need liberal-media–literary–academic–leftist types. The place is already awash with the native born variety. Those immigration websites advise that doctors, engineers, welders, plumbers and carpenters are most welcome to become beaver-loving denizens of the Dominion of Canada. Journalists can only visit.

So in a spirit of trans-continental charity, I offer some suggestions to the depressed left in the US, those too offended by the Bush victory to stay behind and fight for Hillary Clinton in 2008. There are other places you may be useful, other islands of sanity that will welcome you and your wise cellar.

Well, for a start, what about Nepal? I mean, come on. This country needs rich foreign investors, right? People with ready cash to build homes, employ people, start factories and generally push ideas of communism, development and peace. Mind you, perhaps not. For one thing, I’m sure that our existing exact population, some of them anyway, wouldn’t be too welcoming. It’s a limited patch and as I found to my surprise when I lived in this fair land, outsiders are welcome in Nepali homes, not so among the hierarchical long-term expatriates. You who are exceptions, you know I know who you are, if you know what I mean.

Other places for our distraught US liberals then... How about Nauru? I can hear the Nepali Times drop to the floor from here as readers rush for an atlas. Just to help pinpoint it, Nauru is in the southwestern Pacific, but it’s too small to appear on most maps. But it’s there, and it needs help.

Nauru is a country, a circular island about 16 km in circumference, and it used to be made from bird poo. That’s right. Guano, phosphate rich sandali dung, many metres thick, coated the coral reefs of Nauru until the place was a gold mine for Australian mining companies. Apparently it’s good for the garden. Anyway, Nauru is out of bird poo and it’s going nowhere last. American liberals would be welcome to join the local pastime of driving around in circles, drinking Foster’s Lager and bemoaning the fact that seagulls don’t shit here anymore.

Various Central American countries are used to playing host to US citizens fleeing something back home—in the past, taxes, spouses, drug charges or life or its own self. Add to that list, Republican ascendancy and you’ve got a place to run to. Then there’s Mauritius, Dominica, Sao Tome and Principe, Uruguay and New Caledonia. All need the right kind of new citizen. My travel agency for disgruntled liberals is about to take off big time. But then again, maybe people should just hang on for four years and keep fighting the good fight. I suspect most will. Nauru and Nepal may be worse off, but America needs you more.
PRAYERS IN THE WIND: Tiny scrolls of Nepali paper bearing messages from the Peace Corps Volunteers flutter in the wind at Bouddha (Left) and Peace Corps Nepal director is blessed by a Hindu priest at a ceremony closing his office recently.

the letters. Hindu rituals were organised at Pasupatinath and at the Peace Corps office where priests blessed the letters before casting them into the holy Bagmati.

“The Volunteers had a very strong bond with Nepal. Many of them had close affinity with Nepali culture and traditions. They were all living with Nepali families,” recalls Russell. Leaving their host families was the most difficult part. Some of the volunteers had been in Nepal barely two months and more than 15 of them returned to Nepal to meet the families again and bid them a final farewell. Some volunteers are so attached to Nepal they decided not to leave the country and are looking for jobs here.

The US Peace Corps closes its chapter in Nepal on 19 November. After this, there will be no trace left of the institution that served Nepal for nearly half a century. Unlike most foreign organisations, the Peace Corps were representative of volunteers living a simple life without posh office rooms or lavish residences. Most of them were based in remote villages and poor urban areas to help communities improve their status in health, education, sanitation, forest conservation and more.

D’Gommer, himself a Peace Corps volunteer in Ilam from 1967-69, looks lost. “I don’t know where I’ll be sent, but one thing I know for sure is that I am going to miss Nepal very much.”

(See also: Nepal Pan. End of an era, #216 and Peace Corps Pull out, #214)

---

MAOISTS NEED BREATHING EXERCISES

The Maoists may want a ceasefire for breathing space, but an Indian guru says they need breathing exercises to control their anger.

Ravi Shankar, the 66-year-old founder of the Art of Living Foundation in India, who was in Nepal last week says he can make the Maoists give up violence with his meditation and breathing techniques.

The hirsute guru preaches conquering anger and other negative emotions through philanthropy and breathing practices, and was in Nepal on a three-day visit to spread the “message of love and harmony”.

“People who join militant movements usually harbour great stress and fear, which impede thinking and forgiving,” Ravi Shankar told followers in Birganj. “Revenge becomes the dominant theme in their lives.”

The Indo-Asian News Service quotes Ravi Shankar as saying: “But inside every culprit there is a victim crying for help. So when the victim is helped, the culprit disappears.”

The Indian sage said his breathing techniques help calm passions and make people think positive thoughts, and it has worked with suspected al Qaeda detainees in Mumbai. The Nepal chapter of the Art of Living Foundation conducts courses for prisoners in Nahkhu.

NATIONAL AGENDA

More than 1,000 participants from all over the country attended a two-day conference in Kathmandu on ‘People’s Initiative for Future’. The focus was to pressure the warring sides in the conflict towards a negotiated settlement.

Twenty-parallel workshops and two plenaries were held on constitution making, restructuring of the state, internal democracy in political parties, monarchy, natural resources, dalits, women, madhesi, regional disparity and political economy of conflict. Participants decided to form citizen’s pressure group for negotiation in all districts by 10 December. Human Rights Day. Peace rallies will be organised throughout the country during Martyr’s Week in January 2005. A massive rally will be held in Kathmandu on Democracy Day, 18 February.

WHY PEOPLE FALL

The Fourth Asian Spinal Cord Network Conference this week looked at why people fall in Nepal. Because of the country’s terrain and subsistence livelihood, Nepal suffers excessively from spinal injury related to falls from heights. Eighty international experts and Nepali neurosurgeons, public health experts, nursing specialists, physiotherapists took part. Dr Upendra Devkota delivered a lecture on innovations in spinal injury treatment carried out in Bir Hospital. “This conference is an opportunity for us to learn about latest developments in spinal injury treatment and rehabilitation so we can enhance services,” said Esha Thapa, director of the Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre, organiser of the event.

---

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) invites applications from qualified persons for the position of SENIOR EDITOR

- Post-graduate or equivalent academic background with grounding in the social or natural sciences
- 6-8 years experience in editing of technical and scientific materials
- Ability to work across a wide-range of specialist subject areas and respond sympathetically to the needs of authors from a diverse multicultural background
- Proven, fluent command of written scientific English, proven editorial skills with commensurate experience with the ability to vary language complexity to suit the needs of a range of audiences

Further information on the vacancy including Terms of Reference for the post can be found at www.icimod.org or can be requested from the address below. Applications with complete curriculum vitae together with the names and contact addresses of three referees should be sent to the following address by 30 November 2004. Qualified women and minority applications are strongly encouraged.

Personnel Officer, ICIMOD, GPO Box 3226, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: (00977-1) 5525313; Fax: (00977-1) 5524509 / 5536747
e-mail: admin@icimod.org.np

---

WOOD CRAFT

3rd Custom-Designed Furniture & Interior Works
Unit No. 17, Ramshahi Panche, Kathmandu
Ph: 5524534; Telex: 4271492
Mobile: 98510; 912732
Email: kekapalde@gmail.com.np

with 1/4 moisturiser makes your skin soft and smooth
The serenity and beauty of Humla belies the hard life of Nepal's most remote district which has been made even more harsh by the insurgency.

A mule train arrives from the Chinese border carrying food items, two traders stop by to chat. The 62 km Simikot-Hitia road would make things easier, but construction has stopped because of Maoist threats. Pilgrims travel along the trail to holy Mt Kalash and Mamsarab in Tibet, paying a Maoist tax of $100 for each foreigner and Rs 300 for Indians. Nepal has to pay Rs 200, and even porters are taxied. Even then more than 800 pilgrims have taken the route this year, from only 107 last year.

Many Humlis have been either forced out of their villages, or have fled after the rebels started a drive to recruit one person from every household. "It's been six months since I left my family in the village, who knows, it might be another six years since I see them again," says a villager who has been married just one year. He is sitting in Simikot to take a helicopter out. This is the only way to get in and out of Humla now, since the Maoists don't permit travelers to walk the trails to the south.

But the Humlis have fierce pride, a can-do attitude that comes from the daily struggle to survive in a hard land. Despite the hardships, they are quick to smile and villagers still easily overcome fear of strangers to show visitors around.

"It is not charity we Humlis want," says former CDC chairman, Jivan Bahadur Shah. "We want education and jobs so we can take care of ourselves. And most of all we want peace." *(Sujata Panta in Humla)*

---

**We don’t want charity**

---

**Lawful error**

Nepal's Maoists consider themselves outsiders and do not adhere to the laws of the land. But a document has just come to light in which the rebel group gives itself the legal right to take human life. As advocates of 'pro-people' power, they can now legally issue death sentences with safaya (cleaning) and janakarsh (people's action).

"After abducting and killing Radio Nepal journalist Dekendra Raj Thapa in Daliullah in August, the head of the Maoist army's Western Command, Comrade Dwiakar, issued a statement saying: 'Dekendra certainly committed a serious crime. But in line with the party's policy he should not have been killed because he was a journalist.' In other words, it would have been ok to kill him if he wasn't a journalist. Had he not been one, the punishment would have been 'just'. If this is any indication of the way Maoist justice is going to work, the nation needs to be on high alert. It has set the precedence for the rebels to pick anyone who has made a mistake, knowingly or unknowingly, and order their execution. The rebels have not yet made their law of capital punishment public. But the central member of the Maoists and the Seti-Mahakali regional bureau in charge Lekh Raj Bhatta (Guvnand Rakeshi) told us recently that the underground party has a legal manual allowing capital punishment. "Anyone who commits a serious crime will be sentenced to death," he says without specifying what exactly constitutes a 'serious crime'. That Maoist revolutionary

low sanctions capital punishment is probably not surprising, Nepal law itself does not allow death penalty, even though a recent Nepal Police draft Sagadapatri tried to supersede the constitution by provisioning death penalty in its charter. After the clause was leaked to the press, and following an outcry, the final version of the document did not contain the provision.

The worrying thing is that Maoist rulings for capital punishment do not need approval of the central party leadership, the death penalty has been 'decentralised' to the rebel's district and village courts. These revolutionary justice systems run by the rebels are allowed to and can decide who should live and who should die, and the accused can't defend themselves with lawyers. For instance, if the rebels file a case in their local court stating that someone be executed for alleged crimes, the court is not likely to reverse the decision. Local 'people's governments' have already been issuing death warrants and killing those found guilty.

Comrade Rakeshi, who is also a Maoist central member, defends the move, saying the local courts are independent. "We don’t interfere with the court's decisions on death sentences," he told us, adding that regional governments were fully autonomous and were authorised to decide everything except defence and foreign affairs. Although the 'people's council' has provisioned death penalty, abling a law prepared by the council's chief Baburam Bhattaran does not count opinion. The document's security chapter

says that 'realistic and imperialistic forces will be destroyed'. It has also specified that any one or any agency that violates the fundamental rights of the people will be punished severely.

A separate provision in the council's regulatory says that any work against the country, people and the people's war will be regarded as 'enemy action'. The clause goes on to hint that such offenders will be sentenced to death, but the language is not clear.

Nowhere have the Maoists spelt out the kind of offense that will be subjected to capital punishment, Comrade Rakeshi, however, says he has understood it to mean that murderers and informers will be sentenced to death. "We will certainly give them the chance to refrain from such activities, but if they do not improve, they will be executed," he adds. This includes party members and cadre who turn traitors. "If they have committed a crime, they will have to die," says Comrade Rakeshi. "There are no exceptions in the law."

---

**Real Fresh Fruit Juices**

---

**Tastes like eating a fruit**

Enjoy the wholesome goodness of fresh fruits handpicked from orchards. The world over, no artificial colours, no artificial flavorings, no preservatives. Packed with vitamins, minerals and essential nutrients, it's the ultimate way to stay super charged all day.

---

**Weaves & Blends**

---

**cashmere accessories + fine knitwear**

---

---

---

---
At her home, up a steep wooden staircase in Sandikharka, Pratiba Acharya is bored. In her tiny bedroom, walls plastered with popular posters, textbooks are piled high. Her school, Argakhanchi Higher Secondary, has been closed for nearly three months on Maoist orders.

“We’d heard the Maoists think only rich people study in English schools like mine, so they want to close them,” says the shy 15-year-old in English. But, she adds, many poor people scramble and save to send their children to the district’s 17 private schools. Pratiba’s family can’t afford to send her away, so like many of her classmates she is idle and deeply worried about her plans to study science.

Pratiba’s school is idyllically situated near pine forests at the edge of town. Principal Sri Krishna Bhusal showed us the redundant facilities. His students have now gone to local schools where there were 200 students in one class before the closure of private schools. “Now you can imagine the numbers,” says Bhusal, “It’s hazardous for their health.”

Bitter politicised local disputes have produced tragedy here. A widely respected local Congress leader who had stood up to the Maoists, Ram Mani Gyawali, “The murderous middle ground”, Nepali Times #46) was hacked to death here three years ago. “He never threatened anyone,” recalls former VDC chairman Bhaj Bahadur Basnet. “But his gruesome death made all the political leaders run away.” Five Congress members and others have met similar deaths.

Bhaj Bahadur now lives in Kathmandu and on one of his rare day-trips to his village, I could sense his family’s unease as strangers arrived. A hunted look on his face, he told me he would be away by nightfall.

In the same village, Tilottama Bhusal is being comforted by her youngest son. Every so often, she breaks down as she tells of how one son, Lekhnath, died in a road accident while working as a driver. Her eldest son, Dharma Raj, blamed local Congress politicians for not blocking Lekhnath’s appointment as a teacher and joined the Maoists. After that, Tilottama says the army started victimising her daughter, Kanchi.

“One day they came and took her away,” she told us. They kept her for 48 days and beat her with sticks. On returning home, she had jaundice but was ordered to report to the army in Sandikharka every three days. Kanchi couldn’t take it any more and joined the Maoists. Recently, Kanchi who her mother insists never wielded a gun, died at the hands of the army. As for Dharma Raj, the family barely hears from him.

Travelling deep into the breathtaking Argakhanchi countryside, a visitor might be oblivious to the conflict. Every so often Dhaushali paintings from behind the jagged green foreground with its immaculately tended fields and terraces. In Chorakot, the Maoists passed through the day before we arrived. Dhan Bahadur Khatri Chhetri, a venerable family patriarch, chuckles as he pouts a lot of tea for breakfast. “They demonstrated their arms and ammunition to us,” he says. “They stayed a night then went down into the valley. They say they’re fighting for us and we must help and then they go.”

So far, a plan to conscript one person from each house has been threatened but not implemented.

Deep down in the valley below, a huge network of mustard fields nestles by the fast-flowing Bimruk Khola, hidden from the world outside. The foothridge here is one of the very few links to the Maoist Midwestern heartland of Pyuthan. Most houses lie empty, only 20 families live permanently in this fertile but remote spot. Puru Ram Bembase keeps a small shop. “If I don’t sell the Maoists something, I’ll put myself in danger,” he says.

“But if do and the army finds out, then I’m in danger too.”

The army says it has been mounting a major operation against the Maoists in Argakhanchi and three neighbouring districts. It is difficult to test this claim. Villagers like Puru Ram have seen nothing but the Maoists did cancel a planned meeting partly on grounds of ultra-caution because of the army offensive.

Extortion and related violence remain common. Since a major Maoist assault on Sandikharka two years ago (see ‘Enough’, Nepali Times #113) the army has increased its strength here to 700 troops and has also moved its barracks to a more secure spot up the hill from town.

“The army hasn’t made us feel secure,” said a man from the town. “They roam around disturbing the villagers but after sundown there’s no one here.”

---

**Surviving in Argakhanchi**

Individual tragedies of a people trapped by conflict

CHARLES HAVILAND in ARGAKHANCHI DISTRICT

Principal Sri Krishna Bhusal (left) of the Argakhanchi Higher Secondary School on the outskirts of Sandikharka (above)

Lekhnath, died in a road accident while working as a driver. Her eldest son, Dharma Raj, blamed local Congress politicians for not blocking Lekhnath’s appointment as a teacher and joined the Maoists. After that, Tilottama says the army started victimising her daughter, Kanchi.

“One day they came and took her away,” she told us. They kept her for 48 days and beat her with sticks. On returning home, she had jaundice but was ordered to report to the army in Sandikharka every three days. Kanchi couldn’t take it any more and joined the Maoists. Recently, Kanchi who her mother insists never wielded a gun, died at the hands of the army. As for Dharma Raj, the family barely hears from him.

Travelling deep into the breathtaking Argakhanchi countryside, a visitor might be oblivious to the conflict. Every so often Dhaushali paintings from behind the jagged green foreground with its immaculately tended fields and terraces. In Chorakot, the Maoists passed through the day before we arrived. Dhan Bahadur Khatri Chhetri, a venerable family patriarch, chuckles as he pouts a lot of tea for breakfast. “They demonstrated their arms and ammunition to us,” he says. “They stayed a night then went down into the valley. They say they’re fighting for us and we must help and then they go.”

So far, a plan to conscript one person from each house has been threatened but not implemented.

Deep down in the valley below, a huge network of mustard fields nestles by the fast-flowing Bimruk Khola, hidden from the world outside. The foothridge here is one of the very few links to the Maoist Midwestern heartland of Pyuthan. Most houses lie empty, only 20 families live permanently in this fertile but remote spot. Puru Ram Bembase keeps a small shop. “If I don’t sell the Maoists something, I’ll put myself in danger,” he says.

“But if do and the army finds out, then I’m in danger too.”

The army says it has been mounting a major operation against the Maoists in Argakhanchi and three neighbouring districts. It is difficult to test this claim. Villagers like Puru Ram have seen nothing but the Maoists did cancel a planned meeting partly on grounds of ultra-caution because of the army offensive.

Extortion and related violence remain common. Since a major Maoist assault on Sandikharka two years ago (see ‘Enough’, Nepali Times #113) the army has increased its strength here to 700 troops and has also moved its barracks to a more secure spot up the hill from town.

“The army hasn’t made us feel secure,” said a man from the town. “They roam around disturbing the villagers but after sundown there’s no one here.”

---

**Glowing Fairness In 6 Weeks**

Only Fair & Lovely has 4-Step Action to transform your looks in just 6 weeks.

- Protective sunscreen guards skin from harsh sun rays
- Skin remains soft and supple, free from oiliness
- Reveals new skin devoid of blemishes and spots
- Protein and vitamins nourishes skin to bring glowing fairness

“Fair & Lovely has given me new confidence”

---

**“Fair & Lovely has given me new confidence”**

Only Fair & Lovely has 4-Step Action to transform your looks in just 6 weeks.

- Protective sunscreen guards skin from harsh sun rays
- Skin remains soft and supple, free from oiliness
- Reveals new skin devoid of blemishes and spots
- Protein and vitamins nourishes skin to bring glowing fairness

“Fair & Lovely has given me new confidence”

---

**Glowing Fairness In 6 Weeks**

Only Fair & Lovely has 4-Step Action to transform your looks in just 6 weeks.

- Protective sunscreen guards skin from harsh sun rays
- Skin remains soft and supple, free from oiliness
- Reveals new skin devoid of blemishes and spots
- Protein and vitamins nourishes skin to bring glowing fairness

“Fair & Lovely has given me new confidence”

---

**“Fair & Lovely has given me new confidence”**

Only Fair & Lovely has 4-Step Action to transform your looks in just 6 weeks.

- Protective sunscreen guards skin from harsh sun rays
- Skin remains soft and supple, free from oiliness
- Reveals new skin devoid of blemishes and spots
- Protein and vitamins nourishes skin to bring glowing fairness

“Fair & Lovely has given me new confidence”

---

**Glowing Fairness In 6 Weeks**

Only Fair & Lovely has 4-Step Action to transform your looks in just 6 weeks.

- Protective sunscreen guards skin from harsh sun rays
- Skin remains soft and supple, free from oiliness
- Reveals new skin devoid of blemishes and spots
- Protein and vitamins nourishes skin to bring glowing fairness

“Fair & Lovely has given me new confidence”
Mid-Marsyangdi on hold again

Controversial Marsyangdi Hydropower project was halted once again after Maoists allegedly blew up a bus belonging to the project on 5 November. The Maoists had issued a public notice two months ago saying that they would not allow construction as long as security forces guarding the site also engaged in search operations in the surrounding areas. The government says the soldiers are guarding dynamiite used in construction. The project was supposedly reached with the Maoist leadership and construction had resumed this month.

The contractor of the German-funded project, DCC JV, says it can’t continue when there is a threat. The Nepal Electricity Authority, which loses Rs 2 million for every day that work is stopped says there is adequate security. DCC JV’s original bid for civil works was 77 million euros but extra claims due to delays have already topped 60 million euros. (See ‘delay reaction’, Nepal Times #216) The 70 megawatt project was initially going to cost Rs 14 billion of which 85 percent would be borne by a German grant. But given the escalation in the compensation claims by the contractor, the cost of the project to Nepali taxpayers has soared.

Business for awards

Standard Chartered Bank has announced that it will be sponsoring the Award for Best Banking Submission at the at the 2005 Business Journalist of the Year Awards. Standard Chartered first sponsored the banking award in 2004, when Richard Morais of Forbes Global won.

Another Bakery

The Nango chain of restaurants has opened ‘The Bakery Café Dharahara’ and in the community, excellence in field of study and inspiring goals.

Kia goes golfing

Continental Trading Enterprises, the exclusive distributor of Kia Motors organised its Open Golf Tournament at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort. The basic theme was ‘Get the hole in one and win Kia Picanto’.

NEW PRODUCTS

GEL FRESHNESS Following the launch of the Dabur Red Toothpaste in July 2003, Dabur Nepal has introduced Dabur Red Gel in 40g and 80g packs, priced at Rs 20 and Rs 40 respectively. Dabur says it is enriched with three core ingredients: clove, mint and lemon.

MUNCHING MAGIC The Golchha Organisation’s Hulas Biscuits & Confectioneries has launched a sweet and salty biscuit called ‘Magic’ available in the market for Rs 10.

Gambling on business

Gambling is considered a social evil. Don’t casinos encourage? People gamble everywhere. They place bets on crickets matches and toss coins. You can’t really stop them. The government is in no position to stop them either. A casino gives them a place to gamble with fixed rules and regulations. Ninety-nine percent are responsible gamblers. They don’t go to the extent of gambling away their house. About what the black money washered while in casinos phenomenon, especially with Indian gamblers? That is a myth. They can’t claim to have won the money at the casino producing a certificate as proof. On the basis of this, they’d be liable to taxes in both Nepal and India. It would be a loss for both parties. Do casinos rig the games so they never lose? No, there is no such thing. They make rules that ensure odds in favour of the casino. More than 95 percent of our players will always lose. Only five percent win. The casino has a little edge in some games such as blackjack, but if the players know the rules, they can easily win. Also, each table lists at least once so it is really all the player’s luck.

A lot has been made about the contribution that casinos make to the national economy. Is it really that important, and don’t the negative effects outweigh the revenue from the state? We do contribute in various different ways. We take from the rich can’t afford to lose the poor. We provide entertainment and outlets for people who want a night out. Where do you draw the line between gambling and compulsive gambling? Don’t gamble. Don’t gamble in casinos. If you must gamble, gamble with money you can afford to lose. Take the free meals and drinks. Don’t get drunk and lose unnecessarily. It can become a compulsive habit. But that is true of most things: anything in excess and you will suffer. You must be prepared to face the consequences of over-indulgence and push yourself beyond your limits.
It’s a gamble

Tihar is here, take a bet on the market value of professional gambling

ABHA ELI PHOBOO

Nepal used to be the only place between Monaco and Macau where you could gamble legally. With a huge nation of gamblers next door, Nepal’s casinos cashed in on the bonanza for decades, propelling up the kingdom’s tourism industry through good times and bad.

It all started with Casino Nepal at Hotel Sooltee (previously Hotel Olsen). It was all nicely tied in for the Indian

package gambler: air fare, three days four nights and free coupons thrown in to get ‘em hooked. And, boy, did they get hooked.

Nepal Recreation Centre now manages the six casinos that have mushroomed in various five-star hotels in Kathmandu. Though it was targeted at tourists, Nepalis were allowed to gamble in casinos before government policy discouraged them with Rs 50 charge on entrance. In 1997, the Gambling Act of the land granted licence and Nepalis were banned altogether from going into casinos. The dens now bank on tourists but most establishments give those entering the benefit of doubt.

This Dusain wasn’t buzzing for Kathmandu’s casinos. They do not have much to look forward in Tihar either as the number of tourists dwindle. International media coverage of the blockade and the 1 September riots have reduced the number of tourists this season, especially from India.

“A majority of our clients are from India,” says BK Shukya, general manager of Nepal Recreation Centre. “This Dusali, it looks like they are staying home.” But there are the die-hard who come to Kathmandu regularly. “I come to Nepal on business every few months,” says Ayush Agrawal, a trader. “I like the casinos here not just for gambling but for all the other facilities they offer.”

Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) is hoping that recent promotions and road shows in India will bring in first-time Indian tourists to the casinos, especially from southern India. Casinos contribute two percent of their earnings (it amounted to Rs 1.7 million last year) to the Tourist Service Fees which NTB ploughs into promotions.

Casino clients are now diversifying and come not just from India but also from China, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Sri Lanka. Says NTB’s Tek Bahadur Dangi: “Casinos provide attractive packages for tourists and can encourage visitors to increase their length of stay in Nepal.”

The history of the word ‘casino’ comes from the Italian word for a cottage: small summer homes where people gathered to listen to music, and eventually gamble. The first time it was recorded in the English language was in 1851, which is probably when English tourists in Tuscany discovered the salacious pleasures of games of chance.

Although Nepalis are not allowed in Kathmandu’s casinos. “I like coming here,” a Nepali who didn’t want his name mentioned, told us. “It’s not just the gambling, there is music, food and drink. I get to sing on stage sometimes if I ask. It’s not like you can win gambling, it’s more relaxing to just sit and watch.”

The gaming industry has always had an uphill struggle to be accepted in society, although gambling is traditional in Nepal, especially during Tihar. “We are a taboo,” admits Kishor Silwal, managing director of Casino Rad. “But we are a big draw for tourism and prop up the economy.”

The pull factor is that casinos offer round-the-clock free food and drinks for players with special facilities thrown in. The push factor is that when gambling becomes a compulsive habit, it ruins lives. •

GAMING
Casino Nepal
Set up at the Soaltee, Casino Nepal is the country’s oldest casino and was launched in 1968. In 1976, American Richard Doyle Tuttle entered the scene and began managing the casino. He now chairs the Nepal Recreation Centres which runs other gaming establishments in town. With its well-polished ambience, Casino Nepal has repeat patrons and frequent gamblers. Children can be parked at a nearby video arcade.

Casino Anna
In 1992, Casino Anna opened and was as BK Shyaka puts it “a product of the restoration of democracy”. Located at Hotel de la Annapurna in the centre of town, it drew huge crowds. The casino is built on three floors and the ground floor, in an attempt to catch them young, is targeted at children with slot machines. First floor is for serious gamblers.

Casino Everest
When the government granted licence for three more casinos in 1992, Everest Hotel opened (what else: Casino Everest). The establishment is known for its wide range of entertainment events with live music 24 hours. Free meals and drinks attract even more people and weekly tournaments have brought a bonanza of repeat customers.

Casino Royale
1992 also saw the opening of Casino Royale at Hotel Yak & Yeti in the renovated wing of the Lal Darbar. The casino even keeps two astrologers on standby in case any of the customers want to consult the stars about their chances for that particular night. There is also an exclusive beauty salon for VIP guests.

Casino Rad
Casino Rad opened in Hotel Radisson last July and hasn’t looked back since. Besides a loyal clientele of Indian gamblers, it has begun to pull in quite a few Malaysians who are tired of the Genting Highlands, as well as Thais. Like the other casinos, it offers casino packages to guests.

Casino Tara
The youngest casino, it opened last December and is located at the Hyatt Regency. It has an exclusive VIP subdivision where the minimum bet starts at pretty high stakes. It features Caribbean stud poker, half roulette and more.

Genuine Ink Facts

**Superior Image Quality**

For Prints as vivid as your memories

EPSON Ink is the highest quality ink you can get in an ink jet printer. The result are designs specifically to work with your printer hard ware, and to deliver stable, long lasting, photographic quality that can be matched by third party inks.

**Longer Print Life**

EPSON INK TESTED IN INK TEST" PRINTER LIFE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>EPSON</th>
<th>FOR PRINTER</th>
<th>FOR PRINTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GAL</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAL</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAL</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**For brilliant prints that last and last.**

This is where third party inks really give in comparison to EPSON Ink. In a recent study, a trading authority on photo longevity, projected EPSON Ink to last for up to 50 years when used with EPSON paper.
The king holds the key

Interview with Dr Keshar Jung Ramayatra, former chairman of RJP Parishad Standing Committee
Samaya, November 11

How was the 1991 constitution finalised?
The interim government had two prime responsibilities: to frame a new constitution and to hold general elections. The former had to be done first. Hence, a constitutional advisory commission was formed under the chairmanship of Biswaratna Upadhaya, Kishnu, Nilambhar Acharya, Yog Prasad Upadhaya and I were appointed to give the constitution its final touch. Our meeting was held confidentially at the office of the forest department in Godawari, eight days before the constitution was made public. We used a taxi instead of a government vehicle just to avoid detection. We discussed each section in detail and came across a section that said ‘in case of two-thirds majority in the parliament there can be a referendum for a republic’. This was unacceptable to us. The country could not afford another crisis. When democracy had just been established it would be unhealthy to start a referendum for a republic or monarchy system. We came to the conclusion that the section should be changed.

How did you settle that?
I shared my concern with Ganeshmanji. He shared similar concerns with Kishnu and the next day, I worked with the commission team and we concluded that democracy, constitutional monarchy, human rights and rule of law would remain unchanged. We also agreed that besides these four, other sections would be amended if a consensus was concluded that democracy, constitutional monarchy, human rights and rule of law. We continued to work on the new sections. All sections agreed that the king would protect and adhere to the newly framed constitution.

And everyone agreed?
There was a debate about the management of the Royal Nepali Army. As per the constitution, the National Security Council had been formed and there was much discussion about membership. One group proposed that the prime minister be made chairman with the army chief and defense minister as members. Another group disagreed and suggested that the council add the field marshal as an additional member. There were disagreements over majority of military representatives in the council. Ultimately, it was agreed that the field marshal would not be included. The constitution team decided that the king would be supreme commander of the army and the army would be mottled on his recommendation. It was suggested that army generals put pressure on the prime minister because of differences in opinion about council membership. They expressed dissatisfaction about protocol of the chief army. They proposed that Nepal should be made a Hindu nation.

What are the shortcomings of the constitution in the present context?
The prime minister has the right to dissolve parliament but the constitution also says that he should hold elections within six months. There is no mention of any provision in the constitution about what happens when elections are not held within the stipulated time, which is why Article 127 was used and has caused complications.

So how do we resolve this?
This step was taken to find a way out of the present constitutional crisis. The king has shown his respect towards the constitution and has approved all decisions made according to legal provisions. I understand the ministerial cabinet. He has been constantly supporting restoration of peace in the country and wants to see elections held. Since 4 October, we have tried to get the three prime ministers but none of them has been willing to hold elections.

So What is the solution?
Definitely not by constantly changing prime ministers. The king has to take steps to preserve the nation. He will take important steps after his visit to India if the political parties fail to do something by then. I don’t see any possibility of Prime Minister Deuba restoring peace and holding elections. The king can solve the national problem himself either by forming an advisory assembly or by chairing the cabinet.

Do you think the Maoist problem can be solved within the existing constitution?
There is no need for a new constitution. The constitution is not an obstacle to bring the Maoists into mainstream politics.

Rolpa offensive
Nepal Samacharpatra, 6 November

Just when there is talk again of a Tibar ceasefire, the army has begun an offensive in the Maoist heartland of Rolpa and Rukum. The army has launched air and land attacks against rebels in the bordering villages of both districts from the south. The security offensive was launched after the military received information that armed rebels were gathering in huge numbers for possible attacks against security force camps in the area. Maoists have, in the past, gathered in Thawang, Rolpa before launching major attacks in the western districts. This time, the army decided to deploy troops right into the rebel base. The Maoists have claimed that a third military brigade has been formed and even central leaders have arrived in Thawang to plan a big attack. An army official said the idea is to strike the rebels right in their den and decimate their strength.

The army has established temporary camps in Garitganga, Bhawang and Kureli after being dropped from helicopters. There is a lot of chopper activity and more troops are being moved in. The army’s Nepali-Gurkha-based western regional headquarters said the Dang brigade was leading the offensive in Rolpa and Rukum. Locals say the army operation is bigger than a previous campaign before Dasin. Spokesperson of the army’s western headquarters in Nepalganj, Yagya Bahadur Rajaure, characterised the military activity in Rolpa and Rukum as a strategy for “area domination”. He had no other details of casualties on either side.

Conflict studies
Annapurna Post, 8 November

Due to the conflict, fewer students are going to schools in southern Duti. The Maoists have been forcing students to join their indoctrination programs, they have been killed in the crossfire between the Maoists and the army.

Many students are now dropping out of school and moving down to the district headquarters, or to India to work. People who can afford to keep their children in the district headquarters or other relatively safe places are the only ones who are able to provide their children with some sort of education.

In the southern parts of Duti secondary, higher secondary and middle schools have been seen up to 60 percent drop in enrolment. “Students are unable to study consistently in schools,” says one teacher. “The Maoists keep taking them for five-day, weekend or 12-day campaigns and other programs. We never get to finish our courses.” According to a parent from Barchen, students fear the army as much as the Maoists. Min Prakash Malla of Jorayal has been forced to work in a small shop in Dipyal and study there because the conflict in the village was hampering his studies. Students who work in lodges and shops in the district headquarters say that if there was a ceasefire they would be able to go back to their villages and resume studies. The Maoists maintain their party has never forced students to join their indoctrination camps, or join their militia. The army also says schools should be conflict-free. But both sides violate their commitments, students and teachers say.

Pampha Bhushal
Ujj Magar in Nepal, 21 November

BAGLUNG “It’s much safer in Nepal,” said senior Maoist leader Pampha Bhushal who managed to cross the border and reach Nepal safely after Indian police chased her in Fina a few months ago. Her comrades were arrested. Her sudden appearance in Baglung recently surprised everyone. She was moving around freely in Baglung’s remote villages, delivering public speeches and meeting local political leaders.

Constitution is not the end but the means.
King Gyanendra in his message for the 19th Constitution Day on 8 November
Bush’s second jihad

America has become dangerously fundamentalist, just like its enemy

This election confirms the brilliance of Karl Rove as a political strategist. He calculated that the religious conservatives, if they could be turned out, would be the deciding factor. The success of the plan was registered not only in the presidential results but also in all of the state votes to ban same-sex marriage. Rove understands what surveys have shown, that many in the American believes in the Virgin Birth is not Darwin’s theory of evolution. He felt that the appeal to this large bloc was worth getting President Bush to endorse a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage (though he had opposed it in the past).

The results bring to mind a visit the Dalai Lama made to Chicago not long ago. I was one of the people deplored to ask him questions on stage at the Field Museum. He met with the interfaith leaders beforehand and asked us to give him challenging questions, since he is too often greeted with deference or flattery.

The only one I could think of was: “If you could return to your country, what would you do to change it?” He said that he would de-establish his religion, since “America is the proper model.” I later asked him if a pluralist society were possible without the Enlightenment. “Ah,” he said, “That’s the problem.” He seemed to envy America its Enlightenment heritage. When I asked the question perhaps Americans do not know how fervently the Virgin Birth in than is evolution in be called an Enlightened nation?

America, the first real democracy in history, was a product of Enlightenment values: critical intelligence, tolerance, respect for evidence, a regard for the secular sciences. Though the founders differed on many things, they shared those values of what was then modernity. They addressed ‘a candid world’, as they wrote in the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

The secular states of modern Europe do not understand the fundamentalism of the American electorate. It is not what they had experienced from this country in the past. In fact, we now resemble those nations less than we do our putative enemies. Where else do we find a fundamentalist zeal, a rage at secularity, religious intolerance, fear of and hatred for modernity? Not in France, Britain, Germany, Italy or Spain. We find it in the Muslim world, in al Qaeda, in Saddam Hussein’s Sunni loyalists. Americans wonder why the rest of the world thinks us so dangerous, so single-minded, so impervious to international appeals. They fear jihad, no matter whose zeal is being expressed.

It is often observed that enemies come to resemble each other. We terrorize the torturers, we cool our God better than theirs — as one American general put it, in words that the president has not repudiated.

President Bush promised in 2000 that he would lead a humble country, be a uniter not a divider, that he would make conservatism compassionate. He did not need to make such false promises this time. He was re-elected precisely by being a divider, pitting the reddest aspects of the red states against the blue of nearly half the nation. In this, he is very far from Ronald Reagan, who was amiable and ecumenically pious. He could address more secular audiences, here and abroad, with real respect.

In his victory speech last week, President Bush indicated that he would “reach out to the whole nation”, including those who voted for John Kerry. But even if he wanted to be more conciliatory now, the constituency to which he owes his victory is not a yielding one. He must give them what they want on things like judicial appointments. His helpers are also his keepers.

Terrorists will not just go away. The US military will remain in Iraq for the foreseeable future. The occupying forces will be joined by thousands of trained police officers from the United States, to beef up the floundering Iraqi police force. The days of US occupation in Iraq are numbered. The guerrillas will not be defeated by a conventional army. The resistance must be met with resistance. The US government is now on the defensive, and it is not yet clear what response the Bush administration will make.

That is why we need to demand that US troops be withdrawn from Iraq, and why we need to support the Iraqi people in their struggle for freedom and democracy. Only then can the US government be forced to end its occupation of Iraq and begin to work with the Iraqi people to build a better future for all of us.

Garry Wills, an adjunct professor of history at Northwestern University, is the author of St Augustine’s Conversion.
Che chic

As Guevara fever sweeps the world with the release of Motorcycle Diaries, a Cuban writer wonders about the wonder called Che

For millions of young people around the world, their introduction to Ernesto Che Guevara will be Gael Garcia Bernal as Che and Rodrigo De la Serna as his friend Alberto, kicking back the stand of an overloaded motorcycle, hopping aboard and lumbering north on an 8,000-mile journey through South America in the film version of Che’s Motorcycle Diaries. For those of us in Cuba old enough to take a similar trip, our journey with Che, the young man with a funny accent and starred beret, began with less romance. “Pioneros por el comunismo, somos como el Che! [Pioneers for Communism, like Che we shall be!],” we repeated day after day before starting class. The chant became so tedious that inevitably the class clown would ask if the incantation would end up turning us all into asthmatics, as Che was. Che’s life and deeds all became part of a modern bible for young Cubans. Even if we wanted to reject what was forced-fed in chants or poetics like ‘Che Comandante’, it was hard to resist the charm and passion that came from his letters and diaries.

In his speeches, I discovered the brilliant Che, mercilessly railing against inefficiency, false politics, and double standards. “If we lack organisation the ideas after the impetus of the first moment lose their effectiveness and fall into basic routines and conformity to become a memory,” he once said. I looked around our island and wondered: was anyone listening?

I discovered the Che who scribbled love poems and coveted his solitude. I wanted to sit with him, for beer and cigarettes, to talk about his love for chess or his favourite books.

With the crisis of the 1990’s brought on by the collapse of our Soviet patron, many Cubans returned to what Che said about economics and admitted the value of what is achieved with effort. We felt once again the integrity of what’s it’s like to share the burden of a common predicament. The value of our homemade solutions increased to some who had always favoured ideas imported from the east.

Then Che’s face flooded our lives, staring at us from T-shirts, banners, walls, and key rings, with a look as vigilant as those on the faces in murals of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution. The solemn face that Alberto Korda caught in his photographs became tough and unsympathetic. He stopped being San Ernesto de la Izquierda, the saint or talisman who delivered us from injustice. Instead he rose like the flag of the trivial in a global mass culture—a sign associated with consumer tastes in fashion, music, and drugs.

To rediscover the Che who could inspire, I returned to the young Ernesto of Che's diary. I thought again about how on his trip through Latin America, he acquired his revolutionary ideals, clarified certain questions and added more. I loved how he was brave enough to postpone his life for a while to find his own answers.

Today, a photo of Che’s image displayed on the façade of Cuba’s Interior Ministry is a must-have for tourists. Visitors leave and continue their imaginary leftist lives with full refrigerators. We Cubans remain, in charge of keeping the flame alive.

I wonder, Ernesto, what you would have turned into had you lived? An archetype feeding the legend? A general talking down to us with reprimands? A favourite leader? A twenty-first century Quixote tilting at the windmills of canned politics? A postcard? A repressor of feelings? Or just another dinosaur? •

(Project Syndicate)

Eduardo Sanchez is a pseudonym for a Cuban writer.
most years, around this time, the pundits gather around the Champions League tables and begin to draw conclusions, looking for wider trends and patterns. Never mind that only 48 matches have been played so far; a total which most statisticians would find insignificant. As arduous as it may seem, halfway through the group stage, it does look as though Italy’s representatives have been dominating the competition. Of the four sides with maximum points, three — Juventus, Inter Milan and AC Milan — hail from Serie A. The Italian contingent has notched 27 points, compared to the Premier League’s 23 and La Liga’s 17. The top two teams in the Champions League, Inter, are, Italian. So are the competition’s stingiest defence. Juventus. Leave our AS Roma — turn to shed by continuous managerial changes (Luigi Del Neri is their third in four months), injuries and the as yet unimpressed moron whose missile hit Andrea Pirlo, the referee, on the forehead — and Serie A sides have looked decidedly impressive. Some will be tempted by this to draw definitive conclusions about the restored supremacy of Italian football. This would not only be premature, it would also be futile to some degree. The days when we could divide European sides based on their domestic provenance are drawing to a close. The far-reaching effects of the Bosman ruling have much to do with this: Juventus have six Italians in their best XI, Milan five and Inter only four.

But it is not only the players and managers who have been globalised. Football philosophy has changed, too. The Inter, Milan and Juventus all play very different systems based on different philosophies. In many ways, they reflect the variety in Serie A, where there is a very genuine hodgepodge of formations.

In Serie A there are sides that attack relentlessly at pace for 90 minutes, like Zdenek Zeman’s Lecce, and teams that man the barricades for 90 minutes, crossing the halfway line only to counter-attack, like Carletto Mazzero’s Bologna.

“I think this variety has been a massive boon,” said Andrea Sacchi, the former Milan and Italy coach. Indeed, the variety is reflected in Italy’s Champions League participants. Milan serves up an entertaining attacking brand of football based around a short-passing game.

He has taken Andrea Pirlo, who had always played in the hole and sticking him in front of the back four. Or, as he did last season, taking Cala, the Brazilian wing back, and playing him as a right back. By Italian standards, it amounted to apostasy. Serie A sides had always believed that the man in front of the back four should be a snarling, hard-running ball-winner with the lunges of a marathon runner. Not even Brazil trusted Cala’s defensive skills enough to play him as a full back.

With so many players comfortable on the ball, Milan became the kind of side that could hold on to possession for long stretches, thanks to the skills of Pirlo, Clarence Seedorf and Kaka. And with the prolific Andrei Shevchenko up front, the rossoneri have the cutting edge to turn all the creative work in midfield into goals.

Of course, none of this would have been possible if the club — or, rather, Silvio Berlusconi, the owner — had not embraced the new attack-minded philosophy, even when it meant leaking goals, something which is inevitable with such a top-heavy side. Berlusconi, who made his billions in television and knows a thing or two about popular entertainment, mandated that the club should always prioritise entertainment over results, a strategy in keeping with his love of image and branding.

By contrast, the men who run Juventus made no such proclamations. To them, football is about results and to bounce back from last season’s disappointment, they hired Fabio Capello — the closest to a sure thing that the modern game has to offer — away from rivals Roma. His six titles with three teams in 13 seasons of top flight management are a testament to his coaching skills and tactical nous.

Capello is an astute tactician who has employed a range of styles and formations in the past, but it was obvious that, at Juventus, he would only play one way. Capello’s Juventus wear down opponents with watertight defending, a physical midfield and strikers who need only a few chances to score.

And there is Inter, perhaps the most interesting of the Italian sides. After years of dull, defensive football served up by the likes of Hector Cuper, Roberto Mancini, the new coach, has taken a decidedly different course. For the first time in recent memory, Inter

M

ost years, around this time, the pundits gather around the Champions League tables and begin to draw conclusions, looking for wider trends and patterns. Never mind that only 48 matches have been played so far; a total which most statisticians would find insignificant. As arduous as it may seem, halfway through the group stage, it does look as though Italy’s representatives have been dominating the competition. Of the four sides with maximum points, three — Juventus, Inter Milan and AC Milan — hail from Serie A. The Italian contingent has notched 27 points, compared to the Premier League’s 23 and La Liga’s 17. The top two teams in the Champions League, Inter, are, Italian. So are the competition’s stingiest defence. Juventus. Leave our AS Roma — turn to shed by continuous managerial changes (Luigi Del Neri is their third in four months), injuries and the as yet unimpressed moron whose missile hit Andrea Pirlo, the referee, on the forehead — and Serie A sides have looked decidedly impressive. Some will be tempted by this to draw definitive conclusions about the restored supremacy of Italian football. This would not only be premature, it would also be futile to some degree. The days when we could divide European sides based on their domestic provenance are drawing to a close. The far-reaching effects of the Bosman ruling have much to do with this: Juventus have six Italians in their best XI, Milan five and Inter only four.

But it is not only the players and managers who have been globalised. Football philosophy has changed, too. The Inter, Milan and Juventus all play very different systems based on different philosophies. In many ways, they reflect the variety in Serie A, where there is a very genuine hodgepodge of formations.

In Serie A there are sides that attack relentlessly at pace for 90 minutes, like Zdenek Zeman’s Lecce, and teams that man the barricades for 90 minutes, crossing the halfway line only to counter-attack, like Carletto Mazzero’s Bologna.

“I think this variety has been a massive boon,” said Andrea Sacchi, the former Milan and Italy coach. Indeed, the variety is reflected in Italy’s Champions League participants. Milan serves up an entertaining attacking brand of football based around a short-passing game.

He has taken Andrea Pirlo, who had always played in the hole and sticking him in front of the back four. Or, as he did last season, taking Cala, the Brazilian wing back, and playing him as a right back. By Italian standards, it amounted to apostasy. Serie A sides had always believed that the man in front of the back four should be a snarling, hard-running ball-winner with the lunges of a marathon runner. Not even Brazil trusted Cala’s defensive skills enough to play him as a full back.

With so many players comfortable on the ball, Milan became the kind of side that could hold on to possession for long stretches, thanks to the skills of Pirlo, Clarence Seedorf and Kaka. And with the prolific Andrei Shevchenko up front, the rossoneri have the cutting edge to turn all the creative work in midfield into goals.

Of course, none of this would have been possible if the club — or, rather, Silvio Berlusconi, the owner — had not embraced the new attack-minded philosophy, even when it meant leaking goals, something which is inevitable with such a top-heavy side. Berlusconi, who made his billions in television and knows a thing or two about popular entertainment, mandated that the club should always prioritise entertainment over results, a strategy in keeping with his love of image and branding.

By contrast, the men who run Juventus made no such proclamations. To them, football is about results and to bounce back from last season’s disappointment, they hired Fabio Capello — the closest to a sure thing that the modern game has to offer — away from rivals Roma. His six titles with three teams in 13 seasons of top flight management are a testament to his coaching skills and tactical nous.

Capello is an astute tactician who has employed a range of styles and formations in the past, but it was obvious that, at Juventus, he would only play one way. Capello’s Juventus wear down opponents with watertight defending, a physical midfield and strikers who need only a few chances to score.

And there is Inter, perhaps the most interesting of the Italian sides. After years of dull, defensive football served up by the likes of Hector Cuper, Roberto Mancini, the new coach, has taken a decidedly different course. For the first time in recent memory, Inter
Uneven Fragments

The Art of Happiness

Babermahal Deepawali Street Festival

Nepal Kaleidoscope Photo Competition

Kathmandu Dance Festival

3rd Annual Ride and Rage

Ganesh’s Trunk Holiday Bazaar

How to Tame the Crazy Mind,

Hey DJ

Charcoalz

Fusion Night

La Soon

Tickling Taste Buds

Fridays at Summit Hotel. 5521810

Farm House Café

Genuine Thai

Vegetarian Creations

Café Bahal

Barbecue-Ban Bhoj

Shivapuri

Getaway package

140 m down stream at The Last Resort. 4439525

Canyon Swing

Dream Holiday

KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

There has been a significant rise in the concentration of PM10 at all six monitoring stations in the Valley. Winter means dry dusty weather. All zones need to be on high alert because the air quality is getting even unhealthier. Don’t take your masks off yet!

KATHMANDU VALLEY

November is the driest month with monthly average rainfall 7.6 mm for the Valley. Hallway through the month we’ve had zero rain. This satellite picture taken on Wednesday afternoon shows no sign of rain at least for the coming week, which is just as well because it is Tihar. The high pressure zone over central Asia continues to bring in dry, cold wind from the north and keeps away the moisture. A mild cyclone that was spinning off the Arabian Sea has dissipated, sending some wisps of cloud our way. A western system over the Karakoram will not threaten us. Enjoy the sunny weather and great views of the mountains from the Valley rim.

Neeraj, while searching for a solution to Buddha's frequent electrical outages, unexpectedly discovers the Lightness of Being._

Veer-Zaara portrays the trauma of partition. In true Vashnav tradition, it is an emotional love story. Saamiya Siddiqui (Rani Mukherji) is a Pakistani isayer who helps two lovers. Veer aka Veer Pratap Singh (Shahrukh Khan) is from India and Zaara aka Zaara Hayat Khan (Preity Zinta) is from Pakistan. Due to the partition, they have been separated. This film is shows how love conquers all and goes beyond boundaries drawn by men.

Neeraj's Adventures — can also be seen at www.eastern-nepal.com

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

Uneven Fragments Art forms by various artists at Gallery Nine. Until 13 November. 4428604

November Medley Collection of paintings and sculptures by various artists at Siddharta Art Gallery. Until 1 December. 4219048

Babermahal Deepawali Street Festival with live concert, dance and food stalls at Babermahal junction on 13 November from 1PM. Entrance Rs 50.

EVENTS

The Art of Happiness Introduction to Buddhism at Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre, 13-14 November from 10AM to 4PM. 4414843

Nepal Kailashdeko Photo Competition on any subject that portrays Nepal or the Nepali way of life. Submission deadline 16 November. www.pgburl.com rp

The Sound of Music at The Royal Nepal Academy on 19 and 20 November, a fund-raiser organised by Trisag High School. 4470608, 4470425

Ganesh’s Trunk Holiday Bazaar at Baber Mahal Revisited 11AM to 6PM on 20 November. 4436040

Art on the Move at Hyatt Regency. Boudha on 20 November.

How to Tame the Crazy Mind. Talk by Robin Corbin on 20 November, 10AM-1PM at Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre. 4414843

3rd Annual Ride and Rage with the Himalayan Enfielders to the Last Resort on 20-21 November. Rs 1,500 per person. 4440962

Kathmandu Dance Festival with German dance master Andrea at Latin Quarter’s Salsa Bar, Barber Mahal Revisited. From 16-27 November.


Bluestained Beating! Shopping specials for Tihar at both Tripureswar and Lalitpur outlets.

MUSIC

Jazz At Patan featuring Cadence and friends at Patan Museum Courtyard on 20 November.

Hey Bu at the Yak & Yeti on November 26.

Fusion Night at the Rox Bar. Every Wednesday from 6PM onwards.

Dee Not Just at the Jazz Bar Frisday at Hotel Shangri-la, Lalitpur.

Jatra Friday Nites Live music by The Strings. 4268622

Happening Live Jazz in town at the Rox Bar, Lalitpur Bar. Every Wednesday and Saturday, 7.45 PM onwards.

DRINKS

Island Bar with DJ Raju and The Cloud Walkers. The Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency. 4491294

Free drink deals at Red Onion Bar, Lalitpur.

FOOD

Charcoalz a barbecue of western, Indian and Mongolian delights at Hotel Yak & Yeti, 6PM to 10PM. Till 30 November.

La Soen Restaurant and Winehouse, moved in the lane next to the Egyptian Embassy, Pulchork for spacious indoor and outdoor seating. 256711

Tasting Taste Buds live barbeque, 7PM onwards every Friday evening from 6PM onwards.

Dee Not Just at the Jazz Bar Frisday at Hotel Shangri-la, Lalitpur.

Jatra Friday Nites Live music by The Strings. 4268622

Happening Live Jazz in town at the Rox Bar, Lalitpur Bar. Every Wednesday and Saturday, 7.45 PM onwards.

Drinks

Island Bar with DJ Raju and The Cloud Walkers. The Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency. 4491294

Free drink deals at Red Onion Bar, Lalitpur.

Food

Charcoalz a barbecue of western, Indian and Mongolian delights at Hotel Yak & Yeti, 6PM to 10PM. Till 30 November.

La Soen Restaurant and Winehouse, moved in the lane next to the Egyptian Embassy, Pulchork for spacious indoor and outdoor seating. 256711

Tasting Taste Buds live barbeque, 7PM onwards every Friday evening from 6PM onwards.

Dee Not Just at the Jazz Bar Frisday at Hotel Shangri-la, Lalitpur.

Jatra Friday Nites Live music by The Strings. 4268622

Happening Live Jazz in town at the Rox Bar, Lalitpur Bar. Every Wednesday and Saturday, 7.45 PM onwards.

Drinks

Island Bar with DJ Raju and The Cloud Walkers. The Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency. 4491294

Free drink deals at Red Onion Bar, Lalitpur.

Nepali Weather

by MAUSAM BEED

November is the driest month with monthly average rainfall 7.6 mm for the Valley. Hallway through the month we’ve had zero rain. This satellite picture taken on Wednesday afternoon shows no sign of rain at least for the coming week, which is just as well because it is Tihar. The high pressure zone over central Asia continues to bring in dry, cold wind from the north and keeps away the moisture. A mild cyclone that was spinning off the Arabian Sea has dissipated, sending some wisps of cloud our way. A western system over the Karakoram will not threaten us. Enjoy the sunny weather and great views of the mountains from the Valley rim.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

November is the driest month with monthly average rainfall 7.6 mm for the Valley. Hallway through the month we’ve had zero rain. This satellite picture taken on Wednesday afternoon shows no sign of rain at least for the coming week, which is just as well because it is Tihar. The high pressure zone over central Asia continues to bring in dry, cold wind from the north and keeps away the moisture. A mild cyclone that was spinning off the Arabian Sea has dissipated, sending some wisps of cloud our way. A western system over the Karakoram will not threaten us. Enjoy the sunny weather and great views of the mountains from the Valley rim.