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#265 16 - 22 September 2005 16 pages Rs 30

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A large, golden, dome-shaped stupa (Boudha Stupa) in Kathmandu, Nepal, surrounded by colorful prayer flags and a rainbow in the sky. People are walking around the base of the stupa.

KIRAN PANDAY

The release of 60 soldiers who the Maoists captured in Kalikot last month, the unilateral three-month ceasefire announcement by the rebels and an approaching Dasain have given the Nepali people a sense of cautious optimism. But will it, like this rainbow, be an illusory hope? **See p 11.**




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Published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd, Chief Editor: Kunda Dixit
Desk Editor: Marty Logan
Design: Kiran Maharjan Web: Bhushan Shilpakar
Vicepresident Corporate Affairs: Sneha Sayami
Advertising: Sambhu Guragain advertising@himalmedia.com
Subscription: Pushparaj Sharma subscription@himalmedia.com
Sanchaya Kosh Building, Block A-4th Floor, Lalitpur
GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu Tel: 5543333-6, Fax: 5521013
Printed at Jagadamba Press, Hatiban: 5547018

PEOPLE VS RCCC

In a crowded third floor chamber of the Supreme Court, amidst the cacophony of rush-hour traffic below, a five member bench has taken up hearing the case of 'People vs RCCC'. More than 50 lawyers are lined up to speak up for rule the of law and constitutionalism and just a handful of government lawyers are picking up the defence of the Royal Commission for Corruption Control.

The issue before the bench goes to the heart of the matter of the current political crisis. And by the very act of allowing debate on whether the royal commission has the right to exist under the 1990 constitution, the high court has signalled the possibility of challenging the royal takeover. At a time when the constitution is being attacked from both the extreme right and left and accepted as comatose by much of civil society, our submission is that the statute is very much alive. And for Nepal to revert to the rule of law it must be activated.

There is a wave of expectation about the Supreme Court ever since a chief justice who acted as cheerleader for February First retired and the well-regarded Rt Hon'ble Dilip Kumar Poudel took over. Decisions from the court relating to habeas corpus petitions and interim directives on the right of FM radio to broadcast news have suddenly proved that there is an institution of the state showing signs of sobriety and independence. That is all that we ask of the Supreme Court, whose incumbents we would like to regard as personages of the highest discretion and commitment to jurisprudence.

A whole new crop of constitutional lawyers have energised themselves to challenge the existence of the RCCC in front of the justices. Today, they exude the same energy and adherence to principles as did veterans like Kusum Shrestha and Ganesh Raj Sharma when they challenged the Panchayat.

In a nutshell, the lawyers defending the RCCC have argued that Article 127 does provide His Majesty with the authority to appoint the commission. The opposition contends that the royal prerogative does not exist on this matter and that the RCCC is simply unconstitutional.

Perhaps in the interest of a case presently being heard by the highest court in the land we should keep our own counsel. But at a time when the people have been abandoned by so many institutions of state and society, a sense of national relief and hope is beginning to coalesce around the institution of the Supreme Court of Nepal.

The aid precipice

Unless the government is able to rejuvenate the reform process the World Bank will have to move the Nepal program to the 'low case'

In 2002, the World Bank agreed to increase the volume of its assistance to Nepal several fold. This decision recognised the emergence of significant reforms in banking, primary

GUEST COLUMN
Ken Ohashi



education, health care, telecommunication, anti-corruption and public expenditure management, among other areas.

A year later, the World Bank even provided budget support of

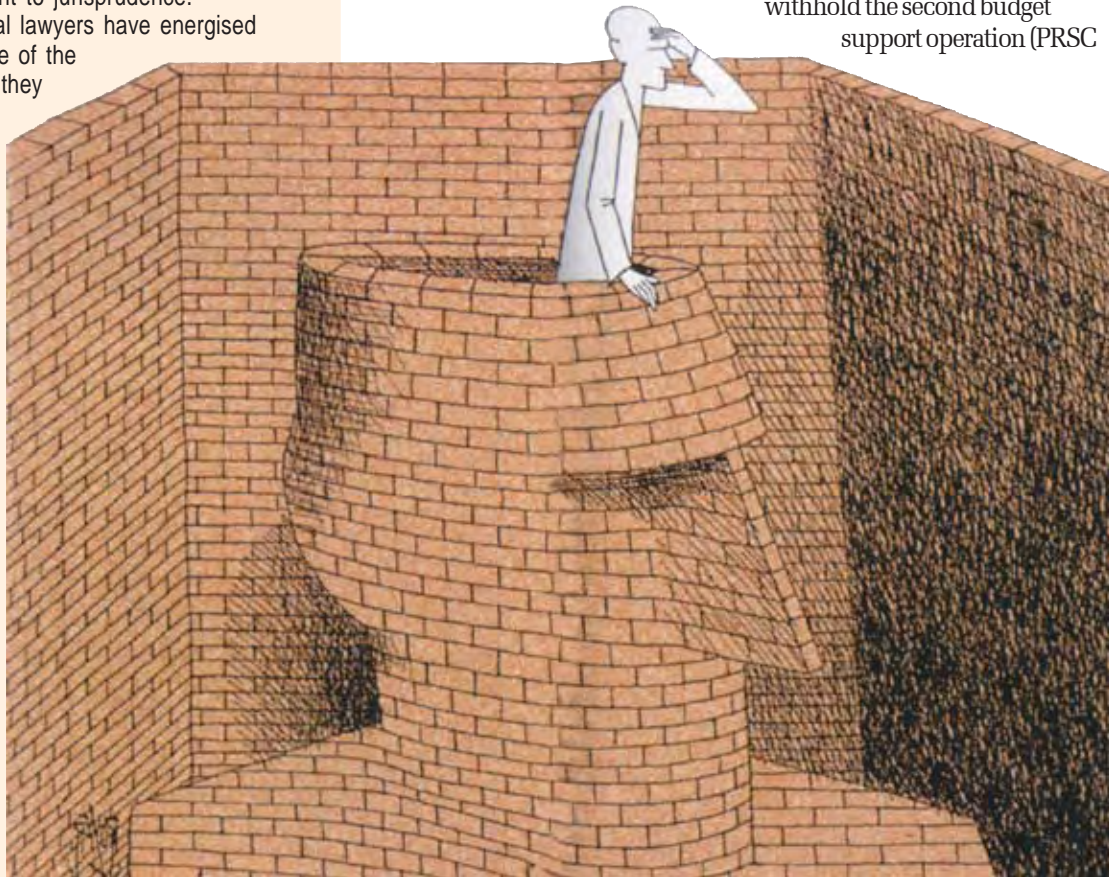
some \$ 70 million in the form of the first Poverty Reduction Support Credit (PRSC). Despite the political uncertainties and the conflict, there was a measure of optimism that these reforms would address some of the fundamental constraints to Nepal's development.

In the days after the royal proclamation of 1 February, some donor representatives, human rights activists and others have argued that the World Bank should cut back its support to the government and in particular withhold the second budget support operation (PRSC

II) until significant progress was made on the political front. These skeptics claimed that PRSC can be seen as an endorsement of the political situation in Nepal. The World Bank did not agree with such a stance, for it does not link its support to political developments. The Bank said it would continue to provide aid to Nepal as long as its government sticks with the reform process and is able to sustain development activities.

Seven months into the new political situation, the World Bank is deeply concerned that these two key conditions have not been met. This could lead to a sharp reduction in the Bank's assistance to Nepal. To be fair, the slowdown in the pace of reforms happened last year, when a coalition interim government took the helm. But some people expected, quite rationally, that the new government would accelerate the reform process. After all, King Gyanendra himself made it clear that the new government was committed to continuing economic reforms, accelerating poverty reduction and fighting corruption. Besides, many argued that, lacking in parliamentary legitimacy, the new government had every reason to deliver good public services and development programs, and build 'performance legitimacy.'

While some good reform initiatives that had started earlier continued to be implemented, few new reform initiatives of



LETTERS

REPUBLICAN KINGDOM

CK Lal is one of my favourite columnists. However, in his State of the State ('22 May, 4 October, 1 February', #264) he seemed to be out of touch with reality. Does he still think a republic is yet to come in Nepal? If it's true that 80 percent of Nepal is under Maoist control then it has been a republic for quite some time. Only the remaining section can therefore be considered a kingdom. However, many who say they are republicans have not been able to stay in the republic and have taken refuge in the kingdom. And many republicans in the kingdom have not dared go and reside in the republic.

R R Misra, Lalitpur

● It is hard to believe how easily the Nepali media published aggressive viewpoints (Letters, #264) against those in power, especially if one compares their silence towards Maoist wanna-be dictators and foreign opportunists. When King Gyanendra expanded his cabinet in July 2005 with a number of people of ill repute, it was a matter of surprise to all Nepalis. However, one must really be foolish to believe that Nepalis will be better off replacing the centuries old institutions of monarchy with the likes of Prachanda and Baburam, or authoritarians in democratic garb like Girija Koirala, or crepe diem Madhab et al. While King Gyanendra has to be more

selective in his choice of ministers, current political party bosses must admit and apologise publicly for their gross failure to work for the best interest of Nepalis and handover the party leadership to the younger generation. As things stand, the so-called seven party 'movement' is undemocratic, and is bound to fail. The rebel leaders should be brought before the International Court of Justice in The Hague and prosecuted for their atrocities. Mass murders can't become national leaders. And Nepali intellectuals and media should make sound arguments rather than taking an overtly aggressive political tone or rallying behind foreigners.

B Giri, email

● Its a favourable time for all of us to make peace in the country, the latest declaration of a three-month ceasefire by the Maoists must be utilised for paving the path for peace, everybody should seize the opportunity. That is what the Nepali people want, let the past be past and let us live and let live.

Razesh Poudel, email

● Reading 'Joi-poi' in your letters section (#264) I was reminded that a marriage is like a 'Dilli ka laddoo: khaoge to pachhtaoge, nahi khaoge to bhi pachhtaoge'. If a wife doubts the fidelity of her husband or vice versa the marriage is bound to hit the rocks. So the ideal

solution to restore conjugal bliss in this so-called marriage is to go for a competent team of marriage counsellors without racial discrimination and with apologies to self-proclaimed *rastrabadis*.

G Rimal, Nattu Tattu Tole

ASTRONOMICAL

It is really great to know that now we have a good column for Nepali stargazers thanks to Mr Kedar Badu ('September sky', #263). This new column will be useful to students, teachers and other enthusiasts alike. But due to unavailability of telescopes not everybody can admire the night sky. If the government or any other institution can help with equipment it would enhance the popularity of astronomy within Nepal.

Pradipta Shrestha
Kosmandu Astronomical Society
www.kosmandu.org

● Despite the love-hate relationship that your readers have with Kunda Dixit's Under My Hat, I personally find the back page quite refreshing. Loved the latest 'All the news that didn't fit' (#264). Mr Dixit, sir, I want to smoke whatever it is you're smoking when you write these columns!

Deep S Rana, City Police Office,
Kathmandu

BLAME GAME

Kiran Nepal's 'Getting over the blame game' in your business section (#264) presents a very alarming picture of the

state from the captains of industry. All of them have sounded the alarm bell but only Rajendra Khetan (the scion of the Mohan Khetan group) has the courage to call a spade a spade by confessing on their behalf: "The entrepreneurs have themselves built a negative image by doing politics instead of business, fuelling conflict with each other, cheating banks and not delivering." Has anyone yet invented a yardstick with which to measure whether anyone is a willful or unwilling defaulter? Isn't it better to get rid of such unscrupulous elements in order to clean up the industry? How about handing them over to foreign direct investors from China, as letter writer Dan Prayag suggested in Letters (#264). That will not only be a shot in the arm for our sick industries but also bring fresh external financial resources as well. Well done, Ramesh Nath. No more worries, Madhukar. The Chinese are coming! And if they do, the Indians can't be far behind and happy days will be back again.

D Gajraj, Maharajganj

KHASTO

I was quite pleased to hear about Gautum Rana bringing back the Khastos. I live in Vermont and on chilly days I like to wrap myself in my old Dhaka Pacheura. Any chance he would try to market that to the Nepali community living in the US? I will be the first in line.

Chandrakala

significance have been launched since 1 February. In fact, there are indications that there may even be pressures to reverse reform gains. Especially after the RCCC verdict on the Melanchi case, many civil servants seem fearful of making even routine decisions to sustain development activities.

The World Bank is in the process of reviewing its Country Assistance Strategy (CAS). As in the past, it strongly links the overall assistance level to the policy performance of Nepal, or its ability to use money well to further its development objectives. In the ‘base case’, the annual range of assistance was set at \$ 120-200 million. If the reforms slip significantly, then assistance would be lowered to a ‘low case’ and the annual commitment level will be sharply reduced to a range of only \$ 0-50 million. In the low case, there would not be any budget support.

I have had many rounds of discussions with senior HMGN leaders about pending reform actions over the last several months. Promises of imminent actions have been made time and again. But few concrete actions have been taken. Therefore, unless the government is able to rejuvenate the reform process in the coming weeks, the World Bank will have to conclude that HMGN’s priorities are elsewhere and that the effectiveness of HMGN as a promoter of development is slipping. In such a situation, the Bank would have to move the Nepal program to the low case.

What is at stake in terms of aid is big. First of all, Nepal would lose about \$ 100 million or more in new assistance every year from the World Bank alone, or about six percent of HMGN’s total Fiscal Year 2005/06 budget. That loss would include PRSC II (\$ 70 million or more), which is the most powerful financial support the World Bank can give to HMGN’s development efforts, for it disburses in one cash payment, unlike conventional projects which disburse over many years.

But the financial loss will not stop there. Recently, the IMF and the World Bank determined that

Nepal is eligible for debt relief for the so-called ‘Heavily Indebted Poor Countries’ (HIPC). Rough calculations show that if Nepal qualifies for this benefit, it may stand to gain around \$ 30 million a year in debt service reduction right now and even more in the future. To qualify for these debt relief measures, however, Nepal’s reform program needs to be on track.

The bigger loss, of course, comes from the slowing down of the development process itself. The kind of reforms that have been stalled and are causing the World Bank to reconsider its stance are really designed to improve public services to average Nepali citizens, to improve transparency and accountability, and to create a better economic environment for job creation. There may be some measures that are more difficult to implement in this highly charged political environment. But other measures should have broad public support and immediate benefits in many cases. Why they have proven so difficult to implement is a mystery.

The flipside of the ‘politically neutral’ position of the World Bank is that it would not continue to provide funding to this government on account of political considerations. Yes, we understand that the country faces a serious domestic challenge from the insurgents whom the government calls ‘terrorists’. Some donor countries may be willing to help the government deal with this problem with more generous aid.

For the World Bank, however, that is not a justification for financial support. Our support is for development, which appears to have been relegated to the back seat. Some senior leaders of this government have said that no country has died from the lack of aid. True. But, the issue is, what kind of life would Nepalis have in the absence of the strong commitment to reforms and development? ●

Ken Ohashi is the World Bank Country Director for Nepal

Losing mystique

It’s a right royal mess

It will soon be three years since King Gyanendra dismissed Sher Bahadur Deuba for being “incompetent” because he failed to hold elections within the constitutionally stipulated period. The country is no closer to national elections today. Meanwhile, the king crisscrosses

the country in televised tours. This week he was in central Nepal, as far away from New York as could be.

His absence at the UN summit was a direct result of the declaration of unilateral ceasefire by the Maoists, reluctance of world leaders to ‘seek an audience’ with the king despite intense lobbying and indications that the streets of Manhattan were going to resonate with anti-monarchist slogans.

Instead, the royal helihopping this week seems to have been hastily arranged to divert attention

xenophobia. The king says the nation should be the meeting point of all nationalist forces. However, the nation imagined by the constitution is in shambles and state power is the monopoly of family loyalists.

In the absence of rule of law and functioning democracy, nationalism is an impulse of the ill-educated, the schizophrenic and the chauvinist. It’s just a rabble-rousing technique of imagined outside enemies to intimidate rivals at home. A return to constitutionalism and democracy is the only way to unify nationalism. And political parties are institutions that can mobilise diverse people under just ideas and shared ideals.

But since October Four, monarchists have been treating parties and not the Maoists as their real enemies. Since political nobodies wouldn’t dare do this without a wink from their patrons in the palace, it can be safely assumed their rhetoric has royal sanction.

In the absence of a political structure to support his ambitions to reign and rule, the king has tried to bedazzle the people with his presence. Waving at crowds, nodding at the hoi polloi and hugging babies. This can be counter-productive for the monarchy: demagoguery makes the monarchy lose its mystique without a commensurate gain of popular legitimacy. When he descends to active politics the people will begin to wonder about his divinity.

The surface of our collective national pool looks

calm because it is stagnant. But underneath, there is uncertainty and chaos and the monarch is being sucked into the vortex of his own making. Nepal’s friends are worried and its enemies are ecstatic. To extricate himself and the country out of this quagmire, the king must find a way to hand the state back to the people’s representatives soon.

The greatest quality of a statesman rests not in knowing what concessions to make but recognising when to make them. Dismantling the Wall of Democracy will not keep a restive population quiet, its flame will not be doused by water cannons. Empty slogans will not inspire unwilling people to make sacrifices for a transcendental institution gone plebeian. Whatever other role a ceremonial monarch may have in an evolving republic, addressing mass rallies is definitely not one of them. ●

STATE OF THE STATE
CK Lal



RAHUL SINGHANIYA/NEPALNEWS.COM

from the cancelled summit. Like all chief executives, the monarch will be judged by what he does and not by what he says. Politicians can get away with rhetoric, a monarch who craves an active role has to deliver results to justify it. Unfortunately, performance-wise this royal regime makes the Deuba administration look like Singapore in comparison.

The country is no closer to peace, good governance, corruption control or ‘meaningful’ democracy in the past three years. Not that we had any doubts about creeping authoritarianism but this blatant disregard for all accepted norms has exceeded our worst fears.

Now that the Maoists have stolen the thunder with their ceasefire, monarchists are once more beating the tin drum of paranoid patriotism and

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KIRAN PANDAY

Naming and shaming

Grading countries on progress in meeting development targets may goad them to do better

KUNDA DIXIT

When Nepal's prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala attended a summit of world leaders in New York in September 2000 he signed the UN Millennium Declaration pledging to meet timebound and measurable targets to reduce deprivation in Nepal by 2015.

Called Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) world leaders agreed in each of their countries to reduce poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote equality between men and women, reduce by two-thirds child deaths, bring down the number of women dying at childbirth by three-fourths, halt and reverse the spread of AIDS, TB and malaria, and raise living standards without destroying the ecology.

All this was to be achieved within 15 years. World leaders are reconvening in New York this week to review progress in the past five years towards meeting those goals. But Koirala is not in New York. Neither is King Gyanendra, which is just as well because Nepal is at the bottom of the heap.

To be sure, we have made progress in meeting at least four of the goals and will probably achieve those targets by 2015. If the statistics are to be trusted, the surprising thing for many is that despite the conflict Nepal's performance isn't worse than it is. But there is a real danger of reversal of the gains of the 1990s if the conflict drags on. Nepal's modest achievements were directly related to better service delivery after 1990, and delays in restoration of grassroots democracy could hinder target fulfilment.

Last week in Manila, the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) issued a regional report card to name and shame countries that are not going to meet targets. They divided the region into three categories: those that have already achieved targets, those that are off track but making very slow progress, and countries that are going backward.

The good news is that Nepal is not regressing. The bad news is that in many of the indicators we are the worst-performer in South Asia, as bad as war-ravaged Afghanistan. On the most basic indicator of extreme poverty and hunger, Nepal scores last with 48.3 percent of underweight children—even lower than Afghanistan which is at 48 percent.

The questions is will these failing grades goad Nepal to do better? In Manila last week, ESCAP Secretary General Kim Hak-Su (pictured) praised Nepal for "taking the millennium development goals very seriously" but added that it



KUNDA DIXIT

Not so bad

Nepal's development prospects don't look as dire as the doomsday scenarios predict

Nepal has made significant progress over the last 15 years in reducing poverty, improving access to education, health services, drinking water, promoting biodiversity conservation and alternative energy.

What is even more remarkable is that these have been achieved despite political instability and the armed conflict. Even though some serious challenges remain in addressing inequity and exclusion to ensure that the focus remains on uplifting the marginalised poor, deprived and excluded communities, it is clear that we are on the right track.

Nepal has integrated the Millennium Declaration and is committed to the achievement of its goals by 2015. In the first assessment report of 2002, it looked like only two of the millennium targets were likely to be achieved. The second report brought out this year says that,

COMMENT

Shankar P Sharma



we are on track to meet five of the seven goals.

Access to safe drinking water, infant and child mortality, poverty reduction by half are likely to be achieved, whereas maternal mortality and gender equality could be achieved with some extra effort in the next decade. Only reducing HIV/AIDS and ensuring universal primary education looks unachievable by 2015.

Today, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) are no longer regarded as just a buzzword among planners, decision makers and civil society in Nepal. There is increased integration of targets and indicators in the national plan, in sectoral and donor strategies.

There are several reasons why Nepal's development prospects don't look as dire as the doomsday scenarios. The decline in poverty has had a direct impact on other parameters, as families spend more on education and health as soon as incomes rise. Literacy levels, pre and ante-natal care improved with rise in income levels.

There was a jump in health and education facilities: the number of health posts increased from 23,000 and 1,100 to 39,000 and 4,400 respectively between 1990 and 2005. Infrastructure development was dramatic with the road network more than doubling to 17,000 km in the last 15 years. This had a strong impact on agricultural productivity, wages and availability of services. Increased awareness through the expansion of radio, tv and newspapers had a positive impact on health and education indicators.

The impact of education was most dramatic among women—mothers who had passed SLC show infant mortality rates of 11 for every 1,000 live births, whereas it is at 84 among illiterate mothers. Greater involvement of private sector in health and education has benefited mostly the middle class and the rich, but the investment and accessibility in these sectors has increased significantly.

The main challenge is consolidating on these gains and finding a resolution to the conflict which could not just halt progress but also reverse past gains. Foreign aid could decline because of political problems, low disbursement and weak governance. Diversion of development spending to security, a decline in revenue from a stagnant economy and rising income gaps could be problems.

We are mostly on track in quantity to meet the millennium goals on accessibility to drinking water and some other health and education indicators but there isn't sufficient focus on quality. ●

Dr Shankar Prasad Sharma is the vice-chairman of the National Planning Commission

needed to really catch up.

On universal primary education by 2015 and for female literacy Nepal is on track to meet the millennium goals. Progress in child and infant mortality is slow but with extra effort we could still reduce the deaths by two-thirds in ten year's time. Nepal's maternal mortality rate is one of the highest in Asia, but the numbers of women dying at child birth has been going down and the UN estimates we can meet the goal of reducing it by three-fourths by 2015.

Where Nepal is actually regressing in its anti-AIDS effort and in providing safe drinking water. The ESCAP-ADB report clusters countries by performance in meeting millennium targets. Of the 55 countries in the region, half are off track for more than half their indicators. Five Asia-Pacific countries are in danger of not meeting even one of the high-priority targets (Afghanistan, East Timor, Papua New Guinea, Uzbekistan and Mongolia). Nepal is not one of them, but only by the skin of its teeth.

The *Nepal MDG Progress Report 2005* released last week by the National Planning Commission (NPC) assesses the most recent data from the world Bank's National Living Standards Survey which were not fully included in the ESCAP-ADB report. It concludes that the country is likely to meet the targets on poverty, child mortality, tuberculosis and access to safe drinking water, and potentially meet the goals set for hunger reduction, gender equality, maternal health and malaria. (See p 5) But even by the NPC's own estimates, at the rate we are going Nepal is unlikely to achieve universal primary education and arrest the spread of AIDS.

Another UN report released this week, *Human Development Report 2005*, ranks countries by the Human Development Index and Nepal scores above Bangladesh and below Pakistan by climbing four points from 140

to 136 out of 177 countries. The reason seems to be better performance on poverty, but since HDI also uses freedom and democracy parameters, Nepal may again drop in the list next year.

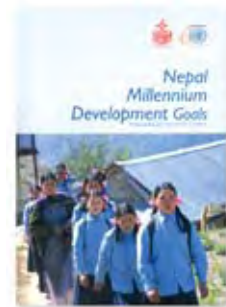
Indeed, what is surprising is that despite the conflict, political instability, economic stagnation and growing inequality, the number of Nepalis categorised as absolutely poor dropped from 42 percent in 1996 to 31 percent by 2004. The reasons: remittances from Nepalis working abroad, income from labour, increase in economically active population in the non-farm sector with the spread of roads and rapid urbanisation. ●



A Future Within Reach
ESCAP UNDP, ADB, Bangkok 2005



Human Development Report 2005
UNDP New York, 2005



Nepal Millennium Development Goals,
Progress Report 2005
HMG/NPC and United Nations Country
Team, 2005

Computer on credit

Mercantile Solution has teamed up with Himalayan Bank to offer a nation-wide computer loan scheme. The loan will require a down payment of 30 percent with the balance to be paid over 12-18 months at an eight percent interest rate. The scheme will be available at all Mercantile dealers. Mercantile Personal Computer (PC) is ISO 9001:2000 certified and comes with a two-year parts replacement warranty.

Flying again

Austrian Airlines resumed its Vienna-Kathmandu service on 15 September after its four month off-season break. The airline has switched to Boeing 767s from Airbus 340s and aims to take advantage of the autumn hike in tourist arrivals.

Austrian operates the flight once a week except for October and November, when it offers two flights weekly.

Focus on health

Deurali Janata Pharmaceuticals has started a new division called Suswasthya that will be responsible for the company's drugs aimed at treating long-term diseases related to the heart and nerves. Today, the company sells 80 different kinds of medicines. Established in 1988, Deurali Janata employs 174 people and is ISO 14001, ISO 9001 and WHO-GMP certified.

Swiss certified

Data Analysis and Software Solutions (DASS) of Nepal has been awarded the ISO 9001:2000 certification for software design and development by SWISO, a Swiss certification body. Launched in 2003, DASS' services include: software engineering solutions, customized software development, design and development of information technology (IT) based systems and IT consulting.



Drive and fly

Buy a Proton, Daihatsu or Ssangyong Motors vehicle and you get a free holiday for two to Malaysia (three nights and four days) thanks to a promotion by Hansraj Hulaschand and Company and Bhudeo in association with Air Nepal International and Nabil Bank. Test-drive a vehicle from any of those carmakers and you could win free round-trip tickets to Malaysia. Other benefits included in this offer are financing of up to 90 percent at seven percent interest and a 50 percent discount on a NABIL Bank credit card.

NEW PRODUCTS

HEALTHY TEETH: Dabur Nepal has introduced herbal toothpaste Babool in the market. The product contains extracts of pudina and Babul (Acacia Arabica) a herbal plant known for centuries for its medicinal value. The plant's extract helps fights plague and cures spongy gums while pudina has a role in preventing bad breath. Babool is available in 50g, 90g and 190g sizes, priced respectively at Rs 14, 25 and 35.



Tips to reach the top

Finding a first job is easy—launching a successful career is hard work

An article in the latest issue of *Himal Khabarpatrika* talks about the mismatch between the supply side and the demand side of the job market in Kathmandu. Human resource

STRICTLY BUSINESS

Ashutosh Tiwari

professionals say there are plenty of jobs for the right candidates. But most applicants just do not know how to approach the job market in a manner that makes them a winner.

They submit CVs riddled with irrelevant information. Few know the importance of doing internships and of acquiring the right set of skills. Others never think about how to present themselves effectively at interviews. And most fail to persuade potential employers about a match between what they can do and the demands of a particular job. What's more, many cannot give reasons as to why they are the best candidates available. The result is that most applicants end up wasting their and others' time and money. When things go wrong they find it easy to blame their own failures on the supposed unfairness of 'source-force'.

If landing a job is difficult for most first-timers, maintaining an upwardly mobile career path is triply so for most jobholders. Unless your father owns the business, doing well in a career these days means subjecting yourself to fiercer competition for fewer top positions. In today's job market, an ability to remain progressively employable for

much of one's working life has become a new skill in itself—something that's not as yet taught in Nepal's management schools. From what I have seen, most otherwise smart professionals repeatedly trip up in the career game and feel stuck for years in jobs they hate. Could they do something to be more strategic about their career path? The following observations might help.

I have noticed that most Nepali professionals think of careers and jobs as the same. They are not. You can have a job, even a series of jobs. But you may not

these days reward those who can show that they have mastered one or two things in depth at their present jobs and are ready to move up.

Developing a deeper set of skills should naturally lead you to seek more challenges and more high-visibility assignments. This is where three additional 'softer issues' come into play to make or break your career. First, you need to start mapping out how you see your next two to four years evolving and what you need to deliver to stay on course. If that requires changing jobs or getting promoted, then you need to work

toward those goals. Second, since no career develops in isolation, the challenge is to find someone senior and respected who can, based on your expertise and likeability, explain what is expected of you and champion you in the wider job market. I wouldn't underestimate the likeability factor. That's because most people enjoy working with competent people they like, not with jerks with a know-all attitude.

Finally, get plenty of feedback. True, giving and receiving feedback is not common in Nepal. That's because few people seek it, most get defensive when given and the practice of doling out meaninglessly airy praise

is widespread. At the least, all feedback can be seen as data points, even if they are outliers, which contribute to a richer understanding of what your career graph is telling you. Viewed this way, getting the first job is relatively easy. The hard part is having a career that allows you to use your talents to the fullest and also enjoy the work. ●



have a career that puts you on the path to the top. Some people move from one job to another and are happy being serial employees. But if it's a career that you are looking for, then you first need to build up skills and knowledge in at least two niches in your field in which you can claim expertise. Being a generalist as in one who knows many things has its charms. But market pressures

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King Gyanendra

A face-saving exit?

Ghatna ra Bichar, 14 September

The king justified his February First takeover by saying that the party leaders had failed to even produce hope for a better future. The international community took a wait-and-see position. After seven months, however, the king has not only proved more unsuccessful than the party leaders but has manoeuvred himself into such a situation that he is politically isolated. The gap has grown between the palace and world leaders.

Most of the countries that support people's democracy have become suspicious of the king's intentions. His efforts to control corruption have been deemed ineffective and politically influenced. There is no sign of peace returning. With rise in prices of all basic commodities, public dissatisfaction towards the king is also mounting. His efforts to gain international support have been in vain. Even the US government, which formerly appeared positive towards the palace, has started to speak out and is now looking for alternative ways to return the country to democracy.

Washington will not leave any stone unturned to put more pressure on the king. Always strongly opposed to the Maoists, the US government is against the parties' move to align with the rebels. But sources say that political leaders and civil society activists have been actively lobbying the US to support such an alignment, as the EU has always done. Even India has been disappointed with the palace, especially with the anti-India publicity and secret purchases of arms from China. The king, who seems alarmed that the democratic movement will grow, has few alternatives given the pressure from the United Nations, the US, aid agencies and the European Union to restore 'loktantra'. It has become clear that he cannot survive with backing solely from non-democratic countries such as Pakistan, China, Russia, North Korea and Burma.

The palace is now trying to find ways for the king's safe exit. General elections, the restoration of parliament and a cabinet reshuffle are all being carefully planned. The king strives to give the impression that he will accept a supporting role not because of pressure from the parties or others, but by his own free will. Yet he remains unwilling to completely hand over the government to the people. However, if the king wants to save the monarchy from serious mishap, he has no choice but to sacrifice his direct rule. The question is: will the extremist camp in the palace allow him to do so?

Question to the king

Janmanch, 11 September
Narpratap Sen

There was an overwhelmingly positive response from the public when the king made his brave move on February First, especially because people were tired of the frequent changes of governments led by the political parties. But on 1 February, all that changed. Many capable people who could have assisted the king were all sidelined and the wrong ones were brought in to join the government. Why was it so necessary for the king to appoint them?

All those chosen for the king's government have been out of touch for such a long time that they still believe in doing things the old way and don't understand that times have changed. And are these the people the king trusts so much? Everyone is asking the same question. Our annoyance knows no bounds when we think about Singha Durbar. Even genuine supporters of this government today are fed up and the reasons are obvious: the king is surrounded by sycophants. Take a recent act by

new Chief Secretary Lokman Singh Karki. During an address to government officials he said, "Unless you show your loyalty towards the crown, I can't be on good terms with you." Really? Has

any secretary, under-secretary, director or any senior government official ever expressed distrust towards the crown? It would have been better if Karki proved his loyalty by boosting the morale of government staff.

Why were people like Madhukar Shamsher, Durga Shrestha, Ram Narayan Singh, Khadag Bahadur GC, Senate Shrestha and Jagat Gauchan made ministers? Who was responsible for their appointments? Putting such people in government has resulted in the anger on the streets. How trustworthy is Ramesh Nath Pande? What roles have people like Salim Miya Ansari, Badri Mandal and Radhakrishna Mainali played so far? The king is only burdening himself by surrounding himself with people of such bad repute. He should no longer be impressed with people who praise him unnecessarily. There are tens of thousands of intelligent and efficient Nepalis who could assist him to move in the right direction. Instead, he has greedy, despicable, disreputable, sinful, useless and slave-minded people at his side.



Lord Camoys

Jana Aastha, 14 September

"A king can gain more honour through democracy than autocracy." These epic words were uttered earlier this month by Lord Camoys (former Lord Chamberlain) member of the UK House of Lords and a British royal who was a local guardian to both King Gyanendra and the late King Birendra during their college days in Britain. His visits to Nepal usually take place at the invitation of the palace whenever it is in crisis. He was here on the eve of King Birendra's decision to restore democracy in 1990 and suggested then that the king should not enforce autocratic rule. Now he has returned, at a time when an autocratic-minded palace has proved unsuccessful at using both political and diplomatic channels to stage a comeback. Lord Camoys arrived on 6 September and left after four days. During that time he is believed to have met the king. During a two-hour talk, Lord Camoys suggested to him that it would be better if he rectified his mistake since the February First takeover wasn't working. Prior to meeting the king, the 70-year-old peer had long discussions with well-known royalist leaders and several political figures about the future of the monarchy. He met Soaltee's Prabhakar Shumshere Rana and the RPP's Pashupati Shumshere Rana several times, offering them his insights about the responsibilities of the royal palace and the role it can play during such difficult times. His trip has already raised hopes, especially among those who still recall his 1990 visit. They believe that the king will make a positive move before Dasain.

Begging to live

Dristi, 13 September

PARBAT—After Maoist area member Trilochan Adhikari 'Prabesh' was killed in a security operation, his wife left to marry another man forcing their three children to beg on the streets of Jungkhu Deurali for survival. The eldest, Srijana, said they survived on what they could find in the house for a couple of months and have already used the 30kg of rice the Maoists gave them. The children also used to eat bananas growing in their backyard but these were recently destroyed by insects. The youngsters say that since March they have been living on food collected with the help of villagers and have even spent their scholarship money to buy food. Local groups have started a grain collection campaign to feed the children and have also repaired the roof of their house. The children go in search of temporary work on Saturdays. When they are successful, they receive Rs 40 for an entire day's work. Now another obstacle has arisen—the family is in debt on a loan they took from Rastriya Banijya Bank some five years ago and bank sources say their home will be auctioned off if it is not repaid in a few days.

Diplomatic tremor

Kantipur, 13 September

Residents of Panipokhari are livid due to construction of a new building for the American embassy in Maharajganj. To make the building earthquake resistant, workers are driving cement pillars into the ground with the help of a crane, which has triggered cracks in more than two dozen buildings in the area. As soon as local residents saw the damage, they protested and the embassy promised to stop construction and pay for repairs. In protest, hundreds of people gathered in front of the embassy last week but officials there still have not granted them a hearing. "As soon as they start driving the pillars in, it's like an earthquake of 7 on the Richter scale has hit the area," says Sudharshan Gurung.

Not too late

Excerpts of a report submitted by chairman Surya Bahadur Thapa to his Rastriya Janashakti Party's central working committee meeting, Kantipur, 12 September

The Nepali Congress appears to have deviated from its centrist course to a leftist approach after replacing constitutional monarchy with democratic socialism in its statute during its recent general convention. The CPN (UML) too has abandoned its critical support for constitutional monarchy and has been favouring a republican set-up and constitutional assembly.

The shift in the two parties' policies and the Maoists' unilateral ceasefire have created a new political spectrum. This novel environment paves the way for the rebels to enter the cities and for the parties to reach rural areas where they can chant republican slogans. The government does not seem to be worried about this development. Instead, it has adopted a one-point strategy to wipe out the parties that advocate the supremacy of the people.

A campaign has been launched to drag the king into never-ending controversy whereas the monarchy should have remained apart from all disputes and politics. With members of the ministers' council and regional and zonal administrators repeatedly raising questions about the king's commitment to multiparty democracy and the constitution, the ideal, value and the principles of constitutional monarchy have taken a severe blow.

After the latest royal move, it was claimed there would be signs of reforms and positive developments in peace and security. So far, there are no reasons for hope. Every sector has been left in turmoil. The free press has come under attack.

But in the very midst of this crisis there is an opportunity for a peaceful solution. If the king and the parties clarify their respective positions and refrain from repeating their past mistakes and social malpractices and if the king pledges to be a constitutional monarch, the two sides will be able to create a common forum.

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"Ouch!"
Ceasefire.

Samaya, 15 September

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



"Lakhdar Brahimi (special advisor to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan) is holding discussions with the US and India in order to gather their support and goodwill to resolve the conflict in Nepal."

Kul Chandra Gautam, UN assistant secretary-general on the BBC's Nepali service, 15 September

“We need storage systems for hydropower”

Interview with Sandip Shah, chairman of the Independent Power Producers Association, in *Abhiyan*, 12-19 September

अभियान

Abhiyan: It is said big energy projects are more expensive and Nepal would benefit more from small power plants.
Sandip Shah: That's not completely true. Small, medium and large-scale projects all have their roles. For example, small hydropower projects can bring electricity to remote areas outside the national grid while medium projects can meet domestic and industrial power demand. But none of these can store water and generate power when water levels in rivers go down.

So why do we still have power cuts?
The only reservoir project for hydropower is Kulekhani. All the others are 'run-of-the-river' types. In winter, when the demand for power is highest, the flow in the rivers goes down and power production is reduced by half. In the monsoon, these schemes run at their optimum capacity but our transmission capacity is not up to mark and can't handle all that power. To solve both problems we need medium-scale storage projects in the 150-500 megawatt range and aim for 30 percent excess capacity to ensure system stability and upgrade the transmission system.



KUNDA DIXIT

How come with all our hydropower potential, electricity in Nepal is the most expensive in the world?
Our projects are located in remote areas and expensive access roads are part of the cost. State-run plants are built with soft credit from donors but the government is charging a high interest rate to the companies running them and that cost is passed down to the consumer. Also, in such projects we have to accept consultants, contractors and expensive equipment according to the wishes of the donors. The contractors also set up cartels and this drives prices up. Private power producers operate with a business outlook but the investment needed to generate power in the early stages of the project is high. They also have to hand back the plants to the government within 30-40 years even though the average lifespan of a project is 75-100 years.

Why aren't local banks investing in power projects?
Hydropower projects are highly capital-intensive and beyond the scope of the Nepali capital market. Because of the limits to banking liquidity and Rastra Bank rules, banks can't invest in more than one project of up to 50 megawatts in size simultaneously. In the absence of a more liberal investment regime, foreign capital is necessary.

Are outside investors in hydropower getting disillusioned?
Nepal still isn't on the international investment map. Investors are worried about the country's rules and their laws, which change all the time and there is an erosion of confidence because of poor implementation of policies and non-adherence to contractual obligations. NEA is the main buyer of power but there are all kinds of other players: the Ministry of Water Resources, Electricity Tariff Regulatory Commission, National Planning Commission, Electricity Development Board, etc. Because their responsibilities aren't clear, there is duplication and even triplication. NEA must be made autonomous and profit-oriented. If the Minister of Water Resources remains NEA chairman, there will be political interference. The board must be turned into a purely professional body.



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The King of Good Times

Will Nepal really benefit as a transit for India-China trade?

Traversing the middle ki



MIN BAJRACHARYA

PRAGYA SHRESTHA

Ever since King Gyanendra proposed Nepal as a transit for India-China trade after Jakarta's Afro-Asian Summit in March there has been renewed interest in north-south trans-Himalayan highways. But there are also doubts about whether our giant neighbours actually need such a link, and more importantly, if Nepal would really benefit.

Bilateral trade between India and China reached \$ 13 billion last year and is expected to double in five years. India is emerging as an exporter of foodgrains and China is a nett importer. Lhasa will be connected to China's industrial heartland by a railroad to be completed in 2007. Nepal could take advantage of its strategic location to offer transit facilities and benefit from trade and taxes. At present only the 400-km Birganj-Kathmandu-Kodari serves as a highway

link between India and China but there is no through-traffic. There are possibilities of developing other north-south routes, of which the 265-km Birganj-Kathmandu-Rasuwa could be completed the quickest. But there are seven other routes, most of which follow north-south Himalayan rivers and could shorten the distance between Tibet and northern India. The Chinese are currently helping build a 22 km section between Syabru and the border. When the Galchhi-Trisuli section of

the road is finished in two years, it will effectively open the Birganj-Trisuli-Rasuwa link. "This will be the fastest, most efficient road corridor connecting Nepal's northern and southern borders at present," says Durga Prasad KC, director general of the Department of Roads. However, the ancient trade route between India and Tibet through Nathu La in Sikkim is due to open for crossborder traffic next month and would be the shortest distance between Lhasa and

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ngdom

Calcutta. The Chinese are completing a highway from Lhasa to Nathu La to connect to India and are unlikely to go for another road through Nepal at present.

A Kathmandu-based Chinese expert told us: “China will opt for the Nepal transit only if it is cheaper, but a feasibility needs to be done first and find if there is real benefit for Nepal.”

However, Nathu La is far from India’s manufacturing belt and a Nepal link could be shorter. At 3,500 m Nathu La is also snowbound for four months in a year and the serpentine highway needs to be widened to take multi-axle container trucks.

Nepal’s proposed Kosi Highway from Rani-Kimathanka could be a faster all-weather road link between India and China with an easier gradient. The other attractive north-south highway is the Sunauli-Kusma-Jomsom-Lo Manthang route of which an 18 km section from Korala to Lo Manthang is already complete and there are sections along the Kali Gandaki that are under construction.

But in the final analysis, the feasibility of a road system needs to take into account the level of future trade between Tibet and India (which at present is negligible) as well as the comparative cost with sea transport.

“The challenge is to design a transit service that can compete with sea transport on cost so that it is attractive and efficient to promote bilateral trade between India and China,” says Kamal Raj Pande, at DoR’s Planning and Design Section which is trying to look at optimal routes that would also promote domestic integration.

Indeed, Nepali planners have to look at whether it is better to invest scarce resources in building highway links that serve domestic priorities. One such link would be the fast-track from Hetauda to



In Transit

1	Birganj-Naubise-Kathmandu-Dolalghat-Kodari 393km
2	Birganj-Patlaiya-Fast Track Kathmandu-Kodari 292km
3	Birganj-Patlaiya-Trisuli-Rasuwa 265km
4	Sunauli-Mirmi-Kusma-Jomsom-Korala 467km
5	Rani-Hile-Tumlingtar-Kimathanka 419km
6	Janakpur-Dolakha-Lamabagar 295km
7	Nepalgunj-Surkhet-Jumla-Simikot-Hilsa 436km
8	Kechana-ilam-Phidim-Taplejung-Olangchungola 460km
9	Brahmadeb-Jogbuda-Darchula-Tinkar 415km

LONG AND WINDING ROADS: The Mugling junction along the Prithvi Highway shows how mountain roads need to follow rivers (*overleaf*)

The Dharan-Dhankuta Highway winds its way up the mountains in eastern Nepal (*below*).



PRAGYA SHRESTHA

Kathmandu which would save billions of rupees a year on fuel alone.

Some experts doubt that a China-India land trade route through Nepal is feasible at present. Tibet is sparsely populated and China’s industrial heartland is on its

eastern seaboard, 5,000 km away by train from Tibet. “Even if India and China were to find it feasible, the big question is whether Nepal would benefit from being a transit point,” says one senior Nepali official, “we need to build north-south

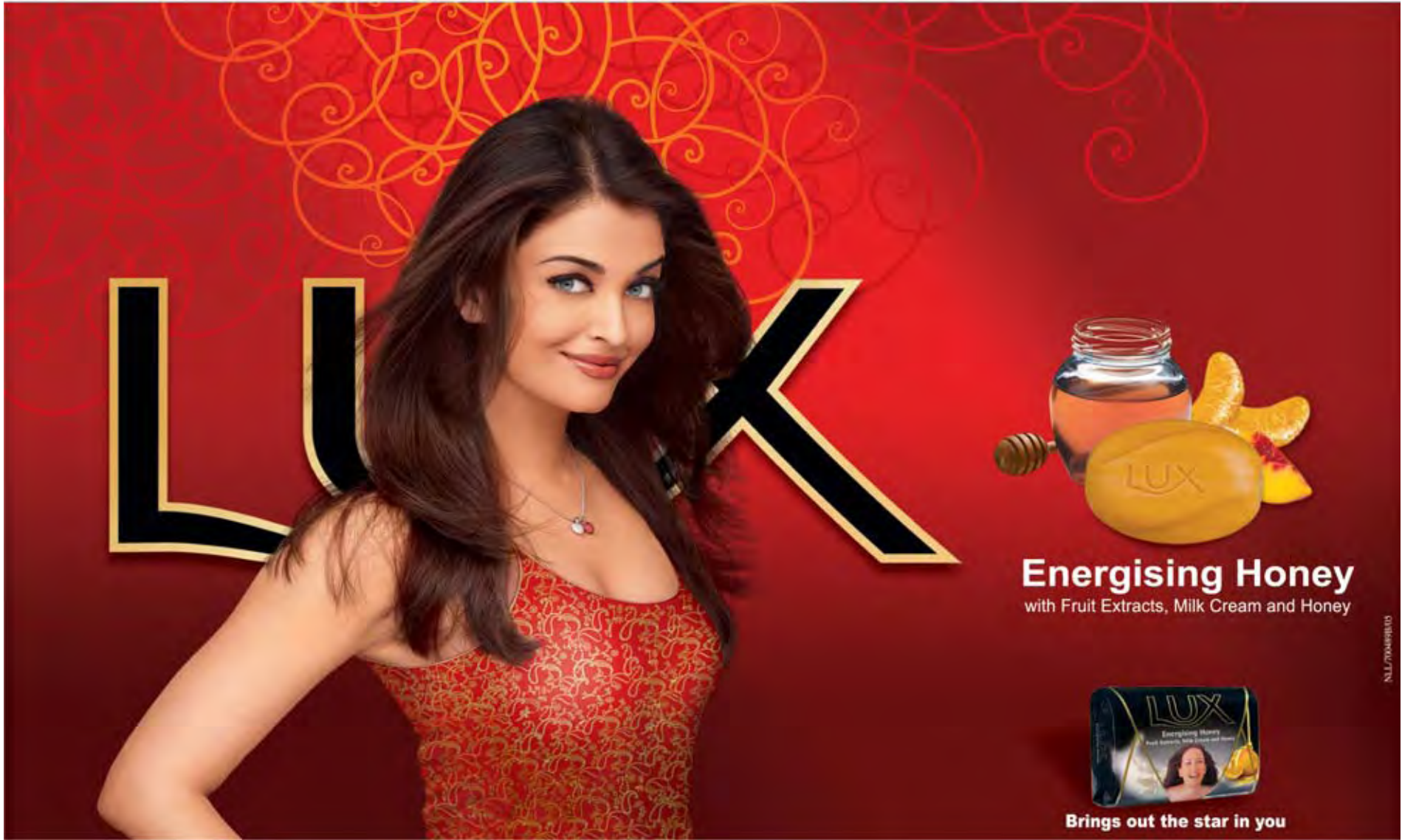
highways for our sake and according to our own priorities, not for India-China trade.”

It is clear that not enough homework has been done. India had formally conveyed its interest on transit rights through Nepal for its China trade at an inter-governmental meeting in Kathmandu in 2004. But Nepal hasn’t officially responded, and the subject hasn’t cropped up in India-China bilateral meetings. China agreed to developing Nepal transit highways during recent bilateral economic and trade talks in Beijing.

“The benefits to Nepal needs to be thought through,” says British highway consultant John Howell, “otherwise there is a risk that environmental damage from pollution and even HIV/AIDS incidence along transport corridors will outweigh the benefits.” Indeed, the Swiss have now stopped container trucks from trans-Alpine corridors between Germany and Italy. All containers must ride trains.

Although in the short-term it is hard to see big benefits from India-China trade for Nepal, transit highways could ultimately bring payback from taxes, trans-shipment services, jobs, fuel stations, better north-south connectivity and also stimulate investments in hydropower and decentralise Nepal’s development.

For now, though, Nepal may have to consider its own immediate domestic infrastructure priorities. One India-Nepal trade expert quipped: “There is the terrifying thought of Punjabi drivers pushing underpowered and overaged Tata trucks groaning and belching black smoke past Dhunche towards the Tibetan plateau.” ●



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Rashmila demystifies Kumari myths

A former Kumari tells her story of being a living goddess



MIN BAJRACHARYA

The innocent yet exotic, *gajalu* face of Nepal's living goddess, the Kumari, looking out of the wooden windows from her palace has inspired writers and photographers since time immemorial. Scott Berry is no exception: perhaps the only difference between him and many

others who have written about the goddess is that Berry was fascinated by the life of an ex-Kumari.

From Goddess to Mortal is the story of a former Kumari, Rashmila Shakya, who was chosen to be the living goddess at the age of four and spent eight years away from

her parents at Kumari Ghar living a life vastly different from that of a conventional young girl. The book describes her struggles as she makes the transition from the world of innocence to a life of common matters. This is also a young woman's quest to correct the world's exotic misconceptions about Kumaris.

A Kumari is said to represent the

BOOK
Mallika Aryal



Hindu goddess Durga. The first few

chapters of *From Goddess to Mortal* chart Rashmila's life and duties as a goddess, focussing on the festivals that are significant to a Kumari. No one describes the streets of Kathmandu better than Rashmila. As the reader follows the Indra Jatra procession through the eyes of a Kumari on a palanquin, the sights, sounds and smells of Hanuman Dhoka, Thamel, Kilagal Tahity, Jyatha, Asan Tol, Jana Baha and Indra Chok flood the reader's senses.

The book's most poignant section describes Rashmila's transition from the life of a Kumari to that of a normal 12-year-old. Life after Kumari Ghar is not easy for her. When she leaves her palace she is virtually illiterate. Put in Grade Two, she works doubly hard to catch up with her classmates, and the struggle continues through her teenage years. To the most part she succeeds, but at times reality hits her with a thud.

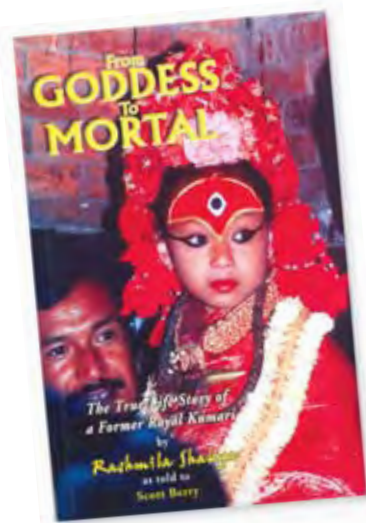
Berry, who has lived in Nepal for several years, is the author of *A Stranger in Tibet* and tells the former Kumari's story in simple yet vivid language. For her part, Rashmila uses *From Goddess to Mortal* for a few specific purposes. She is very critical of the media, both western and Nepali, for often resorting to clichés about the Kumari. For instance, she explains that she was never made to spend a night in a room with 108 freshly severed goat and buffalo heads to prove her courage. Nor did she have to undergo a particularly rigorous physical examination. Rashmila says she cannot claim the 32 signs of perfection that Kumaris are said to possess: "If unusually fair skin had really been one of the criteria, I wouldn't have stood a chance," she says.

Not only a critic, she also points out

that life for present and former Kumaris is improving—a goddess now has a chance at being educated while she is serving. But many institutional changes are still needed and Rashmila makes some suggestions: serving Kumaris need to be treated a little less like goddesses and more like normal young girls, while a scholarship to finance higher studies would cost the government much less than a pension for life. If such changes were to be put into place, Rashmila says she would have no qualms about advising other young girls to serve as a Kumari.

From Goddess to Mortal proves that a lot of the more spectacular stories we hear about Kumaris are wrong. The book succeeds in calling attention to reporters who are keen on writing stories about exotic lands without doing formal research and is a good example of how, with repetition, writers' misconceptions become accepted as the truth over the years.

It is also very clear from Rashmila's story that it is possible and not exceedingly difficult for a former Kumari to readjust to society, particularly with a little help from her family. ●



From Goddess to Mortal: The True Life Story of a Former Royal Kumari
Rashmila Shakya as told to Scott Berry
Vajra Publications
2005
152 pages
Soft cover Rs 650

Rashmila does not feel she was oppressed

Nepali Times: How did the idea to write *From Goddess to Mortal* come about?

Scott Berry: It is a long story that goes back to the 1980s when I was living with my family in Makhan Tole, not far from where Rashmila was living as Kumari. My daughters Maya and Laxmi were fascinated that a young girl, not much younger than them, was living the life of a goddess, a life that was so different than theirs. They used to go around the Kumari Ghar hoping to see her. One day Rashmila asked my daughters if they wanted to play.

Gradually, they developed a rather unusual friendship. Then we moved away and did not return for 15 years. When we did we had no idea who Rashmila was because we only knew her as Kumari. But we had lots of pictures of her. We showed her picture to one of the jewellers who recognised her and arranged for a meeting. At that time Rashmila did not know who we were but when we showed her our daughters' pictures she immediately recognised them as her old friends.

We became friends with the family. Rashmila told us that she was hoping to write a book about her life, largely because there are so many mistakes made by everyone who writes about Kumari. Some writers have said things like she has no playmates, she can get no education and she has to walk on a white cloth inside the Kumari Ghar.

Rashmila also wanted to write the book to show that with proper understanding and a bit of help from the family there is no reason why a former Kumari cannot be a normal person. Personally, I wanted to emphasise the lack of enmity between religions. One of the things I love about Nepal and Kathmandu in particular is that people here share temples and deities. Rashmila is a Buddhist girl who became a Hindu goddess. I think that is an important message of tolerance for the world when there is constant fighting between religions.

What are some of the other lessons of the Kumari story?

What Rashmila wants most is to have the misconceptions about Kumaris corrected. She has survived her experience as a Kumari very well. Today, she is a successful college student and has a good future ahead of her. Rashmila received very basic education when she was a Kumari. The situation was a little better for the Kumari who came after Rashmila because her father petitioned to the government to let her be given normal lessons while she was Kumari.

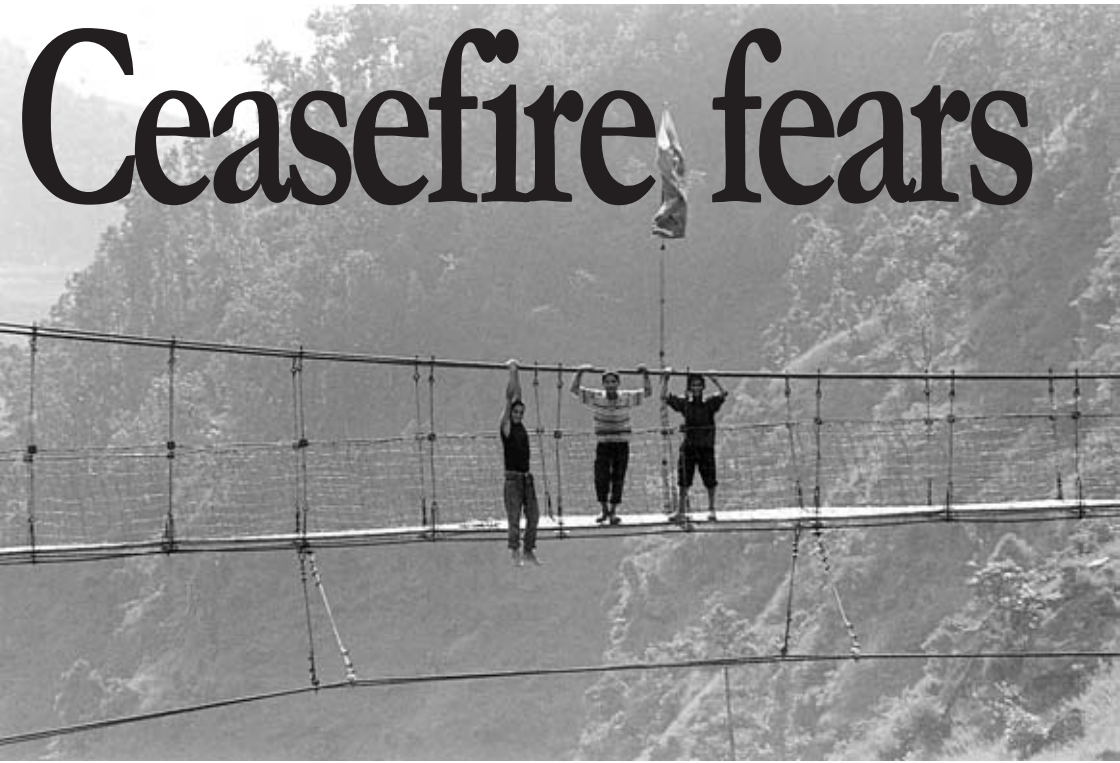
But Rashmila does not feel like she was oppressed or that her human rights were violated. Perhaps it depends on the personality of the girl involved. She is a happy student now and one would hardly recognise her as a former Kumari if they ran into her on the street today.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

What was the reaction of the Shakya family towards the book?

As I mentioned earlier, we haven't exposed any secrets that shouldn't be exposed. We haven't had any reactions from other Kumaris' families but we have had a good response from the Newari community and from the larger Nepali community. The guardian family of Kumari Ghar has reacted positively as well. We never wanted this book to be confrontational—we simply wanted to tell a girl's story.



SUBEL BHANDARI

SUBEL BHANDARI
in AACHHAM

Local Nepali Congress leader Tilak Bahadur Khatri does not bat an eye when the ceasefire is mentioned. For him, it’s just part of a good strategic game plan. “When the king can describe himself and parties as husband and wife, the Maoist ceasefire is neither a surprise nor is it of any good,” he declares. “Anything is possible.”

Instead, Khatri seems preoccupied with what is going to happen next in his little town of Jaygadh about three hours northeast of Sanphe Bagar. Locals here say that when the government failed to agree to the ceasefire, local Maoist cadres felt at risk and left the area’s villages to seek refuge in the far-flung hills. Villagers say they now feel even more unsafe and exposed because with the rebels gone, security forces are free to fill the vacuum.

“That’s what they usually do, come when Maoists are not around and trouble the villagers,” says shopkeeper Min Raj Timilsina. He remembers two years ago when Maoists attacked Sanphe Bagar and Mangalsen and the Armed Police Force (APF) retaliated against the locals. “We were all tortured. Whoever was not beaten in this town, let them speak. Three villagers were even killed.”

Locals blame DSP Abhaya Kumar Khatri and Inspector Bhim Kumar Chaudhary for the atrocities. The villagers’ faces change when they hear these names. “Show us the Maoists, they used to say. And where do we bring them Maoists from?” questions Prithvi Rawal. Although the polices’ behaviour improved after the two officers were transferred, the villagers are still terrified. “No one from the security forces has entered for a year. But who knows what will happen now,” Rawal added.

In inner Aachham, all new faces are suspect. Every visitor is stopped and interrogated. If they show written permission from the Maoists, the locals arrest them and hand them over to the rebels. “We can’t take chances and neither can we trust the security forces. With what we have been through, we are safer with the Maoists than with the security

forces,” they say. The Maoists have often made them take part in campaigns and they harass those who speak against the rebels. To travel east and north from Jaygadh locals need written permission from the rebels. “Jaygadh itself is their undeclared territory,” Min Raj Timilsina says.

Nobody dares speak against the Maoists. But if they do the rebels target them later. One Padam Bahadur Swar had to leave

Maoists have fled for the hills leaving locals anxious

town after he dared to speak against Maoist activities. “They burnt down his shop and he had to flee to Kathmandu,” neighbour Prithvi Rawal recollects.

Everyone is expected to help the revolution, voluntarily or otherwise. Local area-in-charge

LEFT DANGLING: Children play on a suspension bridge near Jaygadh, under a Maoist flag. APF Inspector DeB Bahadur Chand checks identification of cyclists on a peace tour at Sanphe Bagar.

Comrade Sangarsha points out a 65-year-old man carrying a jerry can of kerosene and a bag of sugar. “See how much the villagers love us,” he says. But after he left the shopkeeper spoke up, “What can we do, say no and be in their little black book? We just do what they say and do our work too simultaneously. It’s their country here.” Many villagers have stopped dreaming. Others say they are waiting for an overnight change that will lead to peace and prosperity. “In Nepal, sudden change overnight is not all that outlandish,” they say.

The people of Aachham are not ready to give up hope but the ceasefire doesn’t seem to offer any. ●



SUBEL BHANDARI

Maoists free soldiers

Sixty soldiers of the Royal Nepali Army who were abducted after Maoists attacked the army’s Karnali Highway construction camp in Pili of Kalikot on 7 August were freed late Wednesday.

They were released from Lamidanda in Jajarkot at the initiative of an eight-member team of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) who walked two days to mediate the release. The ICRC said its delegates walked back with the soldiers and ensured that all of them were returning of their own free will. They were handed over to the army at Jajarkot district headquarters late on Thursday.

“The ICRC’s confidential bilateral dialogue with the parties to the conflict was key to bringing the operation about,” said an agency statement. On Thursday itself, one policeman and a soldier were also handed over to the ICRC by the Maoists in Udayapur. The two had been captured separately in Lahan in late August. Since 2001, the ICRC has now secured the release of 208 policemen, soldiers and civil servants caputred by the Maoists in various incidents.

The army has claimed 64 soldiers were abducted in the Kalikot battle and four remain missing. Ninety-six people were killed in the clash, including 55 soldiers, according to a report released by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Wednesday. The report stated that the Maoists forcibly recruited villagers in Kalikot for the attack against mostly non-combatant soldiers recruited to build the highway. “The security personnel of the Pioneer Battalion were equipped with some weapons, general training and combat fatigues for self defence purposes and thus fought throughout the night,” concludes the NHRC report.

Sagarmatha resumes BBC Nepali

Radio Sagarmatha, Nepal’s pioneering public service radio, resumed its live relay of the BBC Nepali Service news program from Thursday saying it had valid permission from the government to do so. Bheri FM in Surkhet also resumed BBC news from Thursday and some of the other 12 stations used BBC are also expected to start their services. The government had stopped the relay of BBC Nepali service after the royal takeover on 1 February, and also banned all news and current affairs programs on FM. Broadcasters resumed news programs after the Supreme Court issued an interim order last month. The government still blocks the first 15 minutes of the BBC World Service news in English that is relayed by the state-owned Radio Nepal’s transmitters on 103 FM 24 hours a day.

Saving our mothers

Increased availability of maternal health services and facilities in Dang is saving the lives of a large number of mothers and their newborns, according to the UNICEF. “Last year alone, the health-care centres in the district were able to treat 344 life-threatening complications,” said Cecilia Lotse, UNICEF regional director for South Asia, who is visiting the region.

Nearly 30,000 Nepali children die yearly in their first month of life, the third highest rate in the world. Children, and mothers, die because they do not receive skilled care during delivery from doctors, nurses and midwives and because they do not receive emergency care when they develop life-threatening complications. Most women in Dang deliver babies at home so saving the lives of mothers and newborns will require promoting deliveries in institutions, with the help of skilled birth attendants and changes in attitudes, says UNICEF.

Ozone whole

Local environmental activists will mark the international day to preserve the ozone layer with a rally and seminar. Friday’s walking rally starts from Basantapur at 7.30 AM and will go around Hanuman Dhoka, Juddha Salik, New Road Gate, the post office and Sundhara.

मूल्य रु.१०

अभियान

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हरेक सोमबार

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गोखानुलको प्राविधिक परीक्षण पृष्ठ ५

गजद्वरे स्वामित्व बेचेर उद्योग चलाए पृष्ठ ७

जुट उद्घाटन २५ प्रतिशत घट्ने अनुमान पृष्ठ १०

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आजको अभियानका स्थानीय वितरकहरू: काठमाडौं उपत्यका: आरवी न्युज, न्यू रोड, ४२४४६७९, ४२३२७८४, पोखरा आरवी न्युज, नारायणगढ चौक, ०६१-५३८९१३

भरतपुर: आरवी न्युज, नारायणगढ चौक, ०६५-५३०६६८ विराटनगर: आरवी न्युज, महेन्द्र चौक, ०२१-५३३३८७



Ambassadors in New York are now working day and night to hammer out the details of the current UN reform proposals to be debated at the summit of heads of state. But whatever they manage to agree upon, as a long-time UN official I am conscious of how much the UN has changed since I joined 27 years ago.

If I had suggested to my superiors at that time that the UN would one day observe and even run elections in sovereign states, conduct intrusive inspections for weapons of mass destruction or set up international criminal tribunals and coerce governments into handing over their citizens to be tried by foreigners under international law, they would

Just another 'talk shop'?

have told me that I did not understand what the UN was all about. Yet the UN has done all of these things, and more, during the last two decades. It has administered territory, conducted

COMMENT
Shashi Tharoor



huge multi-dimensional peacekeeping operations with nearly 80,000 soldiers in the field and deployed human rights monitors to report on the behaviour of sovereign governments. In short, the UN has been a highly adaptable institution.

Today's reform imperatives can be traced to international divisions over the Iraq war. A 2003 poll in 20 countries revealed the UN's standing had declined in all of them. The UN's reputation suffered in the US because it did not support the Bush administration on the war—and in the 19 other countries because it was unable to

prevent the war.

As we face the new challenges of our time, let us not forget the old ones. The combination of poverty, drought, famine and HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa threatens more human lives than terrorism or tsunamis ever did. This summit must reaffirm the Millennium Development Goals and recommit the world to achieving these targets by 2015. There is no longer any excuse for leaving well over a billion people in abject misery.

To change the world, we must change too. The UN can be a much more effective instrument if its member states in the General Assembly and the Security Council are better organised and give clearer directives to us in the Secretariat—along with the flexibility to carry them out—and then hold us clearly accountable.

● (Project Syndicate)

Shashi Tharoor is a UN under-secretary general and author of *Bookless in Baghdad: And Other Writings about Reading*.

"It has failed the world's poor."

STEFANIA BIANCHI
in BRUSSELS

Development groups have slammed the UN summit outcome document agreed in New York on Tuesday as failing to rescue key commitments on poverty and the Millennium Development Goals.

Originally billed the 'UN Millennium +5 summit', the earlier objective of this week's gathering of world leaders in New York was to agree a new comprehensive framework to eradicate poverty. Shortly before the summit a 'core group' of ambassadors from more than 30 countries met to finalise a draft package of reforms for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) after weeks of wrangling. A meeting of the full, 191-member UN General Assembly endorsed it Wednesday morning.

The agreement was intended to spur the world community into a new era of collective security and aggressive action on global poverty and environmental protection. Instead, negotiators had to gut many of the commitments laid out earlier by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in order to reach a deal. The 35-page document provides for UN operations reforms, commitments by the richer nations to aid underdeveloped countries, the establishment of a new human rights council and creation of a peace-building commission to help stabilise countries emerging from armed civil conflict. But many civil society groups say the text falls short on development and describe the summit as a failure from the day it began.

International development agency ActionAid says that although the document affirms the existing MDGs, which set timetables to reduce poverty and urge countries to make concrete efforts to achieve the target of spending 0.7 percent of their gross national product for foreign aid, it does not commit countries that have not made progress into taking action.

"This summit has produced a half-baked plan that the world's poor will find difficult to stomach. Success has been redefined as the mere inclusion of text on the goals, this is both unacceptable and bizarre," Patrick Watt, senior policy officer at ActionAid said.

Aid agency Oxfam accused several countries of undermining the deal but cautiously welcomed the news that world leaders at the summit were poised to endorse a historic measure to help prevent future genocides. "Although the UN summit has so far agreed little on poverty reduction and nothing on small arms, important and significant progress has been made on the 'responsibility to protect' civilians from genocide and similar atrocities," Oxfam said Wednesday. ● (IPS)

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Senior Advisers Human Rights and Good Governance

The Danida Human Rights and Good Governance Advisory Unit (Danida/HUGOU) invites applications from qualified Nepali citizens for the following positions:

Vacancy No. : 01
Position : Senior Adviser, Human Rights Organisations Component

The post of Senior Adviser to the Human Rights Organisations Component has been created in order to further strengthening Danida/HUGOU's capacity to support human rights organisations in their pursuit of promoting and protecting human rights. Presently, an Adviser handles the Component.

Duties and Responsibilities

The main tasks of the Senior Adviser are to guide and supervise the Adviser in the latter's tasks, identify and assess potential partners and projects, coordinate with partners and other donors, and monitor and review project activities within the scope of Danida/HUGOU's support to initiatives within the Component.

Required Qualifications

Advanced university degree (Masters Degree or equivalent) in social or political science or a related field and at least eight (8) years of relevant working experience, possibly from the academia, civil society, and/or donor agencies of which at least four (4) years should have involved aspects related to human rights and/or good governance partnerships. Experience with managing projects, preferably of a capacity building nature, including the application of Logical Framework Approach and/or other project tools, would be a significant asset.

The Senior Adviser to the Human Rights Organisations Component will be under the overall guidance of Danida/HUGOU's Programme Coordinator and will be directly supervised by the Deputy Programme Coordinator.

Vacancy No. : 02
Position : Senior Adviser, Electoral Activities Component

Duties and Responsibilities

The main tasks of the Senior Adviser are to develop the Electoral Activities Component Description further on the basis of existing reports and other documents and to subsequently identify and assess potential partners and projects, coordinate with partners and other donors, and monitor and review project activities within the scope of the foreseen Danida/HUGOU support to initiatives within the Component.

Required Qualifications

Advanced university degree (Masters Degree or equivalent) in social or political science or a related field and at least six (6) years of relevant working experience, possibly from the academia, civil society, and/or donor agencies of which at least three (3) years should have involved aspects related to human rights and/or good governance. Experience with managing projects, including the application of Logical Framework Approach and/or other project tools, would be a significant asset.

The Senior Advisor to the Electoral Activities Component will report directly to Danida/HUGOU's Programme Coordinator.

For both positions, the successful applicants must have advanced analytical skills, excellent communication skills (spoken, written and presentational), extensive report writing skills and experience, good inter-personal skills and good computer skills (word processing, spreadsheet, e-mail and internet).

Expected starting date: 1 November 2005. Both Senior Advisers will be based at Danida/HUGOU's office in Kathmandu. Closing date for applications: 30 September 2005.

If you are interested and qualified, you should submit an application, including the following: (i) letter in which you describe your motivation for applying for the position; (ii) updated curriculum vitae; (iii) names and contact details of three references; and (iv) recent passport size photograph. Your application should be sent to **Danida/HUGOU, P.O. Box 6332, c/o Embassy of Denmark, Kathmandu, Nepal** in an envelope that is clearly marked with the number of the vacancy you are applying for. Only written applications will be considered and telephone contacts will not be entertained. Short listed candidates will be contacted for an interview. Detailed job descriptions for the positions can be obtained from Danida/HUGOU's office or by forwarding a message to the following e-mail address: hugou@hugou.org.np.

Danida/HUGOU is an equal opportunities employer and encourages as such in particular women, Dalits, and disadvantaged Janajatis to apply

Danida/HUGOU is supporting human rights, dalit, media, anti-corruption, justice, and electoral initiatives in Nepal through the provision of technical assistance and grants

Awesome Open

Watching the world’s best battle at 1AM in New York leaves our columnist breathless

Oh my! What a great US Open that was. Two weeks of tennis at its best filled with comebacks, dramas and pure magic on the court. What a fitting ending it was to see an ageless legend (Andre Agassi) battle for the title on the last day of the tournament. Here are my seven highlights of the 2005 US Open.

1. Roger is still the king. Sporting an astounding 23-0 record in finals, Roger Federer collected his sixth grand slam title and became the first man in the Open era to win Wimbledon and the U.S

GAME POINT
Sujay Lama



Open back-to-back in consecutive years. Federer's ability to raise his game to a higher level in critical times sets him apart from his peers. Roger

is on his way to becoming the greatest ever to play the game of tennis.

2. Amazing Andre. At age 35, Andre Agassi played four back-to-back five-set matches. With sets tied 1-1 in the final, he was up 4-2 with a service break against the #1 player. His comeback (down two sets to love) against James Blake in the quarterfinal was an instant classic. There is nobody like AA.



3. Queen Clijsters.

It was great to see Kim Clijsters win her first grand slam title in her fifth attempt. Clearly the fittest women on the women's tour, she showed the mental fortitude that deserted her in previous finals. The women's title could not have gone to a better person than Clijsters.

4. The pride of India–Sania Mirza.

Feisty and gutsy are two words that came to mind when I saw this 18-year-old sensation from India. The first woman from her country to reach the 16th round at the US

Open, Sania captured the hearts and imaginations of tennis fans worldwide. Her torpedo like forehand stands out but her confidence and ability to speak her mind make her special. I have only this advice for Sania: get in better physical shape and you can be in the worlds top 10 soon.

5. The demise of the Williams sisters. I have been a fan of Serena and Venus for many years. They changed the women's game with their athleticism, flair and power. Also, they were able to put the game of tennis in reach for players from ethnic minorities. No longer was tennis just a sport for the privileged. Now, I get the sense they have lost respect for tennis. No longer is the game their #1 priority. It was no surprise that neither of them got past the quarterfinals. They ran out of gas and very soon we might view them as pretenders and not contenders.

6. New York, New York. I am fascinated with this city. It is fast and loud but it has its unique flavour. The NY fans at the US Open love underdogs and warriors such as Connors and Agassi. They understand the game of tennis and have respect for players that give their 100 percent. The night matches at the Open are amazing. At 1.15 AM last Wednesday, 20,000 fans stood and gave Agassi and Blake a standing ovation. Now tell me, where else can you find such fans?

7. Katrina and 9/11 bring a proper perspective. Disappointed with the Agassi loss? Wait a minute! As the US Open began, we saw the destruction that hurricane Katrina delivered to Louisiana and Mississippi and the finals were played on the fourth anniversary of 9/11. These are reminders to keep tennis in perspective. It is, after all, just a game.



KIRAN PANDAY

MARTY LOGAN

When your sport’s number one player has held top spot for more than a decade and his closest challenger is half a century old it’s time to shake things up. And that’s just what Nepal’s squash bosses plan to do.

“We need talented coaches and referees to conduct good international standard games and to be able to get new blood into the game,” says Amar K Simha, president of the Nepal Squash Rackets Association.

While the top players’ legs are getting a little wobbly, no one is complaining about the national squash academy, built a year ago as part of the Birendra International Sports Complex in Sat Dobato. Early mornings its four courts are often filled with 30 and 40-somethings sweating and swatting at a small black ball that caroms off front, back and side walls with racquets that

Courting youth

Kids to kickstart squash in Nepal

blend badminton and tennis bats.

All the courts really need now is solar heating for the showers in winter and an event to showcase the game. That was supposed to be an Asian junior tournament last year but it was cancelled after riots on 1 September. The event is now scheduled for September or October 2006, says Simha, who picked up the sport while studying in England.

In January he was elected to a four-year term as association president (after previous appointments as squash chief). He’s cautiously optimistic about the future. “Squash is still in the infant stage in the fact that it’s not gone down to the grassroots. . .but at the same time we’ve had some good results, there’s been a slight improvement.”

Team Nepal finished third in the 2004 South Asian Federation (SAF) Games. Leading the way was the country’s top player—since 1993—Hira Bahadur Thapa. He started playing when the country’s only public court was in Battisputali Squash Club: hired as caretaker he started hitting around for fun.

Since then his only formal training has been for a few weeks prior to SAF games but the only

Nepali who’s been able to offer him a serious challenge in more than a decade is Suresh Gurung, 50.

Last year Thapa took a game from world number one Rachael Grinham when women squash stars put on an exhibition in Nepal. But he only smiles when asked if he ever dreams of playing on a bigger more squash savvy stage.

However, waiting on the sidelines are a handful of teenage players willing to dream, who can be found squashing balls at the courts every evening. “I just took my SLC exams this year so I came here to do some exercise in the three-month break after SLCs,” says Binit Shrestha, 16.

Ramesh Neupane, 19, says he has played for the past year “to be mentally and physically fresh”. Both discovered squash on tv but say their friends don’t know the game. That doesn’t stop them from dreaming of turning pro one day.

Simha has more practical goals. “In five years we would like to have very good boys and girls teams that we could send to international tournaments. I wouldn’t say we would be able to meet the Asian standard by then but certainly the SAF standard is within reach.” ●

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- Ralph Waldo Emerson, American Poet and Philosopher (1803-1882)

Next Change: **THE FANTASTIC 4** meet to discuss what good deeds are needed in the Kingdom (unfortunately WaterGuard drips on the meeting minutes)

#84 2062 by jigme gaton - read. love. write.

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Drawing of Sound** by Akira Ikeda, till 17 September, Gallery Nine.
- ❖ **Melody of Clouds** by Rajesh Gautam, till 25 September, Buddha Gallery. 4441689
- ❖ **Ni Rita**, exhibition cum sale of bold jewellery at La Soon, till 26 September. 5537166
- ❖ **Folk Fusion** by Asha Dongol, 2-16 September at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal. 4218048
- ❖ **Art Walk** Traditional artworks at Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg. 4248999



EVENTS

- ❖ **International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer** 16 September.
- ❖ **Mahakal and Lakhe Dance** Babar Mahal Revisited Rs 675, 7:00PM, 16 September.
- ❖ **105th Birthday** celebration of Dr. Grahams Homes, 16 September, 5.30 PM onwards. 9851021088
- ❖ **Indra Jatra** 17 September.
- ❖ **Creative Mandala Art Workshop** at HBMC, 17 September. 4414843
- ❖ **Amandla** film by Lee Hirsch, South Africa, at NTB Bhrikuti Mandap, 18 September, 5.30 PM.
- ❖ **International day of Peace** 21 September.
- ❖ **Changa Chait**, kite flying competition at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot, 17, 24 September, 8 October. 4411706
- ❖ **ELD Training** on participatory monitoring and evaluation, 19-23 September. 5555071
- ❖ **Film South Asia '05** entry forms and details www.himalassociation.org/fsa, 27 September-2 October.
- ❖ **Mind Mapping** ELD workshop, 28 September at SAP Nepal. 5555071

MUSIC

- ❖ **Cadenza Album Release** 17 September, Shangri-La Hotel, 7.30 PM, Rs 300. 4441067
- ❖ **Sound of Strings** live performance, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 7PM, 16 September. 4273999
- ❖ **The Good Time Blues Band** at Rum Doodle, 7PM. 4701208
- ❖ **Live Music** at Hotel de l'Annapurna, Darbar Marg. 4221711
- ❖ **Musician Night** every Tuesday at Moksh, 7:30 PM onwards, no cover charge. 5526212
- ❖ **Cadenza Live!** Upstairs Jazz Bar Lajimpat, every Saturday and Wednesday, 8-10PM.



FOOD

- ❖ **The Sidewalk BBQ** with live jazz, Fridays, Shangri-La. 4412999
- ❖ **BBQ Dinner** at Summit Hotel, Fridays, 6.30-9.30 PM. 5521810
- ❖ **The Chimney Restaurant** Signature dishes at Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **International Buffet** Lunch at Soaltee Crowne Plaza, every Saturday and Sunday, Rs 625 plus tax.
- ❖ **Daily Delite** lunch at Shambala Café, Hotel Shangri-La, Lajimpat. 4412999
- ❖ **The Jazz Gourmet** fine dining redefined, Shangri-La. 4412999
- ❖ **Ciney and Par-e-jat** BBQ for Rs 625/person at Dwarika's, Fridays at 7PM. 4479448
- ❖ **Boire and Manger** at Vineyard, Baber Mahal Revisited.
- ❖ **Special Combo** Burmese and Thai Menu at 1905, Kantipath.
- ❖ **Annapurna Value Lunch** at Rs 499 for two. 4221711

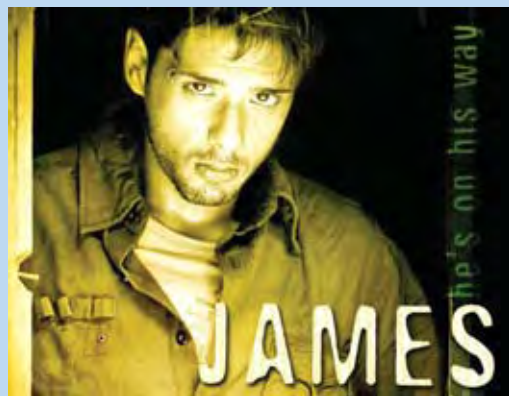
GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Three Days** at Nagarkot, health oriented program 30 September- 2 October. Info@goldenagersnepal.com
- ❖ **Spa** Seasonal rates valid till 21 October at Le Meridien, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Overnight Stay** Breakfast and swimming for Rs 999 per person at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675, 5560775
- ❖ **Monsoon Madness** Package, Shangri-La Village, Pokhara, 4412999
- ❖ **Gokarting** Rs 200 for 4 laps, 4361500

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The city of Mumbai is shrouded in fear generated by a few select families, like Shanti Narayan's, which completely control the political system. The film focuses on a newcomer to the city, courageous young James, who works as a bouncer at a popular nightclub. Soon, James meets Nisha and love blossoms. But the story takes a twist when James finds himself at odds with another contender for Nisha's feelings. James beats him up and only then realises that he is the younger brother of Shanti Narayan. Quickly James becomes hunted by the revenge-seeking Narayan family. What ensues is high-tension drama as the young man fights for his life to overcome evil forces.

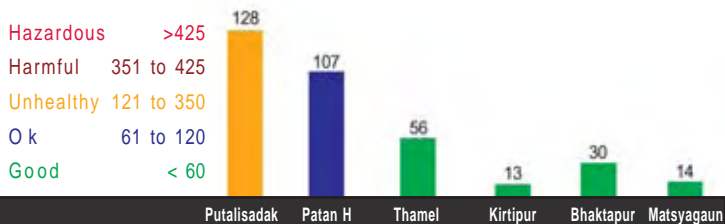
Call 4442220 for show timings www.jainepal.com



KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

The concentration of PM10 particles (small enough to enter the human body and lodge in the lungs) along Kathmandu's roadsides have gone down significantly compared to the previous week. Although during weekdays the PM10 level exceeded the national standard, in Putalisadak the average reading decreased by about 28 percent. The average PM10 level in Kathmandu decreased by about 36 percent compared to the previous week, leaving the air, overall, ok to breathe.

4-10 September 2005 in micrograms per cubic metre.
Source: www.mope.gov.np



NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



We will officially say goodbye to the monsoon on 22 September but not with fondness. This year's rainy season is set to go down in history as the driest yet due to its late arrival and periodic droughts. Central Nepal from Kosi to Gandaki has suffered most from the lack of moisture. This satellite picture taken on Thursday morning shows a series of disturbances emerging from the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal and also over the Indian subcontinent. These clouds will dump late monsoon showers on Nepal throughout the weekend. Expect a break from the rains early next week.

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KIRAN PANDAY

JACK BE NIMBLE: A protesting student from the seven party students' alliance jumps over a burning effigy outside Mahendra Ratna Campus on Tuesday as an army truck drives by.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

ACTIVIST MEDIA: Reporters protesting against police violence after one was seriously injured during the seven parties protests in Bag Bajar on Wednesday.



KIRAN PANDAY

SHASHAYING: Photographers fight each other for the best shot as models walk the ramp during the Sunsilk Nepal Fashion Week at the Yak and Yeti organised by IEC on Tuesday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

TRAFFIC MARMALADE: A seven-party pro-democracy protest in Bhotahiti created this monstrous gridlock along Tundikhel on Monday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

BEAUTIES AND JUDGES: The winners of the Vatika Miss Nepal 2005 with Miss Nepal Sugarika KC (seated) posing with the judges who voted her at BICC on Saturday.




Nepal's jazz pioneers have built their latest album on a dance sound as they ride the wave of the music's popularity among the younger generation. Cadenza has come a long way from the days when jazz in Nepal meant old people playing lounge, says vocalist and drummer Navin Chettri. "In 2002, with the first jazz festival it was phiff...but jazz has become cool today. More and more Nepalis and young musicians are interested though they may not necessarily understand it." A Groove For Shiva sees this ex-garage band from Darjeeling mix Afro-beats, Nepali folk and funk into a hip-shaking offering. "Our earlier albums were more for listening and lounge-ish but this one is

jazz with dancing," says Navin. The music's inspiration ranges from ordinary people to the gods, as in the title track 'A groove for Shiva', written around Shivaratri. "It's been a while between albums. Our priority has not been to release an album so most of the songs were more like a ringing in our heads that evolved into tunes and then songs. A lot of the songs were created while we were just jamming. Jazz is about expressing yourself spontaneously, that's what this album is all about," adds Navin. Cadenza is gearing up for the annual Jazzmandu festival in November and has been invited to participate in the Lionel Hampton Jazz festival in the US in February 2006. Cadenza has evolved greatly

over the years not only because of its changing membership but as musicians. Says Navin: "Different people bring new flavours to the band. As long as I am there I can make sure Cadenza has continuity." ● Aarti Basnyat



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The decisive indecision of our decision-makers

You shouldn't believe everything you read in the antinationalist private media these days about government ministers being hopeless and inept. As usual the media is exaggerating.

In actual fact the ministers are all behind the scenes trying hard to be neither seen nor heard. This is a deliberate move on the part of our rulers, since that way the ministers can't make any major mistakes.

If the chances of a decision being fatally flawed are very high, the strategy should be not to make

any decisions at all if one can help it. That way nothing can go wrong because for anything to go

wrong a decision has to be taken that is not right. Which is why it is a bold and correct decision to be decisively indecisive because the decisions that are finally taken may turn out to be the wrong decisions and detrimental to the nationalist interest.

For example, some blundering fool may suddenly out of sheer boredom take the decision to be decisive which is sure to invite disaster because it most likely will be the wrong decision.

Ever since the royal seizure, therefore, it has been decided that under no circumstances is the cabinet to take any decisions about making decisions. It should leave all such decisions to the real decisionmakers who alone have the right to be decisive.

So, the matter of our council of ministers (Motto: 'Who Told You the Buck Stops Here?') being hopeless and inept just doesn't arise. It's an idiot-proof system of governance because our movers and shakers don't move at all and very rarely shake. And to make the system even more failsafe, the cabinet has made the collective decision to sit perfectly still and not utter a single word since it was recently discovered that there is a mole in the cabinet who is feeding sensitive information about major ministerial indecisions to the media.

We have been provided by the aforementioned mole with a copy of the decisions not taken and have decided in the pseudo-nationalist interest to publish and be damned. Here they are:

1. One million more preponed and postponed mobile phones will be added with cell service extended to all 75 districts. However, calls will keep getting cut off until a decision is taken at the

highest level.

2. Patching potholes on the 100m section of road to the ministerial quarters at Harihar Bhaban has commenced under the World Bank Road Maintenance Development Project and is expected to be finished in two years. No decision has been made on repaving other roads.

3. The fate of the 15 minutes of Nepali instrumental numbers over the BBC World Service on 103 FM hangs in the balance as the special cabinet committee mandated to decide on the matter ended four months of inconclusive deliberations unable to decide on whether to broadcast *Resham Phiriri* or *Rato Bhaley* in that timeslot.

4. The government hasn't decided whether it should be the one to decide to respond to the unilateral ceasefire, and if so what that decision should be. "The decision hasn't been taken on who should decide," clarified the government spokesman with hesitation.

5. According to our mole in heaven, even the Almighty hasn't made up his and/or her mind about what to do with Nepal next. "God is weighing the options," said a celestial spokesperson, "just because he is omnipresent it doesn't mean he's got it all figured out."



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