Put children first

The ceasefire has been a short period of respite for children in Nepal and their families. As the war drags into its tenth year, some, like these children in a school in Rukum last week (pictured above), asked our photographer if the ceasefire would be extended. Many in this classroom were born after 1996 and have never known a period of peace.

With only two weeks left for the ceasefire to end, people across the country are worried about a return to strife—and especially what it will mean to the children. Despite the ceasefire, the forced march of students and their teachers has not stopped. Across the country, the Maoists have closed down schools because of the government’s hardship of management to local communities.

To mark Universal Children’s Day on Sunday 20 November, child rights activists have urged that Nepal children be kept out of the war. They say schools should not be turned into polling stations for the municipal elections.

Says Suomi Sakai, director of UNICEF in Nepal: “We are worried about the ending of the ceasefire because any conflict inevitably hurts children...children need to be able to grow, to learn and to play in peace. Children are the future, and the future of a country becomes threatened when its own children don’t see they have a future here. Let’s remember the children and put them first.”
Military fatigue

The Jaleswor incident is a pointer to bubbling resentment

APOSTLE'S CHARGE

By Sunit Bagree

W hen Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh told a pre-SAARC press conference in New Delhi that there were still “militants” in India’s neighbourhood, he might have delved into India’s role in facilitating their fragility. Deeply embedded in their commitment to human rights, democracy and peace, New Delhi surprisingly supports nepotistic Bhutanese and an oppressive Burmese military junta. Its bizarre intervention in Sri Lanka’s civil war and role in Kashmir’s protracted agony are just some further examples. The Indian establishment’s auxiliary approaches to maintain territorial integrity has harmed human security and human rights in South Asia and beyond. Indian ministers have frequently said one thing about foreign policy and done something completely different. Moreover, they have played on and exacerbated Islamophobic prejudices among sections of the Indian public: to suit their own agenda vis-à-vis Pakistan. Sadly, mainstream Indian society is largely uncritical of their government’s claim to be driven by high moral standards, part and parcel in relations with neighbours.

Nepal’s rulers bear the greatest responsibility for their country’s problems, but even the mosques of the asymmetric 1950 Treaty, India has also been playing a negative role here. Subsequent governments have ruthlessly pursued economic and political goals without considerations for the consequences for the people. In the past decade this is most notable in relation to Nepal’s foreign policy. India has adopted a narrow and contradictory view of the conflict, and only allowing Maoists to hold talks with Nepal political parties on their terms. Deeply embedded Maoists advocated a military solution to the conflict, and until recently completely, it was because of their use of violence: the Jaleswor incident is a pointer to the political parties. Singh said he told King Gyanendra in May that India has adopted a narrow and contradictory view of the conflict, and only allowing Maoists to hold talks with Nepal political parties on their terms. Deeply embedded Maoists advocated a military solution to the conflict, and until recently completely, it was because of their use of violence:

*Seats on the international community to trust the political parties. Singh said he told King Gyanendra in May in relation to Nepal’s foreign policy. India has adopted a narrow and contradictory view of the conflict, and until recently completely, it was because of their use of violence: the Jaleswor incident is a pointer to the political parties. Singh said he told King Gyanendra in May that India has adopted a narrow and contradictory view of the conflict, and until recently completely, it was because of their use of violence:

**Jaleswor—as long as soldiers remain in the barracks, they are usually a benign force. But unleash them into civil roles and they can revert to the same predatory military that they were before. For the Maoists, the Jaleswor incident is a pointer to the political parties. Singh said he told King Gyanendra in May that he was looking for concrete steps towards multiparty democracy, obviously aware that concrete steps are taking place in the opposite direction. Does this amount to a reversal of Indian foreign policy towards Nepal? It is true that for the first time in a long time India’s views have coincided with wishes of the vast majority of Nepal, but New Delhi doesn’t appear to have a clear long-term strategy. India’s adoption of a narrow and contradictory view of the conflict, and until recently completely, it was because of their use of violence:

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Inaccurate
Kunda Dixit’s page one article (‘Taking flight’, #272) inaccurately characterised the US Embassy’s 4 November statement as warning the political parties ‘to stay away from the Maoists’. In fact, as I have publicly noted and personally assured party leaders, we fully support any dialogue between the political parties and the insurgents to convince them to rejoin the political mainstream. This is a goal all friends of Nepal can support, including the United States.

But dialogue is one thing, formal alliance with an armed and authoritarian insurgency is something else—and far more dangerous. Our statement reminded the parties (and the Nepali public) that the parties themselves have publicly ruled out any formal relationship with the insurgents, unless and until the Maoists firmly renounce violence, put down their weapons unless and until the Maoists firmly renounce violence, put down their weapons and commit to supporting the democratic process.

US policy toward Nepal remains constant. The United States supports the restoration of democracy and prevention of a Maoist takeover. Toward these ends, we have called and will continue to call, for the King to reach out to the political parties to find a way to work toward a democratic and peaceful future for Nepal and its people.

James F Moriarty
US Ambassador, Kathmandu

Ambassador James Moriarty’s statement in support of Nepali democracy and human rights is confusing (‘Talking flight’, #272). In Palpa recently he called for Maoists to come to the mainstream but now when the seven party coalition are trying to get the Maoists to do just that it appears he doesn’t find it acceptable.

Recently, the Carter Centre supported some 60 journalists on a junket for peace-building. But we haven’t heard what they learnt on that trip. President Ronald Reagan called Nepal ‘a neighbour on the other side of the globe’ President George Bush also seems to realise Nepal’s geopolitical and military significance. Can the US shun its responsibilities to help restore peace in Nepal? The US must use its resources prudently to get the right information on Nepal and support the right pro-democracy groups including moderate Maoist factions. No military solution is possible.

Archana Thapa, Naxal

It is when rulers start making decisions based on the movement of the planets that we know we are doomed. After reading CK Lal’s (‘Over from Malaysia’, #271) article about the ‘palace taking comfort from the closeness of Mars to planet Earth’ and then Kunda Dixit’s Under My Hat (‘From the Kingdom of Amnesia to the Republic of Insomnia’, #272) I realised that things are far worse in Nepal than I’d imagined. Heaven help us.

Dinesh Aryal, Babar Mahal

‘It is when rulers start making decisions based on the movement of the planets that we know we are doomed’ - perhaps Draupadi

Kankan Dixit’s account of the king’s activities (‘The king at the summit’, #271) leaves me with a question: who is better placed to represent the country at the moment? King Gyanendra unconstitutionally dissolved, and even if it wasn’t its mandate expired by now. After dissolution in 2002 the parties did little to define the people’s rights to elect a new government but instead succumbed easily to the Majesty’s threats (or their own self-serving interests). Instead of getting together to jumpstart the democratic process, they engaged in endless “agitations” against any government (party-led, king-led), which brought little respite to the people, and only hurt our economy and image. To top it all off, now that the king’s regime has taken up the challenge they have failed to meet the challenge and when it announced elections they trash that as well. One can’t help but ask why such people are still being represented by the country internationally now right when they too don’t have the legitimacy of being “elected”. Or should Nepal just renege from any international interaction whatsoever and declare itself a pariah state?

Abhijit Basnayak, email

Congratulations to His Majesty the king and his address at the SAARC Summit. At last we have a head of state who didn’t fumble, grovel or make an ass of himself like his predecessors. I am ode to the elected leaders in the post-1990 period. His Majesty sounded sincere and straightforward and this was appreciated by his audience.

Sagar Shah, email

King Gyanendra’s representation in the SAARC summit is illegitimate. It is not an elected official representing Nepal in the SAARC Summit, as he repeatedly and correctly: this king only represents Nepal’s ruling clique which has a selfish agenda of wealth and nepotism. We are not even close to the reality of Nepal why not describe it as “a country were just a yam, it would have been crushed by two great rocks long time ago. If we want to describe the geopolitical reality of Nepal why not describe it as “apebble positioned in between two boulders”. Deceitfulness reflected in the yam metaphor definitely needs to be cast aside and let’s be more imaginative when defining our country’s geographical position.

Sameechheta Jhangd, email

Mandu Jazz

As Artha Beed writes in Economic Sense (“Youth power rising”, #271) the best way to harness the power of the youth is education. But the “Extreme Rock” show at the stadium was a gimmick because it did not feature any proper rock band and musically if someone thinks that bands like Anx, 1974AD or Robin & the New Revolution are extreme rock bands, then it is time for them to be reeducated in music. At the Jazzmandu show at Gokarna the crowd seemed excited enough but even though they were paying a huge amount of money they had to wait from 4PM to 8.30 PM for the jazz to start. For four-and-half hours they just heard ‘mandu’ and not ‘jazz’. Disillusion reigns amongst the people, specially the performers. It seems they are facing an identity crisis.

Den Tasher Lepcha, email

NAR and Phu

If the Nar Phu in Wanda Vivequin’s photographs (‘Nar Phu’, #271) is our reality of life in high mountain villages and my own trip in 1998 to Nar Valley. We walked to Nar via Chame to see how we could help the local people maintain their microhydro systems. Whereas, Wanda mentions a New Zealand support to this scheme (unless they have been new donors support) the Nar microhydro and the Phu solar systems were provided by HMG’s Renewable Energy Development Committee. Later, the moniker of Nar came to Kathmandu and we had discussions on how they could maintain their microhydro and start productive enterprises if tourism was to expand in the region. I am glad that against all odds during last month’s devastating blizzards, the people of Nar are persevering and hopefully, our small trip and interactions over endless glasses of Tibetan salt tea were worth it. I still hope one day may we make it back again especially to see the two wonderful sisters, Lak and Dina. During our trip we sheltered us for a good week against all odds. And if someone reaches there before me, and reads this, please pass on the message.

Kavita Rai, UK

Onslaught

Thank you very much for publishing my letter to the editor (Letters, #272). But the balanced message I put forward has not been conveyed in true spirit with your editorial onslaught. I had suggested that the agitating parties should be ‘putting forward criteria to ensure a lasting peaceful solution’. It is when rulers start making decisions based on the movement of the planets that we know we are doomed.

Radri Raj, email

Chelis, Come Back

Just wondering where on earth the Chaitrameen Chelis have disappeared. Did they give up their wonderful and courageous mission or have they all get DV visas or got married? It is a matter of great concern for people like me who miss their fresh and bold writing. They were so good doing brave things and challenging society’s mores. Hope this mail will ignite their motive again.

Rajesh Swar, email

LETTERS

Nepal Times welcomes all feedback. Letters should be brief and may be edited for space. While pseudonyms can be accepted, writers who provide their real names and contact details will be given preference. Email letters should be in text format without attachments with letter to the editor’ in the subject line.

Email: letters@nepalitimes.com
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Decoding the Code of Conduct

Donors and NGO don’t like what they see

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

Nepal’s donors who fund non-governmental groups took a week to study the government’s new Code of Conduct for NGOs on Wednesday, they finally gave their message to the government: withdraw it or else.

Minister of Women, Children and Social Welfare Durga Shrestha fired a salvo soon after, warning NGOs to follow the code or else. Both sides are now set for a major confrontation that could have far-reaching impacts on Nepal’s rural development and service delivery.

“We want it to be withdrawn and the issue be revisited because the process through which this so-called Code of Conduct has been prepared, was not a voluntary participatory process of the people directly concerned, that is the essence of our concern,” said UN Resident Coordinator Matthew Kahane who signed a letter to the ministry on behalf of 13 donors.

The donors are holding another meeting coordinated by DfID in London on Friday.

Government officials denied that the donors had not been consulted. “We sat with them, we corresponded with them and we have included all their suggestions in the document,” said Shant A Sharma, Member Secretary of the Social Welfare Council, told us (see interview below).

The fundamental difference between the government and donors seems to be over the very definition of the term ‘non-governmental organisations’.

The government believes NGOs are purely for service work and its staff are voluntary. Minister for Women, Children and Social Welfare Durga Shrestha said Wednesday, “Since the job of the social organisations is to serve society, they should have no problem with this code of conduct. Only those who mint money through such organisations are opposing it.”

NGOs and their donors define the area of work as being outside the government’s ambit and not just limited to social development, but includes human rights, democracy and social activism.

Their difference is to over finding itself. The Code of Conduct prohibits NGOs from receiving funds that are part of official foreign aid to Nepal from donors. Most bilateral donors currently channel funds earmarked to Nepal to both the government and NGOs.

“The issue of how donors would disagree with the government on the use of funds including employing non-governmental organisation as implementing partner is a wide one which we deal with normal development discussion,” Kahane said.

Shibesh Chandra Regmi: “We want it to be withdrawn and the government to study the government’s new Code of Conduct. Only in Nepal there have been protests against it from the international community, various agencies of the UN, donors, civil society, INGOs, international community, etc. The Code is confusing and vague, clauses can be interpreted in many different ways. It is not clear whether it is for NGOs or INGOs or both. INGOs can’t directly implement programs, they can do so only through local NGOs. But the new rules stops us from doing so. NGOs cannot receive any funds without prior approval of the SWC, even INGOs can’t select local partners without consulting the local administration, they cannot assess and report the abuses of human rights no matter from which side. We are not saying that NGOs should be left without any legal framework. What we say is that the Code of Conduct should be seen as a moral document and not a legal one. There already exist many legal instruments in this country on the basis of which action can be taken against any social organisations that do not comply with them.

Are NGOs angry because the new Code prohibits them from having donors who make decisions in the government? No. But we are also unhappy on this restriction imposed on NGOs’ access to bilateral funds. The reality is that while there are many INGOs that have got their own funding mechanisms which means they bring their resources from outside Nepal, there are many that rely on donors’ funds within the country. In any case, who are we to decide about it? Shouldn’t the donors have their say about who they should be partnering with?

How about the criticism that INGOs have been using foreign aid meant for Nepalis? It will be very unfair to criticise the INGOs for this since they only give resources but do not carry back any resources from here. If you had known how hard they work to mobilise the resources nationally and internationally for the poor and excluded people of this country you would not ask this question. Unlike many other aid and grants, the money that NGOs bring comes from political, it is simply for development and humanitarian assistance.

As far as the streamlining of the work of social organisations, improving coordination in their work for more sustained results, avoiding duplication, ensuring that programmes have added value, to the benefit of the poor are concerned, we all are positive towards it. We clearly see a need for it.

Why should donors and INGOs have problem working through a government mechanism? Neither donor nor NGOs have any problem working with the government. In fact, because the government has got the largest network in the country as it has a very strong presence at the village level andward to the national levels, we need to make the best use of this structure. There are many programs that donors and INGOs have been implementing in partnership with government and many sections of the civil society. But again there are so many other factors that one has to look at: the bureaucracy, commitment, transparency, clarity in vision, governance, political stability, legitimacy, urgency, accountability...

WE HAVE A PROBLEM:
Shibesh Chandra Regmi of AINI points to the government’s Code of Conduct document.

“The Code of Conduct is confusing and vague”

Shibesh Chandra Regmi, president of Association of INGOs in Nepal believes that the Code of Conduct will obstruct development.

In an interview with Nepali Times, he explains why.

Nepali Times: What’s wrong with the government wanting to regulate money coming in through NGOs?
Shibesh Chandra Regmi: Despite the rhetoric about massive consultation as claimed by the Social Welfare Council (SWC) in the preparation of the Code of Conduct there have been protests against it from the international community, various agencies of the UN, donors, civil society, INGOs, international community, etc. The Code is confusing and vague, clauses can be interpreted in many different ways. It is not clear whether it is for NGOs or INGOs or both. INGOs can’t directly implement programs, they can do so only through local NGOs. But the new rules stop us from doing so. NGOs cannot receive any funds without prior approval of the SWC, even INGOs can’t select local partners without consulting the local administration, they cannot assess and report the abuses of human rights no matter from which side. We are not saying that NGOs should be left without any legal framework. What we say is that the Code of Conduct should be seen as a moral document and not a legal one. There already exist many legal instruments in this country on the basis of which action can be taken against any social organisations that do not comply with them.

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Cosmic sightseeing

Cosmic Air is launching mountain sightseeing flights with its Fokker 100 jet aircraft from Sunday, the company announced after a test flight this week.

At present Buddha Air and Yeti have sightseeing flights in smaller turboprop aircraft. Although Cosmic’s flights will fly at the same altitude, the faster planes will be able to take in all mountains between Makalu and Dhaulagiri as a flies past Sagarmatha (left). In the 1980s, Royal Nepal Airlines used to fly similar flights with Boeing 727s.

Cosmic will sell only 70 seats in the 100-seater jets to give passengers window seats and the ‘companion seat’ on the aisles will cost less than window seats, the airline said.

NEW PRODUCTS

NEW LOGO: Surya Nepal has revealed a new logo and redefined its corporate values with the slogan: ‘Creating Enduring Value for Society and Among Stakeholders’. The company was the first Indo-Nepal-British joint venture when it was created in 1986 and has recently branched out into garments. “The sun symbolises our passion for excellence, our expanding horizons and our resolve to create international quality products with a proud Made in Nepal label,” said Surya Nepal in a statement.

ULTRA THIN NOTEBOOKS: Neeteric Nepal of Golchha Organisation has launched X and P series of Samsung NotePCs. Presently one model of each series X20 and P29 is available in the market. The notebooks use Intel Centrino platform. Ultra thin, light and ergonomic design meets international standards and can be wirelessly connected. Prices start at Rs 74,999.

VICTORINOX IN TOWN: Authorized dealers TAG Heuer, Seiko and Doir Watches since 1909 and is the only company to have the rights over the use of the ‘Swiss Army’ name. The watch is available in many models and the international standards and can be wirelessly connected. Prices start at Rs 74,999.

NOODLE ATTACK: Himalayan snack and Noodles has launched yet another noodle brand: J-mee. A 75 gm packet of the noodles is priced at Rs 10 and a prize is offered in return for 10 metallic labels, “said Surya Nepal in a statement.

ECONOMIC SENSE

Mone more... our favourite Beef gets to experience how far off the radar Nepal has dropped in the international economic arena. Not that we had a very big blip anyway but now we don’t even register.

Integrating Nepal, Inc

We can’t miss the bus again

If a few cities in India are just another conflict-prone zone and the past four years has become just another date line with bad headlines. True, the concerns of tour agents about Nepal’s security situation is dwindling due to the ceasefire the fact that no place on earth is safe anyway and at least in Nepal the violence is not arbitrary.

But for potential investors, it is just another country in the long list of high risk hot-spots like Iraq, Afghanistan, Haiti and Sudan. If Nepal shuts down for months, it isn’t gonna affect no one much anyway. The more an economy is integrated into the global economy the more its chances of stability and economic growth. Even in communist-rulled West Bengal in India the setting up of call centers and outsourcing businesses have made the government conscious about curtailing the state’s notorious labour problems.

If a few cities in India are closed down repercussions can be felt across the world. Similarly, a strike at a Malaysian or Thai airport can throw the supply chain of retail stores in Europe out of gear.

As Nepal searches for stability perhaps it may be possible to use economic reform measures to be able to participate in the progress of the global economy. Your Beef has always maintained that the solution to the ongoing conflict can neither be political or military, it has to be economic. If Nepal becomes an offshore banking facility for the increasingly affluent Indian and Chinese, then we may not be able to afford strikes anymore, or have holidays to commemorate eclipses and a time zone off which by 15 minutes.

Similarly, if Nepal becomes a large power exporter, we will have to ensure that it meets reliability criteria of its clients. Thailand’s grid is interwoven with power producers in Laos and Vietnam and would never allow the large power exporter, we will have to ensure that it meets reliability criteria of its clients. Thailand’s grid is interwoven with power producers in Laos and Vietnam and would never allow...
Grade one children learn about Lenin

Sanghu, about the need for revolution but the question is: who thought up this new alternative curriculum. himself unsure about whether the children have primary school in Thawang. As the school teaching children at the Maoist-run Sahid Smriti school, text books glorify the king, but the revolutionary curriculum textbooks glorify the king, but the revolutionary curriculum glorifies Maoist martyrs and their struggle for the 'people's liberation'. The Maoists are hoping that their education system will help children think creatively and catch them young to build confidence. They also hope the children will not be superstitious and will want to change things when they grow up. They say the curriculum also aims to incultate the values of hard work, of local realities about environment and science as well as builds interest in culture and art. The education curriculum also includes military knowledge, matter language, physical course, music and dance. Even children of grade one have to learn about the Nepal Communist Party, memorise Maoist declared autonomous regions, flags of various Maoist-affiliated bodies. They even read about the life histories of Lenin, Marx and Prachanda.

Physical education also has a martial element to it: sticks, khukuri, sickle, axe, bow and arrows, catapul, guns and other homemade weapons. Comrade Chiring believes this is needed to make the children patriotic and ‘fight the imperialists’. The Maoists have established 37 schools teaching their revolutionary curriculum in Rukum, Salyan, Jajarkot, Kalikot and Rolpa districts.

New VDCs
Kantipur, 12 November

Local people in a village in Bhagpur district have gone ahead and elected their parallel representatives on their own. Tired of waiting for VDC and because development work has come to a standstill as they haven’t had an elected council for four years they got together and elected their own officials. This is the first time that civil society has taken up governance in its own hands and formed an institution with the authority to represent the people. The villagers of Kulung VDC organised a big mass meeting where they formed an executive committee of their VDC with all political authority. They call it the Community Development and Service Committee. It is made up of former representatives of the people and other prominent figures in the village. “We don’t make recommendations like other government offices do, but we play decisive role in discussing and implementing development in our village,” said Dambr Bahadur Rai who has been selected chairman by the villagers.

The committee has a vice chairman, a secretary, a joint secretary and a treasurer. There are nine members in the committee representing the nine wards in the village. There are three other members representing dalits, oppressed and tribal communities.

The appointments are made in accordance with the newly formed committee’s separate statute. The newly selected representatives have said that they would work toward conserving human rights and civil liberties. They have also enlisted road construction, electricity, communication, industries, education and health as the areas they would be working in.

How they got
Jana Aestha, 16 November

Security agencies have reported to Crown Prince Paras that senior Maoist leaders Baburam Bhattarai and Krishna Bahadur Mahara have reached India travelling past Parshunarayan Chaudhary’s house in Dang district of western Nepal. In a report prepared for the royal palace, the security agencies have stated that the Maoist leaders sneaked out to India just when government officials were engaged in Tihar celebrations. The Maoist leaders are said to have used the jungle track near Parsa in the southern flank as a secret corridor to reach India. This area near Kapilbastu is believed to be quite weak from security point of view. It is the same area where the border security personnel of Nepal and India recently held a meeting.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

It took the Maoists ten years to realize it is wrong to kill people. It took the Nepali Congress 61 years to realize that it shouldn’t carry the king on its shoulder.

Robin Sayami in Himal Khabarpatrika, 16-30 November

We need to strike a balance on our role and that of foreigners when it comes to dealing with our internal affairs. What we lack is self-confidence and unity. Being dependent on foreign powers can’t be the solution. As if the solution does not lie within Nepal, some are going overseas while others are sending $50 to our neighbours. Before we cry foul about foreign intervention, we need to look at ourselves in the mirror. There has to be soul searching whether we are running the state within the perimeters of our national interest. Are we following the law? Do we have civil rights in the country? These are the parameters the world community uses to judge us. The situation of our country is open to everyone. The country is about to go off the edge. So the real need is unification among all internal powers. That is our prime responsibility. It is only natural to seek support of foreign powers. But, to believe that foreigners will be our saviores is not a rational thinking.

(Inter)national
Political scientist Gauri Babha Thapa in 14tishindiresth, 13 November

Those foreign powers that were disillusioned by the royal takeover of 1 February have now begun to realise. In the beginning they wrongly thought that the king had to takeover because the communists had begun to command both the jungle and the urban areas. There was also speculation that the king might have been backed by India and the US from behind the scene in order to get rid of the communists. Few say that myth now. International organisations and even Indian political parties have been critical of what is happening in Nepal. What more could foreign powers do to support democracy in Nepal? After all the current situation deteriorates any further, there may be direct intervention. Foreign powers will certainly continue their support if opposition parties and the Maoists join hands. One thing is for sure: it’s not for the foreigners to launch a movement in our country. They can’t do much as long as Nepal themselves launch the movement. When all political parties stand united, they will surely win the support of the international community. The history of Nepal is replete with examples of outsiders backing domestic people power movements. After the multi-party system was abolished in 1960, Nepal did see movement of the opposition parties for so many years. But the movement won international support only in 1990, only because of the movement. When all political parties stand united, they will surely win the support of the international community. The history of Nepal is replete with examples of outsiders backing domestic people power movements. After the multi-party system was abolished in 1960, Nepal did see movement of the opposition parties for so many years. But the movement won international support only in 1990, only because of the movement. When all political parties stand united, they will surely win the support of the international community. 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What they agreed on

NC leader Narhari Acharya in an interview with his associates.

What the parties expect from the Maoists

- Give up armed struggle
- Commit to multiparty democracy
- Stop attacks and intimidation, even punish guilty
- Adopt political stance
- Allow freedom to political party cadre to operate
- Struggle against dictatorship

What the Maoists expect from the parties

- Parties shouldn’t go back to the king
- Be positive towards political agreements
- Stop treating Maoists like enemies
- Not to see Maoists as anti-democratic or against peaceful agitation
- Minimum program should be setting up a democratic republic through constituent assembly

What they agreed on

- Not to unnecessarily attack each other
- Maoists will accept multiparty democracy
- UN-supervised laying down of arms at the time of constituent assembly elections
- Accept result of the constituent assembly election
- Take part in peaceful political struggle
- Focus on struggle against dictatorial monarchy
- Not to create obstacles in peaceful agitation of parties
- Boycott municipal elections and not let it happen

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College Women: Celebrate your acheivements!

Nepal Congress is indeed passing under a difficult phase. We have engaged ourselves in a movement for the last three years and yet we have failed to give it direction. There is a lack of clarity in policy. Therefore efforts are on to make things clear in our party.

I am just back from a visit to the areas that are said to be infested with Maoists. The situation there is different than perceived by outsiders like us. There were certainly some areas where Maoists’ activities are predominant but the general people and their activities are the same as they used to be in the past. After the Maoist intensified their activities, such places saw an increase in violence. But the positive outcome of all this is that the people today are much more aware of their rights. They are capable of grasping new ideas and thoughts.

It has the objective of trying to get a solution to the current political crisis and to include the Maoists in the regime the King has been leading will be weakened. People power is invincible. Will it not happen?

If the Maoists are not returned to them even after the announcement of unilateral ceasefire. Party workers have been complaining that the Maoists’ activities are predominant but the general people and their activities are outsiders like us. There were certainly some areas where Maoists’ activities failed to give it direction. There is a lack of clarity in policy.

If they were from the NC or because they disagreed with the Maoists? Or also made it clear that we need to discuss some of the old issues in order to sort out the difficulties they have caused. In Rukum alone, 50 political workers have been killed, out of which 42 were of the NC. So, it has to be made clear why were they killed. Were they targeted because they were from the NC or because they disagreed with the Maoists? Or had they committed such serious crimes that they had to be killed?

But, that does not mean we should seek revenge and hold back the forward-looking political course. The NC is in no mood to continue crossing swords with Maoists. It has the objective of trying to get a solution to the current political crisis and to include the Maoists in the same peaceful political process. If the people are united, the autocratic regime the King has been leading will be weakened. People power is invincible but for that we need to create the right environment. In politics, ‘people’ is an abstract noun but it can be shaped. People are also individuals. To make organisations out of such individuals is the role of the political parties. If they are successful in bringing people together for a cause, the people will never be vanquished. The faster people’s power gets consolidated, the sooner anti-people power centers will lose out.
Reviving water needs of a considerable part of the Valley’s population. And that is exactly what the group, Environment and Heritage Conservation Nepal (EHCN), is trying to do with VDCs along the way and support from the Indian Government. Till the 1950s the Raj Kulo was maintained with support from the state but as the funding dried up so did the canals.

Houses and roads were built with scant attention to the canals underneath and within a few years the spouts at Darbar Square ran dry. In the past decade, urban expansion has taken its toll even on the southern suburbs of Patan. Engineers say that the Raj Kulos of Kathmandu and Bhaktapur are past rehabilitation but there is still hope to partially reconstruct the Patan canal. 

“It is a tribute to the people who built them that rehabilitating the canals will not only restore an ancient heritage but also take care of the water needs of the poorest of the poor,” says Sagar Rana, president of EHCN, who is also the Nepali Congress representative from Lalitpur District.

The Patan Rajkulo used to be 11.2 kms from Tika Bhairab to Darbar Square but today it barely reaches Thecho, 5.6 kms away. The Raj Kulos were not just

When the ancient Malla kings of Patan decided to build an elaborate canal system to bring water to their royal baths from 13 kms away, it must have been an undertaking like the Melamchi project is today.

Three hundred years ago the royal engineers diverted water from the Lele River at Tika Bhairab at the southern edge of the Valley, channelled the water along subterranean contour-hugging canals, across the outskirts, under the town all the way to the sunken spouts of the Darbar Square. They had to survey the gradient and precisely map the course of the canal.

Not much is known about how long it took to build, or even who constructed it—just the names of kings who not just took credit but also took baths in the water that came gushing out at the other end.

The most astounding thing about the Raj Kulo is that it also provided water for irrigation along the way and were working till as recently as the 1970s. Now, civil engineers who have studied them say that if revived the ancient royal canals of Patan and Bhaktapur could take care of the water needs of the poorest of the poor.

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The Raj Kulos were not just

Fountainhead: Santa Lal Maharjan points to the source where the Raj Kulo originates at Lele on Wednesday (left). When the work is finished in three years, the royal canal will take the water upto the spout at Sundari Chok in Patan (overleaf) where Malla kings once used to bathe.
water canals. They integrated water supply with irrigation: indicating the fine urban-rural balance of the Kathmandu Valley civilization.

The Raj Kulo irrigated rice fields along the way, traversed many towns filling up ponds and wells, they provide a constant flow of clean water to urban dwellers in Patan and helped sustain the ground water levels by recharging aquifers along the way.

“A revived Raj Kulo could be an immediate solution to the water scarcity problem the Valley faces every year,” says water expert Prayag Raj Joshi who is involved in the rehabilitation project.

Joshi says that when the work is finished in three years, the ancient royal canal will provide safe drinking water to 40,000 people in Patan and irrigate an additional 450 hectares of farms on the city’s outskirts.

The Raj Kulo itself is 1.5 m wide and 1.3 m deep and in most places runs along the surface until it reaches town. In core city areas there is an ingenious underground aqueduct that takes the water to various water spouts.

The first phase of the rehabilitation program is underway now and covers 8.5 km of the canal from the source to the Sunakothi VDC passing through Chapapan and Thecho. This includes rehabilitation of the upper stretches of the canal destroyed by the 1982 flash flood on the Lele River.

Santa Lal Maharjan, chairman of the Chapapan User Committee thinks his community would not just benefit from the water but also learn more about Patan’s history. “The Raj Kulo is such a big part of our tradition and day-to-day lives, we understand the benefits but we also understand how important it is to preserve what our forefathers accomplished,” Maharjan told us.

Sagar Rana agrees: “The Raj Kulo is not just about water, it is about heritage and preserving the close-knit communities that the canal made possible during the time of our ancestors.”
Host government of disinformation officials

MARTY LOGAN in TUNIS

King Gyanendra got his 10 minutes on the international stage here Wednesday but his message was lost as the information age spotlight remained on the fight over who will run the internet and the host government’s repression of activists.

The king’s appeal to develop an international system to provide an internet technology, now in the hands of the US-based ICANN, appeared to have been written before Tuesday’s late-night deal between government bureaucrats here to attend the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the pact guarantees no immediate changes to internet oversight but did establish a forum that will revisit the numerous proposals for reform.

American officials were ecstatic about the last-minute deal. “We are thrilled with this decision,” ambassador David Gross told journalists, saying it “preserved the unique role of the United States.”

Added Assistant US Secretary of Commerce MD Galloway: “The internet lives to innovate another day.”

Leading off the afternoon session of speakers, which included Indian Minister for Communications and Information Technology Dayanidhi Maran and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, King Gyanendra made a pitch for further high-tech aid for Nepal and other developing, land-locked and mountainous countries.

The king refrained from touching on the increasingly sensitive topic here of freedom of expression, which was met head-on by earlier speakers. “It is, quite frankly, unacceptable for the United Nations to continue to include among its member states which imprison citizens for the sole reason that they have criticized their government on the internet or in the media,” said Swiss President Samuel Schmid in his opening speech.

Ironically, human rights activists and journalists here, both local and foreign, continued to denounce the police and plainclothes officials, who stand at every corner of this ramsham conference site. Pride of the government has announced the decision to name Tunisia as host because the government has jailed journalists critical of its policies and actively censored the internet.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) slammed the detention of journalists Hamadi Jebali and Mohamed Abbou. In April Abbou was sentenced to three and a half years in prison for writing an Internet article posted on the banned Tunisian internet site, Tunisianes, that compared torture in Tunisia’s prisons to conditions in Iraq’s infamous Abu-Ghurair jail.

The government, which is a co-host of the Summit, is so low it is hidden behind India. King Gyanendra (right) delivers his 10-minute address to the WSIS on Wednesday (right).

But the UN says there is room at the WSIS for world leaders like King Gyanendra. “We would interpret the presence of leading figures from governments as a positive indication of their growing support for this principle,” said Sarah Parkes of the Information Technology Division of the US government.

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“‘It ain’t broke so why fix it?’”

HAIDER RIZVI in NEW YORK

International effort to break down the digital barriers facing the world’s poor will backfire if governments fail to work out their differences on internet governance at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis this week.

The most contentious issue is Washington’s role in overseeing the internet’s address structure known as the domain name system (DNS), which enables millions of computer users around the world to communicate with each other. Currently, the system is managed by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), a California-based non-profit private organisation that won a 10-year contract to the US Department of Commerce.

Despite certain differences on the issue, both the developing countries’ bloc led by China, India, Brazil and others, and the European Union are stressing that the internet should be governed internationally with multiple stakeholders involved in the decision-making process.

While many developing countries want internet governance to be controlled by an international body such as the UN, the Europeans have proposed what they call a ‘cooperation model’ to deal with ICANN. The model points to a forum that would allow governments, interested organisations and industry to discuss internet issues. But Washington opposes this, arguing that internet security and stability are best maintained through the current system of ICANN.

“‘As important as internet governance discussions are, I don’t think anybody believes that as a result of them there will be one more computer or one more cell phone in rural parts of Africa, South America, Asia or anywhere else,” said David Gross, who handles the US delegation at previous UN meetings.

The plan of action adopted at the conclusion of the first UN summit on the information society held in Geneva in 2003 laid out clear targets for increasing information and communication technologies (ICT) access and internet connections for rural areas, hospitals, libraries and universities in the developing world.

Developing countries argue that meeting such goals requires changes in internet governance but the US says the current system is working and producing positive results. While the vast majority of people without access to the internet in developing countries, there are also millions of people within the developed world who are unable to use the web for economic reasons.

“Telephone networks would not be the prerogative of one group of countries or stockholders,” says Maria Luiza Viotti, a Brazilian diplomat, “governments have a stake and the concerns of developing countries should be taken into account.”

But US says government involvement in internet governance in certain countries would cause further erosion of the freedom of expression and independent political opinion.

The European Union and Canada share many of the US concerns over governance control. But at the same time they also appear to be equally wary of Washington’s dominance over internet governance.

Viorene Bédard, the European Information Technology Commissioner, sums it up: “If they have the impression that the internet is dominated by one nation and it does not belong to all the nations, then the result could be that the internet falls apart.”

World summit of disinformation officials

Host government of disinformation officials

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Some activists were also critical of the presence of King Gyanendra who shut down ISPs and placed soldiers in newsrooms after his February 1 takeover. “King Gyanendra has shown open contempt for the free press. His attendance at the information summit should be read as a cynical attempt at window dressing,” said Tejeprave Thapa, South Asia researcher for Human Rights Watch.

Added the president of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) Bhim Nishat: “The WSIS gives the king another opportunity to lie to the world.”

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As a teacher, Dhan Bahadur Khadka used to walk around his village urging parents to send their children to school and chasing after the students to encourage them to stay in school. The villagers looked up to him for advice and information. He was respected, and everyone called him "Guruji".

That was 10 years ago. Ever since the Maoist 'Peoples’ War' began teachers across Nepal and especially in those remote mountains of central Nepal have become pawns in the conflict.

Teachers like Khadka are prime targets of Maoists for extortion and have to pay five to 10 percent of their meager Rs 3,000 monthly salary to the Maoists. The rebels often abduct teachers along with students for prolonged forced indenture, and in their 'base areas' the Maoists force teachers to follow their 'revolutionary curriculum' or face punishment.

Most teachers have no choice, but that immediately makes them suspect in the eyes of the security forces who regard them as Maoists or at least as sympathisers.

"Either you do whatever they order or be killed," says Khadka. Teachers in the remote areas of Rukum have no choice and have to follow the diktat of the Maoist party.

Khadka’s daily routine is simple. He goes to school, teaches his class and in the evening goes home and waits for day to break the next day.

Nearly 150 teachers have been killed in the last nine years of the war, according to a tally kept by the rights group, INSEC. Eighty-four of them were killed by the Maoists and the rest died in the hands of security forces. Both sides and rebels have been equally responsible for the detention and torture of another 227 teachers.

Teachers are at the forefront of Nepal’s decade-long war. The only government employees who still remain in the villages after police, postmen, health workers and agriculture extension workers fled. There are 147,000 teachers on the government’s payroll and 19,000 of them in primary schools in the most remote VDCs of the country. Most of those still in the villages have to pay the Maoist tax, so it is the government that is indirectly subsidising the Maoists.

Ironically, it is the very fact that teachers remain in the village that makes them suspect in the eyes of the security forces. During past states of emergency it was the teachers who were detained, disappeared or killed because the security forces regarded them as Maoists sympathetic to the Maoists.

In fact, more than any other professionals, teachers have faced the most hardships during that conflict. Aside from physical harm, many teachers suffer from stress-related disorders from having to balance on a knife’s edge between the rebels and the state every day.

One teacher who did not want to be named broke down as he told us: "I endure the beatings and humiliation but when one of my own students joined the Maoists and humiliated me in front of the whole village I just couldn’t take it."

Khadka remembers the days in the early 1990s when he was almost revolver in the villages. His task was not just to teach but to counsel villagers and inform them about what was happening in far-away Kathmandu or in the world.

"Sometimes we had to give health advice, suggestions to farmers and even settle disputes."

Today, Khadka walks with his head bent, trying not to be noticed by the security forces on the outskirts of Musikot as he hurries back to his village with his paycheck. A slight hesitation and nervousness could mean detention. His colleagues have been beaten up for not giving details of Maoist positions. But Khadka knows that when he gets back to Pipal he will be punished by the other side if he doesn’t pay his tax.

“My father was just an ordinary teacher and we don’t know why he was arrested,” a young girl on a bus going from Nepalgunj to Sarkhet told us. A fellow inmate who witnessed the incident told the family after his release that the girl’s father was taken to the jungle and shot dead.

“We are really demoralised, we are treated like criminals by the Maoists,” explains Sakta Bahadur BK, a teacher from Rukum’s Pokhara VDC. Dipesh Roka used to be a Maoist, quit the movement and is now living as a refugee in Musikot. He says it is the children of the poorest families who are most affected by the Maoist closure of schools: "Teaching has become an insecure job especially for those working in the villages and when we leave, the children don’t get an education."

Gagan Thapa presented the monarchy as the reason for a raft of serious problems like fleecing economic woes, endemic corruption, the insurgency. However, he was smart enough to leave some time to hit out at the party bosses who he described as ‘very authoritarian and archaic’. With a sigh, we realised that if Nepal’s best minds don’t enter politics, they will have to be ready to be ruled by incompetent crooks.

Minendra Rijal the NC-D spokesman pleaded about the beauty of democracy. When he was asked about reforms and democracy within his own party, however, he managed to sidestep the question with a smirk. The good doctor is among the most upbeat politicians in Nepal but he couldn’t transfer his optimism to his audiences here. So, we guess the politicians just have no desire. The young crop of leaders have immense enthusiasm and commitment and also the energy to see through their ideas. But looking at the rate in which Nepalis are leaving Nepal, it’s hard to be optimistic even from this far away.

Nepalis need a clear political strategy and coherent leadership. From the party’s rank and file to the top leaders and from leaders of the bygone generation to the younger ones. But all we heard about Daasan and Thar here were catchwords like ‘diktanta’, ‘ganantra’ and ‘samaekeo rajya’ and political discourse was sporadic and full of one-sided utterings. Everyone seems hung up on the process rather than on finding a way out of the crisis. If these buzzwords remain cheap political slogans and we are not shown what it really means in real behavioural changes, a new Nepal will remain a distant dream.
“Hind-Chin Bhai-Bhai” again
India and China woo cross-border business

HOWARD FRENCH in SHANGHAI

For years, the rapid growth of China and India has been based on business with the developed world and has often meant taking business away from western industries. Now, companies in those countries—the world’s two largest emerging economies—are beginning intensive drives to hunt for business in each other’s markets.

In recent months, one giant business after another from the two Asian giants has announced ambitious expansion plans in the other’s economies. Trade between the two countries had already been growing at a phenomenal rate, reaching $13.6 billion last year: a sevenfold increase from 1990.

Driving the new boom in cross-border investment is the shortage of talent in crucial sectors in each country. China is an industrial powerhouse in the making, while India has placed its bets more heavily on services.

Nowhere can this trend be seen more clearly than in information technology, where India is already perceived as a global leader and where China vies to catch up.

Infosys Technologies, an Indian software and information services leader, to take one leading example, recently announced plans to invest $65 million to expand its business in China, where it will hire 2,000 computer experts over the next two years and build large new corporate campuses in Shanghai and Hangzhou.

Beginning intensive drives to the largest emerging economies— are away from western industries. With the developed world and with China but also with China’s own multinational corporations in other’s economies. Trade between China has been mirrored by those of several other large Indian companies that specialize in computer services and outsourcing, like Tata Consultancy Services, Wipro and Satyam Computer Services. Earlier this year, Satyam announced its plans to build a major campus in China.

On the Chinese side, the drive to explore the Indian market is being led by corporate giants, like Huawei Technologies, a leading equipment manufacturer that competes with Cisco Systems. “Since we are a company whose business is based largely on globalisation, we felt we had to be in India,” said Hu Wei, chief executive of Huawei’s Indian operation, which has recently hired 700 Indian software experts in Bangalore. “To some extent, Chinese companies have been doing research on software on a small scale, and things are not very standardised. In India, lots of companies have reached a very high level already and we would like to learn from them.”

For now, Indian companies enjoy a lead in cross-border investments. A stiff challenge for them remains, however: how to break into the Chinese corporate market, where outsourcing of information services is less well-established than in most developed economies and where a strong bias in favour of working with Chinese partners remains in force.

Chinese manufacturing goods have become ubiquitous in the Indian marketplace, bringing down the prices of many products and forcing some Indian producers out of business. The future of the two countries’ economic relationship will depend largely on the openness of the Chinese.

PRANAB BARDHAN in BERKELEY

The media have been all agog over the rise of China and India in the international economy, but while there is no doubt about the great potential of these two economies, severe structural and institutional problems will hobble them for years to come.

Both China and India are still desperately poor. Of the total of 2.3 billion people in these two countries, nearly 1.5 billion earn less than $2 a day.

Of course, the lifting of hundreds of millions of people above the poverty line in China is a historic achievement. Conventional wisdom now suggests that globalisation is responsible for this feat. Yet assertions about Indian poverty reduction through trade liberalisation are even shakier. In the 1990s, the decade of major trade liberalisation, the rate of decline in poverty by some aggregate estimates had, if anything, slowed down. In any case, India is as yet a minor player in world trade, contributing less than one percent of world exports (China’s share is about six percent).

What about the horde of Indian software engineers, call-centre operators and back-room programmers? The total number of workers in all forms of IT-related jobs in India comes to less than a million workers, one-quarter of one percent of the Indian labour force. India is the largest single-country contributor to the pool of literate people in the world. Even in China less than one-fifth of the labour force is employed in manufacturing, mining and construction combined. Nearly half of the country’s labour force remains in agriculture (about 60 percent in India). Domestic private enterprise in China, while active and growing, is relatively weak and Chinese banks are burdened with bad loans. Commercial regulatory structures in both China and India are still slow and heavy-handed. To start a business requires 71 days in India and 48 days in China (compared to six days in Singapore).

In the economic reform process, the Chinese leadership has often made bold decisions and implemented them relatively quickly and decisively whereas in India, reform has been halting and hesitant. This is usually attributed to the inevitably slow processes of democracy in India. And though this may be the case, other factors are involved.

But inequalities (particularly rural-urban) have been increasing in India and those left behind are getting restive. China is far behind India in the ability to politically manage conflicts. Over the last 50 years, India’s heterogeneous society has been wracked with conflicts, but the system has by and large managed these.

We should not lose our sense of proportion in thinking about the rise of China and India. There are many severe pitfalls and roadblocks that both have to overcome before they can become significant players in the international economic scene on a sustained basis.

Pranab Bardhan is professor of economics at the University of California, Berkeley and chief editor of the Journal of Development Economics.
Nine tips
A winning singles strategy

Early on in my tennis career, the only strategy I knew was to run as fast as I could and get the ball back over the net and wait for my opponent to make an error. As I moved on to play better players, I needed to add new strategies to be successful. Here are nine tips that will help you be a winner on the court.

1. Play High Percentage Tennis
Reduce the number of points lost by enforced errors and increase the number of points by forcing your opponents into error.

2. Know the Zones
Use the traffic light analogy to understand the three zones on the court.

Red Zone: Baseline
Yellow Zone: Midcourt
Green Zone: Frontcourt

3. Know Your Two Target Areas
Four quadrants: The closer you are to the net, the greater the potential angle you have. (130 degrees from the baseline as opposed to only 19.8 degrees two feet from the net)

Height = Depth minus Aim at a three to six feet window over the net for depth.

4. Be Caution With Direction Change
The difference between down the line shot and crosscourt shot is 19.1 degrees. You have more chances for error changing direction off a deep ball. Make sure you are well set up to pull the trigger up close to the line.

5. Understand Errors
The best error to make is long. The worst error is the net. When you are a foot or more behind the baseline. From this position, your goal is to get plenty of height on the ball and play crosscourt most of the time.

6. Attack the Short Ball
Once you have depth on your ground strokes, you will get short balls. You have got to attack them and get to the net to apply pressure on your opponent. The key is to understand how many steps it will take you to get into a good volley position by the time your approach shot bounces. You want to approach the weaker side and also the side where your opponent will hit higher and longer.

7. Awareness of Defensive, Neutral and Offensive Position
A defensive position is when you are a foot or more behind the baseline. From this position, your goal is to get plenty of height on the ball and play crosscourt most of the time.

A neutral position is when you are on top of the baseline. From this position you can play consistently as well as look for the opportunity to be aggressive and look for the down the line shots.

An offensive position is when you are a foot or more inside the base line and looking to attack a short ball and transition to the net.

8. Have Plan
You have to be able to adapt and change tactics and rhythm when needed in a match. If Plan A is working that is great but if it is not working go to Plan B or C. It might be adding more or less top spin or varying the speed on your ground strokes. It could also mean serving and volleying instead of staying back or attacking a weak second serve and changing the net. You could also affect the rhythm of your opponent by playing slower or faster or taking the ball earlier to give them less time.

9. Smile and Have Fun
Don’t take tennis too seriously. After all, it’s just a game.
About Town

Exhibitions

- Around Annapurna: panorama photographs by Andreas Stimm 18-27 November at Indigo Gallery, 4413580.
- Nature’s Fantasy: based on oriental art technique by Hare Ram Jiju at Lajimpat Gallery, 18 November-26 December, 4410933.
- The Desdom Doig Exhibition featuring watercolors and drawings, 22 November-6 December at Siddhartha Art Gallery, 4438879.
- Photographs by Susan Griffths Jones, 20 November 7 December, Lajimpat Gallery Cafe, 4428549.

Festivals and Events

- Aasa Ko Blu (Seeds of Hope) HELP Nepal fundraising program for children at Patan Museum, 18 November.
- WTO, Public Health and Hong Kong Ministerial youth discussion series, 18 November, 8PM at Martin Chautari, 4258220.
- Finlandia party at Liquid Lounge with DJ Kiran, 18 November.
- Dance Fiesta with famous DJs and door prizes, Hotel de Annapurna, 18 November, 8PM onwards.
- Rosemary Café’s first anniversary, 18-24 November, 4781591.
- 3rd SIRC Charity Golf Tournament at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort, 18 November.
- Asian Mela at Hyatt Regency, Saturday 19 November, 10AM-7PM.
- What is life and how to handle it, 8BHC, 4414843.
- Universal Children’s Day: 20 November.
- World Television Day: 21 November.
- British Film Festival at the noteable hotel, 21-25 November.
- Ride and Rage bikers ride up to the Last Resort and party, 25-26 November.
- Mean Streets with De Niro and Scorsese film festival at Lajimpat Gallery Cafe, III 30 November, 4428549.
- World AIDS Day: 1 December.
- Jworn Christmas Bajar: 3 December at Hotel Hyatt Regency. Rs 100.

Music and Performances

- U2 Night at Moksha, 18 November 7PM, Rs 150.
- Traditional Nева Music Concert by Tanari Bajan Khala from Jayoo Tole 20 & 27 November at Hotel Vaja, 4217545.
- Ramalo Saajh at Dwarika’s with Maya Mantra 1 December. Rs 1000 per person, 7PM-10PM. 4679488.
- Unplugged sessions with Strings, Jatra Saturday nights. 4256622.
- Live Music at Juneli Bar, Hotel de l’Annapurna. 4221711.
- Wonderful Wednesdays great music at the bar, Dwarika’s. 4479488.
- Ladies Night Wednesdays, one free cocktail to the ladies at Jatra.
- Live Jazz by the pond at 1905, Kantipath. 4225272.

Rajasthan, Saurashtra and Kutch

- Kebab and Biryani Festival cuisine from the house of Mughals at Hyatt Regency 5-20 November, 6.30 PM onwards. 4419234.
- Tapas & Margaritas at Hotel Yak & Yeti. 10-22 Nov, Rs 899. 4248999.
- Culinary Voyage to 14 kitchens of the European Union at Hyatt Regency.
- The Sidewalk BBQ with Shades of Blue, Wednesdays, Shangri-La, 4412999.
- Cinema and Par-e-jat every Friday 7PM at Dwarika’s.
- Sushi and Saki Promotion at Hyatt Regency. 4412947.
- The Chimney Restaurant signature dishes at Hotel Yak and Yeti.
- BBQ Ban Bhoq at Godawari Village Resort, Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays. 5560675.
- Jazz Gourmet fine dining redefined at Hotel Shangri-La. 4412999.
- Autumn Chill Out Moments at 1905 Kantipath, delightful entrances and lounge grooves by DJP, 4425272.

Getaways

- Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge, call for reservations. 4361950.
- Overnight Stay Package at Godawari Village Resort, 5560675.
- Escape Kathmandu at Shivapuri Heights Cottage.
- Junglewalks, rafting, elephant rides all at Jungle Base Camp Lodge, Bardia. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com
- Conferences at Godawari Village Resort. 5560675.
FREQUENCY MODULATION: A radio activist holds a large-dam life-size radio used as a prop in a pro-freedom rally organised by civil society groups on Monday.

DON'T FORGET US: Bhutanese women at a sit-in last week protesting the decline in aid to refugee camps and calling on the UN to resolve the refugee crisis. They called off the protest on Tuesday after assurances from the UN that their demands would be considered.

IF IT'S TUESDAY IT MUST BE BELGIUM: Nepathya performs to eager crowds in Brussels as a part of the group's successful Europe tour.

HELPING NEIGHBOURS: Relief material from Nepali donors for Pakistani earthquake survivors being loaded on a Royal Nepali Army HS-748 aircraft at Kathmandu airport before departure for Islamabad.

AND ALL THAT JAZZ: Vocalist Tipriti from Soulmate belting out a tune at the grande finale of Jazzmandu last Saturday at the Summit Hotel.

His father's son

A s a 17-year-old Boy Scout, Keshar Bahadur Bista travelled the world in the 1960s. Like many Nepalis, he could have stayed abroad and done well for himself in the diaspora.

Fortunately, his father Dor Bahadur Bista would have none of it. The famous social scientist and author of the book Fatalism and Development decided his son had not seen enough of his own country and forced him to return to Nepal. It was a decision that shaped Keshar Bahadur Bista's life and destiny. On Wednesday, he took the plunge and launched his own political party, Democratic Nepal and vowed to take Nepal down the middle path of meaningful democracy.

Like his father, Bista spent most of his free time traveling around Nepal and excelled in university. On finishing his MA in Political Science from Tribhuvan University where he received a gold medal for outstanding academic performance Bista volunteered for the National Development Scheme (NDS) and was sent to Sindhupalchok with three classmates where he worked for a year implementing rural development projects.

If one needs proof that the NDS was the best thing that ever happened to Nepal, one just needs to look at the commitment and drive of participants like Keshar Bahadur Bista. He returned to act as coordinator of the NDS that sent thousands of college students for one year mandatory development work in villages across Nepal.

Bista shied away from politics, although he served a brief stint as minister of culture during the Panchayat years. Seven of his ancestors were executed by Bir Shumsher so the initial reluctance to get into politics was understandable. But the yearning to do something to save the country was too strong and Keshar Bahadur Bista has now returned to his true calling.

Asked why he launched his own party, Bista says, like many other Nepalis, it was because of the unfilled hopes of democracy. "Ultimately democracy is the best way to improve the lives of Nepalis, our new party will represent and include all of Nepal," he says. Wish him luck.

Alok Tumbahangphey
If you have turned to this page in search of comic relief, then I’m sorry to have to break the distressing news that you have come to the wrong place. Is that twittering I hear from the back? No twittering, you understand? Twittering is against the national interest and is strictly prohibited until further notice.

What’s so funny anyway? It’s no laughing matter when Mars is so close to planet Earth, it’s deadly serious. We don’t want anyone to be in stitches around here and if caught indulging in unprovoked laughter perpetrators will be tickled with a feather on the soles of their feet. If you want to laugh I suggest you go elsewhere, for instance to the humour-emerging state media which is the only official mouthpiece licensed to poke fun at the higher-up authoritarians without let or hindrance.

Here on this page we are seriously committed to follow the directives laid down in the Royal Ordinance Amending Some Press Rules and Regulations Act 1984 (hereinafter referred to as ‘If This is Not Draconian Enough For You We Can Issue Another Edict’) which has finally introduced much-awaited and welcome restrictions on uncontrolled guffawing, mindless chortling, chuckling for no reason, falling off one’s chair clutching one’s belly, and all public display of amusement of any kind at the expense of those in positions of power and authority without written approval by the Department of Mirth Control of the Ministry of Infotainment and Population of an application signed, fingerprinted and filed in triplicate two months prior to the publication of the alleged joke. Permission will be granted on a case-by-case basis under the credo:

‘He who laughs best laughs behind bars, and that includes Rumdoodle.’

And as long as we are on the subject we’d also like to bring to the notice of citizens new provisions in the decree proscribing rumours, gossip, innuendo and mindless chitchat with immediate effect. Only officially-sanctioned propaganda is henceforth allowed to be circulated by word-of-mouth provided they meet minimum government-approved standards of sycophancy and adulation to the high and mighty.

Even though it may be belabouring the obvious we would like to reprint sections of the said ordinance to refresh people’s memories. Don’t tell us we didn’t warn you.

Amendment to the Get-Tough Act 2015
Notwithstanding anything already written in Provision 52 (d) of Section 3 (i) Sub-Section 15b Clause (c) of the Freedom of Expression Act or elsewhere in the existing statutes, any corner momo shop, barber shop or beauty parlour that transgresses prevailing laws on sedition by allowing customers to take part in conversation that can be construed as ‘news’ will henceforth have their licenses revoked. Only conversations among clients dealing with ‘informative items’ like health, education, family planning, environment, weather, road transportation or related to any development activities with an objective of promoting public awareness will henceforth be allowed.

Amendment to the Tough Act To Follow 2017
In Clause (d) of Sub-Section (2) of Section 18-D of the Act, the words ‘fine up Rs 500,000 or two years imprisonment or both’ has been added to the provisions on defamation. The definition of defamation has also been widened to include: ‘Anyone practicing voodoo with the intention of countering officially-sanctioned occult rituals, or anyone harbouring negative vibes about aforementioned regime or thinking nasty anti-national thoughts is liable to punitive measures under the law’.

Check the latest classifieds in the Nepal Times and Mercantile Office Systems for the latest updates and classifieds.