What comes first: giving up arms or securing a peace deal?

NARESH NEWAR

A disagreement between the government and the Maoists over laying down arms threatens to deadlock the peace process. The government wants to start a process leading to demilitarisation, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR). The Maoists want to keep on talking without laying down their weapons.

The wrangling is over process not substance, still posturing by the two sides via the media is delaying compromise. Maoist leaders are angry about the government’s 2 July letter to the UN not because they weren’t consulted but because it mentions monitoring, disarming and decommissioning Maoist combatants only.

“There is going to be no DDR until there is a political solution and the government should stop making too much noise about decommissioning us,” says Maoist negotiator Dinanath Sharma, using an acronym that is much in vogue these days.

To make their point, the Maoists are sabre-rattling by taking media on high-profile tours of their military training camps. “If there is going to be any demobilising and disarming, it should be for both sides, not just for us,” Sharma maintains.

The UN has not officially responded to the government’s request but we understand behind-the-scene discussions are going on. Experts from the UN and other conflict resolution groups are in the capital this week.

“If you do not discuss the future, you can’t shape it and in this case the process is technically and politically complicated,” says expert Dan Smith from International Alert. “Disarming only the Maoists is not enough.” (see interview p5)

Experts say the demobilisation process must also include ‘right sizing’ the army and rehabilitating not just ex-combatants but also vigilantes and especially child and women soldiers.

“We are already too late trying to gather information and resources,” says Adrian Verheul, adviser at a DDR workshop in the capital on Monday. Even if the UN and other international agencies acquire money and expertise, the government hasn’t done anything to use them.

“An immediate agreement for DDR is essential between the Maoists and the government in the presence of UN representatives so that no party is suspicious about the intent of others,” says Deo Bahadur Chhaup, a retired brigadier general who has experience in UN peacekeeping in the Congo. Delays in demilitarisation, demobilisation and reintegration until the constituent assembly elections would be expensive and risk a return to conflict, according to Smith. But other military analysts say rushing DDR may actually jeopardise peace talks.

“This is not yet a post-conflict situation to push decommissioning because the peace process is ongoing,” says conflict expert, Indrajit Rai.

The Nepali Army objects to being subjected to the same rules of demobilisation as the Maoist army, arguing that it is an armed force of a democratic and legitimate state power.
BHUtan is HOME

It has now been 16 years that more than 100,000 Bhutanese refugees have been living in camps in eastern Nepal. A whole new generation has been born and grown up there. It was naive expecting anything good to come out of bilateral talks between Bhutan and Nepal in the past decade. The Bhutanese were cynically prolonging the meetings to buy time, and a succession of feudal and distracted Nepali governments bungled the whole thing. The political deadwood and compulsion fatigue have now reduced the level of assistance to the camps, spreading despair. The UNHCR and some western countries have been pushing for a solution through third-country resettlement of some of the refugees in return for Bhutan taking back a token number and allowing most of the other refugees to assimilate into Nepal and India. The Nepal government and refugee leaders have opposed the idea. But now the new government in Kathmandu has said third country resettlement could be the basis of the crisis once and for all.

We understand that a majority of the refugees want to go back to Bhutan (No place like home, #206). To do the refugees as political pawns to allow an archaic democratic regime to get away with a massive violation of the human rights of its citizens would set a precedence for ethnic evictions elsewhere. At a time when the international community talks about ‘humanitarian intervention’, it is surprising to hear it justify refugee resettlement because “there is no other solution”. Since when did a tiny country that has evicted one-sixth of its own people have such geopolitical clout?

India and the Bhutanese community can be faulted but the bottomline is that it is the Bhutan regime that has to take ultimate responsibility. Sooner or later, it has no choice but to do its citizens back.

Nepal also has a responsibility and the new government should try to revive the negotiating process, and mobilise support in New Delhi and other international partners to redress this gross injustice. India, whose territory the Bhutanics were trucked like cattle in 1991 to Nepal, has to take the refuge issue more seriously. This is a potential time bomb for all the four countries. The disenfranchisement of Bhutanics also has serious implications for the security of Nepalis in various parts of Nepal who are watching the resettlement proposal and its implications for themselves.

Scattered a people evicted by the Bhutani regime to the far corners of the world will not just undermine the dignity and security of overseas Nepalis, it will also taint the moral value of the people power movement in their mother country.

COMMENT

Anjana’s Rajbansi’s Journey

It was quite a surprise to learn that Anjana has been offered Rs 1.5 million, free medical education and for Anjana to turn Anjana into their brand ambassador. Kathmandu are trying to outbid each other to dreams. Operators of teaching shops in the country has been born and grown up there. She has been offered Rs 1.5 million, free medical education and for Anjana to turn Anjana into their brand ambassador. Kathmandu are trying to outbid each other to dreams. Operators of teaching shops in the

Anjana stands out because of her personal performance. Any student, not just a Bhutanese girl from the tarai, deserves to be congratulated for scoring over 99 percent in an examination as competitive as the SLC. She wants to study science, go to medical school and maybe migrate. There is nothing wrong with such middle-class dreams. Operators of teaching shops in Kathmandu are trying to outbid each other to dreams. She has been offered Rs 1.5 million, free medical education and for Anjana to turn Anjana into their brand ambassador. Kathmandu are trying to outbid each other to dreams. Operators of teaching shops in the medical schools have opened but there are medical schools have opened but there are fewer, not more, doctors in the countryside. Suga is a relatively accessible village in Mahottari district with a direct bus link to Kathmandu. It has electricity and telephone lines, a private school, a few shops and a weekly bazaar. And yet, this village of over 6,000 has no doctor. We would have complained, but neither the district hospital in Jaleswari nor the zonal hospital in Butwal has a doctor.

Unfortunately, they indicate just how deep the holocaust that has set in our education system. The free-market of higher education is a free-for-all arena where the morality of business and ethics of teaching both have lost all relevance. Dozens of private medical schools have opened but there are medical schools have opened but there are fewer, not more, doctors in the countryside. Suga is a relatively accessible village in Mahottari district with a direct bus link to Kathmandu. It has electricity and telephone lines, a private school, a few shops and a weekly bazaar. And yet, this village of over 6,000 has no doctor. We would have complained, but neither the district hospital in Jaleswari nor the zonal hospital in Butwal has a doctor.

The SLC topper’s success masks an ugly truth about our education malaise

Janakpur gets its quota of doctors either. The country needs more doctors to be congratulated for scoring over 99 percent in an examination as competitive as the SLC. She wants to study science, go to medical school and maybe migrate. There is nothing wrong with such middle-class dreams. Operators of teaching shops in Kathmandu are trying to outbid each other to dreams. She has been offered Rs 1.5 million, free medical education and for Anjana to turn Anjana into their brand ambassador. Kathmandu are trying to outbid each other to dreams. Operators of teaching shops in the medical schools have opened but there are fewer, not more, doctors in the countryside. Suga is a relatively accessible village in Mahottari district with a direct bus link to Kathmandu. It has electricity and telephone lines, a private school, a few shops and a weekly bazaar. And yet, this village of over 6,000 has no doctor. We would have complained, but neither the district hospital in Jaleswari nor the zonal hospital in Butwal has a doctor.

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PARACHUTISTS

Most parachuting foreign consultants (Nepali Pan. More consultants the merrier, #306) tend to be one of the following: friends, past employees, ex-colleagues, distant relatives, past employers, potential future employers and potential future employers of the expat heads of international development agencies who invite them to Nepal in the first place. If not, then such consultants try to attach themselves to a group of donor agencies for lifelong frequent short-term international assignments. In general, the more bilateral an aid agency is, the more opaque and incestuous its consultan t-hiring process tends to be.

Economic conditions matter too. During the knowledge of local people so they number of German consultants at German-funded aid agencies in Kathmandu or Delhi for other bilateral agencies. One result is that it’s rare for expat heads of aid agencies to be concerned about the career paths of competent Nepali employees who see as no more than glorified clerks. Often such Nepali employees may strut about as though they were important policy-makers but in reality they are paid well to do no more than push reams of paper, write terms of reference for foreign consultants and be fixers for visiting clueless consultants. As for debating all Times caught up with him in Penang, Malaysia, on Thursday during an international media conference on this candidacy and the UN’s future involvement in Nepal’s peace process.

Shashi Tharoor is India’s candidate for the UN Secretary General of the United Nations when Kofi Annan steps down later this year. This week at the G-8 Summit in St Petersburg, the United States and Germany agreed to “consider” the proposal. Tharoor is currently Under Secretary-General for Communications.

Nepali Times: How do you think the UN will respond to the letter that the Nepali government sent the secretary general requesting help with demobilisation?

Shashi Tharoor: In recent weeks, I’ve been so consumed by my duty for the secretariat’s work that I’ve not had time to read the letter. So, the only answer I can give you would be the diplomatic one that is that I’m sure the letter would be considered very carefully and in consultation with all interested parties. Obviously the UN would like to help Nepal get out of the crisis but we’d need to actual what is acceptable to all the parties concerned.

What does arms management mean concretely? To be honest, we don’t know what that concretely means because the way the UN does business is that once we have agreed in principle to do a particular job we send an assessment mission to the country concerned which will actually take a look at how the job would be done, look at practical considerations such as logistics, where you locate the headquarters, where you’d get your supplies from and all that stuff. We also look at a viable concept of operations which means taking with various parties so that they behave in a manner that conforms with your approach. Only when that has been drawn up would we be in a position to make a proposal to the government to the Security Council. So these are early days, I’m afraid.

From the UN’s experience in other hot spots, how do you rate Nepal, given the chances of achieving “peace” in Nepal? I’d rate it fairly positively for a number of reasons. First, we actually have an agreement amongst the contending parties in Nepal that is often a key consideration because all too often you find yourself in a situation where one party, or in the case of Darfur, a couple of parties, have not signed up to the process and therefore you don’t have a viable concept in resolution. In the case of Nepal because all the parties have come together on this we should be able to work something out fairly successfully. Secondly, our sense is that where we can be useful would be in areas where we can actually get a clear expression of intent. But the nature of these considerations has to be borne in mind. For example, the UN has no experience with elections with: in some we observe, in some we certify, in some we monitor, in some we actually help run the elections. Nerve that has been expressed could mean various approaches would be right remains to be seen.

Finally, on what you term “arms management”, which is a term we don’t usually use much in the UN, again it depends on what concepts seem most realistic. There would be some which would actually call for containment of soldiers, some which could call for the demobilisation of soldiers and some might be a “shame” of more subtle approach which would be worked out after on-site reconnaissance, and consultation on both sides.

So, which option would be most realistic for Nepal? I wouldn’t want to step into that particular minefield just yet.

How come Iain Martin was sent to East Timor at a time when the peace process in Nepal is at such a critical stage? Pradip Dhital, Pradip Dhital, email

Leopold Hoeglinger, email

Rajendra Pradhan has illustrated well the nature of development workers/ consultants working in underdeveloped countries. He is also concerned about whether the activities of NGOs and INGO in poor countries are doing any good. Parachuting consultants, as Pradhan, said, appear pompous. When I run into such people, I ask a number of questions: are they honest in their work? Are the targeted groups/ classes benefiting from these consultancy services? Are they selling illusions for their own benefit? Jagannath Lamiche, Kathmandu

Ashrat Ghanai’s report (Guest column, ‘Work hard, hard choices’, #306) if it is to come, will gather dust on some shelf somewhere as suggested by Rajendra Pradhan. Despite the fact that many dozens of PhDs reigned over the NPC in the last 50 years, thousands of politicians supported by foreign-funded political consultants sold their ideas and many finance ministers offered their prescriptions for the development of Nepal, the clearest direction for a country’s prosperity is yet to be established.

Nobody seems to know what exactly needs to be done. There are many opportunities but no vision and strategy. Perhaps there will be no hope of a turnaround as long as our politicians and the corrupt continue to berth in key positions.

Shambhu Malia, email

BASIC TRAINING

Although basic skills training is the best option for school leavers, the Nepali government is not giving proper attention to this sector (State of the State, “Putting education to work”, #306). If the government wants every citizen to be employed, it should invest in training courses suitable for those who cannot pass school exams. The budget for higher education should be minimised as it only produces high-level people qualified for jobs in foreign lands. If the government invested in basic education all this would be unemployed and there would be social harmony. Many people would opt for technical and vocational education rather than failing in education. Success in work is better than failure in education and failure in work means failure in generating income for one’s livelihood.

Rabin Rachalsia, Green Team, Bhaktapur

FEMALE FIGHTERS

I think Nepal for the centrefold pictures which further raised the suspicions of me and my female friends about the Maoist intense production of ‘Women as force’, #306). Not only do the pictures grotesquely reveal the abuse of women’s power at a time of restored national peace, Nayan Tara has now portrayed the Maoist leaders as men who sold their ideas and many finance ministers offered their prescriptions for the development of Nepal, the clearest direction for a country’s prosperity is yet to be established.

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Shambhu Malia, email

LEADERLESS

Most of the articles in your last issue offer little hope for Nepal. Ashrat Ghanai mentioned the people’s movement as one which changed the regime “but without leadership of vision and action” (Guest column, ‘Work hard, hard choices’, #306). Agreeing with him, I believe that the seven parties have no charismatic and visionary leaders and that the Maoist leaders believe more in guns than in people, so that we can see a huge gap between their commitments and actions. The photo essay, ‘A show of force’ is more of this and exposes the Maoists’ hidden motive of cowing the Nepal people with propaganda. The cover and the huge debate on removing the list of SLO tops instead of on ‘the plight of the 53 percent of failed examiners’ and the complete failure of the education system underscores the hypocrisy of Nepal intellectuals. For whom are they advocating? For the poor or the privilege of the ruling class? This is a long standing peace on the basis of a democratic society, better and corruption-free service, more employment and the assurance of self- respect and a united Nepal. But these issues are neglected and the unity of the people is being pulled to the breaking point in the name of religion and ethnicity. To succeed, we need leadership not only from the political parties but also from the media. Otherwise, there is a chance that Nepal will fall into a ‘vicious cycle of violence and destruction’.

Sharma Prakash, email

BY THE ROPE

Ropeways should play an important role in connecting the smaller hill regions. Ropeways have benefited small farmers dramatically and they are much simpler, cheaper and much faster. Also, as daily necessities become affordable because of lower transportation costs, some, able-bodied men will not migrate to find work but will engage in planning and developing their region. Surely roads have to be built, but that can wait till the level of economic activity rises sufficiently. Ishwari Pradhan, email

"We can work something out!"
We need an unconventional shakeup to rid ourselves of feudalism

“The most radical revolutionary will become a conservative the day after the revolution”. There is consolation in Hannah Arendt’s remark for those who seek peace. If true, the Maoists could relinquish arms and shed their extremist feathers once a corresponding process is simultaneously undertaken by the opposite side and their peaceful participation in the system is granted.

This doesn’t mean the seven party alliance should lull itself into complacency. The direct aggression against the people by King Mahendra and his sons has not been forgotten. On the cold night of 15 December 1960 a true hero as king staged a royal coup Prime Minister B P Koirala and his cabinet colleagues, the speaker and I, the leader of the opposition were herded off to prison at gunpoint.

The political parties combined to fight back with single-minded determination.

Our armed insurrection of 1961-2 was aborted because of the India-China war and the revolution of the 1970s under BP fell through because of the declaration of emergency in India, the land of our refuge. It took time, but the people themselves started a non-violent struggle against the oppressors.

The people’s movement of 1990, almost as massive as the one this year, had all the ingredients to dislodge the monarchy. But we politicians failed to on build in the people’s initiative and negotiated a dubious compromise in an unwisely haste to gain power. The king was permitted to retain the crown and even his control over the army. After he ascended the throne Gyanendra followed his father’s footsteps as he conspired to dissolve the parliament and usurp absolute power.

People this summer acted with pent up rage. They didn’t trust politicians and took centre-stage, and this put pressure on legislators to change the very character of the state into a secular state and Nepal’s own Magna Carta was achieved in the spirit and resonance of the Cromwellian Revolution.

The most redeeming feature of the April uprising was the resilience with which people resisted the high-voltage pressure of the international community to defend the anachronistic and feudal order. India was quick to realise that its twin pillar doctrine of constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy had lost its relevance and stated that it would abide by what the people decided.

The only continuing voice of protest in the subcontinent is that of the saffron brigade in India which suddenly lost its only Hindu kingdom. Nepal survives and shall survive as a free and independent secular state.

Girija Prasad Koirala has re-emerged as the redeemer of the nation but he and his alliance can retain that authority only if they fully absorb the intensity of the streets. The monarchy, even a ceremonial one, is now unacceptable to the people. Kings are genetically programmed to self-replicate and palaces, even dilapidated ones, turn into hatching grounds for feudal conspirators. History is replete with examples of kings who turned into king cobras. And revolutions, as in Russia and France, do not need the sanctity of the constituent assembly to build a republic over the tombs of tyranny.

The Maoist movement has relevance in the success of People Power II. They deserve credit for keeping the movement peaceful and also for declaring a unilateral ceasefire and taking that initial step towards a peaceful solution. Even when Gyanendra’s armed gangsters hounded nonviolent protesters in April, the Maoists did not retaliate in kind. By turning out in overwhelming numbers the people also reciprocated the sentiment and rejected the politics of violence.

This is a clear indication that the Nepali brand of Maoism has little to do with Mao Zedong. If our Maoists want to follow Prachanda Path so be it. The nation needs a non-conventional shakeup to rid itself of its feudal hangover.

Bharat SJB Rana is a former NC leader. He was the opposition leader of the Gorkha Parisad party during BP Koirala’s government before King Mahendra staged a coup and started partyless panchayat governance system.

GUEST COLUMN
Bharat SJB Rana

History foretold

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Top refugee official arrives

UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees Jenny Cheng-Hopkins will visit the Bhutanese refugee camps and other UNHCR programs during her first official visit to Nepal from 19 to 22 July. She will also call on high-level government officials and meet UN counterparts and UNHCR’s NGO partners, according to a press release.

Chinese university hosted

A reception in honour of visiting Chinese delegates from Nanjing Medical University was hosted by Alta Beta Institute, New Baneshwor, at Shangrila Hotel on Monday. Dhamanath Prasad Shah, state minister for general administration was the guest of honour. Many Nepali students are pursuing their medical studies in China.

World Cup winners

Nepa Hima Trade Link awarded three prizes as part of its Sony World Cup scheme. A digital camera worth Rs 16,600 was won by Neha Mahajan from Lazarim, a DVD player worth Rs 8,800 by Ajin Awale from Patan and a Discman worth Rs 3,250 by Jean Ramal Shrestha, state minister for general administration was the guest of honour. Many Nepali students are pursuing their medical studies in China.

Bank’s INSTANT SMS: Laxmi Bank now provides customers instant notification of account activity via SMS. The bank says this makes for more secure accounts, since account holders receive notification of debit or credit activity within seconds of a transaction, making it easier to detect fraud. Laxmi Bank’s existing SMS banking service includes balance enquiry, exchange rates and details of the last six transactions.

CLEAN CHURA: The KL Dugar Group has launched Gyan Chura, processed using “HACCP system and hygiene auditing”. The chura will be a quality product at a competitive price, says KL Dugar.

STANDARD CHARTER MOVES: Standard Chartered Bank Nepal Limited has relocated its Kantipath branch to Lalitpur from June 17. The Lalitpur branch has a large parking space and can be approached by two-way traffic. The bank is a subsidiary of the Standard Chartered Group, which owns 75 percent shares in the bank.

ECONOMIC SENSE: Artha Beed

Several international DDR missions are coming to Nepal. What role will they play? DDR is very interesting because on one hand, it is very technical — it’s about collecting weapons and counting them and making them unusable. And it is also identifying who are the combatants. On the other hand, it is also a political, social and economic process. Politically, it is based on agreements between the parties. Socially and economically, DDR is about reintegrating those who had been fighting or were in the army back into civilian life. There also need to be decisions taken by Nepal about, for example, how big its armed forces should be when peace is finally achieved. Because that number is likely to be smaller than the combined size of the current Nepali Army and Maoist forces. At the same time, there is a lot of expertise and advice that can be given from outside. You will probably need international observers to monitor the process and certainly need help for social and economic management of the process.

Beyond budgets

The myth of looking at the economy

T he budget is much like the annual Macher Bhadrak Jatra. It comes, people talk about it, a chariot is built, the vest shown, and everything dismantled, to be forgotten until the next year. It’s ironic that though we think the budget is a panacea for all economic ills, we treat it similarly. A great many segment or a few millions allocated for a social cause. In this feudalistic culture, a budget is the only thing which a state can extract taxes from the rich to paternalistically give to the poor. And it’s a return gift from those who were put into power by other people or a supplementary gift to those doled out during elections.

Don’t be too impatient about the peace process

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What is your assessment of the peace process to date? It is at a very early stage now and two things are important. One is to maintain forward momentum to fulfil the points of the eight-point agreement. The second is to not be too impatient about the peace process.

What message are the Maoists trying to give by displaying their armed militia during the peace process? I don’t think it is dangerous. Whenever an organisation, whether it is the army or the Maoists, shows you something, it is to reveal the best side of themselves. I don’t think in any sense it is dangerous or wrong of the Maoists to show that they are a well organised force.

Where are women and children in the DDR process? There are women involved whether they are fighting or not. And sometimes the DDR process focuses purely on those who have gun and who actually fought. But those who did other tasks, not necessarily military, also have a stake in the process, they also need to be looked after and reintegrated. The issue of reintegration of child soldiers also remains an enormous one because depending on what age they were recruited at, they may have very little sense of life except in the military or with rebel forces.
Families wait

While injured Maoists have been promised treatment and the government is actually taking about providing for the Maoist army, the families of Dambar Ekten, Tek bahadur Ekten and Govinda Acharya, killed by the state, are yet to hear from the government about compensation. Dambar, 44, of Ilam Main, was accused of being a Maoist and taken away by the army in February 2002. He was later shot to death. His wife Tika Kumari and their son, then five months old, do not have much to survive on and are being supported by their neighbours. Tika Kumari went to district headquarters to ask for compensation but was told that none is available for the families of those accused of being Maoists. She denies that her husband was a Maoist and adds, “When the government kills someone they have to do a proper investigation and make sure that the families are provided for. I am not asking for much, I just want to feed my son well and send him to a proper school.” Maoist army worker Tek Bahadur Ekten, 28, was taken from his home and killed by the army. His two orphans and his wife Fulmaya are in the same situation as Dambar Ekten’s wife and child.

Compromise

It took nearly a month for the interim constitution drafting committee to add more members. But it still has not been given full shape, for example, a seat has just been reserved for a Dalit representative. This only proves that the government-Maoist talks process lacks homework, consultation and transparency. Soon after the eight-point agreement was signed at the prime minister’s residence on 16 June, the six-member committee was formed. That was the same day Maoist chairman Prachanda appeared in public. But the drafting committee immediately became the subject of controversy. Apparently it was formed in a hurry and no members were given directives. Would the government and the Maoists prepare the initial framework of the interim statute and direct the committee which, after extensive consultation, would propose a statute to the political parties? Or would it function like a task force, which would pave the constitutional way to alternative provisions? Would the government and the political parties? Or would it function like a task force, which would pave the constitutional way to alternative provisions? The committee is composed of legal experts, so the technical aspect of the interim constitution should be good, but the political parties themselves should first be clear about the political roadmap. Also, the time given to the committee is insufficient to prepare a draft of a completely independent statute. Neither the government nor the Maoists has cited a reason for forming the committee to 16 and they did not think it necessary to publicly introduce the new members. This shows that they assume that whatever they decide will be accepted by the people. This is not a good sign. In fact, the selection criterion was not equal representation among different groups or potential members specialisations but an equal share of the cake among the parties. The focus has been to impose decisions reached in a secret room rather than consulting with various sectors of society and ensuring fair representation of all national interests and sentiments. It is not easy to manage the transitional period after the people’s democratic movement. Both sides must continue talking to create an atmosphere of trust. The disputes to date have been over process not ideology. Compromise can always be achieved on such differences.
of witchcraft or tricked into the sex trade. So we cannot say that Nepali society was peaceful. The Maoist rebellion definitely accelerated and changed the nature of the conflict.

With the insurgency, NGOs that were previously involved in social work got the opportunity to make money in the name of conflict resolution. For them it was like heaven. Seminars and dinners were held in five-star hotels, where the NGOs exchanged ideas and discussed how to get big projects from DFID and other donors. To attract donors, NGOs were busy preparing project proposals. When the civil society movement led by Devendra Raj Mahato started getting a foothold in the Tarai, donors wanted to buy the movement. The JNLF activists were asked to prepare the Dalit agenda for the constituent assembly. Big NGOs wanted to secure projects from DFID to prepare the Dalit agenda for the constituent assembly. Big NGOs that previously had no link with social workers and human rights activists were asked to prepare an agenda to uplift the oppressed. Donors in Nepal have a deep-rooted desire to benefit from the conflict. The argument was that if people were kept busy, the rebellion would weaken. How much money was spent on such programs? Which class of society profited? Did such programs benefit the people? If the parties in the hope of being appointed minister, they were prepared to spend whatever amount to establish peace. The current issue of the constituent assembly is another great opportunity for NGOs to make money. Most of the NGOs who had the king's move would help curbing corruption and argued that the monarch was more powerful than the parties in the hope of being appointed minister. The argument was that if people were kept busy, the rebellion would weaken. How much money was spent on such programs? Which class of society profited? Did such programs benefit the people?

The JTLF is already showing signs of internal unrest. Some members are unhappy over the killings and statements made by Singh. District level worker Bibek, whose group is actively involved in abduction and extortion, claimed that the party had been actively holding indoctrination programs. This is happening despite the code of conduct of 26 May in which the Maoists and government agreed to not mobilise their armies or display arms to avoid spreading terror among civilians. The code also stresses that neither the Maoist nor the government army should appear in uniform with weapons at political events, mass assemblies and meetings. But the Maoists in

Rajbiraj—The Janatantra Terai Liberation Front (JTLF), a Maoist splinter group, has been increasingly involved in killings, abductions and extortion, which is spreading terror in the tarai. JTLF activists, who consider the Palakhi (hill migrants living in the tarai) their main enemy, have even started to target Madhesi. Bijay Jha and Mahendra P Yadav were shot dead in cold blood on 5 July in Chinnamastra VDC, while returning from a village party. Now, locals and Madhesi have joined hands to avenge the killings. The next day, two groups protested in Saptari with the corpses of the two youths and hundreds of people participated. Maoist acting district secretary Bimal and people's government chief Umesh Kumar have called the victims their activists and declared them martyrs. They accused the JTLF of intensifying violent activities with the support of the administration and vowed that they would avenge the killings. JTLF eastern commander Jwala Singh said by phone that the youths were killed trying to escape JTLF activists who had accused them of spying on their activities. He claimed that the JTLF seized two homemade pistols, ammunition and a khukuri from the Maoists. But local residents denied that. They said the youths had been feuding with JTLF district coordinator Ranabir Singh, who lives in Chinnamastra VDC, and had a dispute with the leader of a temple committee over the use of temple funds.

The JTLF is already showing signs of internal unrest. Some members are unhappy over the killings and statements made by Singh. District level worker Bibek, whose group is actively involved in abduction and extortion, claimed that the party didn’t carry out the killings, which were merely the result of a personal feud. Only a few months ago, central co-ordinator Jaya Krishna Golt took action against district in-charge Din Singh, coordinator Lal and area secretary Hari Shankar. The Madhesi intelligentsia largely supports the JTLF’s activities, which have continued in Sinha despite the ongoing peace process. But the president of the Nepal Janawadi Morcha, senior pro-republican leader Ramnra Prasad Singh, said that the JTLF will not be able to liberate the Madhesi people if they continue their violent ways. He appealed for an end to criminal activities done in the name of liberating the tarai people. Local rights activists say the JTLF’s activities have only served to aggravate communal tensions.
In the past, the Tharu people of the tarai had a monopoly on the capture, training and care of elephants, which they managed on behalf of the Shahs and the Ranas, who utilised their captive elephant resources to engage in lavish hunts. In the 19th century, Nepal even pioneered its own method of hunting: the ‘ring’, which entailed as many as 300 elephants encircling tracked prey such as tiger and rhino. Once trapped within the ring, the Maharaja and any visiting dignitaries would enter upon elephant back, from where they could then shoot the prey. During this era, Nepal even hosted the British monarchy, including King George V in 1908 and the future Queen Elizabeth II in 1950.

Although the days of hunting are now long gone, the traditional elephant handling skills that were fostered in that time live on. In Chitwan today, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC), and safari resorts and hotels all employ elephant handlers. Without the skills of these still mainly Tharu men, it would not be possible to manage the national park, conduct conservation research or take tourists on elephant-back safaris to view the wildlife of Chitwan. The ring method of hunting has even been adapted to play a crucial role in the capture and translocation of rhinos, one of Nepal’s conservation success stories that has enabled Bardia National Park and Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve to be repopulated with rhinos from the recovered Chitwan population.

During 2003 and 2004 I lived with, and learnt from the elephant handlers (or hattisare) of the Khorsor Elephant Breeding Centre in Chitwan. My friend and colleague Mark Dugas also joined me to shoot a documentary film called Servants of Ganesh (see http://www.oneworldfilms.com). Our film documents the training of a juvenile elephant called Paras Gaj and the experience of his trainer. Servants of Ganesh reveals the traditional prohibitions the trainer must adhere to, the rituals that must be performed to ensure success, as well as the dedication and respect of all the handlers for this animal, which is both a life companion and the sacred embodiment of the Hindu elephant-headed god Ganesh.

In the international world of captive elephant management Nepal has until now been under-represented. This is a great shame, because although Nepal’s captive elephant population is small compared to that of India, Burma and Thailand, its facilities, most especially those of the DNPWC and the KMTNC, are a paragon of good practice. Good elephant management practices persist precisely because authorities like the DNPWC permit the continuation of the traditional rituals that reinforce the sacred value of the elephant and enable junior handlers to acquire respectful attitudes in addition to requisite skills.

Despite a lack of resources, Nepal has every reason to be proud of its elephant stables and the professionalism of its handlers. Indeed, perhaps there are even lessons for others. I was privileged to witness healthy, happy elephants with regular access to their natural jungle habitat, and to meet handlers, who although poor, were the skillful and committed beneficiaries of an unbroken tradition of apprenticeship. I remain indebted to their hospitality and am now compelled to champion the cause of Nepali captive elephant management.

Piers Locke is with the Department of Anthropology at the University of Kent in the UK.
Chitwan youth fight back to protect rhinos and tigers

Youth against poachers

PRERANA MARASINI in CHITWAN

The numbers tell a sad story. Chitwan National Park’s population of one-horned rhinos has dropped from 544 in 2000 to only 372 today.

The 2005 rhino count found that 94 animals were lost to poaching while 66 died of natural causes such as fighting, predation, and age. “One of the major reasons why the number declined sharply is the state of the country,” says Dr Shanu Raj Jnawali, chief of monitoring evaluation and planning at the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC).

For example, the number of anti-poaching posts in Chitwan fell from 32 to eight during the conflict. “Maoist attacks on the army posts moved the soldiers to headquarters instead, which gave poachers a good opportunity to be active,” adds Jnawali.

But there may be good news on the endangered animal front. According to the count, conducted jointly by Worldwide Fund for Nature Nepal (WWF), the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) and KMTNC, the number of tigers has remained stable.

“There is very little evidence of tiger poaching in Nepal,” said Thapa via email. “Overall the tiger population has been growing at the same time that habitat outside protected areas is also becoming favourable for tigers.”

But experts caution that the tiger count, unlike that for rhinos, produces a very rough tally. “There is a nominal chance of missing out rhinos, it can happen only when they go to the inner part of the jungle, tigers are much more difficult to count,” says Jnawali.

A team riding on the backs of about 30 elephants for about one month conducts the census, identifying individual animals. “We note down their inclination of the horn, arrangement of neck folds, trees. “We seized three quintals of wood, caught a gang of 40 people illegally felling trees. “We seized three quintals of wood, 11 cycles and four axes from them,” said Birendra Mahato, a forest guard.

Poachers and their accomplices.

“Plan to trace animal poachers.”

Once monkey in the park’s buffer zone, a group of youngsters has established the impressively named Banya Jantu Chori Sikar Niyantran Yuwa (Jagaran Abhiyan). All have received training on anti-poaching techniques from park personnel and a network of informants recently helped arrest 77 poachers and their accomplices.

“We give out forms to veterinary stores so that they can record who has brought poisons,” explains Birendra Mahato of the campaign to monitor the use of products used to poison rhinos. The group has already helped arrest a dozen poachers.

“In New Paradurpam, 17 young villagers formed their own Youth for Anti-Poaching Campaign and the very next day caught a gang of 40 people illegally felling trees. “We seized three quintals of wood, 11 cycles and four axes from them,” said Birendra Mahato, a forest guard. “We now plan to trace animal poachers.”

Chitwan National Park’s Kamal Kunwar says: “If anti-poaching operations are to be strengthened, some form of incentive has to be given to informants and the army should resume patrolling.”

Besides rhinos, poachers also kill tigers for their skin and bones and deer and wild boar for meat. At the army camp in Tikauli, Capt Dhana Bahadur Thapa says intelligence from villagers is crucial in apprehending poachers. Some 150 poachers have been caught since 2002.

Kunwar says poachers send the tiger skins and rhino horns to Kathmandu from where they are smuggled across the border into Tibet. Smuggling is driven by the huge price differential. 100g of rhino horn fetches $1,000 when it ends up in China, which explains why so many people are willing to risk capture and punishment.

“The China smuggling route is expected to be easier with the arrival of the railway to Lhasa and better trans-Himalayan access,” Kunwar says poachers send the tiger skins and rhino horns to Kathmandu from where they are smuggled across the border into Tibet. Smuggling is driven by the huge price differential. 100g of rhino horn fetches $1,000 when it ends up in China, which explains why so many people are willing to risk capture and punishment.

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Delegates from Nepal, China and India met in Beijing on 22 June to discuss measures to curb the growing cross-boundary wildlife trade. Their major concern was the trade in rhinos, elephants, Tibetan antelope and, particularly, tiger parts, which are reported to have the highest value. Traditional Chinese medicine markets were cited as a key market for the products in all three countries.

IN THE WILD: 

Protecting the wild animals (clockwise): Three tiger cubs posing for a picture, seized tiger and leopard skins at the Armed Forest Guard Training Centre in Tikauli, Captain Dhana Bahadur Thapa pointing at a stack of rhino skulls and skins captured from poachers, a one-horned rhino walking in Chitwan National Park.

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Death as a right denied

Ever since abortion was legalised in March 2002, rights groups have wondered how long it will take for the legislation to actually have an impact on Nepal's maternal mortality rate. Groups fought long and hard to get the law passed; and they don't want to believe that we may have to wait as long as 20 years to see its impact on the health of Nepali mothers. Four years after legalisation we still see headlines like 'Vet performs abortion, mother dies', 'Hetauda mother, seven months pregnant, dies after abortion'.

There are thousands of other sad stories that never make it to the media, of women who suffer and die quietly because of unsafe abortion every day. During a visit to a Valley maternity hospital recently, a senior gynaecologist related the case of a patient from Bhaktapur who had an unsafe abortion. Her uterus was perforated and a part of her kidney was damaged. "It was a real struggle to save her," the doctor told us. "Imagine what would happen if she was in a village."

The doctors in Hetauda who performed an abortion on a woman seven months pregnant had undergone training but ended up killing both the mother and child. In a situation where doctors don't even follow the simple guideline not to abort in advanced stages of pregnancy, legalisation of abortion may be a futile exercise.

There are also deficiencies in the legal system. In the four years since the law was passed, 19 women have been arrested for abortion and been sentenced to between three and 20 years in prison.

Don't expect the legalisation of abortion to have impact on maternal mortality any time soon

Advocate Sapana Pradhan Malla has been defending a 35-year-old mother of four from Dhankuta who gave birth to a stillborn baby after being raped by a neighbour while her husband was away in India. She was afraid to tell anyone, and after the baby was born dead wrapped it in plastic and disposed of it in the forest. Police arrested her, accusing her of killing the baby. No postmortem was conducted, which could have proved that the baby was born dead. The woman is now in prison, and her four children are living like orphans.

Advocate Malla has pleaded with the court that the woman was a victim of state neglect. The court verdict could go either way for the woman from Dhankuta, but if cases like these are still happening then Nepali women have a long way to go despite progressive legislation.

It is easy for us in Kathmandu to blame the victim, to ask why women visit quacks and why they don't go to the police if they are raped, or get legal advice when illegally arrested. But such arguments ignore the reality of medical services, law enforcement and the status of women in rural Nepal.

Anyone who has visited western Nepal knows how difficult it is to go to the police or state machinery with a complaint of rape, how complicated it is to get abortion services and how difficult it can be for a mother to leave home even for a few days.

In fact, it may take over 20 years for the abortion legislation to have an impact on maternal mortality and morbidity in Nepal. It's not just a medical or legal issue, it is socio-economic and cultural, and these things take generations to change. •

Not seeing is believing

Some people can’t see but others just don’t want to see.
The history of development planning in Nepal makes for depressing reading. The idea of planned development was introduced in 1956 with the first of many five-year plans. It assumed that the state was unitary, development was a problem with a technical solution and the growth model was best suited to us. So, we set about decimating our forests and invested in physical infrastructure emphasising the primacy of the state in economic decision-making. When King Mahendra staged his coup in 1960, he declared that he would deliver in a decade what other countries had taken centuries to achieve. He wanted to create an all-new civilisation with the crown at the top. With his edifice complex, he created towns by diktat and sought to populate them with hardcore loyalists. He supervised the mass transmigration from the hills to the plains. Within 20 years, the thick hardwood forests of the Charkose Jhadi were nearly gone and the newly malaria free inner tarai was filled with new hill settlers.

King Birendra introduced the element of space in national economic planning. With the help of geographer Harka Gurung, unitary control over the far-flung areas of Nepal was consolidated through regional centres. This approach was slightly modified during the post-referendum reformation exercises and ‘Growth Corridors’ tried to encourage private investment.

The 1990 People’s Movement changed the politics but didn’t question the development paradigm. In 1991, 46.7 percent of Nepal’s population lived in the tarai, by 2001 the proportion was 48.4 percent. Planning dogmas are hard to discard. Whenever regional imbalance is discussed in Nepal, almost no attention is paid to the deliberate and unplanned transmigration of people from the hills to the tarai. Even less attention was paid to the expansion of urban centres and they spread like malignant growths.

Jibgar Joshi has been involved in the physical planning of towns in Nepal for nearly three decades. Trained as an engineer, he later specialised in economics and urban planning. He has been a part of its remarkable successes (huge expansion in infrastructure and services) and spectacular failures (marginal change in national income, very little improvement in social justice and ineffective poverty reduction strategies) and is in a position to suggest corrective measures now that he has taken voluntary retirement from the government. Unfortunately, he does no such thing. He seems to be quite happy chronicling the events and recording trends in regional strategies and sustainable development.

The book lacks a central thesis. It doesn’t question any of the fundamental beliefs of development planning in Nepal (the unitary model of infrastructure planning, growth model of economic development, development as a technocratic issue, the desirability of foreign aid and the centrality of the state) and suggests minor changes in detail to improve their effectiveness.

We need a fresh approach to make the politics and economics of this country more responsive to its real needs. If this book serves a purpose, it is to raise more questions than it tried to answer. Last week, Nepal’s population crossed 27 million and it will double in the next 25 years. Just that projection alone should send shivers down the spines of planners. How are we going to plan for this? The jobs needed, the food to be grown, the towns accommodated, the hospitals, schools and homes built? Who will control the rage of the disadvantaged? If nothing else, this book reminds us that time is running out.

Jibgar Joshi
Regional Strategies for Sustainable Development in Nepal
Pages: 156+vi
Price: Rs 400
Indonesia's illiterate revolution

India's politicians have themselves lucky, because disadvantaged. Were adequate smokescreen, for it allows the solution? more a quack remedy than a real fighting for something that is discrimination exist. Are those whether merit as a criterion for misguided.

centuries of caste discrimination. The underlying question is whether education for all, our succeeded in keeping a majority of the country's population thoroughly illiterate (as well as poor and unhygienic). Instead of providing quality elementary education for all, our policymakers are more concerned with erecting caste-based measures aimed at short-term political gains. Since India gained independence 58 years ago, billions of rupees have been
duled out in numerous educational policies, but general primary education remains abysmal. Some 8 percent of primary schools have no classrooms, while 17.5 percent have only one teacher. In addition, 76.2 percent of schools do not have clean drinking water, while 14.6 percent lack electricity. Less than 4 percent of all primary schools have computers.

In fact, India's reserved places scheme operates as a deliberate smokescreen, for it allows the government cleverly to mask the real issue, which is in access to primary education for India's disadvantaged. Were adequate primary education available to India's poor there would be no need for reserved places in higher educational institutions. Indeed, Indians able to read this article should consider themselves lucky, because India's politicians have

succeeded in keeping a majority of the country's population thoroughly illiterate (as well as poor and unhygienic). Instead of providing quality elementary education for all, our policymakers are more concerned with erecting caste-based measures aimed at short-term political gains. Since India gained independence 58 years ago, billions of rupees have been
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The affirmative action debate sidelines the real issue: the gap in education

Nearly half of India's 200 million children between 6-14 years of age are not in school at all. Of the remaining 120 million, only 20 million are expected to reach the tenth year of school, with the rest dropping out along the way. The government has pledged in its National Common Minimum Program to raise public expenditure on education to 6 percent of GDP. However, recent years have witnessed a steady decline in educational spending, from 4 percent of GDP in 2001 to 3.5 percent in 2005. Quality education is the single greatest asset that a nation can give to its people. It also happens to be the least expensive and most cost-effective investment that government can provide. But Indian politicians' interests appear to lie elsewhere. After all, with the rate of functional literacy at only 37.5 percent, they can easily manipulate the votes of uneducated people with alcohol, pop-slogans, and intimidation. So the protests by highly educated Indians against reserved places is not only wrongheaded, but dangerous as well. Unless India's highly educated stand up for better education for all, protests against caste preferences will only succeed in heightening tensions and selling newspapers, rather than improving the lives of India's destitute. The government is probably happy with these protests, for they divert attention from the real issue: the authorities' utter failure to address the fundamental problem. • Project Syndicate

Arindam Chaudhuri is Honorary Dean at the Indian Institute of Planning and Management (IIPM) and most recent books are Count Your Chickens Before They Hatch and The Great Indian Dream.

The ungreening of the world

For example, I met claims to love trees—I mean really love trees—yet collectively the human race behaves as if it abhors green things. If you take a step back from whatever blame you are in at the moment and look at the entire Earth and its forests through recorded history, you will see that the relationship between humans and trees looks strangely like War (the title of a recent book on forests by Derrick Jensen and George Draffan)....

In the United States, deforestation began as soon as the colonies were settled. Before long, the colonists were exporting wood to the many nations that no longer had the timber they needed for ships, cars, shingles, and other construction materials. Trees were also cut to clear cropland and provide fuel and the logging nation was using up its forests to build its own ironworks and railroads as well.

By 1920, more than three-quarters of the US's original forests had been cut. Similar to the global figures, today's US has only half the forest cover that it had in 1600. And we continue to destroy forestland.

At the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, it was agreed that ‘efforts should be undertaken towards the greening of the world.” The UN recognizes that “forests are essential to economic development and all forms of life.” But the UN Charter also reads: “states have the sovereign right to exploit their own resources.” And so we do. Although the UN and my own country recognize the value of forests, both ecologically and economically, such recommendations are not strong enough to stop my local council from voting “yes” to deforestation. Last week, I went to a zoning meeting in the town where I live. A real estate housing project developer wanted to cut many acres of trees so he could build houses. That forestland will be lost, probably forever, and a few more numbers will be added to the global deforestation total next year.

Why do local politicians, trees lovers all, allow yet more forest destruction? Why do humans all claim to love trees, but their actions deny their claim? I think it has to do with fear. When a would-be exploiter of trees stands before a politician and requests, or demands, the right to clear a forest, the politician, out of fear, complies. But we do not fear trees. We do not fear their retaliation.

Trees stand mute despite our betrayal. Perhaps that is one of the reasons we really love them. But if we want to do more than love them, if we want to save them, we must become fearless. • Project Syndicate

Joan Maloof is the author of Teaching the Trees: Lessons from the Forest. She teaches biology and environmental studies at Salisbury University in Maryland, USA.

Joan Maloof

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**Alps topple Tour leader**

Floyd Landis won't succeed fellow American Lance Armstrong

**SAVILE ROCKS, France—A Tour de France that began with giddy talk of possibly two or three Americans on the podium took a stunning turn on Wednesday afternoon on the slopes of an Alp called La Toissure.**

One moment, Floyd Landis was pedalling up the six-percent grade of the Toissure with a hard-earned, two-minute lead over his closest competitor. The next, he saw a soup sandwich, cast into a world of hurt by an acceleration he could not come to matching.

The guy who had not shown a moment’s weakness in 17 days of racing became the picture of weakness, sweating profusely, his face losing colour, his cadence laboured. “Hey, people have bad days,” Landis’s coach, Landis’s coach, Ventura, said gamely, afterward.

“Of course, there are days when you labour. There was never 15 minutes time—a seemingly gulf became a chasm, and in 10 minutes time—a seemingly insignificant slip in a three-week race—Landis had lost the Tour.”

Rider after rider cruised past, some registering surprise, some too absorbed in managing their own agony to acknowledge the broken figure before them. In one of the race’s more poignant moments so far, Discovery’s classy Jose Azevedo slowed to ride beside his ex-teammate, offering moral support and, it appeared, condolences.

“I had a bad day on the wrong day,” Landis told reporters at a hastily called press conference outside the Phonak team hotel, a half-mile from the finish line. “I suffered from the beginning. I tried to hide it, but in the end I couldn’t.”

This stage, the most difficult of the Tour, packed in 17,000 feet of climbing, beginning with an ascent of the legendary hors catégorie Col du Galibier, and lasting the duration of the previous day’s effort, arguably had sat on his wheel, but his right hip had been bothering him—the hip he will soon have replaced—Landis said no. Asked by this reporter if he would tell us if his hip had been bothering him, Landis said no.

“I don’t expect to win the Tour now,” he went on, genuinely facing reality. “But I’ll keep fighting.”

**NINE TIPS**

A winning singles strategy

On my playing career, the only strategy I knew was to run as fast I could and get the ball back over the net and wait for my opponents 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 unforced errors and increase the number of points by forcing your opponents into error.

   Unforced errors are mistakes made with no applied pressure from your opponent. Forced errors are the loss of point from applied pressure from your opponent.

2. **Know The Zones**

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

   *Red Zone*: Aggressive position. Trying to get to the net fast. *Green Zone*: Hit the ball and play crosscourt most of the time. *Yellow Zone*: Proceed through with caution. *White Zone*: Play safe and be consistent.

3. **Know Your Two Target Areas**

   Each zone has sub-zones. Three sub-zones: Frontcourt, Midcourt, Backcourt.

   *Frontcourt*: Go for it (Volleys and overheads) *Midcourt*: Handle the traffic light analogy to understand the three zones on the court. *Backcourt*: Use the traffic light analogy to understand the three zones on the court.

4. **Know the Zones**

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

   *Red Zone*: Hit the ball from the baseline and looking to attack a short ball and transition to the net. *Green Zone*: Hit the ball and play crosscourt most of the time. *Yellow Zone*: Proceed through with caution (Approach shot).

5. **Tennis Terms**

   For my opponents 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.

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   *Frontcourt*: Go for it (Volleys and overheads) *Midcourt*: Handle the traffic light analogy to understand the three zones on the court. *Backcourt*: Use the traffic light analogy to understand the three zones on the court.

7. **Awareness of Defensive, Neutral and Offensive Position**

   Positional is when you are a foot or more inside the baseline. From this position, your goal is to hit plenty of height on the ball and play crosscourt most of the time. *Neutral position* is when you are on top of the baseline. From this position you can play consistently as well as seek chances to be aggressive and look for the down the line shots. *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 a 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 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 volleing 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 less time.

9. **Smile and Have Fun**

   Don’t take tennis too seriously. After all, it’s just a game.


**ABOUT TOWN**

- **EXHIBITIONS**
  - Pills of Hope: paintings by Gobinda Prasad Sah ‘Azad’ at Siddhartha Art Gallery till 20 July, 4219018
  - Artistic Art by Sri Lankan painter Denuhi at New Orleans Café, Thamel. Till 20 July. 9800602611
  - Colours of Life: an exhibition by various Nepali artists at Hotel Gloster, Pokhara till 10 August.
  - Exhibition of Creation: an exhibition of paintings and installation art by Japanese artist Masanori Yoneda at Siddhartha Art Gallery, 23 July - 10 August, 4218048
  - Impressions of Manang: 10-28 September, Nepal Tourism Board.

- **EVENTS**
  - Liberalisation: with Professor Bishnumbhar Pyakurel, 22 July at Martin Chautari. 4785522
  - Mani Kamal Chhetri at Paleti, 28 July at Nepa-laya ’Y’ sala. 5.30 PM.
  - Bowl for a Cause: charity event, 29 July. 661666
  - Constitutionalism: with Professor Krishna Khanal, 29 July at Martin Chautari.
  - Sunilk Nepal Fashion Week: at Hotel Hyatt Regency 10-14 August.
  - Changha Chali-2063: battle in the sky at Club Himalaya 9,16, 23 September.
  - Alcoholics Anonymous: problems with alcohol? 9851016079

- **MUSIC**
  - Kutumba: featuring Raman, Sunil and Mica at Singh Art Gallery. Lagankhel. 22 July, 5 PM. Rs 100. 9851065064
  - Heartbreakers: live every Friday at Rum Doodle Bar & Restaurant. 4422613
  - Cadenza Collective: live every Wednesday and Saturday 8PM at Upstairs.
  - Live Music: at New Orleans Café. 4700311
  - Uncork the good times: with Ciney and Par-e-jat playing every Friday from 7PM at Fusion-The bar at Dwarika’s Hotel. 4479448
  - Jatra Friday: Live music by Siron. 4256622
  - Unplugged: sessions with Strings. Jatra Saturday nights. 4256622

- **Dining**
  - Masterpiece menu: at The Shambala Garden Café, Shangri-La Hotel. 4412999
  - Meza and Margarita: at Dwarika’s Fusion-The bar every Wednesday. Rs. 555. 4479448
  - Eden Lounge Bar: happy hour 3-7PM, buy one get one free cocktails. 6th floor, Kathmandu Mall, Sundhara.
  - Monsoon Madness Wine Festival: enjoy wines from four continents at Kilroy’s of Kathmandu. 4250440
  - Shaken and Stirred: every Friday at Rum Doodle Bar and Restaurant. 4422613
  - Traditional Cuisines: at Patan Museum Café. 5526271
  - Earth Watch Restaurant: breakfast with birds, lunch with butterflies and dinner by the fireplace at Park Village Hotel. 4375280.
  - Special budget lunches: at Rum Doodle Bar and Restaurant. 4422613
  - Breakfast: at Singma Restaurant, B.30-11AM daily. 5009092.
  - Wet and Wild Summer Splash at Godavari Village Resort, special swimming and buffet lunch package, weekends. 5506675

- **Getaways**
  - Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge, relaxation and massages in Pokhara. 4391530
  - Junglewalks, rafting, elephant rides: all at Jungle Base Camp Lodge, Bardia. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com
  - Conferences and workshops: conference facilities at Godavari Village Resort. 5506675
  - Nature Retreat: at Park Village Resorts & Spa. 4375280
  - Escape Kathmandu: at Shivalipi Heights Cottage, 9841371927.
  - Dwarika’s Overnight Package: a night of luxury at Dwarika’s Hotel. 4479448.
  - Escape to Godavari Village Resort: overnight stay package with breakfast and swimming. 5506675

- **NEPALI WEATHER**

  On Thursday's satellite image shows a rare squall line emerging from the Bay of Bengal extending northwest along the Ganga plains up to Uttaranchal in India. The image also reveals the pattern of monsoon pulses which are responsible for the on and off heavy rains. Because the trough (the line connecting the pressure zones) lies beyond Nepal's southern border, we should expect only a small share of the monsoon rains from breakaway clouds unless the trough moves north. The south will get more rain than the northern hills as we saw early this week in Dhangadi where a single storm brought 150 mm rainfall, while its neighboring station to the north, Dipayal, received only one-third of that. While the coming days in Kathmandu will be hot and humid, light showers will keep the nights cool.
PUSHING AHEAD: Disabled activists demanding that their problems be addressed in the interim constitution are blocked by police as they move toward Singha Darbar’s south gate on Thursday.

PUSHING BACK: Tharu Women’s Society Secretary Gita Chaudhary blocks a police van carrying dozens of former kamaiyas arrested for protesting at Singha Darbar on Wednesday.

TILL DEATH DO US PART: Comrade Baayou and Comrade Kamala of Maoist Number Six Barrack, Surkhet, in a ‘revolutionary marriage’ in Jahare last week.

MAKING MUSIC: Yatiudra Ramanuj Das Lamichanne of Chura Makwanpur makes a living by playing flute with his nose.

IT’S ROPAIN SEASON: Maoist cadres from Number Six Barrack, Surkhet, serenade locals planting paddy last week.

F or women like Jeena Lingden, parliament’s decision to reserve 33 percent of government jobs for women was nothing new. Even without that legislation Nepali women have been making inroads into professions traditionally reserved for men. Indeed, civil aviation in Nepal is at the forefront of gender equality with five women air traffic controllers in Kathmandu and more than 10 pilots and co-pilots. Jeena grew up in Panchthar in eastern Nepal and wanted to fly ever since she was a school girl. Assisted by a father who gave her moral support, Jeena never let go of her passion to be a pilot.

“I’m really proud of myself,” Jeena tells us from the cockpit of the Yet Airlines Twin Otter that she has just piloted into Kathmandu, “not just as a pilot, but because I know I am helping Nepal.” When she is not ferrying tourists to Lukla and Phaplu, Jeena flies much-needed food supplies to dirt airstrips in Nepal’s remote western regions.

Jeena Lingden represents a new generation of Nepali women: confident, passionate and imbued with a sense that her commitment to her country goes beyond just her job. And it is not just Jeena who has got over people who are shocked to find a woman in the flight deck, she says Nepali passengers are no longer as surprised as they used to be to see female pilots. “It’s become quite common nowadays,” she explains.

Just like Jeena was inspired to be a pilot after reading a newspaper article about Nepal’s first woman pilot, Rakshya Rana, there is no saying how many other little girls across Nepal she is inspiring to become pilots, doctors, engineers or even politicians.

Watching Jeena, it is clear she doesn’t consider herself just a pilot. She talks to passengers and sets them at ease, sometimes helping the cabin attendant as she does her walk-around pre-flight inspection. Jeena also sets aside a part of her income to help needy children go to school in her village in Panchthar.

She says: “I want to give other girls like me the same opportunity I had so that they can realise their dreams. If I hadn’t been a pilot, I’d have been a teacher.”

Kumar Shrestha

Jeena’s wings

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Kumar Shrestha
It is a disgrace and embarrassment that two months after abolishing the national anthem we still don't have a new one. In fact, it’s hard to figure out which is a greater shame: that we don’t have a national anthem or that we don’t have a national bird.

One of the aftershocks of the April Pheasant Revolution is that the danfe has been dethroned as Nepal’s national bird, but because he refuses to step down we can’t replace him yet. Several candidates have put in applications for the position and the following have been shortlisted: the Red-Vented Bulbul, the Rooster, the Greater Russet-Whiskered Himalayan Twist and the Griffon Vulture. But we won’t know until after the Constituent Assembly is elected which of these feathered friends will be bestowed the honour of representing our proud nation on its coat of arms.

Keeping to the trend of eradicating all vestiges of our feudal past, the rhododendron has also been overthrown as our national flower because of its association with entities which were active in crushing the pro-democracy movement. It will be replaced with a flower that has more proletarian antecedents, and the Sub-Committee for Airbrushing the Regressive Royal Past has narrowed down the search to the Clover and the Sweet Pea.

But it is the absence of the national anathema that is paralysing the normal business of government. National days of various embassies in Kathmandu have been anthem-less. The departure of the prime minister for health checkups have been devoid of the pomp and ceremony they deserve. And without the anthem, Radio Nepal and Nepal Television don’t have a tune to conclude their daily programming every night, so they are forced to be on air 24 hours.

Forget the peace process, let’s get a national anthem before the nation grinds to a halt due to our unanthemic state. OK, can we at least decide on an interim anthem?

To speed things up, we are using this week’s column to allow readers to vote on the song that they think should be our interim anthem. (Pls grade each song on a scale of 0-10 and mail your rankings to: interimanthem@gone.gov)

1. Resham phiriri, resham phiriri udera jaunki danda ma dhanyang resham phiriri (The most popular folk song in Nepal, sung gustily by foreigners and domestics alike especially when they are drunk, epitomises our current anarchic state.) Ranking: ...

2. Wari jamuna pari jamuna ko phedaima Manakamana (Will make a great anthem because of that stanza lower down where one has to wolf whistle.) Ranking: ...

3. Balaka baburu, dijaeka nama (The famous poem Pijara ko suga as rendered by 1974 AD has the kind of symbolism needed in the serious anthem of a serious country which we can yell at the top of our lungs to go with its heavy metal accompaniment.) Ranking: ...

4. Bheda ko oon jasto (Not that I want to sway the voting process in any way, but this one is my personal favourites for national anthem, it’ll have the whole nation dancing in the aisles.) Ranking: 10.

5. Ho ho Male ho ho, ho ho A-Male ho ho (Great song that exhorts Nepal’s peasants to work harder to ensure greater productivity of paddy harvests, but unfortunately has to be disqualified for mentioning only the CPN-ML and CPN-UML and leaving out the other members of the SPA.) Ranking: 0.