Mangal Bajar on Tuesday as a slanting sun illuminated a monsoon shower to bring out a brief rainbow.

Rainbow nation
1 September 2004. The day after television news showed the brutal murders of 12 Nepalis by an Iraqi terrorist group, Kathmandu erupted in an unprecedented outbreak of communal violence. On Saturday it will be three years since that day when hundreds of labour recruiting agencies were systematically targeted. There were organised assaults on mosques and the homes and businesses of Nepali businesses, Arab airline offices were set ablaze and two media offices were attacked.

The reason we have to remember this shameful anniversary is to remind ourselves about how easy it is for this country’s seeming ethnically-peaceful society to disintegrate in a matter of hours. Although there was spontaneous anger on the streets on 1 September (just as there was on 1 July three years previously) much of the violence we witnessed in that day was politically orchestrated, and carried out by hired goons.

Remember this was during Gyanendra’s rule, the hopelessly disunited political parties were struggling to mount a pro-democracy movement. There is evidence the parties were trying to play with fire so it would escalate and bring the king down. The palace, for its part, let the fires spread so that it could use the violence as a pretext to stage a royal-military coup it had been planning all along. The curb was only announced at 2PM but by then the damage had been done.

The other lesson of September First now, as the state tries to come to grips with tara militancy, is to keep politics out of ethnically-sensitive issues. We need to address ethnic grievances early through consolidations, and not let them fester. The simultaneous outburst of demands from janajatis and indigenous people, dalits, madness, women, the people of the Kamli, the Limbuk may look intractable, but an inclusive state must remain the agenda for all. A slightly more subtle point must also desist from playing politics to extract maximum concessions from a weak state because one set of demands will always shortchange the demand of another group.

NO EXCUSES

It now looks like Pushpa Kamal Dahal’s embarrassing backtrack on his proposal to postpone elections will do his party good. The Maoists were needled into it for the second time in less than 24 hours. The Aprut Kisan Sangh, which occupied 83 seats in the interim parliament and five ministries in government, is obviously nervous his party will break apart if it fares poorly in the polls, which looks likely. He needs to keep the constituency parties from being the big winners.面板

Dahal probably knows that the biggest impediment to his party’s performance in elections is the continued violent behaviour of his cadre and the tenor of his propaganda speeches. But if he can hold out and show some patience, the Maoists can differentiate themselves from other parties by being the true champions of Nepal’s poor and disenfranchised. They can emerge as a pivotal political party by being the true champions of Nepal’s poor and disenfranchised.

There can be no excuses now.

Towards the end of his life Josef Stalin famously remarked that revolutions were so crude they never allowed the dead rebels to be buried with dignity. “They are put on pedestals, and then cast out into the streets,” Stalin added.

Guest Column

Krishna Raj Devkota

It seems the rebels of the April 11 uprising are also being thrown from their pedestals down to the pavement. Without even repairing or restoring for the 12 years of parliamentary malgovernance in the 1990s, they are now imposing the same old regime on a lohta nation. This synthetic democracy is about to run aground on the shoals of janajati, madheshi, indigenous, women, Kamli and the demands of the disfavored.

These groups have different histories, and the roads to their liberation will not entirely be different. But there must be a common formula to address them. However, today’s dalits couldn’t be bothered about the Kamli. The janajatis don’t care about madheshi demands. The madheshis aren’t concerned about the Kamli. The Kamli residents can’t care less about the indigenous struggle.

Civil society and the political parties have been unable to find the thread that runs through these struggles. Who will bring them together? Can they shake off the national symbol that will unite these-demands?

Let’s be polite. The Badi women took their clothes and climbed on the gates of Singh Darbar to expose the government’s apathy towards their plight. Kathmandu was laughing, because it didn’t get it: The Badi women were not exposing themselves, they were exposing the apathy and neglect of the government towards its citizens.

The end of the Maoist revolution is proof that political democracy is not possible without economic and cultural democracy. But the seven parties are not prepared to chart a political course for the future that will launch a new beginning. Nepali people are already let down once by the incomplete revolution of 1990. An end to the Maoist regime in Nepal is afflicted with terrifying contradictions. Some pseudo democrats seem to be for the constituent assembly elections because they see it as the vehicle to perpetuate the status quo.

Their strategy is to pout lip service charges that prevent real change, accept the transformation of the state but keep it intact. For them, this is just a charade.

The famous Indian magician P C Sorcar was asked whether he feared death. He replied: “Magicians don’t die, they vanish.” Nepal’s secular regime has carried out a similar disappearing act. It’s not visible, but it’s still very much there.

After years of slumber, the people wake up and topple a tyrant. Then the people go back to sleep for years. The people were victorious in their struggle but lost out when all the machinations and intrigues are stuck. At the rate things are moving today, history is repeating itself.

The Maoists must share the blame. They could have remained in their base areas and forced the government to change. In fact, they would have been more effective if they had carried on with their struggle from Rolpa, than joining the government in Kathmandu.

You can’t fight new enemies from old fortresses. How can we forge a new Nepal while the parties carry all the old cultural and administrative baggage? It would be foolish to expect these old wrongdoers to make the dreams of a New Nepal come true with the present administration, be it the present, or the present judicial system, present leadership and present mentality.

Nepal has returned to the period before Prithvi Narayan Shah created this country with his conquest. We have to re-examine Nepali under a new paradigm.

Kristanjali Devkota is the executive editor of the Daily Chronicle. Naya Paturika and a longer version of this piece appeared in his column Phalak Mat. Reprinted with permission.

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Political ecology of the madhes
Pay attention to the environmental crisis in the tarai

The Madhesi Tigers’ five-day banda in central tario has proved once again that callousness and criminality are the defining features of violent politics everywhere. Nothing else explains the cruelty of imposing a general shut-down on people struggling to recover from some of the worst floods anyone can remember.

STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

With farmland submerged, the poor and the marginalised were desperate for the work provided by commerce and transport. For them, this man-made disaster was even worse than the natural calamity. But there is more to the crisis in tario than just politics.

The growing frequency of floods is the result of man’s careless intervention in tario’s fragile ecosystem. Apart from global warming, four factors have played a role in the annual devastation.

- Extensive areas of the tario wetlands, which once absorbed much of the rainfall, have been drained for human settlement in the Bhitri Madhes.
- The vegetation of the Chure hills, which used to slow the surface run-off and soak up the monsoon downpours, has been cut down and replaced by terraced fields of corn which are repeatedly washed away and rebuilt. The rivers downstream are now so heavily laden with silt and gravel that they burst their banks at the first opportunity.
- In the once dense forests of Char Kose Jhadi, which trapped the silt in their tangle of roots and brushwood have now been thinned in the name of community forestry, with its neat and tidy plantations and cleared undergrowth.
- In the neighbouring downstream states of West Bengal, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh, the country’s second powerhouse.

To the chagrin of madhesi leaders.

FROM THE TIMES
Name withheld, email

FOREIGN HAND
We need the likes of Foreign Hand back more often on this paper. Although we get to read some of his writing once in a while, they are an absolute treat to all of us without a doubt. Not only is it entertaining to read but the things the Hand says have to be carefully examined in advance. The warning political factions in the tario are fighting ghosts of the past. More than fractious politics, it’s the ecological crisis that will test the mettle of this country’s future leaders.

J Smith, email
Demolition derby

JoHN NARAYAN PARAJULI

Just as the tourist industry in Pokhara was gearing up for the new season that begins next week, the news dawned that most of the town’s lakeside properties face imminent demolition. The process has already begun. As one enters Pokhara, it is impossible to avoid seeing partially destroyed buildings. These are not battle-scarred from the years of conflict but the result of peacetime Maoist activists. Not even the stadium wall has been spared. A law here bans any private construction within 65m of Phewa Lake, but like many laws in Nepal, it has never been enforced. Now the Ministry of Local Development, under Maoist control, is setting out to make amends. The Maoists’ youth wing, YCL, is leading the assault on the encroachers, supported by the Pokhara Valley Building Department which is also led by a Maoist appointee.

But many fear such wholesale demolition will have a disastrous impact on the tourist trade, leaving few hotels and restaurants unaffected. “It will spell disaster not just for the owners but for a lot of people like me who depend on tourism for their livelihood,” says Kiran Nakarmi, a doctor at the Kanti Children’s Hospital and later at the Phewa on the world heritage list, there will be more tourists coming.”

Many property owners we approached seemed reluctant to talk, but were clearly worried that the demolition might go ahead. They mounted a sit-down protest and have asked the eight parties and the District Development Committee (DDC) to reduce the width of the banned construction zone to less than 65m. The DDC upheld the existing law, but ordered the concerned agencies not to demolish the structures immediately.

For now the business community is sitting tight. The eight-party representatives in the district have asked the local building department to come up with a plan to compensate the owners before enforcing the regulation. Even the YCL says it will respect the decision of the eight parties. Nevertheless, there is fear among those in the tourist trade that the young activists will be up in arms again, sooner rather than later. ♦

Loving our little Ganesh

Nepali surgeons are ready to tackle cleft lips, but there is little money

Surely everyone loves Ganesh, the friendly-looking elephant-headed god of auspicious beginnings. Well, apparently not. In many rural areas the arrival of a ‘Ganesh’ in the family is not a reason to celebrate but something to fear, with the family facing ostracism in the village. When Tirtha Magar was born to his family in Bhagpur, the first thing his father said to his mother was, “Go, dump this Ganesh in the fields.”

Ganesh is the cruel nickname people often give to a baby born with a cleft lip, which they claim resembles an elephant’s trunk. It is not life-threatening but can affect the child’s speech and cause dental and eating problems as well as attracting the sort of unwelcome attention facing anyone with an unattractive disfigurement.

Tirtha’s father hated the child, ignoring him for long periods at a time, not really caring whether he lived or died, all because of a disfigurement. It was only after months of protest that he agreed to take Tirtha to the local hospital in Biratnagar. Upon arrival, he saw that Tirtha wasn’t the only Ganesh around. Many other children and even adults with cleft lips were present. A simple operation later, he was no longer a Ganesh, and there was no longer a reason for his father to hate him.

There have been documented cases where fathers have left their families moments after they saw the deformed baby,” said Kiran Nakarmi, a doctor at the Interplast Surgical Outreach Program (ISOP) which provides reconstructive surgery. Mothers have been known to dump their babies in the fields.

Health researchers estimate one Nepali child in every 700 has a cleft lip at birth, with at least 30,000 untreated cases across the country.

The problem occurs when the tissues of the upper lip fail to develop properly in the womb, often the result of folic acid deficiency in the mother or caused by her smoking or drinking during pregnancy. ISOP, headed by plastic surgeon Shankar Man Rai, is the Nepali branch of an American organisation, Interplast USA, providing free surgery for cleft lips and palates, burns and for those children born with extra or conjoined fingers and toes. Rai’s teams of surgeons, nurses and speech therapists have carried out more than 7,000 operations on cleft lips and palates since he set up ISOP in 1999, and now operate outreach camps across 60 districts each year from their base at Kathmandu Model Hospital.

Another doctor who has been working on cleft lip surgery in Nepal for the past 26 years is Narayan Bahadur Thapa who has carried out 4,000 cleft lip surgeries, first at Kanti Children’s Hospital and later at the Council for Cleft Lip and Palate Centre in Banepa.

Thapa and other doctors even raised money by organising annual Volkswagen Beetle rallies through ANBUG but lately funding has dried up. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) helped by supporting more than 1,100 operations for 12 years.

There are costs for surgical material, but Thapa offers his surgical skills for free. He hopes to set up a Cleft Centre in Nepal, and says: “We are looking for any donations, even the smallest amount will be welcome. All I need is the chance to help.” ♦

Pranaya SJB Rana

The YCL are going after Pokhara’s lakeside property owners

JoHN NARAYAN PARAJULI

In Pokhara
Ten for Laxmi
Laxmi Bank, fourth branch in the Valley has just opened at New Road. The New Road Business Centre offers a full range of personal and business solutions and will serve as a full-fledged branch. Laxmi Bank was established in 2002 and has a total of 10 branches around the country.

Yamaha in Itahari
Yamaha has a new branch in Itahari. The Tirupati Auto City is a showroom-cum-workshop and offers Yamaha motorcycles, spare parts, and a care unit. Yamaha motorcycles include the Crux, GS, Emilia, Gladiator, and the Gladiator Black. Morang Auto Works is the sole distributor of Yamaha.

Economic telecom
Thuraya is introducing ThurayaEO in Nepal, a new prepaid telecommunication service that offers special discounted rates. Thuraya offers the same rates as in CDMA phones. International calls are at $0.4 per minute. All incoming calls on Thuraya are free, and users can send SMS to Thuraya phones for $0.25.

Global Nokia
JWT has been chosen as Nokia’s global network marketing agency. In July, Nokia announced Wieden and Kennedy as their global lead agency for mobile phones. Nokia Multimedia will continue to use Interpublic Group for the Nokia NSeries creative support. The new agency for mobile phones, Nokia Multimedia will continue to use Interpublic Group for the Nokia NSeries creative support. The new marketing model from JWT will become fully operational by 1 January, 2008.

New Nepal Dictionary

The faulting and the defeating captives of our industry are not unknown for their sense of humour. Because of bandas, forced donations and agitating labour unions—the three headaches of New Corporate Nepal—they only complain about the growing size of their financial tumor. But this Gay Jatra week,

Strictly Business

Ashutosh Tiwari
allows all to decide what’s happening in Nepal so that there’s learning about how to talk the jargon of New Nepal with relevant stakeholders.

Here, then, is an extract of a glossy—custom-made for our corporate busyness.

Chha.lang
A ‘can do’ word, this refers to the scientifically proven process whereby a monkey who builds neither his house nor lets others build thee becomes a double-tongued Homo communis overnight. Chha.langd, with Indo-European roots, comes from the marriage of chha and angt. Forget slow and steady hard work. Forget iterative learning from mistakes. With force, violence, and threats, you can chha.lang your way to anything you want in New Nepal.

Feudal mindset:
What you don’t have, but those who disagree with you or your party display, you can use this phrase as an excuse for everything that went wrong in Old Nepal.

Gana.tan.tru In the absence of any due legal process, this is a method to replace one despot with a few quarreling warlords, with each asking, “what’s in it for me?”

Kathmandu elites: Those who have built fancy new houses and bought new cars in Kathmandu in the last 10 years.

King G: The face which, when put on magazine covers, reduces core thoát sales!

Everyone’s favourite punching bag

Labour unions (revolutionary): Underpaid huddled masses who, because of their sheer numbers, will not rest until you become as poor and desperate as they are.

Mao. badi: Enlightened souls who have seen the Last Truth about the nature of man in this universe, and thus have no desire to find out anything new that might contradict what they know for sure.

Raja. badi: Folks you do not like for whatever reason in Nepal and among Nepalis.

Calling someone, in private or public, a rajabadi is the easiest way to destroy their reputation, authenticate your own leekshatrak credentials while silencing discussions on topics you do not like.

Sa. manta:
Your wife’s best friend’s husband who makes more money than you do. It does not matter how that guy earns his salary. That he has visibly more than you do makes him a samanta. For example, a banker’s family using its own card.

Sa. manta
Your wish is not met.

Sam. bhidan Sab.ha: Everyone’s favourite punching bag

Sa.manta.
Despondent generation. As an excuse for everything that the Sabha was going to have in a few months. Think about this: Why go through the song-and-dance routine of having elections when appointments of one’s MP’s have worked so well to destroy everything that the Sabha was originally meant for?

Truth & Reconciliation:
The truth is that the poor, in large numbers, did the dying in the 10-year-old civil war, and the survivors, now in power, reconcile with that fact, while going about their lives by promising more violence if their wishes are not met.
Let’s do federalism right

Arun Baral in Jana Astha, 22 August

We have to be careful when renaming the new proposed federal units. To toist names for these provinces from above, without consultations with local inhabitants smacks of bahunism. In fact if all the ethnic groups in the mosaics that will be these provinces are to be fairly represented, the naming should not be ethnically-based so that all groups feel like they are a part of it. All the new federal provinces should have names that have geographic, historical or natural nomenclatures. Within those provinces, one can always have ethnically-demarcated autonomous sub-units. If that is not done and the federal units are named after a particular ethnic group, the others who are left out will not feel ownership. Even Gopal Gurung, who has been one of the earliest supporters of ethnic federalism has warned about disturbing communal harmony if the provinces are named after ethnic groups.

Recently, however, the Maoists have named 11 national committees of which all except three are ethnically-named. For example the eastern tarai, where bahuns are in a majority, has been named ‘Kochila National Committee’. If these committees are going to be the names for the federal units to be set up after the constituent assemblies are elected then we have to think very carefully before doing it. Or take the Maoists’ ‘Newa National Committee’ in Kathmandu where 320,000 people are Newar, 424,000 are bahun and 312,000 are chhetris. The ‘Newa National Committee’ has all the Newars in it, the ‘Bahun National Committee’ has all the bahun while the ‘Chhetri National Committee’ has all the chhetris.

Free-for-all

Editorial in state-owned Gorkhapatra, 25 August

Since CA elections are a common agenda, media persons have to play an effective role in creating an atmosphere for elections. From creating awareness to guarding it, each media outlet has a role. In this transitional phase, media from centre to the local level have to be active, balanced, and responsible. The press continues to enjoy public support as the fourth organ of the state based on its factual reporting and impartiality. But at this historic juncture, the responsibility of the press is even more important. The Election Commission wants the media to set the agenda for elections. The eight party leaders continue to blame each other for not being serious about holding elections. The Freedom of Information Act and the Working Journalists’ Act have been passed, and the Maoists have expressed their commitment not to interfere with press freedom.

The press has to be responsible and investigate the truth about Prachanda’s statement concerning elections. Prachanda has said he has been misrepresented and that he intended to garner support for elections not postpone it. Biased reporting will only jeopardise the credibility of the press. There is no room for doubts and unhealthy competition. Only in such a situation transformation of this nation and its inhabitants is possible.

Bhutani Maoists

Interview with general secretary of Bhutan Communist Party Marxists-Leninists-Maoists (BCP-MLM) Biklab in Nepal, 25 August

Nepal: Tell us about the objective of your organisation.

Biklab: We want to return the sovereignty to the people from the hands of a few feudals who have been ruling Nepal by dint of their foreign patrons. Our party has an iron discipline. The head of our party is also the head of our military. We have
Quote of the Week

“...The chairman is right. We seem to be weak in government. Maoist leader Barsaman Pun ('Ananta') in Buddhabar, 29 August

Bad behaviour

constitution provides for the overthrow of the monarchy, the Maoists have not registered a single motion in parliament to do away with it.

3. Democracy means the rule of law. However, the Maoists have chosen not to use legal channels, preferring instead to take to the streets. Although they say their new program of protests is designed to ensure elections, others cannot understand how that translates into support for the elections. Even the leftist parties seem fed up and clueless about the Maoists’ plans.

4. The Maoists are saying November 22 is not conducive for them, and April would be best. But what if tomorrow another party feels the same about April? Prachanda and Madhab Nepal proposed November 22. What kind of message would another deferment send?

5. Prachanda even claims he feels singled out in Eight-Party meetings and says many agreements were made under pressure. It is unbecoming of a top party leader to make such statements.

6. It seems that every agreement Prachanda had with other leaders is being termed as a mistake. So why does he keeps on making these mistakes, if in fact they are mistakes?

7. The Maoists are in power now and their decision to take to the streets is not acceptable behaviour. Even if they have made mistakes, it is only human to do so. In any case, talk of postponing the elections should cease. It is not in the interests of society. Holding timely elections should be the priority.
Now we know why cowdung is holy

GOBAR!

The unbeatable combination of cow dung and sunshine has made Jit Narayan Chaudhary a happy farmer. In the four months since he installed his biogas plant, he has seen his household running costs fall dramatically. He is saving Rs 60 each day that he used to spend on firewood for his family’s cooking needs. The residual slurry from his biogas digester is far superior to the urea and potassium fertiliser he used to buy for nearly Rs 10,000 each year.

Jagita, his wife, is smiling too. She no longer has to spend hours fetching firewood, then more hours struggling with the cooking over a smoking, temperamental fire.

NARESH NEWAR in SUNSARI

DUNG POWER: In villages like Dumartoka, Ilam, cowdung is not only sacred but is also becoming increasingly valuable as more people use biogas as their primary resource.
Carbon cash

In Kathmandu and other urban centres we pollute the environment and emit ever-increasing amounts of carbon dioxide while our rural neighbours like Narayan Chaudhary (pictured) are switching to biogas are doing just the opposite. A family converting from firewood or kerosene to biogas reduces its carbon emissions by an estimated 7.4 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year, helping Nepal increase its carbon-trading credits. So far, more than 170,000 households have made the switch.

Since January, Nepal has been selling spare carbon credits through the World Bank for $7 per tonne of carbon dioxide, and now the government’s Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPF) has negotiated a price rise to $10.25 per tonne.

The AEPC has been working with Biogas Sector Partnership-Nepal (BSP), which works with the government’s Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPC) to promote biogas. BSP says there are now more than 170,000 households using this technology in Nepal, making the country a world model for successful biogas programs. (See: ‘Nepal’s future is in the dung heap’, #167)

High on methane

In Solukhumbu and Rasuwa are already using biogas up to an altitude of 3,000m, but supporters of this renewable energy source would like to go higher. "We want to go all over the country, even to the high mountains," said Saroj Rai, managing director of Biogas Sector Partnership-Nepal (BSP), an NGO that is implementing the fourth phase of a 15-year-old biogas support program.

Biogas users have formed their own credit groups and help their poorer neighbours like Chandralal Chaudhary (pictured) by providing loan guarantees that are acceptable to the Agricultural Development Bank or Grameen.

Community forest user groups are also getting involved. The Parsahi Ame Bhuke group in the village of Parsahi in Mahottari district has built plants for nearly 60 families. Saroj Rai, managing director of Biogas Sector Partnership-Nepal, would like to see commercial banks showing more interest in helping poor households adopt biogas technology, because in the long term the benefits will be not just for the users but the nation as a whole, especially in helping conserve Nepal’s forests.
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MOHAN MAINALI
in DHADING

A terrible helplessness hangs over the village of Jogimara in Dhading district more than five years after the army massacred 17 of its men in an attack in Kalikot, an incident that the government has never properly explained.

The bewildered relatives still have no clear idea why the soldiers killed their sons, fathers, husbands, and brothers, and they do not have the political clout that is needed to get their questions answered. Most of Jogimara’s men were killed, leaving their families destitute.

“The wound is still fresh but we don’t know whom to meet, we don’t know where to go, we can’t read or write” said Gyan Bahadur Chepang who lost two sons, Sanu and Tek Bahadur, in the assault.

In May 2006, the army finally accepted that those killed were innocent, but said they may have been killed in the crossfire, and recommended the payment of compensation. But the government has not paid out a single rupee, and some villagers are bitter.

“Many organisations have helped us,” said Sukmaya Chepang, a widow whose 60-year-old husband, Chitra Bahadur, was the oldest person killed in the attack, “but the government we elected killed our relatives and declared them terrorists.”

Another villager, Gobinda Chepang, is equally disgusted.

“The government may not be able to give us our relatives back, but it could at least compensate us and punish the killers,” he said.

While most families have now accepted their men will never

TIME DOESN’T HEAL: The front page of Nepali Times on 9 August 2002 with the photograph of Syani (left) and Kaman Maya Praja with her baby who were widowed at 15 after their husbands were killed by the army in Kalikot in February 2002.

Kaman Maya married her brother-in-law and lives in Jogimara, this picture of her (above) was taken two weeks ago in Jogimara. Syani Maya married again and has moved out.

“I weep

The relatives of those killed in the Kotbada massacre never got help and are still grieving

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A terrible helplessness hangs over the village of Jogimara in Dhading district more than five years after the army massacred 17 of its men in an attack in Kalikot, an incident that the government has never properly explained.

The bewildered relatives still have no clear idea why the soldiers killed their sons, fathers, husbands, and brothers, and they do not have the political clout that is needed to get their questions answered. Most of Jogimara’s men were killed, leaving their families destitute.

“The wound is still fresh but we don’t know whom to meet, we don’t know where to go, we can’t read or write” said Gyan Bahadur Chepang who lost two sons, Sanu and Tek Bahadur, in the assault.

In May 2006, the army finally accepted that those killed were innocent, but said they may have been killed in the crossfire, and recommended the payment of compensation. But the government has not paid out a single rupee, and some villagers are bitter.

“Many organisations have helped us,” said Sukmaya Chepang, a widow whose 60-year-old husband, Chitra Bahadur, was the oldest person killed in the attack, “but the government we elected killed our relatives and declared them terrorists.”

Another villager, Gobinda Chepang, is equally disgusted.

“The government may not be able to give us our relatives back, but it could at least compensate us and punish the killers,” he said.

While most families have now accepted their men will never
at night"

Moved by the tragedy of Jogimara, overseas Nepalis donated money and the families who received help posed for this group picture in 2002. Since this photo was taken, five of the widows have married again, two families have moved out, one father and one mother of Jogimara victims in this picture have died.

come home, and have performed the required funeral rites, some cannot lay their anguish to rest.

Sukmaya Chepang can still convince herself at times that her husband might still walk through showing my suffering to others. I've forgotten my sons," he said. "I'm looking forward to his arrival."

He left home with 19 other men from the village in November 2001, attracted by the chance to earn some desperately needed money building an airstrip at Kotbada in Kalikot district, more than 500km away in western Nepal.

Tensions were running high in the area after army bases in Achham were attacked and helicopter-borne commandos were sent in hot pursuit of the guerrillas who had fled north. The Maoists had passed through and had demanded food and shelter from the contractor. Three of the Jogimara men thought it was too dangerous and had headed home.

On the morning of 24 February 2002 the army attacked the construction workers' quarters, killing 35 people, including 17 from Jogimara. Rumors of what had happened trickled back to their families. (See www.nepaltimes.com/ issue/106/) First they heard in the news that 67 'terrorists' had been killed in Kalikot. Then they heard their own relatives were among the dead.

"Some said they were massacred, some said they were lined up and shot, some said they were killed by bombs dropped from the air," recalls Shankha Bahadur. Jean-Paul Corbaz, protection officer with the ICRC who recently visited Jogimara, says the government of Nepal has not fulfilled its international obligations by failing to look after the victims. "The government is obliged under international law to tell all families, not only the families of Jogimara but all families whose relatives have disappeared during the war, what happened and to recognise that those people died," Corbaz told us.

The impact on the village has been devastating. The 17 dead included nine under the age of 21 who were among the strongest in the village. The attack also left 18 children without a father and created 10 widows. There has been a cease-fire now for more than a year and the Maoists are in government, but aside from a letter of gratitude from the Maoists, the relatives of the Kotbada massacre have got nothing.

They have found different ways to deal with the deaths. Man Bahadur BK, who lost a son, sold up and left the village for the earth where they could get a job. Those who have been pushed around by arrogant party cadre will take their revenge when they can, and the polls offer a golden opportunity.

Whatever one's political beliefs, certain natural laws are bound to prevail. In the real world impunity does not exist, the law of action/reaction is inevitable, and sins end up being paid for one way or another. Democrats understand this to the degree it keeps them in line so they can win the next election, whereas totalitarian leaders tend towards the 'action/crush-reaction' approach that includes banning elections and jailing opponents. As history is witness, such defiance of natural law never lasts long.

The comrades are their own worst enemy

Payback time

W
atching the tables turn in Nepali politics is one of our few pleasures these days and last week we got lucky. The sight of PK Dahal shooting himself in the foot was priceless and provided much needed comic relief to an exhausted nation.

Last we heard, the Maoists were threatening mass uprisings and the end of the world should the CA polls be delayed, so seeing Supreme try to weasel out of his own demands and plead for a postponement was as astonishing as it was amusing. Dahal’s surprising admission that support for the party has collapsed was possibly his first truthful public statement ever, marking a refreshing change from rhetoric and deception that we’d like to see more of.

Historically, communists have always been good at denying reality, proven by the fact it took the comrades this long to figure out what everyone else has known for months: their version of 'Support Us or Else' democracy is about to be massively rejected by the people they claim to be liberating.

If you ask the Hand, the party’s first mistake was adopting a violent, totalitarian, bankrupt ideology but even that isn’t what dooms them now. Since few in the isolated districts have a clue about world trends, Nepal is one of the few countries on earth where they could get away with such nonsense.

Though this may be slowly changing (a valley villager recently told me he’s heard even China is run by kangaroos nowadays) the Maoists have exploited this ignorance with remarkable success. It is their second big mistake they are paying for now. By not changing their violent ways after signing the peace agreement the Maoists exposed an abiding contempt for the people’s aspirations that has left everyone feeling betrayed. The initial relief brought on by the end of conflict was so great that many were willing to overlook Maoist war-crimes if only they started behaving like responsible, civilised democrats. Noone expected them to continue waging war on a government they were a part of and it came as a rude shock when violent extortion and kidnapping actually increased after the Maoists entered parliament. By the time the YCL were attacking district offices and beating whoever got in their way the people realised they’d been tricked yet again.

Ideologues always fall into the same trap of intolerance and insisting they have all the answers, which not only makes them look foolish in the long run but leads directly to their downfall. Those who have been pushed around by arrogant party cadre will take their revenge when they can, and the polls offer a golden opportunity.

Though a Maoist change of heart now would be too little too late and seen as highly suspect, the least we can hope for is that the leadership realises their coercive ways have backfired and start behaving themselves. If it took them this long to figure out crime doesn’t pay so be it, but we fear they may have learned all the wrong lessons from their brief fling with democracy and will fall back even harder on the only strategy they know.

The people, meanwhile, have learned enough from recent experience to know who can be trusted (nobody, of course, but some less than others) and those who would trick and threaten them will soon pay the price.

If and when the results are ever in, we can look forward to trial being piled on at the usual suspects (Royalists, Fieldists, Foreign Hands etc) but everyone knows the Maoists have no one to blame for their fall from the heights but themselves. •
The cost of the gender gap

Reducing inequality is not just a question of justice, it makes economic sense

Working women throughout the world have long complained of the unfairness implied by lower pay than what men receive. But the wage disparity between men and women is more than unjust. It is also economically harmful.

Economists at the IMF have calculated that the gender gap costs the world billions of dollars in economic growth each year. A cross section of 40 poor and rich countries shows that there is a strong relationship between women’s economic and social status and overall economic growth. Women’s lack of education, health care, and economic and social opportunities—both absolutely and relative to men—imhibits economic growth. By contrast, economic growth ameliorates women’s subordinated condition.

In Western Europe, the early break with patriarchy in Europe in the late Middle-Ages (1200-1500) accounts for the rise of capitalism and growing prosperity in the Western World. Girls were no longer married off, but selected their own spouses. Thus, it became worthwhile for parents to invest in girls’ education and wellbeing. As a result, Europe’s economy advanced much more than China’s over the next five centuries. However, the tables have turned. As The Economist pointed out last year, women have become the engine of global growth, especially in China and other Asian countries. The Asian economies seem to make much better use of the resources that women have to offer than Europeans do.

In Asia, women work, they work more hours, and they advance on the corporate ladder much faster than European women. In the Philippines, 89 percent of companies have women in senior management positions. China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Taiwan, and Singapore follow closely in terms of women in top jobs. Even in India, where more than half of girls and women are illiterate, women hold senior management positions much more than in countries like Germany and the Netherlands.

In Europe, women long ago bridged the education gap with their male peers. Still, they occupy a mere 8.5 percent of corporate boardroom seats. Except for...
Feel-good nationalism

For decades now, intellectuals from all schools—Marxists, Feminists, Fascists, Postmodernists, Liberalists, or Hayekians—have struggled with understanding and explaining the global phenomenon of nationalism. This beguilement of a concept may baffle the scholars, but for the makers of Chak De India there is nothing less convoluted and ambiguous. In fact, not only Chak De, but scores of Indian films have branched nationalisms in as if it’s the most uncontroversial thing. By now, Bollywood has mastered the most uncontroversial thing. By now, Bollywood has mastered the global phenomenon of nationalism. This beguilement of a concept may baffle the scholars, but for the makers of Chak De India there is nothing less convoluted and ambiguous. In fact, not only Chak De, but scores of Indian films have branched nationalisms in as if it’s the most uncontroversial thing.

Chak De India makes you laugh, it makes you cry, it makes you proud (to be Indian)

The sport in question is not cricket but hockey. Lest you forget, the filmmakers will remind you that hockey is after cricket but hockey. Lest you forget, the filmmakers will remind you that hockey is after cricket but hockey.

Chak De, like its forerunners, is a perfect feel-good movie. It makes you laugh, it makes you tearful, and most of all, it makes you proud. So mechanical is the functions of nationalism that you don’t even need to be an Indian to gloat over the histrionic victory of the girls in Chak De who bring India the much coveted title of a World Cup women.

The sport in question is not cricket but hockey. Lest you forget, the filmmakers will remind you that hockey is after cricket but hockey. Lest you forget, the filmmakers will remind you that hockey is after cricket but hockey.

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In fact, not only Chak De, but scores of Indian films have branched nationalisms in as if it’s the most uncontroversial thing. By now, Bollywood has mastered the craft of making nationalist flicks. It knows from inside out the formulas that are needed and the exact emotions that are to be played with.
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EXHIBITIONS
- Graduation Show by KU Centre of Art and Design Students, 10AM-6:30PM, until 1 September. 9803202824
- photo.circle.ex an exhibition by Mani Lama, Ashok Shakti, and Alok Tuladhar, 1 September, 10AM-12PM at the Sundhara Bakery Café.
- The Dust solo art exhibition by Tirtha Man Sthapit, until 2 September, at the Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal.
- Exhibition of contemporary paintings, art and crafts at the Kathmandu Gallery, Thamel Chok, until 8 September. 4248094
- Heritage Panoramas acrylic paintings by Pradeep Bajracharya, until 12 September, at Park Gallery, Putchok. 5522207

EVENTS
- Flags of our Fathers a film by Clin Eastwood, 31 July, 6.45 PM at Lazimpat Gallery Café. 4428549
- Friday Project dance party at the Blue Eye Lounge, 8.30 PM on 31 August. 2616000
- CSGN monthly lecture on changing faces in Nepal, transforming lives through cleft lip and palate surgery by Susan Stenson, 31 August, 9.30 AM at the Shankar Hotel, Lazimpat.
- Shastriarth on humanism by Rabindra Bhattarai and Uttam Niraula, 1 September, 4-6PM at Martin Chautari. 4238050
- Nyaayapareem a play by Albert Camus, directed by Sunil Pokharel, until 8 September, at 5.30 PM except Mondays and Wednesdays, at the Rimal Theatre, Gurukul. 4466956
- Regular pottery classes at Artvich, Putchok, opposite Banana Cat Café, starting at 12 noon. 985110837
- Film South Asia 2007 Festival of South Asian documentaries, 1-4 October. www.filmsouthasia.org
- Toastmasters a communication and leadership program, organised by Kathmandu Toastmasters Club every Wednesday 6PM at Industrial Enterprise Development Institute (IEDI) building, Tripureswor.

MUSIC
- Paheli with singer Ashok Rai, 31 August, 6PM at nepa-laya’s ‘R’ Shala, Kalikashan. 4437893
- Jazz at Jatra every Saturday 7PM onwards, at Jatra Café and Bar, Thamel.
- Ciney Gurung every Wednesday and Rashmi Singh every Friday, live at the Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayani Complex, 7PM. 5521408

DIINING
- Pear and berry etagere taste pear and blackberry crepes, at The Lounge, Hyatt Regency, 4.30-6:30 PM. 4491234
- Italian barbeque lunch at Alfredo, Soaltee Crown Plaza, Saturdays, 12-3:30PM, Rs 300 plus taxes. 4273999
- Jazz in Patan with coffee, food, drinks, and dessert at the New Orleans Cafe, Jwalaeshel. 11.30 AM-10PM. 5522708
- BBQ Unlimited at Splash Bar & Grill Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat, every Friday 6.30 PM. Rs. 899 nett.
- 3rd Annual Monsoon Wine Festival 16 wines at Rs 150 a glass and Rs 600 a bottle, at Kilroy’s of Kathmandu, Thamel. 4250440
- Monsoon Magic live jazz by Inner Groove and a variety of cocktails from the summer special menu, every Wednesday, Rs 599 at Fusion – the Bar at Dwarika’s. 44700612
- Shangri-La’s pasta, pizza, zip, and pool a special swimming package with a complimentary beer, Rs 650 nett per person, every Saturday and Sunday at Shangri-La Hotel. 4413999
- Kebabs and curries at the Dhaiba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- Krishnarpan Nepali specially restaurant at Dwarika’s Hotel, six to 22 course ceremonial lunch and dinner. 4479498
- Weekend special with sekuwa, barbeque, Fridays at Ambassador Garden House, Lazimpat. 5.30 PM onwards. 4411765
- Light nouvelle snacks and elaborate cordon bleu meals at La’Soon, Putchok, behind the Egyptian embassy. 5537166
- Calcutta’s rolls, biryani, kebabs Indian cuisine at Banwarchi, Bluebird Mall Food Court. 9741000735
- Rediscover fine Italian cuisine at La Dolce Vita, Thamel, all new exciting menu. 4700812
- Pizza from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 44222519

Weekend Weather
Nearing the tail-end of the monsoon now, but plenty of moisture still streaming up from the Bay of Bengal, as this satellite picture taken on Wednesday evening shows. The behaviour of these moisture-laden clouds will now depend on the isobars show. The behaviour of these moisture-laden clouds will now depend on the

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors@nepalitimes.com

The Dust photo.circle.ix
HAPPENINGS

SNOW WHITE: The normally bare and rocky summit ridge of Annapurna II wears a thick blanket of fresh snow above monsoon clouds in this picture taken from the Kathmandu to Nepalgunj Buddha Air flight 403 on Sunday.

TWO HEADS BETTER THAN ONE: Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Baburam Bhattarai listening to what a gathering of intellectuals had to say at a roundtable at the Hyatt Regency on Friday.

FRUITY GIRLS: A Gaijatra troupe from Bandipur pause for refreshments during a procession at Hanuman Dhoka on Wednesday.

THE THIRD AGE: Trikaal perform at the Nepal Tourism Board on Sunday, before departing for a concert in Austria.
Looking at the final list of ambassadors it would be natural enough for people to ask: “We waited 16 months for this?”

It is the Maoists who have come out smelling like roses from the process: not that their candidates are scintillating in any way, but at least they’re not Khaoabbadies.

Except for Pampha Bhusal (old flame of the Cloudy One who was sidelined from the hierarchy and therefore had to be appeased by being kicked upstairs to Paris) the others are non-cadre. His Awesomeness snuck in his buddy from Chitwan Campus, Rishi Adhikari (PhD in agro-economy as ambassador to Malaysia) after his original candidate, loyal royal career dip Hira Bahadur Thapa, was shot down by the UML. Our media colleague Vijay Karna has been justly rewarded as the Maoist candidate for Nepal’s first ambassador to Denmark, where the English prof is probably going to find out where the phrase ‘red herring’ comes from. The Maoists have been careful not to put forward names whose accreditations would be rejected by, say, the Australians. And couldn’t the NC find anyone better, fitter, than Shailaja Dolgo for Delhi? What is Murari going to do in London, sell off the 12A Kensington Palace Gardens property? The list has obviously been drawn up as an eight party compromise, and from the looks of it the political appointees will largely be a waste of money.

The cabinet also finally got around to appointing new secretaries. Bravo. Nearly all are NBCs and all except the very capable Brinda Hada are men. So much for inclusivitiveness in the Renewable Nepal.

According to the Ass’ back-of-the-envelope calculation, the national exchequer saved $15.5 million by not having ambassadors for the past 16 months. In fact, one could say that the biggest accomplishment of loktantra so far has been that we’ve managed to save all this money. We can now put the moola to other use, like making a down payment for a new plane for the national airline.

It’s time to put ‘Royal’ back on the Nepal Airlines. Removing it has brought nothing but bad luck. Never, not even during the worst years of absolute monarchy, has the airline been so completely grounded. In the past month, there have been no international flights for three weeks. How can a SPAM government that can’t even run a national airline be entrusted with more important things like restoring peace in the tarai, is what the Ass wants to know.

At present NAC has the largest glider fleet in the world because its jets have no engines. The Parliamentary Accounts Committee (PAC) has been chasing the paper trail on the Lauda and China Southwest scams to finger those responsible for destroying the airline. The Ass had a peek and the list includes all prominent names from the NC and UML. In fact, if the findings of PAC on NAC are right half of the central committee of both parties would have to go to jail.

About the only thing the SPAM has taken a concrete decision on seems to be on nationalising the king’s palaces. But why take over palaces that are already yours? Most of the palaces are World Heritage Sites, while others have always been crown property. And didn’t king Mahendra sell off the new Narayanhiti Eyesore to the government even before construction was finished in 1972? So Gyanendra thumbed his nose and took his family to Nagarjun, ostensibly nationalized the previous day. Punters are already busy betting on whether kingji will make an appearance at Krishnasthami (September 4) and Indra Jatra (September 25). Send all wagers to the Ass.

Red herrings in New Nepal

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