A
fter arriving here on Tuesday, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal hadn’t a moment free until his first full Nepali meal at the residence of Nepal’s UN ambassador, Madhu Raman Acharya.

An NYPD patrol car was parked on the kerb, there were more black cars across the street and more security on the hallway outside Acharya’s Upper East Side apartment at the Wednesday lunch. Nepal’s ambassador to Washington, Suresh Chalise was also present.

The prime minister looked pleased and calm, if a little dazed, as he took a helping of cake for dessert. Speaking earlier at the Asia Society—a talk moderated by the former deputy chief of UNMIN, Tamarat Samuel—Dahal emphasised the “economic revolution” that he said could consolidate peace in Nepal.

The predominantly non-Nepali audience seemed impressed with the former guerrilla’s direct answers to questions. Responding to skeptics in the audience about his commitment to parliamentary democracy, Dahal said: “We are in a democratic phase and we are going to apply the democratic form of government, this is quite clear.”

On Wednesday evening, Dahal attended a reception hosted by the Nepal mission at Sunnyside in Queens. Representatives of overseas Nepali organisations from Arizona and Canada were in New York to attend Dahal’s talk at the New School’s India China Institute on Friday and another one in Astoria, Queens, on Saturday.

Before his talk at the New School, Dahal will attend an invitation-only round table and a private dinner hosted by the India China Institute which will be attended by Under-Secretary General of the UN, Angela Kane, the former Norwegian Minister for International Development, Hilde Johnson, UNMIN’s Ian Martin and former Assistant Secretary-General of the UN, Kul-Chandra Gautam.

“This is an opportunity for the prime minister to meet scholars and experts including Nepali community leaders, and to get a sense of how deeply people care about Nepal,” said Ashok Gurung, senior director of the India China Institute.

On Monday evening Dahal attended a round table hosted by US President George Bush where the two shook hands and spoke briefly. Later, he met US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard Boucher, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and officials from Cuba, Mongolia and Qatar.

He hasn’t met Ban Ki Moon yet, but his press office said a meeting may take place on Saturday. “Obviously Nepal is an important country for us and we have a major office setup there,” a UN spokesperson said.

Nepal’s Foreign Secretary Gyan Chandra Acharya told Nepali Times: “This is the first major international platform for Nepal since the changes and I think it’s been successful in allowing us to explain our situation and garner their interest and support.”

Dahal addresses the UN General Assembly is slated for Friday morning and he will raise the problems of Least Developed Countries, development and trade and Nepal’s contribution to UN peacekeeping.
What a riot

Pay for people to live, not for animals to die

I t was the eve of the Indra Jatra festival when Finance Minister Baburam Bhattarai, in his budget speech, cut the government's funds for cattle sacrifices. The protests against a ban on this traditional festival in the Kathmandu Valley had resulted in clashes, and 40 people had been injured. Bhattarai, in his budget speech, cut the government's funds for cattle sacrifices. The protests against a ban on this traditional festival in the Kathmandu Valley had resulted in clashes, and 40 people had been injured. Bhattarai, in his budget speech, cut the government's funds for cattle sacrifices. The protests against a ban on this traditional festival in the Kathmandu Valley had resulted in clashes, and 40 people had been injured. Bhattarai, in his budget speech, cut the government's funds for cattle sacrifices. The protests against a ban on this traditional festival in the Kathmandu Valley had resulted in clashes, and 40 people had been injured. Bhattarai, in his budget speech, cut the government's funds for cattle sacrifices. The protests against a ban on this traditional festival in the Kathmandu Valley had resulted in clashes, and 40 people had been injured. Bhattarai, in his budget speech, cut the government's funds for cattle sacrifices. The protests against a ban on this traditional festival in the Kathmandu Valley had resulted in clashes, and 40 people had been injured. Bhattarai, in his budget speech, cut the government's funds for cattle sacrifices. The protests against a ban on this traditional festival in the Kathmandu Valley had resulted in clashes, and 40 people had been injured. Bhattarai, in his budget speech, cut the government's funds for cattle sacrifices. The protests against a ban on this traditional festival in the Kathmandu Valley had resulted in clashes, and 40 people had been injured. Bhattarai, in his budget speech, cut the government's funds for cattle sacrifices. The protests against a ban on this traditional festival in the Kathmandu Valley had resulted in clashes, and 40 people had been injured. Bhattarai, in his budget speech, cut the government's funds for cattle sacrifices. The protests against a ban on this traditional festival in the Kathmandu Valley had resulted in clashes, and 40 people had been injured. Bhattarai, in his budget speech, cut the government's funds for cattle sacrifices. The protests against a ban on this traditional festival in the Kathmandu Valley had resulted in clashes, and 40 people had been injured. Bhattarai, in his budget speech, cut the government's funds for cattle sacrifices. The protests against a ban on this traditional festival in the Kathmandu Valley had resulted in clashes, and 40 people had been injured. Bhattarai, in his budget speech, cut the government's funds for cattle sacrifices. The protests against a ban on this traditional festival in the Kathmandu Valley had resulted in clashes, and 40 people had been injured. Bhattarai, in his budget speech, cut the government's funds for cattle sacrifices. The protests against a ban on this traditional festival in the Kathmandu Valley had resulted in clashes, and 40 people had been injured. Bhattarai, in his budget speech, cut the government's funds for cattle sacrifices. The protests against a ban on this traditional festival in the Kathmandu Valley had resulted in clashes, and 40 people had been injured. Bhattarai, in his budget speech, cut the government's funds for cattle sacrifices. The protests against a ban on this traditional festival in the Kathmandu Valley had resulted in clashes, and 40 people had been injured. Bhattarai, in his budget speech, cut the government's funds for cattle sacrifices. The protests against a ban on this traditional festival in the Kathmandu Valley had resulted in clashes, and 40 people had been injured. Bhattarai, in his budget speech, cut the government's funds for cattle sacrifices. The protests against a ban on this traditional festival in the Kathmandu Valley had resulted in clashes, and 40 people had been injured. Bhattarai, in his budget speech, cut the government's funds for cattle sacrifices. The protests against a ban on this traditional festival in the Kathmandu Valley had resulted in clashes, and 40 people had been injured.
POWERING GROWTH

India’s Water Resources Minister Satish Upadhyay Lets the cat out of the bag last week when he ended an interview with the BBC Nepal Service by saying: “Our main interest (in Nepal’s rivers) is flood control and irrigation. Those are our first two priorities. If we get hydroelectricity as a by-product, that will be a bonus for us.” (See: ‘Flood-control, irrigation, hydropower’, #418).

But even if we manage to generate that amount of electricity by 2020, it will only be 10,000MW in 10 years, so they shouldn’t let delays on water negotiations set back energy deals on regulated rivers, it just doesn’t dare agree to anything.

First, we must work out a formula to calculate annual reparations because we are convinced the Indians are going to arm-twist us. Second, we need a deal on regulated rivers, it just doesn’t dare agree to anything. But Soz was the first senior Indian politician to put it quite bluntly.

The Maoists led by ‘Mr. India’ Baburam Bhattarai have been assured by Jharkhand CM Babulal Marandi that they will get 70 per cent of the Ganges water flows down from Nepal and 80 per cent of that water falls in the three monsoon months, the Kosi embankment collapse and the floods in western Nepal have partly resulted from the Kosi river. The Maoists are also pressing on the government for an immediate rehabilitation during natural disasters.

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I was the eve of the Indra Jatra festival when Finance Minister Baburam Bhattarai, in his budget speech, cut the government’s social and cultural development budgets for festivals like Dasain and other jatras. Protests began around Hanuman Dhoka the next day, and the farmers and traders were demanding a 10-point agreement on Sunday night when Finance Minister Baburam Bhattarai said that the government had to make peace with the Maoists. The protesters claimed that to withhold money, no matter how small the sum, was an insult to their traditions and customs. Animal sacrifices are crucial in concluding the week-long jatra, but by funding these sacrifices, the government had paid the little jackal to#.  

plain speaking

Proashant Jha

Others argued that the local community had no business asking the state for funds and should pay up themselves. The government gave in. Our erudite Marxist finance minister recognised the potency of culturally-charged politics. This was partly true because those who had brought the protests were a happy, rebellious, uncompromised lot. The event will have far-reaching consequences for the future of Nepali secularism. Nepal became secular without adequate public discussion and debate on what it meant. Ethnic groups felt alienated by the Hindu character of the state. Liberal activists in Kathmandu changed the cause, and the Maoists made a powerful political slogan. Kathmandu’s NGOs wanted this clause changed in the constitution. The decision to declare Nepal secular was correct but it was done in a flawed manner. People did not know what to make out of it and there were differing expectations. The parties never explained the issue when they were campaigning. It is a weak point in their manifestos. There will be particular problems in the media. In the Karna Tara, Nepal has a lot of land to give away, but even if we manage to generate that amount of electricity by 2020 through exploitation and misappropriation of the state’s resources, the Indians will be foolish not to want to regulate it. The Kosi river’s fall is 80 per cent of that water falls in the three monsoon months, the Kosi embankment collapse and the floods in western Nepal have partly resulted from the Kosi river. The Maoists are also pressing on the government for an immediate rehabilitation during natural disasters.

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Lost in transactions
Making money transfers smoother would increase remittances

PAVAAN MATHEMA

An estimated 32 per cent of Nepali households now receive foreign remittances, up from 23 per cent a decade ago. This income now accounts for 16 per cent of GDP, making it nearly as important as agriculture. With so much money moving home, the mechanisms to get it here have become important as agriculture.

Unskilled, illiterate and often illegal workers abroad do not have access to banks, and their high charges deter them from using formal channels from countries like Japan and the UK. Informal routes are the only option for many, leading experts to believe that annual remittance figures is probably double the official Rs 1.5 billion.

Narabahadur KC of CG Finco says some simple, practical steps could make a difference: “The government could create access points in other countries where our workers can learn about sending their money home,” he told a Roundtable on Money Transfer and the Remittance Economy organised by Himal media recently.

Women working in cities in countries like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia often find it hard to get their money home, says Diwakar Thapa of Hulas Remittance. “Their employers delay the transfer or sometimes don’t send it at all,” he says.

Here in Nepal, less educated people in rural areas often do not understand how money transfers work. “Many do not remember the code number or the name of the agency or don’t know about exchange rates,” says Krishna Tandukar of Bank of Kathmandu.

It is largely due to remittances that the proportion of Nepal’s living below the poverty line has fallen 13 percentage points to 31 per cent over the past ten years. Experts say the total remittances are increasing only because the number of Nepalis going abroad is increasing, not because they are earning more.

And the inflow of dollar and the drying up of British Guineanremittances will make the increase less dramatic.

In the 2006-07 tax year alone, an estimated 240,000 Nepalis migrated to work in the Gulf and Malaysia, where the total number of Nepal’s living above the poverty line has surpassed one million. There are another two million in India (see box).

It’s not only about getting the money home, but also what families do back home. Aparn Bajracharya of Union Money Transfer.

“For every year, much of a worker’s earnings are spent repaying the loan he knows to go abroad, usually at a very high interest rate,” he says. Because the majority of migrants are poor, the money is used initially to provide basics like food, clothes and education for the family.

But researchers have been struck by the amount spent on consumer electronic goods, jewellery and vehicles. Onset have expensive, few migrants are looking to invest the money for the longer term.

“There is need to create a partnership between the worker, his family, the government and financial institutions to create an accumulated fund that can be used for investment,” says Pratya Uma Pohharel of Nabil Bank, pointing out that only one-third of Nepal’s migrants actually have access to remittances.

Remittances are expected to continue going up, but would no doubt increase faster if bureaucratic barriers and transfer costs could be reduced and workers better trained before they go abroad, enabling them to take higher-paying jobs.

The view in the banking sector is that the government should look for employment as a development opportunity. “Surendra Mallad Union Money Transfer. “We must have an integrated approach so the money injected into the economy promotes sustainable economic growth.”

“People need to see they have...”

Beth S Paige grew up in Nepal in the 1970s and is now back as USAID Nepal Mission Director. She spoke to Nepali Times this week about the focus of her agency’s development assistance to Nepal.

Nepal Times: The US has been providing development assistance to Nepal for over 50 years now. What are some of the lessons learnt?

The US was the first country to sign a technical cooperative agreement with Nepal in 1951 and since then we have achieved remarkable development outcomes with our partners. But certainly there’s a lot more to be done.

In terms of lessons learnt, the first thing that comes to my mind is that we need local participation. In the past, “experts” would design programs without a lot of consultation with communities and other stakeholders. But we have recognised over time that community participation, buy-in, and support are absolutely essential for success.

The same is true regarding government commitment, without which the desired impact will not be possible. Donors can do the groundwork and initiate activities, but at the end of the day, government commitment is an absolute prerequisite for widespread, sustainable, positive changes.

We are trying to influence and accelerate development and economic growth, and there is often no specific tested method or blueprint for doing this in a particular country. Therefore, I believe there is a need for evidence-based approaches to development, researching the best practices in the region or in countries with similar issues, bringing them to Nepal as pilot projects, gathering relevant data to evaluate their impact and then rolling out and scaling up those programs. We also need to be thinking of sustainability and an exit strategy right from the very beginning in...
The power to change their lives

Next Kumari

Kumari Bank has opened a new branch in Biratnagar. This is the bank’s 15th branch since it opened for business eight years ago. The bank says it will now focus on expanding its network in other parts of the country.

Spicy deal

Spice Mobile is offering a Namaste SIM card fee with a purchase of either the S-570 sliding phone with FM or the S-650 with MP3. Each phone comes with a one-year warranty. Battery and charger come with six-month warranties.

Ladies only

Laxmi Bank has launched a new savings account for women with a 6.5 per cent interest rate. The minimum opening balance is Rs 500 and there are introductory cash prizes.

Icy expansion

Baskin Robbins recently added 500ml and 1000ml ice-cream packs to its takeaway services. After opening its latest ice-cream parlor in Utkal Dhoka Road, it plans to open six more outlets this year, including one in Darbar Marg. It also plans to introduce home delivery service soon.

Macau golfing

Fakhre Shah Sayed won the Carlsberg Macau Golf Classic 2008 tournament held at the Royal Nepal Golf Club on Saturday. He won a trip to the Macau Open 2008 Pro-Am tournament.

NEW PRODUCTS

SPORTS WEAR: UFO has introduced new lines of high-end sports shoes from major international brands Puma and Fila. The brands are now available at UFO outlets in Kathmandu Mall, Marianpali, Baneshwor and Pokhara.

NEW WHEELS: Hyundai has launched the new i10 cars, powered by a 1.2-litre petrol engine. They come with power steering and a choice of 10 colours. The new i10 cars, sporting a 1.2-litre engine, have 5-speed manual and 4-speed automatic transmission.

The nocturnal economy

An unelected home minister makes a unilateral, authoritarian decision

Two weeks ago, Home Minister Bam Dev Gautam issued a statement saying that the police would no longer be shut down restaurants, discos and bars after 11 PM in Kathmandu, 9 PM in Lalitpur, and 9 PM in Bhaktapur.

The minister seems to have a point. Due to the implementation of urban zoning laws, these restaurants are located alongside private residences, and are seen to be responsible for prostitution. In addition, NGO activists say that women working in the nightlife industry are exploited, underpaid and coerced into doing things they do not want to do.

But the minister’s unilateral decision to punish the entire industry is in conflict with the ideals of a free and democratic society. Legal experts say that the minister’s decision is not legal, and that the restaurant owners want to take this case on their own.

To think and long how their evening entertainments should and must be treated by the government.

With enough practice, such skills and recognition can only help them strengthen their networks and confidence, which can be harnessed by skillful NGOs to eventually help them form unions that offer protection against exploitation and violence.

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Interview with Nanda Kishor Pun (Pasang), head of the Maoist PLA in Samaya, 18-25 September

To be a part of the National Army, your combatants need to fulfill certain criteria. What would you term as the criteria?

As far as we understand it, the candidate should be physically fit, healthy and capable of working under harsh conditions. He should be brave and emotionally strong enough to tolerate pain and suffering. The Maoist combatants are battle-hardened. It would be incorrect to say they do not fit the bill. The People’s War ended with neither the Maoist army nor the state army winning, but politically we have won. The monarchy has been overthrown and Nepal is now a republic.

After the integration of the armies, do you expect to be the head of both armies? How are you qualified?

My position will be decided by the party and the government. It is a national issue and the state will take responsibility. The cabinet and the CA will decide, and no decision has been made yet. We assert that even after integration, the commanders of the PLA should not lose their positions.

What should be the size of the army?

There are 19,604 PLA soldiers at the moment. Other than those who are injured, handicapped and pregnant, all should be integrated. We also need to think about the 4,008 PLA soldiers who the UNMIN as identified as under-aged and cannot be integrated into the army.

Will integration be completed in six months?

It should be completed because the peace agreement is at stake here. Those who are against integration are against the peace process as well. A process has to be started within three to six months.

But there are voices within the Maoists who say that it is not yet time for army integration.

There isn’t a big disagreement within the party. Making the future of the PLA soldiers secure has always been an issue. The talk now is not of an economic revolution, and in many areas our revolutionary objectives are yet to be realised. The modalities of a federal republic and army integration are yet to be finalised, we have to write the constitution. It is only natural that there are a few disagreements in the party. The whole party is in favour of integration. But we have to understand who is being integrated into whom. Both the armies have to be respectfully integrated.

Army integration

Home minister Bam Deb Gautam speaks to Samaya, 17 September

People have taken to the streets to protest against your decision to close down all businesses in the capital by 11PM. What is your response?

Dance restaurants, discos and other businesses in Kathmandu have become breeding grounds for depravity. The activities that they have been engaging in shouldn’t even be allowed before 11PM. The decision was made with consideration to the capital’s security and no compromise will be made.

Will the government control these businesses now or manage them better?

We won’t allow them to operate in the capital where there are residential areas, schools, colleges and universities, all of which would be harmed. What we have decided instead is to specify a certain area outside the valley, for example Nagarkot, as a red-light district where they can openly do business.

If the government is going to monitor their activities anyway, can’t it just stop them conducting illegal activities but keep the night-life?

We’ve done a lot of research to come to this decision. These businesses are already benefiting a minority of people. And most illegal activities in the capital are happening there. It has destroyed people’s lives, has caused loss of money and property and has pushed young people from the villages into involvement in illicit activities. It’s the government’s responsibility to decide in favour of the majority.
There are five factions within the Maoists right now. The Kiran-Bikalpa faction claims that the struggle of the People’s War still continues. With an inclination towards nationalist revolution, this faction stresses the need for anew work plan because the one devised under the 12-point agreement has already reached its objectives. In line with the changing situation, this faction thinks changes are needed within the party itself, and seems to want to discard the parliamentary system.

Those in favour of Baburam feel that the political aim of the revolution has been achieved with the abolition of the monarchy and attention should now turn to an economic revolution. There has to be a peaceful transition from the present democratic republic to a people’s republic. However, their view that India is supportive of Nepal’s progressive political restructuring is worrying to others.

The third faction feels that since the party has moved on from the politics of Mahakali and Karnali, and the Madhesis, Adhivasis and Janjatis back this belief. Lekhraj Bhatta in the west, Prabhu Shah in the Madhes and Gopal Khambu in the east represent this thought.

The fourth faction feels that the People’s War should continue, and there is a fifth faction that has lost its trust in the party and seeks to renounce it. Among these, the first faction is not yet organised. The second seems to be clear in its ideas and has already implemented them since the formation of the government. The third faction, which supports regional ethnicity, is present more as a concept. Lastly, the fourth and the fifth factions exist only as sentiments and are not organised under anyone’s leadership.
The Malla kings of the 13th to 15th centuries filled their royal baths in Patan with water channelled through an intricate canal network known as Raj Kulo, from 13km away in Lele.

As the population grew, an elaborate underground water distribution system was developed to bring water to the various spouts around the city. This pipe network remained an integral part of the water supply even into the 1970s, providing a constant water flow to the many hiti in Patan.

But as new houses sprang up and the road network expanded, developers paid scant attention to the canals beneath, and some water spouts were buried beneath construction projects deemed more modern and important to the developing city. Within a few years many hiti ran dry.

“People got used to getting water from the mains, and the spouts were buried and forgotten,” says Keshari Bajracharya, a Nag Bahal resident. Through a community initiative, and support from the US Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Heritage Preservation to the Patan Tourism Development Organisation and Nag Bahal Hiti Rehabilitation Project of Lalitpur, Nag Bahal Hiti in old Patan has now been renovated and locals have started using the water once again.

For the engineers responsible for its restoration, the biggest challenge was to find the original channels, some of which are now buried beneath private residences. “The process was long,” says project director Jharna Joshi. “We had to identify where the water was flowing from, and repair the channels in such a way that it would also be easy to carry out future maintenance work.”

The project staff say it would not have been possible without the support of the local community. Dilip Joshi, secretary of the Historical Water Spout and Aquifer Preservation Society, says the people of Patan understand the importance of preserving the hiti. “Even those who did not directly benefit helped us, especially when we had to identify where the water was flowing from and if it went under their homes,” he says.

Of the 61 known water spouts in the Patan area, five have been completely destroyed, but Jharna Joshi is confident that with further financial support, all the other 56 could be revived to their former glory.

Dilip Joshi says the water from Nag Bahal Hiti can be stored and distributed to homes—a system that has already proved successful in Patan’s Kumbeswor and Akko Bahal, where water coming from the spouts is collected and stored to be distributed to over 200 homes by the community.

However, the long-term goal must be the preservation and restoration of the old canal systems that worked so well for so many centuries. Says Joshi: “We can renovate as many water spouts as we like, but unless the aquifers and the canals that actually bring water to them are saved, there may not be water flowing out of them.”

Mallika Aryal

A canal runs to the
Centuries-old water spout is restored
through it restored to its former glory

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Point of no peace

Far from home: Sabitri Remi (fourth from left) fled her home in a village in Dailekh after her husband was tortured and killed by the Maoists in December 2003. She and her children now share a one-bedroom apartment and wait for the day they can return home safely.

There is no real peace until those who fled the conflict can go home.

Assembly profile

Jayapuri Gharti’s journey from war to peace

The seventh of eight children, Jayapuri Gharti was born in Rangsi, in Rolpa district. Her family had been living in hiding in Kathmandu for about a year and a half after her village was laid waste by the Maoists in the early 1990s. Her family was forced to flee to Kathmandu, her father’s place of work. They were reunited in 1996. After the Civil War ended, she returned to her village in those days.

At school she dreamed of becoming an agricultural trainer. “I always wanted to become a farmer because that would be more helpful for me and my family,” she recalls.

Nanda Kishore Pun, President of the Female Farmers’ Association, was one of several leftist teachers at her school, and she soon began to take part in political rallies and singing revolutionary songs. Slowly she learnt more about social injustice and discrimination based on caste and gender.

In the constituent assembly elections, she beat seven candidates, all of them men. “I don’t hate men, but I never liked the way social custom in feudal society ranked males higher than females,” she says. “My fight is for gender equality and social justice.”

She joined the Maoists to try to dismantle the existing feudal structure and help create a more equal society. “We waged war for social well-being, not for our lives,” she argues, and adds that she had to fight both with the party and against the state to end discrimination.

But the difficulties and hardship of guerrilla warfare never weakened her. “Although I could not continue her studies after SLC, she gained the confidence to...”

Reality check

Nepal may soon become a federal state. Up to now, the major debate has focused around the question of where to draw the lines. Some favour a federal state that follows ethnic boundaries, while others fear that this will open up a Pandora’s Box and undermine the unity of Nepal. Both sides need a reality check.

First of all, countries don’t break up that easily. Look at Africa: a continent riddled with weak economic systems, disputed borders, heavy interference by external powers, ethnic conflicts and confrontational politics. With the notable exceptions of Eritrea and Ethiopia, none have departed from their colonial boundaries. The nationwide solidarity shown with the displaced people in the Kosi floodplain is a clear sign that Nepal’s national unity is a reality and will probably prevail in the future.

On the other hand, ‘ethnic federalism’ shouldn’t be seen as a shortcut to success. Look at Belgium and India, for instance. Both countries are seen as exemplary cases of federalism and both divided themselves up according to ethnicity. Nevertheless, both are facing increasing problems over the power balance between the centre and the different states.

In India, the states are asking for a bigger cut of the tax revenue to meet growing expenditure. In Belgium, the struggle of the northern state for more executive powers threw the government into a year-long deadlock, and this has still not been resolved.

If the experiences with federalism in these countries contain any lesson for Nepal, it would be that the fundamental question is not how federal units are demarcated but how power is shared between the centre and the units.

Nepal’s unique diversity will need a unique model of federalism. Ethnics are not dominant in any one region, economic connections transcend ethnic borders, and domination by one ethnic group in a certain area is mostly relative in comparison to the overall population in that area. All these issues need to be taken into account when devising the map of a federal Nepal. How to divide fiscal authority and accommodate both the interests of ‘smaller minorities’ vis-à-vis ‘bigger minorities’ are other tough questions ahead.

Asking the right questions is as important as finding the right answers.

The opportunity we have in Nepal is that there is no power struggle yet between the centre and the states. This allows us to come up with a meaningful, well-balanced and sustainable federal system. An even bigger advantage is the presence of what has rightly been called the most inclusive body Nepal has ever had: the Constituent Assembly. This body bears not only the responsibility for the constitution will be a first step in creating a legitimate federal structure and much needed stability in New Nepal.

It is now two years since the government announced its resettlement package to help people displaced by the war return home, but many are still waiting for the day they can return home safely.

The seventh of eight children, Jayapuri Gharti was born in Rangsi, in Rolpa district. Her family had been living in hiding in Kathmandu for about a year and a half after her village was laid waste by the Maoists in the early 1990s. Her family was forced to flee to Kathmandu, her father’s place of work. They were reunited in 1996. After the Civil War ended, she returned to her village in those days.

At school she dreamed of becoming an agricultural trainer. “I always wanted to become a farmer because that would be more helpful for me and my family,” she recalls.

Nanda Kishore Pun, President of the Female Farmers’ Association, was one of several leftist teachers at her school, and she soon began to take part in political rallies and singing revolutionary songs. Slowly she learnt more about social injustice and discrimination based on caste and gender.

In the constituent assembly elections, she beat seven candidates, all of them men. “I don’t hate men, but I never liked the way social custom in feudal society ranked males higher than females,” she says. “My fight is for gender equality and social justice.”

She joined the Maoists to try to dismantle the existing feudal structure and help create a more equal society. “We waged war for social well-being, not for our lives,” she argues, and adds that she had to fight both with the party and against the state to end discrimination.

But the difficulties and hardship of guerrilla warfare never weakened her. “Although I could not continue her studies after SLC, she gained the confidence to...”

Pieter De Schepper is a lecturer at National College, Kathmandu University.

Dhiraj Raj Poudel was forced to flee his homen in civil strife eighteen years ago. He had been living in hiding in Kathmandu since then. He says he still can’t return to his village because of threats, but life in Kathmandu is becoming unbearable.

There are still at least 70,000 Nepalis who are internally displaced by the conflict who still live in limbo. Most of those who fled the war and managed to build a new life for themselves are reluctant to go back to their villages, but those like Poudel who are keen to return need protection and support.

“Property is only of secondary importance, security the main concern,” says Poudel, complaining that the allowance from the government for returnees is not enough.

The government’s package for returnees includes travel expenses to homes, food allowance of Rs60 per person per day for four months, Rs 20,000 for the construction of a new house and Rs7,000 to repair their old house, and Rs2,400 to cover school fees for children under the age of 16.

Bhagir Thumil is president of the Maoists’ Victims’ Association, says that the government should—if it really wants to settle this issue—bring the offenders to justice. “It will be very difficult to live together with those who drove us away with violence, where their innocent will continue to be afraid,” he says.

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return

lead. She obtained party membership in 1990, became a central committee member in 1996 and since 2003 has headed the women’s wing of the party. “This is definitely an achievement, but I have not forgotten where I come from,” she says.

She married comrade Bibek, Kabiram KC, during the war, but he was killed in action in Rolpa the following year. “We were prepared to grieve and take lives,” she says. She has a daughter, Nabina, who is studying in a government school in Rolpa. “She was taken care of by her father. She was loved and is happy with them,” she says. “I cannot afford to bring her in Kathmandu to put her in someboarding school. She will study where she and the children of the people study.”

Asked if she thinks the war was worth it, she says: “People are not politically engaged. Other than assembly members are women, and this would have been possible without the Maoist struggle, she says. But she is still not happy about the level of women’s representation in the cabinet. “There has been a significant change already, but it is yet to be completed,” says Gharti, whose name was making the rounds as a state minister, but seems to have been dropped.

Asked about her experience as a CA member, she says: “I would be doing physical work in the village, but this is a different kind of work. The struggle isn’t over yet.”

Dewan Rai

too scared to go back to the Magatapo. She continued to occupy the land.

Apart from providing travel expenses for their return, the government has not schemed to help returnees regain control of stolen land or re-establish their old livelihood. Government records show 27,000 IDPs (internally displaced people) have been offered the chance to return home—which some have accepted—but little has happened beyond that.

“There is no streamlined system to deal with IDPs in terms of their return, integration and resettlement,” says Phillippe Clerc, country director of the Norwegian Refugee Council, “only the return has been addressed in a partial manner, which is not going to resolve the issue.”

Bimala Regmi, field officer at the Council says the government must introduce programs of social recognition and reintegration immediately to heal the emotional wounds first. “Women have lost their lives and villages a second time, usually for political or financial reasons. Some in Maoist strongholds were forced out a second time by mob continued threats. With no protection, they felt they had no alternative left to leave once more. The government is focused on merely returning IDPs to their places of origin, and many returnees have been unable to acquire new documents from their VDCs for verification, compensation and other rights. “There is a lack of a mechanism to monitor, evaluate and document cases of forced displacement,” says Clerc.

The government has verified 41,000 IDPs so far, but NGOs and international agencies estimate the real number at between 50,000 and 70,000. In the absence of any systematic IDP registration system, verification has been difficult, and it is equally hard to determine how many have actually returned home, almost were scattered in the major towns and cities or migrated to India.

Furthermore, as only people displaced for political reasons are counted as IDPs, the figures do not take into account those forced out by lack of food and jobs.

The main donor to the Nepal Peace Trust Fund has approved a government proposal to distribute a $5.6 million relief and rehabilitation package for 50,000 IDPs who were ready to return to their homes. But only half the amount has been spent so far.

While returning home may be the preferred solution for many, it is not the only solution for all. “Return, reintegration and resettlement to an appropriate location should be carried out together,” says Clerc. “And the IDPs need not be passed and implemented as early as possible. The more we delay, the more complicated it will get.”

The Norwegian Refugee Council is organizing a concert at Tundikhel to create awareness about Nepal’s IDPs.

One in five Nepalis suffers from some form of mental disorder

When I was 11, I started suffering symptoms of mental disorder: chronic headache, insomnia and feelings of hopelessness, isolation and depression.

But such is the social and family stigma towards mental disorder that I kept it hidden from my family. I felt guilty about my deteriorating health and had suicidal thoughts. There was no one with whom I could share my sense of hopelessness.

Because of my belief in spiritualism I couldn’t kill myself, but opted to poison myself slowly with alcohol and smoking. I went to doctors, but their dismissive and humiliating behaviour made me feel worse. Where to go? Who to talk to? What to do?

At 13 I started taking neuro-psychiatric medicines along with alcohol and smoking. But after 12 years, I stopped these and turned to yoga and alternative therapies. Slowly, I emerged from the darkness. As I got healthier, my faith in these methods grew and I started sharing my concerns with my family members who supported my recovery.

Since then, I have decided to open the mind showing others that mental disorder is not a dead-end street, we can will ourselves to come out of it. There is a lot to struggle against, but the biggest barrier is society’s ignorance about mental health and the stigma attached to it. The extent of the problem in Nepal is staggering:

• 20 per cent of the population is affected by some form of mental disorder, and this dwarfs any other disease
• Yet, only 0.15 per cent of the health care budget is spent on mental health
• There are only 40 licensed psychologists and five clinical psychologists for a population of 28 million people
• Traditional healers are primary care givers
• There is extreme stigmatisation and ostracisation
• Mental health is a human rights issue because many patients are sent to jail because of their illness
• Mental health is not a priority for the donor community
• Out of six people with disabilities, four have mental disorders
• The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was signed in May this year to promote the human rights of people living with mental or physical disabilities.

Usha is now 46 years old. She went into deep depression after the birth of her second child twenty years ago. Her family thought she was possessed and sent her to a janhri. Fearing loss of prestige, Usha’s husband settled her in another house and married again.

Later, she was diagnosed with common postnatal depression which has a 100 per cent chance of recovery. The only barriers to her treatment were ignorance and prejudice.

Our social attitudes, education and health care clearly deny the importance of mental health for individual and collective growth. This insensitivity creates a deep silence and great injustice by its avoidance of mental health issues.

There is no human rights review board with the authority to inspect mental health facilities. Instead, mentally ill people are locked up in jail or they are treated in semi-prison like isolated care systems.

There is a close relationship between mental illness and gender bias, social exclusion, alcoholism, drug addiction, HIV/AIDS, suicide, unemployment, illiteracy, natural disasters, poor health and family violence. In Nepal, conflict trauma, poverty and political turmoil are also reasons. Yet, the voices of these people and their families are never heard in discourse about social, political, and human rights.

In the past year, I have found friends and supporters within Nepal for the cause of mental health. Let us hope that in a ‘new’ Nepal, the state and society will promote justice and equality and extend priority to the mental health of Nepalis.

This Dasain, let’s commit ourselves to this goal on World Mental Health Day on 10 October.

Jagnanath Lamichhane

Jagnanath Lamichhane is the founder of the Nepal Mental Health Foundation.

Jagnanath@sigmail.com

 COMMENT

Jagannath Lamichhane

Mental Health

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Wok and Curry

Savor flavours from the exotic orient at the Café showcasing famous wok fried specialties and curries of Asia.

FEEL THE HYATT TOUCH™

Wok and Curry

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FEEL THE HYATT TOUCH™
Euromovies

T o celebrate the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, several European embassies and cultural centres in Kathmandu have organised the European Film Festival 2008, screening 10 films from five countries between 26 September and 1 October. The European Year of Intercultural Dialogue is really an European affair—a directive to encourage a shared European identity. That identity may be

...decidedly wobbly—as is apparent from the nervous attention given to the Irish vote on the Lisbon Treaty and the recent aegorisng over relations with Russia—but thanks to the active European cultural institutes in Kathmandu, it has provided as good an excuse as any for a film festival whose stated intent is to encourage other nations to “explore the benefits of their own multicultural and multilingual heritage.” Although some films on show are now a few years old, they are new to Nepali audiences, and have garnered critical praise and reasonable box-office takings in their respective countries. Besides the must-sees that film connoisseurs may have already set their sights on—namely Ken Loach’s, The Wind that Shakes the Barley and Wolfgang Becker’s Good Bye Lenin—the festival features other noteworthy entries. The German comedy Kebab Connection (2004) is one: an aspiring Turkish filmmaker has ambitions to make Germany’s first kung fu film but for the moment must make do shooting commercials for his uncle’s kebab shop. Another to note is the Danish film, Kongekabale (King’s Game), directed by Nikolaj Arcel—a political thriller about the damaging collusion between the media and politicians (nothing new there, then). Kebab Connection puts a Turkish-German spin on the very familiar American format of big comedies. Its protagonist, Ibrahim ‘Ibo’ Sezmem, travels the route of the reluctant, ill-prepared father-to-be before eventually stepping up to the plate. It is a well-worn idea, but nicely executed and given a new twist. Not only is he a pre-head, but he is of Turkish descent and his family thoroughly disapproves of his German girlfriend. The film doesn’t shy away from the complicated ways different communities relate to each other. Heavily populated with a host of hilarious characters and juggling a bundle of plot-lines, it manages to be well paced and scores plenty of laughs by affectionately poking fun at its immigrant subject. Kongekabale explores some serious-minded ethical issues, not the least of them being the compromised nature of the press in democracies. A rookie reporter, Ulrik Torp, is placed on the parliament beat after the leading candidate in an imminent election meets with a serious car accident. Information fed to Torp from a source inside the party earns him a front page scoop, but digging deeper has serious consequences for him. King’s Game has a certain aura of authenticity. It is based on a novel by a former spin-doctor for a Danish conservative party who witnessed at first hand the dirty power struggles that occur in politics, so conceivably it has a back in reality. Sadly, when it gains in believability it loses in dramatic tension. It is nevertheless thought-provoking stuff that has you asking what’s behind the headlines you read each day.

Films for all tastes

Whether it’s the animated French film, Le grand écart, in which a princess is befriended by a unicorn, or the Danish Kongekabale, where an obsessed political journalist struggles to unravel a conspiracy, the European film festival at the Nepal Tourism Board Auditorium at Bhrikuti Mandap, has something for everyone. The 10 films on show will be screened twice from 27 September 1 October.

CRITICAL CINEMA
A Angelo D’Silva

Grow Your Own (27 September 10 AM, 29 September 6PM)
This British comedy directed by Richard Laxton finds a group of Liverpool gardeners up in arms when refugees are given some gardening plots in the same allotment.

The Wind that Shakes the Barley (29 September 12 PM, 1 October 4 PM)
A dramatic Irish tale of two brothers who join the Irish Republican Army to fight for independence from Britain who find each other on opposite sides when a treaty is signed.

Good Bye Lenin (28 September 6 PM, 30 September 10AM)
The story is set before the fall of the Berlin Wall and revolves around Alex, and his strongly socialist mother who lay in a coma as the wall came down.

Kebab Connection (29 September 4PM, 30 September 4PM)
A romantic comedy about an aspiring Turkish filmmaker in Germany who gets his German girlfriend pregnant and what happens when his conservative family finds out.

Mies Vailla Menneskjyllid (The Man Without a Past) (27 September 4 PM, 30 September 6 PM)
A man is so badly beaten up in Helsinki that he can remember nothing at all about his past. Unable to get a job or a place to live, he has to slowly rebuild his life from nothing.

Suoden Avojous (Mystery of the Wall) (28 September 12 PM, 1 October 10 AM)
This is an enthralling family adventure film from Finland, in which a young girl called Saia rescues two wolf cubs from poachers. From then on she spends her time battling to save them.

De Fortallop S’Elles y (Island of Lost Souls) (27 September 12 PM, 28 September 4PM)
In this adventure film, 14 year-old LuLu’s brother is possessed by the 19th century spirit of Herman Hartmann and he sets off on an journey to stop dark forces determined to take over the world.

Kongekabale (King’s Game) (29 September 10 AM, 1 October 6 PM)
Political power struggles and conspiracies come up against the obsession of young political journalist Ulrik Torp in this Danish thriller as he tries to report the truth.

Free passes will be available at Nepal Tourism Board one hour before the show.
New warning near Everest:

Beware of falling people

This season the region around the world’s highest peak could be faced with a new danger: skydiving.

A team of 32 people are poised to jump out of a plane flying higher than Chomolungma at 8,990m and land on the world’s highest dropzone at Syangboche, at 3,833m.

“It began with an idea, which then became a dream and now it is reality,” said Nigel Gifford of High & Wild, the organiser of the event. The British ex-mountaineer and skydiver never thought that this could ever be possible. He got the idea in 1975 when he saw a Pilatus Porter plane land on the airstrip at Syangboche.

“Organising this event has taken me more than two years and it would not have been possible without the help and support of the people of Nepal,” Gifford told Nepal Times. In May, a team of skydivers did four reconnaissance jumps from 5,000m, testing the special gear that is needed at this altitude.

“Jumping from that height requires specially designed clothes to cope with temperatures as low as minus 40C, extra large parachutes to account for the increased speed of the freefall and a relatively light oxygen system,” said Ryan Jackson, the team’s doctor and professional skydiver.

Jackson’s other worry is altitude sickness, and he says the skydivers will acclimatise by first walking to Pheriche at 4,250m. But jumping off a plane over Everest doesn’t come cheap. Depending on the type of jump, it can cost anything between £12,675 and £16,870.

“The thing I’m looking forward to most is just seeing Everest, it will be amazing,” says Holly Budge, a 29-year-old professional filmmaker and skydiver from the UK. These solo jumpers are required to have made at least 200 skydives.

Most of the support team, which includes astronaut Andy Elson and world skydiving champion Omar Alhegelan, are setting up base at Syangboche. The Pilatus Turboporter will be in Syangboche by the weekend. ● Billi Bierling

www.highandwild.com
adventures@highandwild.co.uk

Rough ride

Former British Gurkha Fergus Anderson sets off this week from Glasgow to Kathmandu on his Triumph motorcycle to raise funds for vulnerable Nepali children. He hopes to reach Kathmandu’s Durbar Square in early November on the bike he has nicknamed ‘AshaBlue’.

His route will pass through France, Switzerland, Italy and Greece, and then through Turkey to Iran, Pakistan and India before reaching Nepal. The money raised will be given to CWS, an international charity which supports disadvantaged children in Nepal.

The trip will allow Anderson to combine his three passions: Scotland, motorcycles and Nepal. Originally from Glasgow, he has lived and worked in Nepal intermittently for the past 16 years, first in the Brigade of Gurkhas and more recently as a trekking guide and motorcycle guide.

He has already trekked up Everest Base Camp six times—twice to run the Everest Marathon. In 1997 he led a mountain bike trip along the length of the Tarai, and in 2001 he rode his original ‘Asha’ motorbike from Delhi to Kerala.

Cozy corner

If you are stuck in Lazimpat because of a traffic jam caused by riots up the road, just turn off into the Radisson and cool off at their newly opened watering hole. The Corner Bar offers its well-heeled customers an excellent mix of Nepali, Indian and European food ranging from Harra Kabab to Kingfish steak served in a cozy setting.

There is live music every evening from Wednesday to Monday, and the bar, open daily from 4.30 PM to 11.30 PM, offers comfortable seating, a great selection of snacks—both vegetarian and meat-based—chosen by executive chef Sylvester Gomes and cocktails ranging from the classics to more unusual variations.

By evening, you’ll find one thing leads to another. And even if the road has cleared, you may want to hang out and get into the Dasain festival mood a little early. ●
**Exhibitions**

- Bridges of Love: an exhibition of paintings by Tony Monsanto till 26 September, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Sunday-Friday 11AM-7PM, Tel: 4431204.
- Shree Ganeshaya Nama: an exhibition of paintings by Govinda Dongol on 26 September at 5PM at Park Gallery, Lazimpat. 4419553

**Events**

- Performances by Shanti Thadat 26 September at Pateli, r-sala. 442469.
- X-POSENEPAL presents Fusion Music Recital by Simriti Band at Yaka Maya Kendra, 26 September. 6PM, Rs 300.
- Africano, an African night at La Sooon Restaurant, 26 September. 6:30 PM. Rs 600, 5537166.
- The Bucket List, a film by Rob Reiner, 26 September, Lazimpat Gallery Cafe. 6.30 PM. 4428549.
- Sixth SWC Charity Golf Tournament organised by the Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre 27 September, Gokarna Forest Golf Resort and Spa. 8AM. 4910874.
- Awareness Concert by Norwegian Refugee Council at Khula Manch, 27 September. 1PM. 5522813.
- Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat, a musical by KSC & Lincoln School from 25-27 September at 6:30 PM and 3PM on 28 September, Globe Theatre, Lincoln School. Rs 300 for adults and Rs 150 for students. 5509720.
- Clean up the world event between Thapathali and Kalopul, Teku by Australian Embassy and Friends of Bagmati, 28 September. 8AM.
- CSON lecture by Luigi Fieni at The Shanker Hotel, 6PM on 1 October. Rs 150.
- European Film Festival 2008, 26 September-1 October, Nepal Tourism Board Auditorium, Bhrukt Mandap.
- Discussion on Peace from Multiple Perspectives, 20 September, 6-8PM, Martin Chaulali. 6910257.

**Music**

- Poesie and Fags a jazz vocal trio from Holland, Saturday at Patan, 5PM22708. Sunday at Thamel, 4700736. New Orleans Cafe, 7PM.
- Some like it hot every Friday BBQ and live music by Dinesh Rai and the Sound Minds, 7PM onwards, Rs 899 at Fusion, Dwarika’s Hotel. 4474488.
- TGIF with live band EPIC every Friday, 7-10PM, Jazzabel Cafe 2114072.
- Hyllaz Club every Friday from 8.30 PM, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4498600.
- Dance and Cocktails at Cube Bar, Kamaladi. 4438617.
- Fusion and Lozza Band every Friday night, Bhum Resto Lounge, Lazimpat. 4412913.
- Rudra night fusion and classical Nepali music by Shyam Nepali and friends, every Friday, 7PM at Le Meridien,Gokarna. 4451212.
- Fusion and Classical Music by Anil Shahi every Wednesday, rock with Rashmi Singh every Friday, 6PM-12AM & Raga with Hemant Rana every Saturday, 8PM onwards. Absolute Bar. 5221408.

**Dining**

- Wok & Curry every Wednesday at Hyatt Regency. 4491234.
- Sunday Jazz Brunch at Hyatt Regency with performances by Mano and his band from 12-3:30 PM. 4492724.
- Fusion of Marcela Regan’s new menu and Manne’s new bar at Tala Maya Kendra, Mangal Park. 4412999.
- Plat Du Jour at Hotel Shangri-la, Kathmandu. Rs 600. 4412999.
- Pizza & Pasta every Monday and Tuesday at Rax Restaurant. Hyatt Regency. 448526.
- Pasta pesto passion at La Dolce Vita, Thamel. 4700612.
- Steak special with free Irish coffee at Kool Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. 4700403.
- Continental and cafe item with live band every Friday at Vintage Cafe and Pub. Woodland Complex, Durbarmarg.
- Home made pasta at Al fresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999.
- Ivy Expression Coffee at Hotel Shangrila, Lazimpat and Mandap Hotel, Thamel.
- Starry night barbecue at Hotel Shanti-la with live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs 666, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards. 4412999.
- Kebabs and curries at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841230619.
- Socially Responsible coffee at Himalaya Java, Thamel live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs 666, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards. 4412999.

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors(at)nepalitimes.com

# Nepali Movie

A new Nepali movie, Sano Sansar is about the youth. In this movie we are introduced to Ravi, a average guy who has just graduated from college and faces the dilemma of not knowing what to do. Like Ravi, Reetu, a not so average girl, also doesn’t know what she wants out of life. Unlike them, Suraj is a confident guy who knows exactly what he wants to do with his life. Manoj is also a confident individual, but he is also more materialistic. All these characters soon find out the sano sansar that they live in and how they are interconnected.

Call 4442220 for show timings at Jai Nepal.
www.jainenlap.com
BUFFALO SOLDIERS: Central Kathmandu saw rioting once again over the weekend as people battled with police to protest the government’s decision, later rescinded, to cut funding for festivals like Dasain and Indra Jatra.

OBSTACLE COURSE: Even after the government signed the 10-point agreement on Sunday night, demonstrations continued in some areas as pockets of protesters remained dissatisfied.

FESTIVE COLOURS: A rainbow hangs over the nine-storeyed temple at Basantapur Darbar Square on the last night of Indra Jatra on Sunday.
The mice play when the cat is away

The mice play when the cat is away. It's true, just when the demons were dying down, Bum Dev's cops dismantled the lingo, fuelling more anger. BRB should have just listened to his Asan-born wife and not cut the water buffalo decapitation on all lawlessness in India. The finance minister sprung to the defence of bureaucrats who helped him with the budget at the press conference, but privately to advisers he has expressed misgivings about entire chunks of the budget speech that went missing from the final text before he was due to read it to parliament.

Delayed intelligence has just been transmitted to this donkey's earpiece that Mr & Ms Awesome were gifted a double bed by the Chinese during his Olympics visit. Initially, yours truly wondered why a bed, only to realise that before becoming PM, Comrade Terrible used to meet foreign spooks in his bedroom in Naya Bajar. The dips must have seen the pyjama-clad prime minister-designate's primitive sleeping quarters and decided that it was in Nepal's national interest that the head of government get a good night's sleep. A word of caution, though, PMji: better sweep the bed for bugs. When they inspected the soon-to-be Naryanhiti Museum last week, Chabial and Sita noticed the king-sized double bed and exchanged glances when they realised Gyani and Komal's bed was much bigger than theirs.

While in Delhi, it seems Comrade Terrifying sought out two of India's most nomadic godmen, Comrade Ram Dev and Sri Tin Ravi Shankar. The abdominal diaphragm exercises they taught him will have stood him in good stead when he met Dubya in New York on Tuesday, and a transcript of their conversation has just been made available to the Ass. Excerpts:

Bush: How's things in Tibet?
Pukada: I'm from Nepal, it's Dalai who is from Tibet.
Bush: No kiddin'.
Pukada: Comrade President, I've brought with me here four spiral-bound volumes of the complete English translation of our government's Policies and Programs announced last week.
Bush: Wow, that's great!
Pukada: And here is a bronze statue of the Buddha for you as a token of my deep appreciation of your success in spreading the sweet dream of American imperialism all over the world.
Bush: Thanks, Dalai.
Pukada: In exchange, could you try to keep us on your terrorism blacklist? It gives us notoriety and everyone treats us with respect.
Bush: Sure thing, no problem. And say hi to the brave people of Tibet for me, will ya?

This week's New Name Contest winner is Ms Awesome for turning Mahindra Highway into Mahindra & Mahindra Highway.