

EXCLUSIVE
Crowded sky
 Two near-miss incidents within half-an-hour early morning on Monday, 12 August, have raised concerns again about aviation safety in the crowded sky over the capital.

Nepal Times has learnt that flight RA225 to Bangalore had taken off in driving rain and was about to set course to Simra after a wide climbing turn over Kathmandu when its anti-collision TCAS warning came on. The Royal Nepal 757 was converging with a Qatar Airways Airbus 320 from Doha which had just aborted landing because of poor visibility, and was also climbing out over the airport. Sources told us that the 757 pilot had to take extreme evasive action.



The Airbus then went around to try to land one more time, but had to climb out again because of clouds on finals. The pilot was westbound over the airport when it found itself directly in the path of a Buddha Air mountain flight that had just taken off. Kathmandu radar controllers realised the emergency and asked the Buddha Air Beech 1900D to "descend immediately" while the Qatar pilot had to put his plane on a steep climb.

Civil aviation authorities have refused to comment, but at least one near miss incident report is expected to be filed. Aviation experts say procedures for missed approach inside Kathmandu Valley in bad weather need to be urgently revamped.

Polls apart?

The government and Maoists both need elections, but for different reasons.

BINOD BHATTARAI

It could be war-weariness, it could be the monsoon lull, they could just be catching their breath, or there could be genuine indecision about what to do next. One or all these factors seem to be egging both the Maoists and the government to seek a face-saving formula that will pave the way for relatively free elections in November.

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba was forced to call early elections to outmanoeuvre his rival, Girija Prasad Koirala. But having staked all on elections, he loses big if they are called off, postponed, or if campaigning is marred by serious violence.

The Maoists, despite all their macho talk, have also decided that this is not going to be the quick revolution they had planned for. Their casualties are heavy, supply lines are disrupted, and the Indians are cracking down across the border. But more than all of that, they now see that disrupting the coming elections may end up pitting them against

an adversary unbacked by civilian control. For the Nepali people, November could be an opportunity to show not so much which party they prefer, but to vote in a virtual referendum on democracy. Since the turnout would be a key indicator, it would be in the interest of the Maoists (and anyone else who doesn't believe in parliamentary democracy) to keep voting low through violence.

The Maoists call the shots; they have propelled themselves into the position of being able to determine whether elections are held or not. This is a strong bargaining chip. Elections can't be held, then the ensuing constitutional crisis will allow the king to invoke Article 127 and use his power to find a way out of the impasse.

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Many see that as taking the country back to square one, circa 1990. But the uncertainty is rooted much more in the Maoists' next move.

As the manifestos are prepared and the Election Commission hears the Congress factions fight it out over the tree symbol and party flag, many remain uncertain about

the polls. The UML, for its part, seems so traumatised by an impending victory that it doesn't want to entertain any doubts about polls.

Narahari Acharya of the Girija faction told us: "I see two major obstacles to holding free elections: the state of emergency and the Maoist problem." The emergency is due for another extension in two weeks, and since the Maoists are far from defeated, the army would prefer renewal.

Maoist Chairman Prachanda in his extra-conciliatory 9 August statement appealed for "dialogue to end the emergency and find a positive political resolution". But he followed that up with a warning that this flexibility shouldn't be seen as a weakness, and therefore force his group to "attack those who support elections". The threat to agree-or-else couldn't have been more explicit.

The convergence of interests of both the Maoists and the government to let elections go through presents a window of opportunity to agree at least on a truce. So far, the government has publicly demanded that the Maoists first give up their weapons. But secretly, emissaries have been going back and forth to see if there can be a compromise.

If they genuinely desire a truce (even if it is to just regroup and re-arm), the Maoists need to do more to prove that they will not double-cross the government this time. The Maoists admit that

at least five of their central committee members have been arrested or killed and that one of every five people killed by security forces is a party worker. The government has arrested hundreds of rebel supporters, some of whom have provided valuable intelligence. Still, the hardcore Maoist fighting force is intact. And they are quite capable, if the talk of truce doesn't get anywhere, to resume attacks in the build-up to next month's strike.

see p 6



Axis of despair

KUNDA DIXIT

The enemy of an enemy should be a friend. But it doesn't seem to work quite that way in geopolitics. A divided Iraqi Christian refugee family in Kathmandu is testimony to how humanitarian concerns don't figure in the present sabre-rattling against Iraq and the "axis of evil".

Two years ago the Kandal family fled Iraq to escape persecution by Saddam Hussein. But while the father and two daughters are in a refugee camp in Germany, the mother and three other children are waiting in Kathmandu for someone to help reunite them. They are trapped between unfeeling embassies, Nepal's own rigid laws that make no humanitarian exceptions, and a United Nations that has its own rules on refugee status.

Liliah Kandal is a petite 47-year-old woman with a radiant face who could easily be mistaken for a kindergarten teacher. In a cramped flat in Kathmandu, Liliah, her two daughters Dina and Dayana, and her son, Sargon, are trying their best not to give up hope. "All we can do is pray and trust that our family will be one again," Liliah says, showing us family photographs stuck to the wall of her tiny room (right).

Governments and relief agencies haven't been of much help, but a fellow refugee from Iraq's erstwhile enemy Iran came to the rescue. An American good samaritan then assisted with living expenses. Still, local missionary schools don't want to take the children because they do not have any documents. Then there is the stress and boredom of living in alien surroundings, and an overwhelming sense of uncertainty about the future.

After her husband sought political asylum in Germany two years ago, Liliah took their five children and travelled via Jordan and Thailand to try to join him. In Bangkok, a human smuggling ring organised to take them to Germany via Kathmandu with fake

French passports. The eldest and youngest daughters, who were on one passport, went through Kathmandu airport departure immigration, that morning a year-and-half ago. But Liliah and her three other children were caught.

They posted a Rs 180,000 bail for one year while the case was under investigation. But now they could be taken to court and, if convicted for travelling on forged documents, face jail sentences of a maximum of five years. It would be possible to convince the judge that deportation, rather than sentencing, would be better for all concerned.

The United Nations refugee agency in Kathmandu, UNHCR, is trying to help, but can't use them refugee status until the case is tried. Even then, the UNHCR says that it can only return them to northern Iraq. Liliah would prefer to go to Jordan, where she thinks it will be safer for her family, and from where will be more chance of reuniting with her husband and two other daughters.

Last week, Liliah wrote a petition requesting King Gyanendra for a royal pardon, and to be allowed to leave the country on humanitarian grounds.

While America prepares to bomb Iraq again, one Iraqi refugee family is in limbo in Nepal.



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W e must have elections, but we can't have elections. That is the dilemma of our democracy.

Who gets the free symbol is not really that important. What is more critical is what happens if elections can't be held as scheduled. Now that he has brought us to it, it is up to Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba to show that he can hold credible polls and guarantee free and normal campaigning. For this, he needs to lift the state of emergency two weeks from now. But he can't do that until he has a truce with the Maoists. The Maoists are offering to talk, but once-then Deuba is shy. And he's under pressure from his hardline ministers not to buckle. It is a precarious time to be prime minister.

The Maoists are also in a fix. Despite threats about disrupting the campaign, a scuttled election and the ensuing constitutional crisis will not be to their strategic advantage. The Maoists have now realised that their fast-forward revolution went out of control and resurrected the ultra-right. This wasn't how it was supposed to happen, it was supposed to be an easy victory over a corrupt and fractious bunch of reactionary puppets.

In their plan the Maoist leadership decided to call off their "decisive forward leap" and concentrate on long-term political work. For this they need public opinion on their side and they can't afford to antagonise other political forces. The leadership will therefore need to keep up its hardline rhetoric in public, mostly to assuage the rank and file who worry that they might have sold out. But having taken the risk and made the move, the onus is on the Maoists to prove their good faith this time. And to get them along in that direction, there is military and political pressure.

Escalating the violence and provoking the government to call elections, requiring the king to use the provisions of Article 127 of the constitution to "remove obstacles that prevent the enforcement of constitutional provisions" The king is entitled to give executive orders to parliament to overcome the crisis. But what if there is no parliament, like now? The constitutional monarch has a slew of options, and if it comes to Article 127, the motivation for any move he makes will be to get the country back on track.

For the moment, going by the past record, the only thing we can be absolutely sure about is that even if elections are held, and even if they are relatively fair, the old familiar faces will be back. However, it can't be said that the country cannot—will not—endure another 12 years of this.

FOSSIL ECONOMY

The fundamental mistake of Adam Friedensohn makes in his beautiful article "Fossil economy," #106 is to assume that there is a government in Nepal. The Nepali people know that a mob of crooks are running the country, and holding the country and everything in it to ransom for their vested interests.

Friedensohn said is absolutely true: Nepal can save billions in fuel costs, feed development of electricity and other facilities through this saving, generate employment for medical costs, make itself a prime tourist destination etc. etc. if it gave up fossil fuel and switched to electricity. This switch will not happen now. What the Nepali people are doing is the highlight fuel adulteration

and the diesel lobby is highly commendable. Your paper and investigative journalism can go further and compile a list of the people in the mafia involved in this racket so that they can be roasted on a spit. The Nepali people know that a mob of crooks are running the country, and holding the country and everything in it to ransom for their vested interests.

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An end to the means

"If you act like there is no possibility of change, you guarantee that there will be no change."

- Noam Chomsky

Recent news about a possible dialogue with Maoists is a welcome sign. But the government's repeated, single-minded response, asking the Maoists to lay down arms first, is an example of the glibility of the establishment.

Without compromising on law and order, the political leadership must be prepared to be proactive and offer a set of far-reaching revolutionary reforms to make to break this offer—decentralised regional government and electoral reform replacing the Westminster system of election in favour of (mixed) proportional representation.

There are two schools of thought. One argument is that the extreme segment of society, unable to find a forum to give any visible conduit to engage in any policy debate to make a difference, has resorted to underground norms and practices. An alternate explanation that the current extremism is totally ideologically driven and offers no room for compromise seems equally valid as well.

Let's take a look at the original 40-point demands of the Maoists and classify them:

- **Economic issue and safety net:** setting minimum wage (30), providing unemployment compensation (29), free health care and education (35), subsidies for farmers (33), guaranteed work (29), guaranteed low inflation (36), effective disaster relief mechanism (34), provision for cottage industry (38), protection of the domestic marketing industry by restricting Indian trucks (3);
- **Infrastructure:** building roads, water and electricity facilities in rural areas (37);
- **Ethnic and social issues:** ethnic languages and their status and bilingualism in (middle) schools (22), proper rights for daughters (19), land reforms (17), solving problems pertaining to housewives, women, and the elderly (31), end relief for farmers (23), corruption control (39), ending caste discrimination (20);
- **Human rights and press:** controlling police brutality (15), press autonomy (23), intellectual freedom (24), repealing the Security Act (13), freedom for political detainees (14,16), civil oversight of police activity (12);
- **Social conformity and cultural policies:** less personal liberty: restriction on personal freedom to enjoy certain kinds of music and movies (8), restriction on personal choice to get private education, restriction on development of civil society like NGOs (9);
- **Idological and institutional goals:**
- **Nationalist issue:** removing unfair clauses in the 1950 Treaty (1), nullification of the Tansukey Treaty (2), closing Godhara recruitment camps (4), requiring work permits for non-Nepali (5);
- **Constitutional demands:** declaring Nepal a secular state (18), removing monarchial privileges (11), constituent assembly for a new constitution

LETTERS

Nepal. Moaning about it may be good for cocktail parties but not the things done bribes are the norm: whether directly or indirectly through agents or as consultation fees. This is the way everything else is done—from buying planes to building hospitals—why should electric vehicles be any different?

Kabindra Pradhan, Butwal

DOLAKHA

We want to thank you for the good for cocktail parties but not the things done bribes are the norm: whether directly or indirectly through agents or as consultation fees. This is the way everything else is done—from buying planes to building hospitals—why should electric vehicles be any different?

We want to thank you for the good for cocktail parties but not the things done bribes are the norm: whether directly or indirectly through agents or as consultation fees. This is the way everything else is done—from buying planes to building hospitals—why should electric vehicles be any different?

NATION

COMMENTARY

(10), bringing the army under the civilian authority (12).

Policy goals:

- **Macro economic policy:** pegging of workers' salary to inflation (and guaranteed inflationary adjustment) (36), increased custom duties;
- **Closed economy and protectionism:** restriction on flow of foreign capital (6), higher import tariff and restriction on imports (7), (goal: protection for cottage industry);
- **Documentation of foreign workers:** requiring work permit for non-Nepali (5);
- **Devolution of central authority:** autonomy to mobilise resources and decentralisation, local autonomy (26);
- **Improve occupational discrimination:** confiscation of the property of government agents and brokers, targeted rationalisation of certain sectors (28).

Without legitimising the path of violence espoused by the insurgents, many of these demands may actually come under the purview of our parties, groups, and ethnic and political minorities with varying degrees of support and opposition. Many of these issues can easily be framed within the context of policy debates.

Every democracy has these policy polarisations. We may call certain common goals and welfare, but the tools to achieve them may be different across different political parties. Forcing others to adopt a set of policy tools is ridiculous and autocratic. Some tools are theoretically sound (eg, regional level decentralised government, see demand number 26), and yet others are highly counter-productive (eg, macro-economic policy, anti-trade policy), and the rationalisation of the bookkeeping sector).

More importantly, why did the Maoists take the path of violence? Or do they have some other agenda that we are not seeing in the 40-point demand? If they do, then why would they want to come to the negotiation table now? In any case, many of the policy-related items on the 40-point list have been the focus of public policy debates in western democracies.

Socio-economic goals cannot be demanded, but proper policy tools can be used to achieve them. Many of the 40-point demands are similar to those enjoyed, for instance, by Americans (eg, minimum wage, free school education, welfare support for minorities and the poor, homeless shelters, low inflation, disaster management, farm subsidies, community oversight of police activities, anti-discrimination laws). The Maoists just have a different way of trying to attain those goals.

With some exceptions, many of these same issues are common to citizens around the world. But political forces and civil society have the question these problems through debate and participation, using the ideals of democracy and consensus and respecting each other's views. The answer is about priority and compromise: no one group or ideology should have complete domination over the entire population. Attempts to socially engineer societies in China, Cambodia and the Soviet Union failed miserably. The real way it is important to understand what is the real motive behind proposals.

A can't move of mixed proportional representation in elections and the elected regional governments, embracing a secure of ethnic and political minorities into public policy debates, offers a way out.

(Alok K. Bohara is professor of economics at the University of Missouri, USA, and earned his PhD at the University of California in Boulder. See also: "Devolution, not revolution", Nepali Times #97.)

Sara Shneiderman and Mark Turin, Cornell University, New York

In his piece "What do the Maoists want this time?" (#104) Shyam Shrestha remains silent on an issue which I am sure no party would want to happen. How can the Maoists come into mainstream politics and go to elections with their arms and men still in the jungle? Can the election ever be held in such a situation? No matter how inefficient the government has been, and it sadly will continue to be, it should not hold any negotiations with the Maoist until they surrender. This, despite the government's many shortcomings, should be the government's stand.

Dipak R. Tulachan, San Francisco, USA

Nothing to talk about

The Maoist offer of talks is a ploy to distract the security forces while the comrades prepare for more offensives.



arrangement that has support of all parliamentary parties! Also, who has the authority to make such an understanding? The parliamentary political parties are not yet ready for that. Which is why it may be a foolish thinking that the Maoists are seriously seeking an exit.

From published statements, it is clear that the Maoist plan is in no mood for any compromise. The leadership doesn't see any need to talk yet, and the military pressure has curtailed Maoist activities and supply lines, though the rebels still control the hinterland of the mid-west. The Indians may be cracking down but there are plenty of secret routes across the open border, and enlistment and training of the 'people's army' is on schedule. In fact, the true offer could very well be a discretionary manoeuvre to lure the army into a false sense of security while they plan attacks in the coming months.

So far, every decision Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has made in the past few months has indirectly benefited the Maoists. The dissolution of parliament and the extension of an unpopular emergency would only be to advantage. The Maoist rebel competition for the hearts and minds of the grassroots were elected local leaders. By postponing local polls and dissolving the local elected bodies, the government did exactly as the Maoists have wanted all along. In the absence of MPs, and village and district councils, the standing of the Maoist 'people's government' has in fact improved.

In other words, many of the things that the Maoists would have to achieve through the talks have been carried out by the current government. To the Maoists, the Maoists are getting what they have, if the Maoists want all along, then they have no reason to talk now.

The argument of some Kathmandu-based leftists is that the Maoists are not ready to lay down their arms and return to the negotiating table is hard to swallow. And even if the Maoists may have fine-tuned their tactics, there is no reason to believe that they have abandoned their one strategy: objective: setting up a people's republic.

The only situation which may compel the Maoists to initiate serious dialogue for the first time—aside from their short-term strategy

goals—like the arrest of the main leadership, full-fledged attacks by Indian security forces on Maoist camps, stricter regulation of the border, and the weakening of the Maoist militia. Hoping that they will change suddenly—become moderate and give up their ideological thinking—is a dangerous assumption and only shows gross misjudgment and underestimation of what drives revolutionary struggles.

The Maoists justify their unilateral breaking of the truce in November with the devastating attack the army had refused by saying that the government had refused to agree to their demand for a constituent assembly. To the Maoists, the Maoists have not provided any other justification for going back on their word.

Even now, despite the talk, the main agenda of the Maoist war is destruction, irrespective of the cost to human life and infrastructure. Whether we like it or not, the Maoists still have the means to pick targets and weak have and error on the popular. A largely non-performing government is big help to the Maoists.

Deuba's partyless government is blundering and old about about. But it lacks the legitimacy to initiate serious dialogue for the present. The talks could be meaningless, even if

people living abroad go insane if they don't get their weekly fix of Nepali Times in general and Under My Hat in particular! Don't you see? It's not that we are hardcore addicts and yes, that's 8%\$% includes me. Where the 8%\$% is this week's Internet edition of Nepali Times? You still have the old issue and it is not updated as of today (8 August), and that's driving me 8%\$% nuts. What happened to the Monday upload schedule?

Nirmal Niroula, Kentucky, USA

Editor's note: The online edition of the Nepali Times can be read free of cost, and content is progressively uploaded from Monday onwards after the hardcopy edition comes out Fridays. Last week's update was delayed due to temporary server problems.

Hats off to Kunda Dixit for "Gods must be crazy" (#106). Loved reading every bit of it.

Rajendra Shrestha, Kathmandu

Correction: In "Unfriendly fire" (#106) the caption for the page one picture should have read: Syani and Kaman Maya Praga are widows of 15, Kurne Praga is the name of Syani's husband who died in Kailash. We regret the error.—Ed.

RAMYATA LIMBU

Kathmandu Valley has exceeded the limits of its growth. It is one of very few cities in the world of more than one million people which is not situated on the coast, or along the banks of a big river. We are running out of water, and the Melamchi project is still at least seven years away. What are we going to do till then?

One fact that is obvious is no point waiting for the government or the municipality to get its act together and provide 24-hour treated water on the mains. Drill a tube well! Sorry, Kathmandu's water table is sinking fast and pumping ground water will not be an option. Migrate to Pokhara? If you can find a job there.

A much cheaper option is to have rainwater, where it falls close to your roof. It is simple, it is free, it is logical, and it is the only solution. Individual households investing in

The solution to Kathmandu's water shortage lies in collecting rain.

rain harvesting systems today will have solved the water needs of their water needs of their children.

The trouble is that 80 percent of the rain in Kathmandu falls between June and September. Nepal has a problem of too much water three months in a year and too little for the rest. We need to store monsoon runoff so that it will last the dry months, and take households off the next rainy season. This means larger tanks, which makes rainwater storage systems more expensive than in other parts of the world where rainfall is more evenly distributed through the year.

But even so, a simple calculation shows that adding a round-the-year rainwater cistern is the only option where it falls close to your roof. It is simple, it is free, it is logical, and it is the only solution. Individual households investing in

rainwater goes like this: Suppose you have a 100 sq m roof or terrace area. Kathmandu gets a little more than 1,000 mm of rain every year. If you could collect all that rain, it would fill a 100,000 litre tank. Let's say you can collect 90 percent of what falls; you will have 90,000 litres of rain to play around with.

A 90,000 litre reinforced concrete underground tank would set you back Rs 700,000. And that might be overkill, unless your family is used to soaking in the bathtub every night.

At present, an average conservative-minded middle class household of four people in Kathmandu uses about 250 litres of water a day for cooking, drinking and washing. If we take the dry season in Nepal to be 250 days, then there is a need for only a 250x250=62,500 litre tank. With gutters, PVC pipes, a sedimentation tank the cost of the

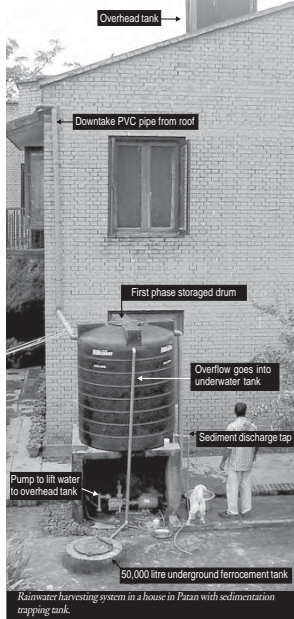
whole system can come down to Rs 550,000. This may sound like a lot of money, but imagine the peace of mind for the rest of your life (and the lives of your children and grand children) of never having to worry about water.

For households that still get intermittent water supply from the city mains, it will be a good idea not to mix rain water with treated drinking water. So, a separate small tank for treated water can be made (a 2,000 litre outdoor PVC tank would suffice) that feeds water just for kitchen use.

Collecting rainwater where it falls for large use has not been as much a tradition in Nepal as it is in the arid Indian states of Rajasthan and Gujarat. In fact the Rastapuri Bhawan in New Delhi which is the official residence of Indian presidents has a rainwater harvesting system.

Growing urban water shortage in Nepal towns and cities will make this a viable proposition here too. The first known use of a modern rain water harvesting system was in a mission hospital in Pokhara in the 1960s. The US Peace Corps has been active in propagating rain collection models through its volunteers, and lately the government built a large capacity rain tank in Tanahu district. The Finnish-aided Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project has built 400 two cubic metre rainwater tanks to meet household needs in villages of Gorkha and Palpa districts.

Anil Pokhrel of the Nepal Water for Health (NEWAH) says the beauty of rainwater harvesting is that you don't need multi-million dollar projects. "Unlike



RAINWATER COLLECTION SYSTEMS

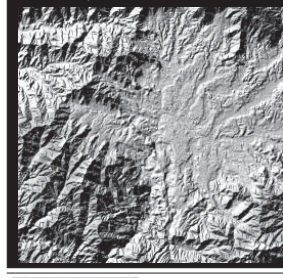
Can be of various types, capacities and costs:

1. Rainwater for direct use: This is a simple rooftop catchment with sloping channels feeding directly into an outdoor drum with a tap attachment.
2. Overhead tank storage with overflow: collects rainfall on roof and stores it in an overhead tank that supplies household water supply through gravity. Has an overflow and water system.
3. Underground tanks: Downtake from roof is taken to an underground storage tank after passing through filters and sedimentation tank.
4. Rainwater storage and groundwater recharge: Water stored for household use and overflow charged into groundwater for withdrawal later.



DOES KATHMANDU HAVE ENOUGH WATER?

Kathmandu Valley (satellite picture, below) has a catchment of 600 sq km. It gets 1,100 mm of rain annually. There are no snow-fed streams leading into the Bagmati, so in an average year, 330 million cubic metres of water is available if we can catch it. It would only need 1.5 percent of Kathmandu Valley's total surface area to harvest just six percent of the total rainfall—which would be enough to meet the water needs of all the valley's inhabitants even if they used double of what they use now.



big water supply projects like Melamchi, rainwater harvesting is the most decentralized system of getting water. Anyone can collect it.

NEWAH runs an integrated programme for water, health, and sanitation in various parts of the country has for the last five years been helping people in rural communities to tap rainwater for drinking and domestic use. In rural hill areas, most villages are clustered on ridges, where the air is fresher, threat of malaria is minimum, but there is an acute water shortage. NEWAH helps villages organized on ridge-tops to build 24,000 litre ferroconcrete tanks for harvesting rain.

Nepali water expert Ajay Dixit believes in practicing what he preaches. He harvests rainwater both in his home and office and stores rainwater in a 500 litre tank for the bathroom flush. "It's not an alternative but a complementary supply. By using rainwater we can prevent treated water from becoming sewage every time we flush," he says. Stored water can also be used for meeting other

needs like bathing and washing. By way of a gutter and plastic pipes, Dixit also taps rain to feed it underground to recharge groundwater in his locality.

As a means to replenish decreasing groundwater tables, organisations along with NEWAH have begun to rehabilitate old ponds around the Valley to trap rainwater and recharge the water system that provides water to Kathmandu's population.

Existing old ponds in Sankhu, Dharmasthal are being renovated. Ponds in the upper catchment of the Bagmati river in Shivapuri have been built. The Department of Soil Conservation and Watershed Management (DSCWM) has built conservation ponds to store rainwater in southern Lalitpur while ponds built on hillslopes in this area have also helped stabilise landscapes.

Water experts are also looking to India, where rainwater harvesting is good news for Nepal as the age of 35, which is when heart ailments start to strike. The good news is that Nepal now has 40 cardiologists compared to only 15 five years ago. The number of cardiac surgeons has gone up noticeably after the imposition of the emergency—some 15,820 have given up their arms and turned themselves in.

The bad news is, we need this. There has been a 100 percent increase in the incidence of hypertension and cardiac disease in the last five years.

Hackers threaten ISPs

The Computer Association of Nepal (CAN) and Internet Service Provider Association of Nepal (ISPAN) have issued out a group of Nepali hackers who have attacked servers, disrupting internet services and threatening privacy.

The group, which calls itself YSGNET is this time targeting Mandarline, Nepal's largest ISP which takes care of 50 percent of the bandwidth. Nepal, handles the 'top' domain, and provides internet services across the country and satellite links to remote areas.

One of the hackers, Suraj Joshi, had been jailed last year for five days accused of hacking into Wink's servers, and is currently out on bail. YSGNET claimed it can bring internet services to a halt, warned it can hit confidential data. The reason they say they "want to be taken seriously". This is tantamount to a gang of thieves overrunning the security of a bank making copies of sensitive information, vandalising the rooms, disrupting normal operations, "CAN and ISPAN said in a statement this week. "This is cyber-terrorism pure and simple."

One ISP handler told us that if the hackers go unpunished there is a potential for servers belonging to the security forces, banks, sensitive data in corporate and personal accounts being seriously compromised. "The authorities have to take care of this problem before it becomes any bigger," he added. The hacker group says its 'Trap the Cat' campaign will terminate on Friday, but warn that they will keep exposing breaches.

Every Sunday 11th August onwards

Es Domingo Por La Noche

Nuestra Latino

Every Sunday 11th August onwards

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DOMESTIC BRIEFS

"Predator of press freedom"

The Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (Reporters sans frontières) named four new 'predators of press freedom' in Asia this week: Islamic militants, the Prime Minister of Nepal, the Home Minister of Bangladesh and the security forces in southern Philippines.

Deuba not joins an illustrious list of other RSF "press freedom predators" which include North Korea's Kim Il-Sung, Iraq's Saddam Hussein, Libya's Moammar Gadhafi, Than Shwe of Burma, Chechnya's Khadimaga malla and China's Jiang Zemin.

RSF says about Deuba: "When he imposed a state of emergency in November 2001 to combat 'Maoist terrorism', the Prime Minister also resolved to cover up the arrests, torture and intimidation of journalists by the security forces. He has turned his country into the world's biggest prison for journalists."

4,337 Nepalis dead, and counting

It is latest report about the police forces for Nepalis about the age of 35, which is when heart ailments start to strike. The good news is that Nepal now has 40 cardiologists compared to only 15 five years ago. The number of cardiac surgeons has gone up noticeably after the imposition of the emergency—some 15,820 have given up their arms and turned themselves in.

The security forces have made 16,130 arrests in connection of insurgency, 10,736 of those arrested have been killed. Legal action has been taken against 4,338 people, and the rest are still under trial. The number of insurgents the government says have surrendered to the security forces has gone up noticeably after the imposition of the emergency—some 15,820 have given up their arms and turned themselves in.

Heart alert

The good news is that Nepal now has 40 cardiologists compared to only 15 five years ago. The number of cardiac surgeons has gone up noticeably after the imposition of the emergency—some 15,820 have given up their arms and turned themselves in. The bad news is, we need this. There has been a 100 percent increase in the incidence of hypertension and cardiac disease in the last five years.

Hackers threaten ISPs

The Computer Association of Nepal (CAN) and Internet Service Provider Association of Nepal (ISPAN) have issued out a group of Nepali hackers who have attacked servers, disrupting internet services and threatening privacy.

The group, which calls itself YSGNET is this time targeting Mandarline, Nepal's largest ISP which takes care of 50 percent of the bandwidth. Nepal, handles the 'top' domain, and provides internet services across the country and satellite links to remote areas.

One of the hackers, Suraj Joshi, had been jailed last year for five days accused of hacking into Wink's servers, and is currently out on bail. YSGNET claimed it can bring internet services to a halt, warned it can hit confidential data. The reason they say they "want to be taken seriously". This is tantamount to a gang of thieves overrunning the security of a bank making copies of sensitive information, vandalising the rooms, disrupting normal operations, "CAN and ISPAN said in a statement this week. "This is cyber-terrorism pure and simple."

One ISP handler told us that if the hackers go unpunished there is a potential for servers belonging to the security forces, banks, sensitive data in corporate and personal accounts being seriously compromised. "The authorities have to take care of this problem before it becomes any bigger," he added. The hacker group says its 'Trap the Cat' campaign will terminate on Friday, but warn that they will keep exposing breaches.

Every Sunday 11th August onwards

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Is rainwater safe to drink?

A: Rainwater collected from roof needs to be have filters like a coarse mesh and a sedimentation tank to prevent debris from flowing into the storage area. Rainwater is free of mineral pollutants found in ground water, but may contain dissolved air pollutants and surface contamination from the roof. These can be minimised by ensuring that the first foot of rain is drained off. Water quality improves with storage as impurities settle and the pathogens die out. Remaining biological contamination can be disinfectised by adding bleaching powder (one teaspoon per 200 litres). For drinking purposes, it is still safer to boil rainwater.

Q: What is the best roof surface for rainwater collection?

A: The runoff coefficient for various surfaces determines the quantity and quality of the water that can be used for drinking. Tiles and corrugated metal sheets are the most efficient and cleanest rainwater collection surfaces.

Q: What is the best way to stop solid particles from entering the tank?

A: A wire net on the roof drain is the first line of defence. Then, a simple sedimentation line in the pipe that can be drained periodically, or a first-stage outdoor tank to store water before it overflows into the underground tank will take care of most debris.

HERE AND THERE

by DANIEL LAK

Deconstructing aid...

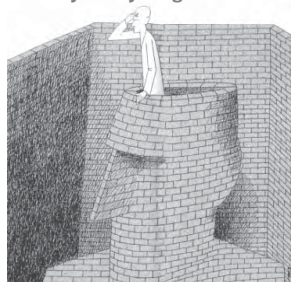
...is easy once you figure out the subversive subtext in a furniture shop.

A remarkable global institution—at least in developed countries—is a place known as Ikea. This is yet another international business based in relatively tiny Sweden, a country that defies the tenets of fundamentalist capitalism with great success. Mixed economies work, otherwise we wouldn't have Ikea, Volvo, Saab and so on. But that's another argument, another column.

Ikea pretends to be a furniture shop, but it's really a giant, identikit lifestyle store. And I mean giant. There are three Ikea stores in my home town, Toronto, part of a worldwide network of hundreds of sprawling warehouses of consumer choice. Everything is meticulously planned—Swedish-style—down to the cheap cup of fragrant coffee—again Swedish-style—that happy customers clutch in their fists as they dash between aisles, picking up fittings or toys. In Toronto, Ikea is the first stop of the city's newly arrived immigrants, or students leaving home in need of cheap furniture. Like almost everything else from Sweden, Ikea is socially useful as well as profitable.

Ikea began life as an outgrowth of Sweden's powerful forest product industry but it soon became a way of marketing all things Swedish, primarily the austere, tasteful design that the country is now known for. A huge range of products for the home—all with absurd names like "Bille", "Lande" or my favourite "Ekevo"—are on display. Prices are cheap, the shop attendants are friendly and helpful. No wonder the place gets so full every day. All these are mobbed with customers. Each outlet does millions of dollars in business every week.

The real secret of Ikea's success is an idea that's catching on, and it's a worrisome one. Ikea's furniture, you



se, might look diverse and unique. It may call out to you "take me home and put me in your bedroom", but it's all mass-produced from a narrow range of patterns that use interchangeable parts to maximum efficiency. In other words, a few basic building blocks appear in almost every item on sale and this reduces costs to the company hugely. It's

good marketing and even better cost control. But once the idea gets into other sectors, it's time to worry.

These days, what line of work doesn't involve standardisation of some sort? As we're finding out, the international accounting industry uses universal and abysmally low standards to evaluate corporate clients' balance sheets. That's one reason why the global economy is sinking. Policy makers in all countries are encouraged to follow identical paths if they're to get any money from multilateral institutions—never mind that the paths encouraged by International Monetary Fund and World Bank planners are increasingly discredited in rich countries. And even soft development assistance follows an Ikea-like approach, fitting together bits developed in meeting rooms back home, to produce and policy in myriad situations around the world.

To put it simply, what works for Ikea won't work for aid, public policy or economics. That's becoming increasingly plain. Countries, societies, places, each has different approaches, local conditions and special needs. Applying the theories of thinkers from home rarely helps with any of those unique challenges. At best, imported approaches provide comfort only to the official who's paid by his government to run the program. If it goes well, then it's down home know-how at work. If it fails, the locals stole the money or didn't understand the concept. But as for the beneficiaries, they wait until they find the right combination of ideas, funding and so on. Perhaps there'll be some in the warehouse, next to the mattresses and alongside the kitchen sinks. If we just get a few more of them down, maybe it'll fit together next time... ♦

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Polls apart?

No one is expecting the Maoists to join the election fray, but they could use it as an opportunity to push ill-minded leftist parties who could act as a de facto political wing to push through their agenda for constitutional change and a referendum. "That would help them to legitimise their politics and keep the issue alive," a Maoist watcher told us.

There appear to be at least two separate and highly secretive behind-the-scenes efforts to get the two sides talking. "The Maoists are even willing to announce a ceasefire provided they get an assurance of reciprocity from government," a source close to one of the peace initiatives told us. Another Maoist condition is the emergency be lifted, and the publication of the names of detainees.

A breakthrough was getting so close a real possibility last week when the police suddenly decided to make a subdued announcement of an Interpol notification on the most-wanted rebel leaders. That seems to have temporarily put a quaver in the Maoists, and convinced some that there are elements in the establishment who think that a trace would cause the counter-insurgency campaign to lose momentum.

"We have been able to build some trust between two sides," says Sudip Paudyal of the Human Rights Organisation of Nepal. "Everyone knows elections cannot be held in a situation of terror and even if they are held it may not be free and fair which is why the peace is essential." Paudyal is one of three human rights activists who have been trying to re-establish contact between the government representatives and the Maoists. Shyam Shrestha, who had mediated between the government and the Maoists in the past, thinks that if the Maoists have wanted to come to talks at any time, it is now, not later.

But Shrestha adds, "I sense there are forces that don't want the two sides talking." An indication that is the arrest of Krishna Dhoi Khadka, said to be among those that had made the last round of talks possible.

There are interlinked factors at play: the Maoists have suffered major losses, but are still capable of disrupting elections, and the government can legitimise itself only by holding elections. Which makes taking trace the only exit strategy for both sides. Unless the plan all along was to create conditions in which elections can be held. ♦

SOMEWHERE IN NEPAL

by PUSKAR BHUSAL

Electoral collage

Elections aren't only about winning, the UML may soon find.

The only thing that can stop the UML from forming its first majority government is a rigged election. At least, that's what the courtiers at Balbhu Darbar are telling us. The cadence and candour of the prose may vary, but the clear feeling you get from reading UML-friendly publications is that the party has waited too long for its turn. Moreover, its troubles are not entirely of its own making. Each time political trends seemed to take a favourable turn, rivals conspired to ebb the flow. True, the Nepali Congress-led interim government that held the 1991 general elections included members of what is today the UML. But the Congress acted as if it had just restored the two-thirds majority they held in the 1959 parliament. The comrades had to craft a survival strategy. In seeking to shift the failures of the interim government on the Nepali Congress while sharing in its successes, the UML emerged as a formidable opposition.

The party fell short of a majority in the 1994 poll because the nastiness of the Kangresi infighting made the Panchayat-era Surya Bahadur Thapa-Lokendra Bahadur Chand squabbles look like concisely fought combat. The Rastriya Prajatantra Party quintupled its share of seats in the hung parliament and both men got to be prime minister again. The Supreme Court's reinstatement of the lower house stood in the way of a UML majority in 1995. Although they were part of the election government in 1999, the split that spoiled the comrades' chances had several Kangresi fingerprints.

The cracks in the Nepali Congress have charmed the comrades this time. They have also exacerbated the UML's split personality. As part of Campaign 2002, the folks at party headquarters are busy rearranging portraits in the conference room to match the visual preferences of the foreign dignitary in attendance. Senior leaders are trying to shore

up their revolutionary credentials among cadres at the same time they are struggling to wipe off all traces of communism from the party name and flag. The moment of truth has arrived.

A grossly under-appreciated facet of Nepali politics is the part Pusp Lal Shrestha's vision of Congress-communist partnership played in overthrowing the Panchayat system. The untold story of the People's Movement of 1990 is how externally quarrelling communist factions could agree to form the United Left Front. Amid such ignorance, it becomes easy to overlook the transformation UML luminaries have undergone since their avatar as primary tools of the campaign to eliminate class enemies.

Ignorance has also perpetuated pluralistically inimical myths. The assertion that there can be no life without the Nepali Congress implies that the roots of our democracy are still too shallow to be strong. More invidious is its insinuation about our comrades. Why can't communists who were good enough to be entrusted with restoring democracy be trusted to preserve it?

The UML wanted to dipud such fallacies through fresh appearances power hungry by insisting on keeping 13 November sacrosanct. But elections are not only about winning. In order to foil well-organised anti-party protests against fraud into this year's work plan, we have to have elections on time, don't we? ♦

responsibility for draining a couple of billions from state coffers. With the elections and the Nepal Congress rupture having come in quick succession, it's more than obvious the UML's patience has paid off.

Will the elections be held on schedule? From the outset, the UML has said the onus lies on the government that imposed them on us. But that it has detected some eerie similarities in the syntax and substance of the phraseology of the executive and judiciary, the UML has officially deployed in full resources to electing the new legislature. The Supreme Court ruling that the six-month gap between sessions structure applies only to a house of parliament existence has evidently rewritten some of the equations. What if

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba feels he can put Congress in its place as long as he feels safe to govern through the hung Upper House? Wouldn't the possibility of the Maoists taking part increase with each month of delay? Then there's that possibility of the Congress uniting.

A lot of UML idealists would probably want to avoid such power hungry by insisting on keeping 13 November sacrosanct. But elections are not only about winning. In order to foil well-organised anti-party protests against fraud into this year's work plan, we have to have elections on time, don't we? ♦

ECONOMY

INTERVIEW

"Local democracy works best."

Dhawal SJB Rana is Nepal's recently-retired mayor who hopes to contest the MP seat in November elections from the UML. Nepal's political and economic hub for nine districts of the mid and far western regions. It is also the entry point for tourists to Bardia, Rara, Mugu and Jumla. Nepal's political and economic hub for nine districts of the mid and far western regions. It is also the entry point for tourists to Bardia, Rara, Mugu and Jumla. Nepal's political and economic hub for nine districts of the mid and far western regions. It is also the entry point for tourists to Bardia, Rara, Mugu and Jumla.

during the Indian mutiny. Today, Nepal's under increasing urban pressure because of people who have fled the Maoist insurgency in the hill districts to the north. Rajan Chatkuli of the Regional Media Centre in Nepal's spoke with Dhawal SJB Rana. Excerpts:



Rajan Chatkuli for Nepali Times: How do you react to the government's decision to dissolve local governments?

Dhawal SJB Rana: Local governments are the pillars of democracy, the future of democratic rule depends on the practice of the rule of law at the local level. There was the option of extending the terms of local governments but the government did not do that for political reasons, and the decision could affect the growth of democracy in Nepal. The government needs to end the present confusion soon by holding parliamentary and local government elections simultaneously.

What is the track record of the central's dealings with local governments?

The government has only tried to exert its influence in the name of decentralisation. It was more unresponsive to those local bodies where opposition parties were in charge. In general, it was unable to be as open and accommodative as it should have been.

How was the cooperation of other political parties at the local level?

I had the cooperation of all political parties, intellectuals and the ordinary residents, and I tried to build on that trust.

What were you able to achieve during your tenure as mayor?

We've seen more development in Nepal's in the past five years than we had achieved in the past 30 years. There was institutionalised corruption at the municipality, which had also affected our image. I have been able to control that corruption. We have undertaken a major effort to upgrade infrastructure: shopping centres at the municipal complex and the bus park, three organised vegetable markets, improvement and conservation of the Rani Talau, and the construction of a mini zoo. Prior to this we had no source of local income; today we are moving towards being a municipality that earns its own keep.

Did your business background help?

The municipality should be run like a well-oiled business. We have tried to serve and the other needs to make a profit by providing services or trading. We did make the municipality more efficient, more people-friendly, and we invested in human resource development.

Is it true you didn't take a salary as mayor?

After becoming mayor I announced that I would not take any salary or benefits from the job. I distributed the first year's salary to the urban destitute, and women who needed help. The rest of the money is in the bank, and I am using it to build a waiting room in front of the emergency ward of the Bheri Zonal Hospital.

Your opponents say you are too ambitious?

I am someone who hopes to be able to lead the country's development by example. I don't think that is being over-ambitious.

Is there something you wanted to do, but could not, during your term as mayor?

I wanted to raise the status of the municipality into a sub-metropolitan city. I was not able to get the support of the MPs representing us to get that done. Secondly, I was unable to manage the sewerage of this city because of budget constraints.

What now?

If the party trusts me, and the people support me, I want to continue serving the country. Presently, I have been relieved of the pressures that come with becoming mayor and because I have free time, I have taken to reading. I am also working on my PhD thesis on 'Nepali Municipalities: A Mayor's Dilemma'. Many colleagues and people still address me as 'Mayor Sah' and that sometimes make me feel that I am still in charge. We, the politicians of this country, have failed by not raising ourselves above petty politics. We can still hope to reverse the failures of the past 12 years of democracy by changing the attitudes and selfishness of those in leadership positions.

BIZ NEWS

Top of the class

Dabur Nepal has been named the largest producer and exporter in Nepal, and another company, Anantha Multi-fibre, has been recognised as the single largest employer. These and 18 other export-oriented companies are to be recognised as Commercially Important Persons (CIPs). The CIPs among garment exporters are Cotton Comfort, Momento Apparels and Shantika International. Among the carpet exporters, the first three carpet industries are Paramount, Samling and Param. Likewise, Exclusion Fabrics Industries has become the top exporter of woollen and pashmina goods. Others recognised are Narayani Leather Manufacturing Industry, Asiatic Traders and Exports (handicrafts), Nepal Lever (soaps and toothpaste) and Anantha Multi-fibre Ltd (jute and jute products). The government has also named six importers of garments and carpets as CIPs.



Stronger buildings

Panchakanya, Nepal's largest steel-manufacturing company has launched high-quality thermo-mechanically treated (TMT) steel bars that the company says are best for large structures, and for earthquake-resistant buildings. The TMT steel bars used for large infrastructure were imported until now, and Panchakanya says that its new product can compare with any of the foreign brands. The TMT bars, produced using technology developed by the German Genningsdorf Stahl Engineering GmbH, are also said to be stronger and more resistant to rusting, which makes them more efficient than ordinary bars. Panchakanya is Nepal's largest steel producer and produces about 80,000 metric tons every year.

Investor blues

A booklet on industrial, fiscal and tax policies produced by the Nepal-India Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NICCI) in association with four other business associations explains just why investors keep out of Nepal. Bangladesh has a 12-15 year tax holiday for new investors, Nepal has none. Bangladesh does not tax export income. Nepal does. Bangladesh gives investors subsidies to export, Nepal levies a 0.5-0.5-0.5-0.5 percent duty. Bangladesh has a vibrant domestic market with the economy growing by about 6 percent. Nepal's domestic market is small and sluggish (the growth rate here is 2-3 percent), and so on. The NICCI adds that logistics are another factor, as Nepal is pretty much inaccessible, except via overland routes. We're also pro-labour and have a high, hidden cost of getting policies implemented in accordance with laws. All of these drawbacks negate the advantages offered to investors in Nepal in terms of access to north Indian markets and the potential for investment in hydropower and tourism. The NICCI's final message is: none of these problems is insurmountable, but someone needs to take action to make amends fast.

Indi League

Spiral Trading has introduced a new after-sales scheme to service Tata India vehicles. The company says the new facility is all about giving 'more care per car'. The membership programme, called Indi League, comes with free labour charges, pick-up and drop-off services, insurance claims, tax payment processing, and blue book renewal services. Members also qualify for discounts on spares and lubricants.

Nepal-India

Officials from Nepal and India are meeting in New Delhi 15-16 August to iron out problems resulting from the renewed Nepal-India trade treaty, especially the extra duties that India imposed on Nepal goods prior to agreeing to renewal. High on the Nepal agenda is getting the rail agreement with India that is needed for the operation of its Inland Container Depot (ICD) at Birganj. The ICD, built with a World Bank loan, has been gathering dust since its completion early last year. There are also issues relating to the setting up of additional quarantine check points along the border between Nepal and India, which India has promised, but not yet acted upon.

FNCCI-JEC team

The Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries has named a team to represent it at the Joint Economic Committee of the FNCCI and the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII). Rabi Bhakta Shrestha, FNCCI president, heads the team, and Padma Jyoti has been named senior advisor. Other members of the JEC are Surya Vaidya, Divakar Golchha, Kishore Khanal, Kushi Joshi, Kumud Dugar, Joy Dewan and Badi Ojha.

Sugar quotas

The opening up of European Union markets to the export of 'everything but arms' from Least Developed Countries has presented Nepal with the possibility of exporting some 9,000 tons of unprocessed sugar. The government has already given the National Trading Corporation (NTL) permission to explore the possibility of sending the first consignment sometime in April next year. If that happens and the price is right, the EU decision may give the country's 11 sugar producers something to aim for. It would also give some people to bankers who've put their money into the ailing sugar mills that have barely been able to produce enough to meet domestic supply, especially during the festival season.

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AUGUST ISSUE

Shrinking Tundikhel



HEMILATA RAI

We're used to it, but the first thing visitors to downtown Kathmandu remark on is that vast, conspicuous swath of open space called Tundikhel. For a city that has seen such extensive documentation of its buildings and spaces in the last three decades, there are surprisingly few people—government functionaries or independent researchers—who know anything about Tundikhel's history or its social significance. Everyone knows that there was a massive tented camp here after the 1934 earthquake, but few people understand why it is the spot of so many military parades, and no one can even tell you how many square metres it covers. Now, the nine-ft-high fences being erected around Tundikhel might mean even less interest in a part of Kathmandu as steeped in legend as any Darbar Square.

Henry Ambrose Oldfield, British resident surgeon in Kathmandu, wrote in his 1850 book *Sketches of Nepal* that Tundikhel originally spread from where Rani Pokhari is today in the north to where the Dasarath stadium is in the south. He estimated that it measured two-thirds miles in length and about 300 yards in width, making it one of the Asia's biggest parade grounds at that time.

Since Tundikhel lies in the heart of the city, it has always mattered to those who would make their authority felt. Way back in 1671, King Prithvi Rana made the first incursion into this space when he directed that Rani Pokhari be built to console his guests.

But the first mention of Tundikhel by name was later, in 1709, in a scripture engraved in the

It's been encroached upon and is now being fenced off. It's time to show Tundikhel, our only real park, some respect.

Taleju Bhagawati temple by Queen Bhuvan Lalani. During the Malla period, Tundikhel was a vast open space maintained by the rulers for social and cultural events, including Ghode Jatra celebrations. Some researchers argue that Tundikhel was an architectural requirement of the Malla era—vast open spaces were considered essential near any densely populated settlement. As the rest of the Valley expanded to accommodate new, wealthy towns, darbars and shrines, Tundikhel alone remained open.

It still is, although over the past 150 years, the demands of modernisation, and the need to legitimise Rana rule, slowly constrained it from all sides. "Encroachment of Tundikhel started when the rulers started gathering military power. They overhauled social and cultural significance and made it out of reach of the communities in order to use it to their own benefit," explains Bal Dev Juji, an expert on Newar culture.

Until Jung Bahadur Rana came to power, the army was trained and paraded in the Chhauni grounds. Bhimsen Thapa might not have envisioned developing Tundikhel as a military parade ground but his decision to build a palace for himself in Lagan Tol, south-west of Tundikhel, in 1813/14 brought soldiers closer to Tundikhel.

Baracks were constructed on the east and north sides of Tundikhel, where

the Karmachari Sanchaya Koshi's main office now stands, and a foundry was built to manufacture cannons on the south-western side.

Juji says that Ghode Jatra was at the time only symbolic—the horse of the Kathmandu Kumari would be let loose at Tundikhel during Jatra. But when Jung Bahadur returned from England, he realised that the festival had the potential to show off his military strength even as it entertained foreign visitors.

Tundikhel was turned into a parade ground for the Nepal army as early as the mid-1830s, towards the end of Bhimsen Thapa's premiership, and Jung Bahadur reinforced this new use of the space, but it was Bir Shumsher, who proclaimed himself prime minister following a coup in 1885, who turned Tundikhel fully over to military use.

At the centre of Tundikhel was the *Kharti ko bot* with a marble platform around it, under which the Rana rulers made all significant announcements—Jung Bahadur summoned the army to challenge King Rajendra in 1848. Bir Shumsher proclaimed himself prime minister at that spot in 1885.

Chandra Shumsher announced the emancipation of slaves in 1924 in the same place, and finally, the Allies' success against Hitler's Germany was announced and celebrated here in 1945.

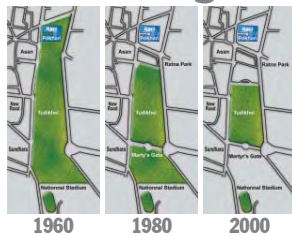
The political significance of Tundikhel started declining after the end of the Rana regime in 1951, but then the encroachment began, and was institutionalised during the Panchayat years. Says historian Rajesh Gautam: "Tundikhel started shrinking faster even as the world was realising the significance of open spaces and got serious about preserving historical and culturally important spaces."

In 1961/62, the US government helped support a food-for-work programme which was used to divide Tundikhel into three separate parts and fence them off. Rana Park and Dasarath Stadium were built,

squeezing in Tundikhel from the north and south sides, and a walled Shahid Gate, which was constructed without any consultation with the communities that lived around the area. More recently, the Royal Nepal Army built an officer's mess against public opinion and until late 1992, the space adjoining the Khula March was allocated for a flea market.

The latest onslaught on this defining feature of the capital has been its fencing off by the Department of Urban Development and Building Construction (DUDBC). Gautam for one is unhappy about this, as are many members of the general public. "Tundikhel is our history, everyone should have access

Going, going, almost gone.



Tundikhel as it looked from the top of Dhara tower in 1925, and (top) the Khari Ko Bot where Chandra Shumsher announced the emancipation of slaves in 1924.

to the ground," he says. The department estimates that the space will be able to accommodate 300 tents during large-scale emergencies. Five emergency gates will be built for large-scale movement of people to Tundikhel, but the gate through which the public now enters will retain its present function. Explains Anant Shrestha, senior divisional planner at the DUDBC, "Kathmandu's open space is being encroached on mainly due to wrong policies. With planning and execution of the kind we are undertaking here, we will be able to prevent further encroachment in Tundikhel."

The DUDBC plans to fence Tundikhel in three phases at an

estimated cost of Rs 28.1 million. But people like environment campaigner and tourism entrepreneur Bharat Basnet, who started a clean-up campaign in Tundikhel ("Citizens Bhauri", #92), believe the move will help stop encroachment and misuse of the space without restricting the cultural activities that take place here, or the access of the public to it. Ravi Shah, site engineer for the fencing project, recalls how crucial Tundikhel was after the 1934 quake, and says: "The fencing is to prevent encroachment. We want to preserve the open space and make it useful during calamities."

The DUDBC plans to fence Tundikhel in three phases at an

COMMENT

by LUIS PAULO FERRAZ

Kathmandu's lungs

Kathmandu is recognised internationally as a special city for different reasons: its environment, its people, the architecture, the landscape, the culture. When I arrived here in January and started walking around the town, three aspects attracted my attention: the Valley itself and the surrounding mountains, the architecture, including the temples and the palace squares, and that unusual open area, a kind of park in the middle of all the urban confusion: Tundikhel.

I was impressed to see that large open space being used by Kathmandu people. Some were playing football or cricket, others having a picnic, others only crossing to the other side, boys and girls flirting with some "open privacy". But in the past few months I have noticed that this unique place has been closed off to the public. Everyday I check to see if it has been re-opened, but the only difference now is an iron fence ringing the green.

I grew up in a very difficult urban environment and I know how hard it is to live in a place deprived of parks and open spaces. Sao Paulo, in Brazil, is a young city compared to Kathmandu. Rapid urbanisation without planning has created a critical situation for its 18 million inhabitants who live in a polluted environment and are deprived of enough areas for sports, recreation or even simply for a rest.

In the 1980s I worked for a government agency responsible for the protection of the natural and

cultural heritage of Sao Paulo. There was a "People's Park" without significant greenery, but with seven football fields. The area was unique not only because of the dense urbanisation around, but also due to its intense use by the population, especially the poorest, who had no access to private clubs. It was not easy to convince the authorities about the importance of the area, in the face of all the other economic interests involved. But today the park is protected by law and is recognised as a heritage site by Sao Paulo State.

There are many reasons why it is so important to protect green and open spaces in urban areas. Some environmental reasons are: to recharge groundwater, preserve the microclimate, provide habitat for fauna (especially birds), and minimise the air pollution. From a social perspective, areas like Tundikhel are responsible for reducing urban stress, creating opportunities for sports and recreation, improving the landscape of the city, and helping promote tourism. It is hoped that the local authorities will be sensitive to the protection of Tundikhel. Not only is it important to keep the area free of new encroachments, but also to maintain it as a public and open space. Tundikhel may not be a heritage for entire humanity, but it could be a national heritage site for Kathmandu and its inhabitants.

(Luís Paulo M Ferraz is a Brazilian geographer currently living in Dholahiti, Kathmandu Valley.)

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Battered, but strong

Will America's stock market collapse lead to depression?

By JEFFREY SACHS

Stock markets are volatile. Consumption and investment fall. Foreign investors flee. Bank loans are tightened. These factors add up to a domino effect, as in America's mild recession of the past two years.

But two forces can turn a mild slowdown into a severe recession or even depression: stock market decline can lead to a full-fledged banking crisis, as occurred in Japan, Mexico, and most recently Argentina. Banks may face bankruptcy, as they can't get repaid during a stock market bust, and so severely restrict new lending. In extreme cases, bank depositors fear for the safety of their deposits, and flee from the banks, leading to the banking crisis, and foreign investors who may suddenly flee. Suddenly the country is thrown into a balance of payments crisis, in which it cannot meet its foreign debts. This disrupts trade and production.

It helps my moderate optimism comes from examining the links between the stock market and the rest of the economy. During a stock market boom, when share prices are bid up high by strong investor confidence, the stock market helps create an overall economic boom. Consumers who own more funds. But US banks still appear strong—and they borrow money on the basis of their stock market wealth to buy new homes, cars, and other expensive items. Companies find it easy to borrow or raise new equity for capital in business investments. Banks lend more to foreign nations, America owes more in US dollars than any other country. The US won't "run out of dollars" to service the foreign debt, as the foreign nations or Korea did during the past decade. The dollar may therefore lose value as investors flee the US, but probably without producing a serious crisis. Also, the US is not an easy target for possible post corporate misdeeds.

COMMENT

When the boom ends, and prices

MEXICO CITY — For the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development, which will be held 26 August – 4 September, it will not be enough to show up with mere paper commitments – not with the global pacts concerning to weaken international instruments until they are effectively irrelevant, and with the unilateral arrogances of the powerful continents to promote, through action or calculated inaction, as go to genocide as the world looks on, paralyzed by impotence, failing to recognize that life is equilibrium, that equilibrium is consensus, and consensus must be respected.

I don't denigrate the advances, particularly legislative and regulatory, that have taken place over the past ten years or the growth of local experience that has been taken place in the wake of Rio. But it is the progress rapid enough? How many disasters must yet occur, how many arrogant unnecessary wars must yet be fought, how many international instruments guaranteeing peace and life itself must be defied or denounced before we can accept that the "civilisation" in the name of which so many errors and injustices were committed is not the only path for humanity.

In the communion of my Mayan ancestors, every people, every culture, is the mirror of the natural world in which they live. No man can ignore a polar bear in the Amazon, or the Maasai people moving from Kenya to Greenland. Cultural identity is the mirror of the diversity of nature. Each time a forest is razed, a form of life is violated, a language lost, a form of civilisation ended, an act of genocide committed.

Of particular relevance to the indigenous peoples, the Rio Summit approved the Convention on Biological Diversity, which article 8 requires recognition of and learning from the richness and diversity of indigenous practices and systems of knowledge. However, what has prevailed has been the kind of thinking of plunder, arrogance, and colonial disdain that underestimated the wisdom of our ancestors and denied our people the right to being heard.

The theoretical and normative arena that emerged from Rio – binding instruments and the irrefragable technological tool of Agenda 21 – constitutes the most significant intellectual and political advance produced by the debate on development and peaceful co-existence in contemporary history. Rio represented a definitive change of concepts, giving development an integral focus that established the interconnection between economic, social, environmental, and cultural dimensions.

Because of the degradation of nature and various forms harm on the last ten years, despite the enormous important consensus, declarations, and actions, we hope that the Johannesburg Summit will make a clear, firm political commitment to guaranteeing the environmental governance of the planet and with it world peace. The past ten years have shown us that it is insufficient to depend on

by RIGOBERTA MENCHU

Staying alive

Indigenous people and the environment need commitment, not endless agreements on paper.



Rigoberta Menchu is a 1991 Nobel Peace Prize recipient and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador.

precise diagnoses, even with binding international instruments and plans of action. The challenge of the political will that restores the value of the founding pact that underlies our actions.

We also hope that the Johannesburg Summit strengthens the recognition of the rights of the indigenous peoples, particularly the right to own our irrefragable lands. Promises that we have used incorrectly, and the erosion of the intellectual property of the traditional knowledge relating to it. On our lands and indigenous peoples sustained life for generations; we preserved the natural diversity and efficiently produced the foods that marked the history of the civilisations. We will not accept any restriction on the international standards now in force, particularly the requirement that there be "prior consent" regarding any action that affects our interests.

The Rio pact must be converted into a Code for Co-existence for a world that has caused a may death since the World War II as it did in the war itself, that has generated more than 25 million refugees and has displaced. We need to radically change the rhythm and the direction of this model of co-existence which is accommodating to cruelty and disaster. We must restore dignity, a sense of a commitment to the survival of the species and all civilisations. (P)

(Rigoberta Menchu is a 1991 Nobel Peace Prize recipient and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador.)

Kurds and Turks

ISTANBUL — The death penalty is abolished, Kurds have been given the rights to broadcast in their language, and Turkey is proud of this homework done for full membership of the European Union. But Turkey might have another to-do list on its hands after the EU in December in Copenhagen in meeting when Turkey's claim to membership will be discussed. Turkey is a changed nation, though questions remain whether it has changed enough.



The 28th Star on a headline in the *Hürriyet*, Turkey's biggest daily, meaning that Turkey will be the 28th member of the EU. Chief editor Erugul Ozkol says: "We have come from the fear of pronouncing the word 'Kurd' to granting freedom for education and broadcast in Kurdish language." A Kurdish minority of an estimated 15 million has for years struggled for national rights within Turkey. Turkey's preparation for the EU has now changed their lives. The "EU package" as the media calls the reforms now passed by parliament include freedom of education and broadcast in non-Turkish languages, freedom to criticise the state and its institutions, easing of restrictions on foreign NGOs, greater freedom for non-Muslim minority groups, and tougher measures against illegal migration through Turkey. In a country where denial of another ethnicity had become the cornerstone of statehood, analysts call the recent reforms groundbreaking. (P)

Policing NGOs

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan's military rulers are putting the finishing touches to a government bill that they say will streamline how thousands of NGOs operate in the country, making them accountable to the state, particularly in their financial affairs. But, while the government says that the process is aimed at reforming the working of public interest organisations and maximising benefits for the people, most NGOs fear the legislative proposals will take away their independence and freedom to work. "It appears to be an attempt to bring NGOs under government control," commented Shafiqat Munir, who heads the Islamabad-based Journalists for Democracy and Human Rights. According to a government estimate, more than 45,000 people are working in areas as diverse as advocacy, human rights, service delivery and relief in a country mired by rampant poverty (around 50 million from a population of 138 million live below the poverty line), with a majority of people lacking basic needs.

Many NGOs and their networks have already expressed serious reservations at the proposed Non-Profit Organisations (Governance and Support) Ordinance 2002, which the government made public in the second week of July for consultations and comments. Khawar Munir, coordinator of the Pakistan NGO Forum, an alliance that brings together leading organisations from across Pakistan, says the forum's main concern is the proposed establishment of a powerful National Non-Profit Organisations Commission, which is to be headed by a minister and comprises members from the government as well as the non-government sector. The draft law stipulates compulsory registration, with the commission, for all public interest organisations that apply for or receive any government or foreign funds in excess of \$5,000 in a single financial year. The bill also requires that registered organisations file with the commission at the end of each fiscal year details of foreign funds received in excess of \$50,000.

The proposed ordinance would make it obligatory for NGOs to provide the commission with details including the identity of donors and the purposes for which funds are received. The bill empowers the commission to initiate audits against any force-bearer or member of any organisation suspected of involvement in financial irregularities. (P)

Getting heated up

MONTREAL — Led by a northern hunter who spoke of signs of global warming throughout his territory, Canada's provincial premiers shrugged off tradition at their annual summer meeting and engaged in a public row over whether to ratify the Kyoto Protocol on reducing greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. While oil-rich Alberta province wants to fight the global treaty that Canada signed but is now hesitating to ratify, three smaller provinces have loudly urged Prime Minister Jean Chretien to ratify the treaty. In the end, both sides settled for a typically Canadian compromise: a meeting on the subject this month in Ottawa that has yet to be determined. Environmental groups say the public unwilling is a good sign that Chretien, who is in the middle of an unpopularity leadership fight, will ratify the deal and may even announce his decision by the end of this month at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in South Africa. Soon after Canada's neighbour and leading trading partner, the United States, announced last week it would not ratify the Kyoto Protocol — which requires industrialised nations to cut greenhouse gas emissions by an average of five percent from their 1990 levels by 2012 — Chretien hinted that Canada might follow suit. He has said ratification would put the country's businesses at a competitive disadvantage with US companies. Since then, he has suggested that countries renegotiate the deal struck in Japan in 1997 as Canada could obtain credit equal to cutting Canada's reduction requirements by 30 percent for exporting "clean" energy — natural gas and hydroelectricity — to the United States. (P)

ASIA

MUOASSIR RIZVI IN ISLAMABAD

Sitting in a position that seeking the Kashmir dispute must proceed free-trade with India, Pakistan has chosen to prolong restrictions on trade with its rival neighbour, while aiming for greater market access elsewhere in South Asia. Pakistan's trade policy for 2002/03, announced last week, once again notes the possibility of free trade with India. This time, the Ministry of Industries and Commerce has placed an emphasis on a settlement on Kashmir. At the diplomatic level, Pakistan maintains that non-settlement of the Kashmir dispute is the reason for trade restrictions on India, but commerce ministry officials privately agree that the restrictions stem from a fear of the dominance of Indian products and services. They say India has manipulated its tariff structure to suit the interests of exporters of finished and semi-finished products. Its tariff manipulation has victimised the small-scale industries of Pakistan's manufacturers and industrialists benefiting from low priced raw materials available in India, analysts say. Among other things, they continue to run trains to transport the low goods they allow their business to trade in.

In 1996 India granted Pakistan the Most Favoured Nation trading status, in line with WTO requirements, but the step was never reciprocated. Now Delhi withdrew the status after the attack on the Indian parliament last December, which was a Pakistan-backed terrorist organisation. The main reason to trade proposals with India comes from the military establishment, which can only justify its existence by keeping

The peace dividend

If only Pakistan and India could agree on increased trade.



likely in the near future. One regional security analyst explained that such progressive initiatives need democratic thinking and a sincere desire to establish durable peace in the region. "It suits the interests of the government in the two countries — the BJP with in Hindu nationalist agenda and Pakistan's military — to maintain the status quo for domestic companies," observed Naim Mushtaq, an Islamabad-based analyst working for the International Crisis Group. (P)

But free trade with India isn't

COMMENT

by VANDANA SHIVA

Not quite Rio+10



In Johannesburg the WTO will push that part of its agenda that has no legitimacy even in the WTO.

exclude life forms from patentability and criminalise biopiracy. The WTO is trying to use Johannesburg as the venue for the part of its agenda that can be pushed through the WTO itself — bad for citizens rights, government responsibilities, and corporate accountability.

The transformation of development into an ideology brought the globalisation of the priorities, patterns and prejudices of the West. Rather than support the diversity, it has created homogeneity. Market development based on market growth indicators and externalisation of environmental costs and of human rights and needs. The right to development based on the universalisation of market development utility it means the right to destruction, since the market prospect of the North is characterised by scarce consumption and natural resource utilisation 5 to 20 times higher than in the developing countries. Rio made a convergence possible between environment and development, and the North and the South.

Unfortunately, a desperate attempt to erase the legacy of the Rio Summit is underway. The first distortion being introduced is that "environment" and "development" are opposing concepts. This was business and industry propaganda pre-Sockholm, but then it was recognised legal and government system good for the environment are good for development too. Resource destruction and alienation are the biggest causes of poverty, securing land, water, and biodiversity rights is the best mechanism for ending poverty in the Third World. Now the Rio agenda is being replaced by the Doha agenda. The perverse equation being created is poverty removal = globalisation of economy = WTO rules = corporate control over resources.

Johannesburg's hidden agenda is privatising natural resources and enclosing the commons, using "poverty removal" as the excuse. Poverty will become a screen for hiding poverty and debt-creating systems. WTO rules and World Bank structural adjustment are making land, water, and biodiversity the monopolies of corporations. (P)

agreed upon in India. Pakistan has estimated \$500 million annually in customs duties to smugglers, according to one independent source.

Activists say that Pakistan's industries will be overwhelmed by India's imports, and are hopeful that businesses on this side of the border will find advantage in Indian markets and state is opened up.

They specifically mention what which is a unit recently Islamabad imported from the United States and Australia, medicines and fertilisers as some of the products whose price would drop substantially in Pakistan if they were imported from nearby India.

Not quite Rio+10

In Johannesburg the WTO will push that part of its agenda that has no legitimacy even in the WTO.

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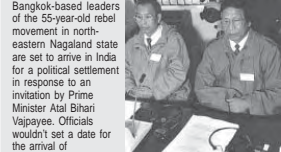
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(Vandana Shiva, an author and international campaigner for women and the environment, received the Right Livelihood Award — the Alternative Nobel Prize — in 1993.)

One step closer in Nagaland

NEW DELHI — After decades in exile, the Bangkok-based leaders of the 55-year-old rebel movement in north-eastern Nagaland state are set to arrive in India for a political settlement in response to an invitation by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Officials wouldn't set a date for the arrival of Thuingaljam Muivah and Isak Chishi Swu, who lead the most powerful faction of the banned National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM), but said that the government was eager to arrive at a resolution which "satisfies all Nagas". The avowed ultimate aim of the NSCN-IM is the creation of Nagalim or Greater Nagaland, which includes not only large chunks of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh states but also parts of western Burma. Expected to be announced shortly is the lifting of a 12-year-old ban on the NSCN-IM, which on 11 July in Amsterdam signed a joint communique with the central government that officially recognised the "unique history and situation of the Nagas". The Nagas tribes are of Indo-Mongoloid stock and are mostly Christian, having been converted by missionaries after the invasion of their homelands by British colonials in the 19th century. Following the decolonisation of British India, the Nagas declared independence under their leader, AZ Phizo.



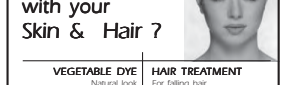
Isak Chishi Swu and Th. Muivah at the third General Assembly of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization.

But a great threat to a lasting settlement comes from elected representatives in the north-east, including Chief Minister Jamir and the chief ministers of the neighbouring Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, parts of which are inhabited by Nagas tribes. Manipur has already announced that it would not withdraw arrest warrants it issued against Muivah and Isak. That means that neither can visit Manipur, two-thirds of which is inhabited by Nagas. In January last year, when New Delhi extended its ceasefire with the NSCN-IM to other territories outside Nagaland, riots broke out in Imphal, capital of Manipur. Fifteen died and students, belonging mostly to the majority Meitei community, set ablaze the state's assembly building. Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi said that he would ignore the Nagas ceasefire with India's central government and that the ban on the NSCN-IM would continue. Former Home Secretary K Padmanabhaiah, who has been pivotal to the talks between the NSCN-IM and the Indian government, says that ceasefire and territory have since been delimited. (P)

likely in the near future. One regional security analyst explained that such progressive initiatives need democratic thinking and a sincere desire to establish durable peace in the region. "It suits the interests of the government in the two countries — the BJP with in Hindu nationalist agenda and Pakistan's military — to maintain the status quo for domestic companies," observed Naim Mushtaq, an Islamabad-based analyst working for the International Crisis Group. (P)

But free trade with India isn't

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Himal Khabarpatrika recently organized a contest giving young poets a chance to speak out against the violence in the country. Over 300 young Nepalis from 52 districts participated. This week we translate the prize-winning essay in its entirety, and notable excerpts from other entries.

Let's choose life over death

Top Bahadur Khadka, in Himal Khabarpatrika, 1-16 August



Dear friends, all of you who now have been caught in the revolt and the violence that is burning this land of the Buddha! Are you sure you are not heading down a path that can have grave consequences? Are you sure that you are not wasting your most creative years by taking the destructive path just because you've decided to go by what others are saying? Stop and think, perhaps your violence has caused many 'peace-loving' Nepalis to hang their heads in shame. Maybe you have not yet forgotten the arguments you presented when you were asked to write an essay 'the pen is mightier than the sword' while still in school. That was when you upheld the pen as the harbinger of 'life, progress and civilisation' and compared the sword with death and destruction. But many people who once put forth this argument are now taking up arms. You have now legitimised getting rid of people you don't like by declaring them rogues, class enemies or informants. You may not take long to get rid of them once you've decided what you want to call them. The actually cutting and killing may take only a few seconds. Just for a moment, please try and think how long it must have taken the parents to raise the person you are killing. Is it possible to bring back the dead who you got rid of in a few minutes?

You may have your own reasons for taking to a suicidal path: there is oppression in society and you're unhappy over its inability to develop. If those are your reasons, then they point to your frustration. Picking the option of the 'people's war' over other democratic means to tackle and overcome these problems hints at a frustrated mind. The violent path that you have chosen reflects the frustrations in you.

The ideology of violence does not separate us from others with finality. Your brother was killed in the actions of security forces and your son 'Victory' is now out to avenge the death of your father. Your brother-in-law was killed because he was a 'class enemy' and his son, in revenge, has decided to become a soldier. Now tell me, who is fighting whom? Are they not the children of brothers and sisters? One has picked the 'people's army' the other the 'royal army' and both have taken the route of not stopping until the other is killed. Is there a better example of what the result of this violence and counter-violence can be?

One 'Anirasi' was killed Khara of Rukum. His mother, who had lost her only son, unleashed a flood of tears when she was told that the dead had been exhumed from their graves and exhibited. The father is said to have promised Rs 100,000 to anyone bringing him the head of the dead. You call yourselves the children of Sine and Jaljala, fine. You can be proud of that heritage, but do not adhere to that bad side of that upbringing. Until some years ago, hundreds of thousands of young goats were sacrificed in Jaljala. Rana annually, and the blood of the sacrificial animals would form a *kula*. How can we be sure that you are not just following the tradition with blind faith, sacrificing people? All you friends who have taken to violence, there is still time—let us not take the path of death, but turn towards the road to life.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK
We are unhappy that the Indian government banned the Ekata Samaj for its alleged affiliation with Nepal's Maoists at a time when discrimination against Nepalis has increased. The Indian disposition of creating new problems for Nepalis (living in India) makes us angry.
—Girdhari Lal Neupane, President of Mainstream All India Nepal Unity Society in Janta Aardha on 13 August.



Barner—All party Meeting
"Nobody showed up, shall I erase 'all-party' and replace it with 'one-party' meeting?"

"The future is ours..."

Yuharaj Parajuli, Lalitpur
Will blowing up a bridge in Rolpa make things difficult for the prime minister? Will shutting down a school in Godaha after the education of the children of the education minister? Will destroying a hydroelectric plant in Rukum bring darkness to the residence of the home minister?

Paras Shrestha, Dharam
You may be thinking, "My comrades and I are shedding blood for the people and the nation. The armed struggle will bring revolution, development and the pace of progress will be many times what it is today." However, the revolution you are thinking about is impossible in the present national and international context. At a time when even Mao's own country is democratising, isn't it foolish and immature to imagine dismantling the democracy established after 30 years of struggle for the sake of bringing about your republic? How can you justify the revolutionary activities to uproot the system that you have been able to undertake in the first place because of democracy? What is the type of revolution your group is trying to achieve by destroying the infrastructure designed to make the lives of the people easier and that has taken so much time and money to build?

Lawman Ghimire, Kathmandu
Have you ever thought these things: How many have been widowed as a result of your act? How many have lost their children? How many have been crippled, while nothing has happened to the actual combat people? You seem to have a large cache of weapons, but why are they always aimed at the poor? Why have you not aimed your arms at the mafia and the corrupt?

Kabita Kawaal, Sini, Bhojpur
Everyone loses in violence, while sustainable, legal campaigns always win. This is a historical fact. When you seek change unethically, you might even put lives in permanent danger. Let us not engage in violence in the name of change and freedom.

Jaya Sharma, Bhadi Kawa, Parbat
I want to ask our friends who have taken to violence where will it end. Where will the serial violence end? Violence is not a solution, it creates more problems. We are losing the trust we had in you, we are getting demotivated...

Harilal Poudel, Bijaur, Dang
What type of power will we end up with once violence has burnt away all creativity? Who will remain who can call the "people's army" after we have killed everyone? Is it our goal to make a battlefield of our country and then gradually turn it into a desert?

Rajaram Dahal, Jhamsa, Sunsari
It is true that we did not get what we had hoped democracy would bring. But we still have the right to remove the incapable and replace them with capable leaders, but our inability to pick the right people is our own failure. What we need to understand is that if democracy remains, we will be able to

Kamal Kumar Lamichane, Hetauda
I won't accuse you of treachery on the wrong path but I will definitely say this: you are destroying the very road on which you walk.

POETRY AND REVOLUTION: Siddhicharan Shrestha

Photographs of Kathmandu in the 1930s show a mass of brick-and-mortar hovels punctuated by opulent Rana palaces with aspirations to Versailles. Ordinary Nepalis who appear in these photographs look pre-political to us now, resigned to their poverty (or we attribute to them inscrutable fatalistic minds). Yet they were by no means living in simple times. When Juddha Sumshere Jang Bahadur Rana became maharaja in 1932, anti-Rana sentiment was gaining ground in Kathmandu. Shukra Raj Joshi had met Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose in India, and had formed the Nepali Nagrik Adhikar Samiti, a group demanding citizens' rights. Another group, Ajambai Mat, had been founded by Newar intellectuals opposing the Bahun caste's supremacy, and demanding social justice. Teachers at the Mahavi School in Khilna Tole were preparing an independent syllabus aimed at sparking political consciousness in students, and the school was becoming a gathering place of budding revolutionaries. A smattering of free thinkers were organising underground libraries and discussion centres. All this was before political parties began to form in the 1940s. Some of Nepal's leading poets and writers of the 1930s and 1940s were among those directly leading anti-Rana dissent. Kedar Man Yathit was active in the Nepali Nagrik Adhikar Samiti, and Siddhicharan Shrestha was teaching at the Mahavi School. Before them, poets Shambhu Prasad Dhungel,

Lekh Nath Poudyal and Juddha Prasad Mishra had written lyrically on political oppression and the suffering of political prisoners. Yathit and Shrestha were contemporaries of Laxmi Prasad Devkota and Gopal Prasad Rimel, both of whom also strongly protested injustice in their art and life. By then it was the norm for important poets to write not just of their subjective experiences, but of the suffering of ordinary Nepalis. Though in Panchayat years Siddhicharan Shrestha came to be known primarily as a romantic poet, his early work focuses equally on the need for social change and revolution. In the poem below, he mourns the death of a son of Laxmi Prasad Devkota, who, despite gaining wide popularity in his short lifetime, lived in unspeakable poverty. Shrestha urges his friend to transform his private suffering into a revolt, into the seeds of revolution.

To Poet Devkota

Wounded bird, what can I say your bruises are gathering still
The world wants to snatch from you even your soul
This is the way perhaps of the foundation's desire to hear the song that you sing kneading your chest, drawing your blood
Speak poet, sing, parching your vitality: What have you received here?
Have you seen anyone so much as melt in this arid land?
Friend, this land won't be bettered by spreading hands, crying, screaming
What will you gain by gathering affections of sympathy? He who took your son by sending death at a tender age by whose inspired anomaly you suffer such penury take revenge on him, poet, sing, sing a fine song
Hundreds of thousands who have lost their sons will befriend you
Poet, sound a song to raise the corpses of our uncouneted sons
a song to shatter the unconsciousness of each age

Poet, the dinghy of life navigates a vast sea of suffering
Poet, don't spend tears at the passing of a young beloved son
On the pain on the ground, poet, lay down your unbearable distress
So many lives are going to waste daily for want of food and clothes
Add your drop of water to this sea of pain
Navigate your life's dinghy on these waters
Dance rubbing the ashes of burned dreams and putrescent hopes
Poet, live even in suffering to prepare the earth for hun-dreds of thousands
Build a new world of the present anomaly
Live and save others, defeat death and spread robustness here

Help children all over the world to stop dying before their time
Spread your command, go, poet, let cries and tears stop at once
Country arranger, poet, you have sons all over the country
Go, stand up, or others may die, ah, how they live...

The poem echoes Shrestha's earlier call to himself to become a poet inside and outside a warrior. In this, he stands as an example for Nepali poets today, many of who share his acute desire to invite (or force) progress to Nepal.

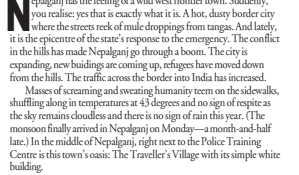
Note: The original poem is written in a strict metre and rhyme scheme, which (fearing laughable results) I have not attempted to mimic in the English translation.

Authentic Thai Restaurant & Bar

Bean Thai Restaurant & Bar
Durbar Marg, Kathmandu, Nepal
For Reservation: 2432371

Candy in Nepalgani

Nepalgani has the feeling of a wild west frontier town. Suddenly, you realise: yes that is exactly what it is. A hot, dusty border city where the streets reek of mud dripping from hips. And, luckily, it is the epicentre of the state's response to the emergency. The conflict in the hills has brought Candy through a boom. The city is expanding, new buildings are coming up, refugees have moved down from the hills. The traffic across the border into India has increased. Masses of screaming and sweating humanity teem on the sidewalks, shuffling along in temperatures at 43 degrees and no sign of respite as the sky remains cloudless and there is no rain in sight. (The monsoon finally arrived in Nepalgunj on Monday—a month-and-half late). In the middle of Nepalgunj, right next to the Police Training Centre is this town's oasis: The Traveller's Village with its simple white building.



Small is still beautiful in this oasis in the middle of Nepalgunj.

The lodge is something Nepalgunj is not: it is clean, cool, quiet, uncomplicated, and a haven of civility. Candy here is not some delicacy, everything thoughtlessly wrenched away by a sweating halwai in Rupedaha. No, it is Candy Shrestha, the proud owner of Traveller's Village. The lodge's only claim to pretentiousness is a three-way stucco staircase that connects the three units, 12 rooms with air conditioners, clean beds, no peeling plaster, working faucets, no moldy carpets and feculent grey blankets lying for space on my bed. The service is sweet and ready. No waiters in pseudo-Nepali turnouts, no waitresses in Newari costumes and no Nepali dal bhat in copper thalis that have turned green. My mother-in-law had a remedy for green utensils: one handful of crushed burnt charcoal from the fireplace, a bit of rubbing, and you can see the reflection of your face in your plate. People forget that ash is also antiseptic. You have to be there to believe that in Nepalgunj you can have chicken that tastes like something Colonel Sanders would dish up, with mashed potatoes, greens in the most delicious lemon butter sauce. Chicken is a Candy.

The service and care make the eating at the Traveller's Village just like at home. Candy's gestures are derived from her 27 years in Nepal. Her waiters are Tharus who she supports with board, and lodging, food and education for their children. That is corporate social responsibility, Schumacher style. Small is beautiful in this pocket of Nepalgunj.

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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITION

♦ **Colorgraph prints** by Ragini Upadhyay-Grela. 17 August-15 September, Siddhartha Art Gallery, 11AM-6PM, except Saturdays. 218048

EVENTS

♦ **Bichal Bartaman/ The Disillusioned Present** A multimedia arts event to raise creative voices in solidarity against the country's deterioration. 17 August, Basantapur Dabali. Noon launch with photo exhibition; 12:45 PM poetry reading, visual artists begin work; 2PM drama; 3PM music; 4PM visual art exhibition; 5PM conclusion. (See p 15)

♦ **Rain dance** DJ Ozzie at the poolside lawn, Hotel de l'Annapurna, 3PM, 20PM-7PM, 24 August. 221711

♦ **Jhaankri Festival** Shaman dances and dinner at the Fort Resort, Nagarkot, 22 August. fortresort.com. 226799

♦ **The Second Bagmati River Festival** Ceremony at Sankhamul at 1200 noon on Friday, 23 August. Be there to welcome the kayak and raft flotilla! friends2thebagmatinepal@yahoo.com

♦ **Kayak Race**. Part of the Bagmati Festival, starts at Sundarjal at 0800 on Friday, 23 August. For inquiries: Nepal River Conservation Trust, phone: 426 329 or 419 295

♦ **Raft down the Bagmati** to save the river. From Tilaganga to Sankhamul one hour. Starts at Tilaganga at 1100 on Friday, 23 August. Rs 150 per person. For tickets and inquiries: Ultimate Descents 419295 or Friends of the Bagmati, Hotel Dwarika's.

BRITISH FILM FESTIVAL 2002

♦ 21 August: *Lucky Break*. 22 August: *High heels and Low Lites*. 23 August: *Last Resort*. 24 August: *Striptease*. 25 August: *There is Only One Jimmy Gimble*. All shows at 6:30 pm at the Gopi Krishna Hall. Tickets are free after 5:30 pm each day before screenings.

MUSIC

♦ **The Jazz Communion** at Fusion with Vidhees singing jazz, blues and more. Fridays, Fusion Bar, Bhatkhat, Hotel 7PM on 479498

♦ **Shangri-La Re-Unites** Prism Friday nights live at the Jazz Bar, starting 8 PM. www.hotelshangri-la.com. 412999

♦ **Live music** by Catch 22, Friday nights at the 40,000 ½ ft Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, Thamel. 414336

DRINK

♦ **Ladies night** at The Rox Bar Wednesdays. Women get a drink on the weekend, and after 8PM Teesta band plays. Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 491234

♦ **Mountain Madness Special** Two-for-one cocktails at Rs 250, and BBO, Kilroy's of Kathmandu, Thamel. 250440

♦ **Happy Hour at Splash Bar & Grill** Buy one, get one free. Live music Wednesdays and Fridays with Baroque. Radisson Hotel 5:30 PM-7:30 PM. 411818

FOOD

♦ **Cool Saturday Brunch** at The Fun Café, Radisson Hotel with buffet of cold soups, salads, starters, mains etc. Noon-2:30 PM. 416180

♦ **Authentic Thai Food** Everyday at Yin Yang Restaurant. 425510

♦ **Thomas Kilroy at the historic 1905, Kantipath** Special August offer has any two courses with a glass of wine, beer or iced tea for Rs 500. 225272

♦ **South Indian Food Festival** at The Café 9-24 August. Authentic flavours such as rasam, idlis, dosas, appams, chettinad curry, seafood. Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 491234

♦ **iced Lemon Sour Plum Sour**, sweet, salty, bitter, to go with the improved Singaporean and Malaysian food. Sing Ma, the Food Court, foodcourt@wlink.com. 300204

♦ **Pasta Mania** Choose from a variety of pastas for Rs 111 plus tax at lunch and dinner, and 20 percent off bottled wines. La Dolce Vita, Thamel.

♦ **Wood fired pizzas** at the new Roadhouse Café. Completely redesigned with separate bar seating and coffee bar. The Roadhouse Café, Thamel.

♦ **Paddy Poles** Irish Pub A wide range of drinks and food. Live music on Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday nights. 416086

♦ **Special Thai cuisine** at Ban Thai Restaurant, Darbar Marg. 243271

GETAWAYS

♦ **Secor Garden Weekend** Local residents buy one night for \$99 plus tax and get the second at 50 percent. For single or double with discounted add-ons. Dwarika's Hotel. 479488

♦ **Nature walks**. Horshoe Horseshoe. Make two-and-a-half hours from Kathmandu. Nature walks, birdwatching, drizzle walks, Nepal's best Finnish sauna. editors@horshoe.wlink.com

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

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OK, call off the foggy weddings and the midnight strip-tease in the paddy fields. It worked. The two-month drought in the west has ended. The reason was the weakening of the westerly flow over Afghanistan which allowed the monsoon to make a break for it. In this satellite picture on Wednesday morning, we see a monsoon squall-line right across northern Pakistan. In Nepal, we are still the midst of two monsoon troughs, and there are fresh clouds headed this way from the bay. Expect heavy showers and moderate night rain this week, with occasional heavy localised cloudbursts.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

City	Mon	Tue
CP	29-19	28-19
Sat	30-20	29-19

YAK YETI YAK

by MIKU

BOOKWORM

Development as Process: Concepts and Methods for Working with Complexity David Maw, John Farrington, Alan Rew, eds. India Research Press, New Delhi, 2001. Rs 472

How can the complexity and unpredictability of planned development be understood? How can project managers deal with the social relationships and institutional contexts in which they operate? Drawing on work in agriculture, irrigation, forestry and fisheries in Asia and the former Soviet Union, the authors examine the changing information needs of development agencies as they move away from simple technology-led approaches.

The Underdevelopment of Development: Essays in Honour of Andre Gudner Frank Sing C Chew, Robert Denmark, eds. Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1996/2001. Rs 1,112

This festschrift pays homage to Gudner Frank's many years of struggle to offer an alternative conception of development. This volume is an invaluable tool to understanding Frank's complex intellectual development. From his study of human capital at the University of Chicago, his revolutionary dependency analysis of Latin America and exploration of worldwide economic crises.

Development Theory: Deconstructions/Reconstructions Jan Nederveen Pieterse. Vizar Publications, New Delhi, 2001. Rs 440

Pieterse discusses Eurocentric, critical globalism, intercultural transaction, deinking and alternatives, human and post-development theory. He discusses reorienting and restructuring the field and connects development with new thought in sociology, critical theory and social science.

Courtesy: Mandala Book Point, Kantipath, 227711, mandala@cscl.com.np

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Daily	2045-2115	BBC नेपाली सेवा
Daily	2245-2300	BBC नेपाली सेवा

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Daily	0800-0830	विजय दुरा
Daily	2000-2030	विजय दुरा

Radio Sagarmatha

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www.radio.sagarmatha.org

MUSIC REVIEW

by RUPA JOSHI

Music in my soul

I was an enthralling evening the show, the stage, the ambience, and Phattaman himself. Phattaman's total devotion to his music was apparent in the way he immersed himself into the depths of each and every song. With a nod, a juggle, and twist of his head and neck he seemed to coax the notes from deep within his throat, every note as powerful as in the original songs he sang over three decades ago. His body sang along with him, his dimpled chin thrusting in and out, shoulders arching along with the crescendo of the chords, fingers dancing over the harmonium, or stretching out with an alap. Song after song from the popular *Sannai ko galai* to *Kauli kauli* to his *nai nai timir* fragrance, to the melodious folk song *Ghantang ma ghintang maadala* he sang that he sang with Anju Seta, the four-day old new mother. From his nostalgic all-time hit *Mama haru garu humna*, *innu maya maru skinau* and *Yaso nani* to *boodo chula jindgi* to *kalya kalya* to the heart-warming, *Roaro ra chanda surya jang nishan haam*, he sang over two dozen of his favourite hits. His songs still the same, the nuances of every note still the same, the potency in his voice still the same.

Phattaman and the 30-person ensemble who sat on a three-tiered brick platform lined all around with oil wick lights seemed as if they were on temple steps in the midst of a festival. The lighting was

non-intrusive, complementing the mood of the songs—shades of crimson when Phattaman belted out *Ram ra chanda surya*. The taste of the young down from Nepal and the designs from Mat'wo was apparent in every detail of the stage, down to the use of traditional brass drinking vessels instead of the ubiquitous mixed water bottles.

This was Phattaman Rajbhandary's first solo appearance, and the singer's down-to-earth simplicity was apparent in the few words he spoke in between songs. A couple of songs into the evening he said, almost apologetically, "Sorry, but it's hot," and removed his black *blagun* cap to reveal a shiny pearl. Autographing the back of a fan's ticket stub after the show, Phattaman wrote, "sargam me pran ho" (Music is my soul.) The only proof you need for that is the simple life of this modest 67-year-old artist who has sung 300 songs in his 50-year career. ♦

The veteran singer Phattaman was in fine form at his first solo performance last week.

Creative activism

Nepali artists, writers, musicians, photographers, thespians, poets, journalists, come together on Saturday for peace and democracy in Nepal.

Participating artists of all disciplines will freely express their own thoughts regarding ways to put these troubled times behind us. Asked why he is taking part, poet Durga Lal said, "This is going to be a soul-renewing exercise. Even if I cannot bring my poem, I would come to derive emotional sustenance from what other poets and writers have to say about what is going on in our society." Sarta Mishra, a tabla player, said that she hoped the event would let her create music to reflect the present and to spread the message of hope. Photographer Usha Tikichu said she wanted to join hands with other artists to express concern through her pictures about the increasing lack of social justice. Artist Asmita Ranjit said that her installation work would be against violence and for peace in Nepal.

The artists and writers say that they don't believe that they can achieve peace and justice by merely making wishes or by engaging in activities in their isolated spheres, but that an essential condition for peace and justice is that members of civil society use non-violent public pressure in their societies.

Bichal Bartaman is their collective attempt to show that much damage has been done by violence. To call for an end to mayhem, and to build solidarity for a peaceful, democratic Nepal.

For further details, contact: Khagendra Sangraula, Rajendra Maharjan and Ashutosh Tiwari of the organising committee.

HIMAL

CASTLEMAN HILLMAN

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Tell a Tale

The British Council Short Story Competition

Topic: Contemporary Nepal

Age Categories

- 15-18 (1500-1800 words)
- 19-24 (1000-1300 words)
- 25-30 (1000-1300 words)

Dates

Closing date of entry: 15 August

Winners announced: 15 October

Language

All entries must be in English

Prizes

Awarded to the top 3 entries in each category

1st Prize: Rs. 15,000

2nd Prize: Rs. 10,000

3rd Prize: Rs. 5,000

Judging Criteria

- Original creative thought
- Imaginative plot, characters and descriptions
- Style, language
- Relevance to the topic

Entry Conditions

- Winners must not have been published or used in another competition before and must have been written in English and translated from another language
- Winners must agree to the publication of their work but cannot opt out of it
- Entries must be typewritten, double-spaced on A4 paper using a standard 12 pt font, left side and margins must be indicated

Short Story Competition

The British Council

PO Box 645 Lalitpur, Kathmandu

Times

The British Council

The British Council



Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Eating crow

Recent breakthroughs in labs in the UK have confirmed what we in Nepal have known now for quite some time: that crows are collectively smarter than human beings. British scientists conducted an experiment in which they placed some food in a miniature hamper inside a test tube, and left a piece of copper wire casually lying around. Guess what the snappy pants crows did: they bent the wire into a hook, fished out the hamper, and had a picnic. "Piece of cake," they are reported to have chorused. They even knew how to talk with their mouths full. Wow.

Although the scientific community at large is abuzz with this discovery, here in Nepal crow specialists were pretty blasé about the whole thing. "Big deal. Nepali crows are much smarter than that," said Prof Kag KC, Head of the Centre for Crow and Raven Studies at Tribhuvan University on condition of complete anonymity.

Our ancestors have known of the intellectual prowess of crows since the dawn of human pre-history, and that is why they nominated the bird as side-de-camp to Yama, the God of Death. The crow was chosen over a short-list of other applicants, which included a female Anopheles mosquito, a tick, and a that bat. Ever since they were given the appointment letter, it is a job crows have taken very seriously indeed.

Unbeknownst to the rest of the world, Nepali crows have climbed up

the evolutionary ladder to become the apex species. They are at the top of the food chain, and not only are they now numerically superior to human beings, at least in our locality, they also have far better IQs. In fact, the time may have arrived for Nepal to have its first crow editor, first crow vice-chancellor, first crow prime minister, and a cabinet made up of ravens, rooks and jacksnaws.

From my own personal observation at our favourite neighbourhood garbage pile (which is about ten metres away at the crow files from where I am sitting now) I know that several of the carrion crows feeding on water buffalo pebbles there deserve Ph.Ds. British crows may use primitive tools to extract hampers from test-tubes, but their cousins at Kishna Gali have discovered fire. Yes, they have learnt to set the trash ablaze so that they can organise regular barbecues of water buffalo T-bone steaks, well done, and invite guest crows from as far away as Babur Mahal for raucous feasts.

Crows, we know, are socialist animals, which means that they are highly organised and have an efficient caste system with an elaborate division of labour. As winged scavengers, they are greedy, gregarious, they love to eat rotten stuff, they are uncouth, devious and love to talk with their mouths full.

A perfect decision symbol for a party without one. ☺



NEPALI SOCIETY

Kiran, the radio guy

I all began three years ago when a fresh sciences graduate from Lubhu, tired of teaching school, decided to make a career move. He walked into Radio Sagarmatha, Nepal's first public service broadcaster, and offered himself as a volunteer. There followed nine months of long unpaid hours, and gruelling in-house training, and to and behold: Kathmandu got one of its most incisive and hard-hitting radio discussion programmes.

Kiran Pokhrel hosts Radio Sagarmatha's best known prime time radio talk programme Aja ka Kura (Today's Talk). He has talked day-in, day-out, seven days a week about everything under the Nepali sun: the dissolution of parliament, life without local governments, mismanagement of

hospitals, vehicle emission standards, the marital rape bill, duped Nepali migrant workers, you name it.

It's now come to the point where you're nobody unless you have been grilled by Kiran on Aja ka Kura. A list of his interviewees is a who's who of Nepal politics: former prime ministers Surya Bahadur Thapa and Lokendra Bahadur Chand, UML boss Madhav Kumar Nepal and dozens of his comrades, hundreds of activists, students, all have been heard. Everyone gets a chance to take pot shots at everyone else, and it doesn't matter if you are a senior minister or a migrant worker: you get equal time.

Kiran is completely and passionately submerged in the world of radio, and he says it doesn't matter that salaries in community radio are not very

high. "It is the satisfaction of doing it right, money can't buy you that. And the gratification is knowing that the issues we broadcast influence policy decisions."

Kiran saw how powerful his medium was when lawyers played a recording of his Q&A on a government decision to allow Indian vehicles into Nepal on self-certification to the judge who then ruled against it. A programme highlighting an Indian minister's statement on placing Indian security at Kathmandu airport after the 1999 hijacking became controversial and was picked up by the opposition MPs who raised a fuss in the house.

Last year, he and a colleague covered the pyramid savings scheme. Duped Nepalis jammed the switchboard at the station with calls, and the NGO involved was forced to refund the money.

At 26, Kiran is not planning too far ahead. He wants to fulfil his late father's wish that he get an MA degree before embarking on a career. Trouble is, Kiran's career has already taken off, and he doesn't have much time to study.

We just had one last question. When are we going to see female Kirans in the male-dominated world of news and current affairs on radio? Answer: Radio Sagarmatha is grooming young women journalists, so it may not be long before we start hearing from radio gals, too.



Kiran (left) with Raghu Pant, Rohit Nepal and Narahari Acharya on a live studio discussion about the November election on Wednesday's Aja ka Kura.

In Nepal's Moment of Joyous Celebration

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To

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Her Majesty Queen Komal Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah
On the auspicious birth of their Majesty's first Grandson
And to
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Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Himani Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah
On the Joyous Birth of His Royal Highness the first Son

His Royal Highness Shri Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah
And
Our humble Congratulations to
Her Majesty Queen Mother Ratna Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah
On the auspicious birth of her Majesty's Great Grandson

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