

NEPALI Times

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EXCLUSIVE

Nepalwatching

A flurry of high-level visits by US and British officials to India and Nepal indicates growing international concern about a Maoist threat to the Nepali state. In New Delhi, western officials have been meeting the Indian establishment to find out if there is a joint role for Britain, the United States and India to address the crisis in Nepal, sources said. The consultations are also to gauge Indian policy, future support and the potential spillover effect of violence in Nepal. Besides senior State Department officials who have visited Nepal and India recently, British foreign ministry official Rosalind Marden is currently in New Delhi. Marden was the coordinator of the first contact group meeting of Nepal's donors in London in June. And a visit by British permanent undersecretary Sir Michael Jay is scheduled early next month to Kathmandu and New Delhi.

Western officials are said to be sharing their concerns with Indian experts on two main points: the recent escalation in the insurgency, and the future of Nepal's democracy after the 4 October royal takeover. Diplomatic sources say they are watching the widening rift between the monarchy and the parliamentary parties with serious alarm, and are worried that a rise of the right will lead the country into a dangerous polarisation and an even more turbulent war.

Journalists sue

Fourteen journalists and two activists filed separate cases at the Kathmandu district court Thursday seeking compensation from the state for their "illegal" detention during the emergency which ended 28 August. They have demanded compensation of up to Rs100,000 each in accordance with a six-year-old law. We want to set a precedent that the state must bear responsibility for violating people's fundamental rights even during the state of emergency," said Shyam Shrestha (right), editor of *Mulyankan* magazine.

BHAGIRATH YOGI

When we hear the endless jingles, see the celebrities on television, and watch them watch us from huge billboards. The message everywhere is "Let's talk about HIV/AIDS". The campaign is aimed at raising awareness among Nepalis about the serious threat of HIV/AIDS which is going to be the main cause of death in the 15-49 age bracket over the next ten years. AIDS in Nepal has not been upgraded to a "concentrated epidemic", which means that any one, not just the vulnerable groups, may be at risk. But the word on the street is that the advertising billboards have made "condom" a household word, but it hasn't made much of a dent in behaviour and attitude. And even if it has, it isn't worth the estimated Rs 30 million that has been spent on the ad campaign.

"We have been hearing similar messages over the last 15 years. But where is the change in the behaviour, especially among the youth?" asks Rajni Kalle, a HIV positive activist who feels social perceptions haven't evolved. Kalle's cynicism is supported by a UNICEF-sponsored survey conducted last year. Of the 1,400 young people surveyed in seven districts, 92 percent had heard about HIV/AIDS, but only 72 percent knew condoms were a preventive measure, and fewer actually used them.

In 1999, Family Health International (FHI) found that only 70 percent of truckers along taral highways used condoms. Nearly 11 percent of them had sexual infections, and 1.5 percent were HIV positive. The figure for injecting drug users in Kathmandu is even more frightening: nearly half of them were HIV positive and 18 percent of the sex workers in the valley were infected.

Critics say the anti-AIDS programme is largely donor driven, and the problem is one of ownership. Donors want government to take the lead, but in practice they are reluctant to relinquish control. Aside from the strong commitment shown by the previous health minister, the political will has been weak.

Isn't enough supervision and monitoring of how the money is spent. "There is virtually no coordination at the managerial level among the NGOs working in the community," he told us.

When approached, FHI refused comment, saying only: "An impact assessment study is ongoing and FHI is in no position to tell anything to the press at the moment."

Michael O'Dwyer, senior health and population adviser at the British aid agency DFID that has poured £1.6 million into the Nepal Initiative, told us: "The Nepali people have the right to know where this money is going, and we accept that implementation must be carried out by Nepalis using Nepali resources."

At UNAIDS, the body that is supposed to coordinate UN programmes in HIV/AIDS, country director Michael Hahn felt the message in the media campaign may be too narrow. "They are focusing on specific behaviour issues, what is missing is the access to services."

Rajni Kalle agrees: "Every drug user knows syringes shouldn't be shared. But the support services aren't there to allow him to play safe." What is worrying many health planners is that the insurgency has increased poverty, unemployment and migration, all of which contribute to the spread of HIV through commercial sex, population mobility and injecting drug use among youth.

The first line of defence against HIV/AIDS is public awareness, and hence the extensive ad campaign. But the big question is: when is information cost-effective, and is awareness enough? ♦

Straight-talking Thai sex educators p11

And now, French Gurkhas!

Chandra Kanta Tiwari is a Nepali officer in the French Foreign Legion. PATRICK LEVAIQUE talked to him about the life of a legionnaire.

How come you landed up in France?

I was born and raised near Pokhara. I had a business degree, but it was hard to find a job. I was organising trekking expeditions when a couple of retired French people invited me to France. When I arrived at their home near Toulon in 1992, I saw the sea for the first time in my life.

And how did you hear about the Foreign Legion?

My host was a former soldier and we used to talk about the military. One day he gave me a magazine called *White Kagi*, the monthly magazine of the Foreign Legion. This is where I first heard about it. I quickly decided I wanted to join this elite force. I went to the main recruiting centre in Aubagne. Twelve days later, I signed my first five-year contract. Unlike the British Gurkhas, you are not sent back to Nepal after retirement, it is a lifelong commitment.

How has the last ten years been?

I was first assigned to the 2nd Foreign Legion Parachute Regiment based in Corsica. Although I am from a landlocked country I joined the amphibious company. I received my commands certification in Martinique. After two and a half years, I became corporal and leader of a team of three legionnaires. Altogether, I jumped 80 times. Once during an exercise-jump, I landed on a main road and the cars on both sides were good enough to stop. The drivers were so surprised they even gave me a hand to hold my parachute!

I did special training in chemical and nuclear warfare. After six years, I was assigned to the

3rd Foreign Legion Infantry Regiment in French Guyana. As Chief Corporal, I received my certification in jungle warfare and became an assistant instructor taking part in missions in the Amazon forest. Two years ago, the Legion sent me back to France. I am currently working at the main recruiting centre for northern France near Paris.

Were you often sent on missions abroad?

Yes, many times. In addition to various post-exercises abroad, I also went to Djibouti, Chad, Central Africa, and ex-Yugoslavia. In 1995, I met some British Gurkhas in Yugoslavia. They were quite surprised that Nepalis could join the French Foreign Legion. Even though we only spent a few hours together, we got along quite well.

And other Nepalis?

There are other legionnaires from Nepal in different companies and even though we aren't from the same area or ethnic group, we get along very well. We often meet on weekends to go to the beach. To join, you have to be between 20 to 25 years and you have to be in France. Unlike the British Gurkhas, the Foreign Legion is not allowed to recruit abroad. Selection is hard, you have to be mentally and physically agile. As Nepalis, we are strong and adapted to difficult mountain terrain. I go home every year, and like to trek in new places.

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WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?

We are a bit worried by the uneasy anticipation which is dominating the national-level leaders of the political parties who are waiting for the king's interim cabinet to fail. "We couldn't wait, and we won't let you either" seems to be the refrain. Careful there, it may turn out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

That is what puzzled many of us watching the Basantapur meeting from the sidelines: the inability of those who are ostensibly on the side of parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy to cooperate against a militant force bent on a violent overthrow of both. Not only are they not helping each other, they seem determined to drag each other down.

So when Girija Prasad Koirala says it's time to "breathe fire" and Madhav Kumar Nepal says "we'll unleash a typhoon of protest," it is because they have to talk through now so that they can join an all-party government? Or is the sabre-rattling a protection against more detentions by the CIA?

Whatever the reason, an all-party national government is what we need to take us out of this crisis. Who knows what kind of give-and-take is going on behind the scenes to make that happen. But do we all have to hang around widdling our thumbs until it does? Why this sense of suspended animation?

We understand that it takes time for non-political experts to rush suddenly into the decrepit and sad corridors of the ministries to get a handle on things. But it's been 45 days now since the king nominated the first nine members of the new cabinet. What are they waiting for? Let's see some immediate and tangible service delivery. Even if it's just a token gesture to give the people hope: like sending medical teams to abandoned district hospitals, rehabilitating children and orphans



displaced by war, some gesture of official concern when VDC buildings are destroyed and schools bombed. Show us a sign that you are there. The only sign thus far is the sight of officialdom as pro forma guests of honour lighting wicks, launching CDs and giving elaborate speeches that are pandemics of Panchayat-era news clips. In fact, there should be an immediate moratorium on all such wick lighting, garlanding, speechifying, and talking heads. We've seen and heard it all.

OILING THE MACHINE

There are many places to start. The petrol and kerosene price hike was one opportunity to do things right, and we pretty much bungled it. The minister was right when he said he doesn't do populist stuff, it was not only not populist it was downright dead. Anyone who has seen the hundreds of Indians on bicycles along the Mahendra Highway at Kakarhitta every morning filling up jerry cans of subsidised Nepali kerosene to sell in India knows what the real problem is. Some 1.6 million litres of kerosene goes into India every month from eastern Nepal alone because you can make a Rs 6 profit on each litre if you can take it across the border. The real problem here is the price gap within Nepal with India (which leads to smuggling) and the price gap within Nepal between kerosene and petrol/diesel (which leads to adulteration).

The Nepal Oil Corporation is bankrupt not so much because of subsidies as mis-management and corruption. It loses Rs 2.8 billion on kerosene subsidies, Rs 1.5 billion on diesel subsidies, but earns Rs 715 million from petrol sales every month. The fuel price hike will not make a dent on the NOC's finances. By just increasing petrol prices, we have not stopped kerosene smuggling, and made adulteration worse.

It's long overdue: end the NOC's corrupt monopoly on imported fuel and resume incentives for electrical transport.



by CK LAL

Remote control...

Why the clamour for a constituent assembly, what's the hurry?

Kathmandu high society too considers it beneath its dignity to discuss a constituent assembly. It is interesting to pay too much attention to these uncouth politicians. The military brass, officialdom and big business (MOB) of the entrenched elite in falling states is interpreting the proposal of a constituent assembly in its own way. For the Maoists, it is the first step towards their utopia of dictatorship of the proletariat. Having failed to keep the king within the accepted norms of constitutional monarchy, intellectuals close to the Nepal Congress want a constituent assembly to do what three parliaments over last 12 years couldn't accomplish. But why are the revisionists of the right also yearning for a constituent assembly? Do they seriously contemplate restoring unrestrained power once again in the hands of the king through legitimate constitutional means? Naïveté apparently has no limits. The call for the formation of a constituent assembly seems to be based on five assumptions:

- The king is willing to relinquish power
- Maoists are ready to accept the verdict of the electorate
- Political parties are capable of canvassing freely all over the country
- Leadership of the Maoists is in a position of disarming all its cadres
- The government has the power to force a new constitution, but the real message is forget the old constitution.

The best that can be said about these presumptions is that they are, well, presumptuous. The king hasn't so far shown any inclination of sharing power, let alone relinquishing it. Had the Maoists had any faith in the decision of the electorate, they would perhaps

already be one of the largest political parties in the dissolved parliament. Mainstream parties have been almost de-legitimised by the king on the one hand, and decapitated by the Maoists on the other. They are in no position to canvass in the countryside.

The less said about the government's ability to enforce rule of law, the better. Geo-strategic forces of the region have repeatedly made it clear that they remain committed to constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy. After such public pronouncements, they are unlikely to accept either the dictatorship of the proletariat or the palace.

In addition, there are operational details that need to be deliberated upon. Do we need a constituent assembly to decide on the fate of monarchy, or to formulate the structure of a federal Nepal state? How will it be formed: direct elections, proportional representation, ideological nomination, or a mixed composition? Who will oversee its formation: Indo-Chinese joint forces, a UN Peace Force or an army of human rights activists? There is no ready international model that can be adapted, let alone directly adopted. Why then the clamour, what's the hurry?

There can be only one explanation: someone wants us not to think too much about the Maoist insurgency, someone wants us to forget what happened on 4 October, and ignore the symptoms of a failing state. The red herring is the promise of a new constitution, but the real message is forget the old constitution.

And then the all-important question: will a constituent assembly succeed in containing the unbridled ambitions of MOB oligarchy of Nepal? If yes, then let's open the book. If not, let's stop fiddling and re-engage ourselves with the real elephant in the room—the violent Maoist insurgency. ♦

COMMENT

...damage control

I have taken 12 years for the democratic aspirations of the Nepali people to shatter. The blame for this goes to the gross misuse by the leaders and parties in power. Rampant corruption at all levels of government became an open and expected process, some leaders didn't even try to hide their unsavoury behaviour anymore.

Factionalism, horse-trading, personal and political scandals became the order of the day. Then came the violence—Nepal's tranquility was shattered by unprecedented levels of murder and mayhem. Nepalis are killing each other like animals growling at each other, we are destroying what little infrastructure we have, all this for power in the garb of a political ideology. We seem to have hit an irreversible self-destruct button.

If we don't look for solutions, a Khmer Rouge-type future is not inconceivable. Things couldn't drag on like this. On 4 October, King Gyanendra sprang a surprise on the nation, asking the government citing incompetence, taking upon himself the executive powers, pledging to uphold multiparty democracy and hold fresh parliamentary polls within the next possible time. The people, fed up with years of misrule, were generally supportive of the king's move. But the political parties held a series of meetings, requested a joint meeting with the king, which didn't happen, and balked at joining the king's team.

It has taken some weeks for these shell-shocked parties to protest the move. Political leaders have said they see a "grand design" to reverse multiparty democracy and have announced the rallies and mass meetings in the coming month. The Maoists have detected an ideal opportunity to drive a wedge between the king and political parties. They have stepped up their offenses, bombings, looting, arson and destruction nationwide. They now threaten to take their struggle to the bitter end if their demands for a roundtable meeting including the king (a constitutional assembly and a) an interim all-party government are not met.

The state has tried to match their ferocity with military operations. But the general feeling is that it has not been able to put the Maoists on the defensive. So, where do the three forces (palace, parties and Maoists) go from here?

They have to start by agreeing to pull the country out of its deepest crisis ever, and Nepal's long-suffering citizens from this unnecessary mayhem.

Firstly, the Maoist must abandon violence as a means of attaining state power. This is outdated and unacceptable. There is enough political space for anyone with aspirations of power to win it through the ballot. The bullet is not

Political parties and the palace must cooperate if they are to compel the Maoists to give up their violent path.

acceptable, nor is it a sustainable method of retaining power. Elsewhere have tried it and failed: it is not possible to browbeat a nation to follow your notion of justice and system by force. The politics of terror and destruction never yields state power, it can only be attained and kept by winning the hearts and minds of people.

However maligned it may be, parliamentary democracy is still the most viable form of government in the present context. Any infringement on the rights and freedoms of the people will not be accepted by the Nepalis. Political parties and their national leaders may be discredited, and it is true that they must take a major share of the blame for the present state of affairs, but this does not mean the people have lost faith in the system.

The Nepali people have sworn to political freedom, and they cannot be put down anymore.

The monarchy must remain constitutional. The king's deviation is fraught with dangers. Nepal's diversity requires the king as a symbol of national unity, a symbol of hope and salvation. For this,

he needs to keep himself above petty politics, leaving the peoples representatives to sort out the problems and develop the nation as best as each can, they are not out. People power should never be underestimated. For their part, the national leaders of the political parties owe an apology to the people for their past misdeeds. Their misconduct, greed, malgovernance and factionalism has fed parades in modern statecraft. There is really no way out but for the leaders of political parties to regain the peoples' confidence; they have squandered over the past dozen years.

Together, political parties and the palace must cooperate if they are to compel the Maoists to give up their violent path. The international community, and especially our neighbours, must extend financial and material help to bolster the chances of a political resolution. A secure and peaceful Nepal is in their interest too. ♦

(Dhawal Shumshere JB Rana was the UML mayor of Nepalgunj.)

LETTERS

BLINDKINS

I am a pacifist whose heart lies with the desperately poor and trapped Nepalis who are the real victims of the "People's War." I have eaten their maize *dhoro*, their stinging nettle *riun*, and sung their songs. I know their mounting frustration with government—the humiliation they suffer as ethnic minorities, as women, as *pami* na *chane* caste, or even as poor and poorly educated higher caste farmers. Nevertheless, I was appalled by the counter-productive reasoning and misplaced sympathies of the email campaign against outside military assistance to a democratic government ("Democrats on warpath," #119).

The Maoists are destroying this country through murder, ethnic exoriation, forcible recruitment of children, destruction of infrastructure, blockage of food aid, undermining community institutions and local governments, stopping all development efforts, all investing funds and tourism, and creating

levels of distrust and fear Nepalis have not known for centuries.

Yes, there is over-reaction and abuse by the police and police who live in daily fear and police who live in daily fear have happened if the Maoist leaders had not instigated and led alienated and confused youth into a path of national self-destruction. The conditions in Nepal are appalling—but they are in no way, in no path of empathic reasoning justify the wanton use of violence in a country that does have democratic means for addressing wrongs, even if imperfect. And how will it stop? How can there ever be peace? And when will that happen? When there is a credible government capacity to counter the country's problems from an international perspective ("Last stand," #118). He has written from the perspective of a Nepali mind noted in our soil. Presently most Nepali people believe solving the Maoist problem will end all our suffering. Of course, I agree this would help, but if we look further, our future beyond is even darker. Our budget and any development projects can hardly be made without international aid.

Jawan Singh, by email
 • At first I would like to thank Daniel for a good reflection of our country's problems from an international perspective ("Last stand," #118). He has written from the perspective of a Nepali mind noted in our soil. Presently most Nepali people believe solving the Maoist problem will end all our suffering. Of course, I agree this would help, but if we look further, our future beyond is even darker. Our budget and any development projects can hardly be made without international aid.

Kabindra Shukya, Kathmandu

• Thanks a lot for a wonderful editorial ("Unity," #117). It emphasised that we throw our conspiracy theory out of the window and start to work collectively to repair the damages done over the last few years. I suggest the ideal place to start doing so would be holding local

people of Nepal work to create a climate of hope. When the leaders see that their real future lies in working together to create a peaceful and prosperous Nepal for all Nepalis, where diversity is valued. In the meantime, instead of focusing on America's counter-productive Iraq policy, the intellectuals abroad sponsor petitions that will only result in prolonging the war and agony of the Nepal people. Get real. Promote real peace, and stop the murder of Nepalis by the most irresponsible leaders to have been born in this tragic country.

Jawan Singh, by email
 • At first I would like to thank Daniel for a good reflection of our country's problems from an international perspective ("Last stand," #118). He has written from the perspective of a Nepali mind noted in our soil. Presently most Nepali people believe solving the Maoist problem will end all our suffering. Of course, I agree this would help, but if we look further, our future beyond is even darker. Our budget and any development projects can hardly be made without international aid.

Kabindra Shukya, Kathmandu
 • Thanks a lot for a wonderful editorial ("Unity," #117). It emphasised that we throw our conspiracy theory out of the window and start to work collectively to repair the damages done over the last few years. I suggest the ideal place to start doing so would be holding local

elections and strengthening the local bodies, which will also be helpful in understanding the Maoists' attempt to break havoc.

As we have seen by now, the men in green can do only so much. Having been in the US for a while now, one thing that's been driven home for me is decentralisation is the true strength of a democracy. Dirty political games are played here as well. But what makes this a prosperous nation is decentralisation of executive power to local governments, which allows them to function efficiently even when the political games continue at the top. It's easy to be fatalistic, talk of grand designs, point fingers at each other and that's something, which comes very easily with our culture. But that won't get us anywhere though. National building requires effort, commitment and accountability on the part of everyone—leaders, bureaucrats, and citizens. There are no short cuts to development; the only route is to persevere with democracy, to devote power to local bodies and to give people a chance to control their own lives.

Abhishek Shrestha, Grinell, Iowa
 • The "People's War" has overshadowed our lives and makes us doubt the rationale for "righteous wars". Revolutionary wars are a war of principles: the oppressed fighting against the oppressor, the downtrodden overthrowing an unjust regime, the deprived and the voiceless revolting against the injustice. However, the "people's war" in

Nepal has been anything but a war of principles. Where is the justice when so many innocent people have lost their lives by the hundreds and so many families displaced from their homes in the countryside by the thousands for no fault of their own? Where is the justice when innocent bystanders are killed daily by Maoist bombs in marketplace?

Where is the justice when so many youngsters have been promised dreams and made to lay down their lives? This is not liberation. It is a power grab riding a wave of social and economic discontentment.

Our leaders have been blind to the needs of the country. We got a political culture of greed: rule by the greedy, of the greedy, for the greedy. But of all the evils that the Nepal people have been made to suffer, the worst is this: the violence that has strangled the very fabric of our nationhood. The remedy lies in uprooting the very causes of social injustice still pervading our society and surmounting the very challenges posed by the Maoist violence. This can only be done by a two-pronged strategy: establishing a more equitable socio-economic order that gives precedence to a rule of law and justice wherein everyone is dealt with equally irrespective of caste, creed, gender, race, religion, status or wealth, and simultaneously eliminating the very source of the Maoist terror campaign.

The government needs a leadership with a vision and intention pure in conscience, the

people need an effective government with good honest leaders dedicated to the causes of the people rather than their purses. The security forces need the co-operation of all institutions of the state. Personal and party interests will leave the country divided and confused.

Chur Yetam, by email.

SURENDRA LAWOTI
 Media is such an important tool that it can raise a person's faith or shatter it. Why then, do you publish vicious letters by such people as Sudip Pokhrel of Malgona (Letters, #120) about Surendra Lawoti's photographs ("Life in a different light," #117)? Sudip Pokhrel, I'm sure you can't help it that you are an ignorant and envious "mar ko chhyago". The only feeling you know is "How dare anyone do better than me?" Face it, it's a common Nepali affliction. You should be proud that Surendra Lawoti is trying his best to capture life under two different cultures. It is not an easy task. Instead of abusing him, you should encourage him, or suggest ways to improve his work. Your letter has disheartened Nepalis in the Chicago area. Better ask for forgiveness than permission.

Pravesh Saria, Chicago, USA
 CORRECTION
 The main pictures of Petan in "The King of cement" and "The Valley's ancient heart still beats" in #120, were by Stanislas Kimek.



Children in the frontline

Even one year later, Ghorahi's children are still traumatised.



A government vehicle and office building destroyed during last year's attack.

RAM HARI RIJAL, in GHORAH were awakened by the terrible sound of gunfire and explosions. We couldn't sleep all night," recalls 12-year-old Srijana Nepali who lives with her parents on the outskirts of Ghorahi. It was exactly one year ago on 23 November at 10.30 a night when the Maoists broke the truce, launched a surprise attack on the army base north of the town, killing 14 soldiers and 23 police and looting the army area. In the year since, more than 5,000 people have been killed all over Nepal.

Ghorahi's children still remember that fateful night when the war came to their doorstep. Recalls Srijana, "I was huddled and hid inside our rooms, our hearts beating like drums. In the morning we

looked outside and there were dead bodies everywhere, and I will never forget the sight of the bright red pools of blood."

A bomb hit behind by the Maoists went off, injuring Srijana in the abdomen. "I still get nightmares about that terrible night," she says. "Every time I hear a loud bang, I get a panic attack and I have to lie down." Srijana's physical wounds have healed, but the psychological scars from the fear and anxiety remain. A bright student, she has not been able to do well in her studies.

Down the street, six-year-old Anagya Rijal still remembers last year's fight fighting on his street. At first, I thought they were setting off fireworks," he says. These days, being street-smart in Ghorahi for children like Anagya is

to die "he says. This week, the army has intensified patrols in anticipation of a Maoist attack to mark the anniversary. There are roadblocks and checkpoints all over the place, people have to even empty their pockets. The increased security has brought back memories of that night, and by late afternoon the streets wear a deserted look.

There is a group of young boys from Rukum at the bus park. "We were repeatedly warned to join the militia squad," one of them whines. "We thought we should get out. Moreover, there's isn't any food left in our village." His group is trying to go to India to find work and to escape the fighting.

A civil servant from Libang has also come down to Ghorahi. He says the only people left in his district are toddlers and older people. "The CDO office is full of young people desperately trying to get papers so they can leave," he says. A policeman who was recently transferred from Rukum agrees. "While we were on patrol, we found almost every house was locked up. Whole villages are empty."

In Dang itself, the Maoists have intensified their house-to-house extortion drive, blowing up bridges and roads, plundering the property of those who have left. Dang is the strategic corridor for both the Maoists and the security forces, so key bridges linking the district with the Mahendra Highway and Puthan have been damaged in recent attacks, and army convoys ambushed.

All but one of the VDC buildings in Dang have been blown up and all documents destroyed. Local officials have gathered what files are left and shifted their offices to Chorahi, Tulsipur and Lamahi. A 30-year-old farmer from eastern Dang has walked three hours to Chorahi just to get his son's birth registered, something he would have done in his own village. He says the fields in his village have been harvested, but because the farmers are away, the grain is rotting or is being looted.

"We are trying our best to maintain peace and order in the district," says the CDO of Dang, Mathur Prasad Yadav. "And since the mobilisation of the security

forces, the situation has come under control." But most people know that things are far from normal.

The Maoists for their part appear to have given up any semblance of respecting public opinion. Said the teacher from Rukum: "They seem to have decided that they now have to make a final push." Most here doubt that the Maoist leaders mean it when they say they want a negotiated solution. But others see the increased brutality

extortion and the spread of human misery as indications that things must get much worse before they get better here in the western hills of Nepal. ♦

'Children suffer the most'

Excerpts from a BBC Nepali Service interview with General Secretary of the Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC), Subodh Raj Pyakurel.

"Women and children suffer the most when violent activities happen in any country and are the one who suffer the most. Studies show that over 50,000 children have been directly affected due to the on-going insurgency. So far, 100 children have been killed during the conflict out of which state has killed 67 children and the rebels have killed 42. Recently, the Maoists killed a 14-year-old girl at Rappur, Bardia for allegedly giving directions to some army personnel."

The children narrated their experiences at a program recently organised by INSEC. They need answers to questions like what any side can gain by killing people who have nothing to do with the so-called People's War. They need nobody can protect them.

As a human rights organisation, we have repeatedly appealed to both the government and the Maoist rebels [to stop the violence]. We have rehabilitated some children. These children share their stories with the public so people can stand against atrocities.



by DANIEL LAK

HERE AND THERE

A developing crisis

There's at least one group of people in Nepal that haven't been heard from on the country's current agony. And for one would like them to speak up. These are the legions of development and aid people who've been assisting this country for the better part of fifty years, from America, Britain, Europe, Australia, Canada and Asia.

They came—most of them I'm sure—with the best of intentions. They supply huge amounts of money and expertise and influence on the country's spending and political priorities. Yet they remain faces in the crowd, not held to account by the press or public or even their own parliament, let alone Nepalis. And they have been here all along as things spiral downwards, watching and perhaps trying to improve things "who knows?" They rarely tell us.

Few other countries in the world are such proving grounds for the "development industry" as Nepal. Perhaps Bangladesh and one or two in Africa, but that's about it. Nepal has provided the perfect development destination almost since it began opening up to the outside world in 1951. Cold war aid was among the first tranches of money to start arriving; western countries—particularly the US—were worried about China's communists and graced a hedge of friendly countries around the dragon of East Asia. It was perhaps the stupor of all reasons to pour money into a place, but there were troubled times there.

The world had just emerged from a convulsive World War whose great powers were racing to develop means of exterminating each other. The "Free World" cultivated newly open Nepal and began the process of freeing funds of cash from on high—a process that continues today, the difference being that the money stays largely in Kathmandu these days. Then there were the heady sixties and early seventies when "Changing the World" was on the agenda. Largely orthodox conservative governments in western capitals in the West often weren't aware of just how radical their foreign assistance brigades were. Sandalled, dope-smoking, protesting hippies at home made dedicated aid workers in foreign lands, or at least



shared political views and dissatisfaction with the majority view in their native lands. No real problem there, you had to be well outside the mainstream to abandon the easily realised material dreams of home to share burdens overseas.

The most far-reaching development change of the 1980s was the emergence of Japan as the world's—or at least Asia's—largest aid donor. In those days, Tokyo's bureaucrats and business types presided over an economy that seemed destined to dominate the world. My Japanese friends tell me—those—forgive me for observing that their country's per capita now heavily discredited political culture allowed all sorts of corrupt and damaging development practices to flourish, even as countless corals of yen flowed from promiscuously. It is, of course, all dying up now as the chickens of corruption and cronyism come home to roost in today's Japan.

For decades, donors have exercised huge, unaccountable influence over this country's polity and economics.

In the nineties, development became an industry as it still is today. The Economist magazine's slogan of the business elites of the West, is where Britain's Department for International Development advertises for experts. So too, the United States Agency for International Development, SNV of Holland, Germany's GTZ, Helvetas and all the rest, professionalism was in, the old style radicalism and commitment was out. DFID and others wanted "Poverty Specialists," "Economists" and communications experts, especially the latter.

And through it all, where was poor Nepal? Riding the crest of the latest wave of course, surfing through gender workshops, good governance seminars, putting public health first, stressing basic education, the rights of child, developing capacity, institution building, encouraging local NGOs and today—signing up for conflict resolution workshops—the latest development gray train that enriches consultants and creates tax-free opportunities in foreign lands.

But has any of it made a damn bit of difference over the years? You can argue yes, you can argue no. But what you can't do is blame the current state of Nepal entirely on Nepalis. For decades, donor countries and aid agencies have exercised huge, unaccountable influence over this country's polity and economics. It's time for a little mea culpa from the aid community. ♦

Why the children?



The scars on Rabina and Rabin (above) represent the face of our wounded nation

NARESH NEWAR IN BARA

Bhakta Bahadur Regmi can't bear to look at his two children and their grievous burn injuries sustained during a firebomb attack on their bus by suspected Maoists on 4 October on Lakhnathi Bridge, 70 kms from Simara.

"At least they are alive," is all Bhakta Bahadur can say. But he is heartbroken when he remembers how his wife, Anju, died trying to save their children as the bus caught fire. They were the last ones among the 55 passengers to escape after the Maoists threw petrol bombs at the speeding bus. The two others who died in the attack that preceded the three-day Maoist bandh were the bus conductor and an employee of Music Nepal.

We lost four-year-old Rabina who hurt her, "Maabadi," she says simply. Rabin looks at her burnt fingers and touches her stomach which is covered in burn tissue. Her six-year-old brother Rabin has burns all over his face, a gash on his head and a deep cut on his leg. The two haven't yet been told that their mother is dead.

Anju Regmi was seven months pregnant. She was rushed to Malangwa hospital, where her baby was still born, she died three days later of trauma and burns.

Bipin Shah was on the same bus travelling with his family. He says the driver panicked and started speeding when he saw a group of men by the side of the road with beer bottles filled with petrol. But the attackers threw the bottles through the window shield and the bus caught fire from the front. Because of the speed of the bus, the interior quickly caught fire, the driver jumped out, and the bus fell into a ditch and overturned.

Bipin Shah remembers clambering out of a broken window. His hands and face are severely burnt, and his brother and wife are also badly burnt in the hands and face. Bhakta Bahadur Regmi

home for Tihar and was carrying Rs80,000 in savings, all of which he lost. Three other Sarlahi residents were returning home after three years working in Saudi Arabia, and they lost up to Rs 300,000 each in hard-earned savings which they were taking home to their families.

It has been over a month now. But for the residents of Simara who visit the Regmis, the scars on the children are a picture of our wounded nation. Even strangers look moist-eyed at Rabin and Rabin and they ask: "Why the children?"

It was International Children's Day last week when Bhakta Bahadur brought his children out of hospital in Birganj. The Nepali people have been numbered by news of violence over the past years, but the sight of the burn injuries on the children shocked and enraged onlookers outside the hospital. "How can Nepalis do this to fellow Nepalis?" they asked.

Near Lakhnathi Bridge from where the suspected Maoists fled, Bhakta Bahadur says, local villagers know the attackers, but are terrified into keeping quiet of their whereabouts.

"The scabs are still thick on their faces. I really don't know what to do," says Bhakta Bahadur who is now worried about further medical care. He is a forest guard with the District Forest Office

here and he gets a little help from his friends, but it is not enough. He is far away from his home in Hetauda. "My treatment costs a lot of money and nobody I know can afford to help," he told us. The children need to go to a hospital in Kathmandu for specialised medical attention. He has given up expecting anything from the government.

And Bhakta Bahadur has to take care of himself as well. Having lost his wife is a deep personal tragedy, but now he has the future of his children to worry about. He can't even afford to give to them. ♦

DOMESTIC BRIEFS

Jesse at JazzMandu-2

Nepali jazz enthusiasts can look forward to enjoying a special class act at JazzMandu—Edition Two (28 February to 15 March, 2003) with Dutch guitarist Jesse van Ruler and his Trio. Jesse will play with his current working band, that features two other upcoming stars from the European jazz front: Frans van der Hooven on double bass and Martin Vink on drums.

Thirty-year-old Jesse van Ruler has won the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Prize for jazz guitar in Washington and played legends like Christian McBride, George Dulas, former Miles Davis protégé Mike Stern, Philip Catherine, Toots Thielemans, and the Roy Hargrove Quintet. His prolific career includes six CDs released under his own name. Nepal's own Cadenza summed it up after listening to Van Ruler's music: "Jesse is cool. End of discussion."

(for more information: www.kathmandujazzfestival.com)

Threatened

Climate change is not only melting Himalayan glaciers, but it is also threatening its bird life, according to a new study. Some 15,000 glaciers are retreating at between 15 and 30 metres per year, and the snowline has retreated up the mountains.

The Himalaya has the greatest diversity of river birds in the world, and this puts their future at risk. Among the endangered species is the Ibisbill, a wading bird that breeds in the glacial valleys of Langtang in central Nepal. It is particularly threatened because it depends on a unique and fragile habitat. The Ibisbill nests on shingle banks in slow-flowing rivers. Its ecosystem will move upwards as the climate changes but the river valleys will not. The Ibisbill, like other birds, may not be able to adapt. (Climate Action Network)

Ghandrung ACAP destroyed

The popular visitor centre and adjoining office of the Annapurna Area Conservation Project (ACAP) in the scenic town of Ghandrung was destroyed by armed Maoists earlier this month. A dozen Maoists raided the centre, and set fire to the building, destroying it completely. Eyewitnesses said the fire spread rapidly after the Maoists set gas cylinders ablaze which exploded. The centre at Ghandrung was one of eight in the Annapurna area. ACAP is seen as a model eco-tourism project that tries to use tourism revenue directly for rural development.

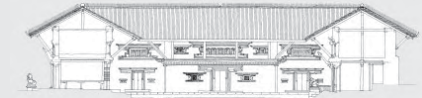
Justice for all

Now that ex-Gurkha POWs have won the court battle for compensation, it should be good news for former Lanco Corporal Han Thapa. He has used the British Ministry of Defence for racism by paying him a salary and pension much lower than that of a British soldier. A tribunal began hearing the case on Monday. Thapa moved to Wales after his retirement and receives a pension of only £58 a month. A British soldier of a similar record would receive £500. A decision is not expected for another three years, but if the case is successful it may open the floodgates for thousands of other cases that could cost the British government billions of pounds, experts say.

The British government says the benefits are governed by a bipartite treaty between Nepal, India and Britain and are adequate for Gurkhas who return to Nepal. Thapa's case is being backed by the Commissioner for Racial Equality.

Itumbaha restoration

The Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust is working to restore the historic 11th-century Itumbaha, one of the oldest monasteries of Kathmandu. The earthquake of 1934 and urban incursions have taken their toll, and the historic courtyard is in a state of despair. The World Monument Watch has put Itumbaha on its list of 100 most-endangered sites in the world.



Now, the trust with the Kathmandu Metropolitan City and the German Embassy are getting together to restore Itumbaha. The project will begin in March 2003 and will last two years. "Most restoration work in Kathmandu Valley so far has been focussed on World Heritage sites, other sites have been largely neglected, but this is beginning to change," says Kathmandu Valley historian Nels Guttschow.

art shows of three artists

December

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HELP RABINA AND RABIN

If you would like to contribute to the medical treatment and rehabilitation care of Rabina and Rabin Regmi, please send cheque to: Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC) GPO Box 2728 Kathmandu, Nepal. If you want to make a direct bank transfer, please use INSEC's account at Nepal A Bank Ltd savings account number: 081010016901 with a mandate to insec@npt.com.np. The names of donors will be published end of December when the collection is handed over to the children's father, Bhakta Bahadur Regmi.

SOMEWHERE IN NEPAL

Crisis leadership

The post-4 October atmosphere has allowed us to take a fresh look at our mainstream leaders and ponder our politics. Let's face it. We misjudged Girija Prasad Koirala's proposal for a "broader democratic alliance".

When the Nepal Congress patriarch first made the plea last year, the most charitable critics dismissed it as going against the principle of majority rule. Those of us who were positive Koirala was only trying to return to Sakurwar in time for the Kathmandu SAARC summit were misled by his record. When Koirala said his party's majority in parliament amounted to nothing, who could have imagined the entire House of Representatives—barring the speaker and his deputy—would be wallowing in irrelevance barely halfway through their tenure? The consistent flip-flops of a man who built a 35-year political career on an image of steady determination had to have some explanation. I had Kangreshi and the rest of the country—headed Koirala's one-man-two-posts counsel, we'd be somewhere close to another boisterous winter session of parliament now.

Long time Koirala associates say he excels in adversity. With leading figures of the breakaway Nepal Congress (Democratic) either in jail or in disgrace, Koirala should have little problem wooing back the rank and file to rebuild the party. Once he's reasonably sure democracy is back on track, Koirala

Who could have imagined the entire House of Representatives would be wallowing in irrelevance?

should honestly retire from politics or declare himself party chief for life. Both would be an infringement of democracy, but nothing in between can work anymore.

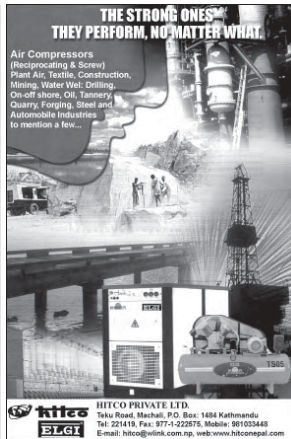
Maligned for having offered only critical support to a constitution that two of its leading luminaries helped draft, the UML has used this crisis to its advantage. Madhav Kumar Nepal has shown his party is fully committed to the parts of the basic law it supported from the start. After the Silguri convulse, the Maoists dismissed Nepal as the torchbearer of the Rayamajhi Reds. The characterisation was among the last two years. Nepal asserted that a violation of the 1990 covenant by one signatory would free the other two from their obligations. The comrade hopped off to conferences in Colombia and Bangkok to register the country's presence in the international democratic community. Upgrading KP Sharma Oli for breaching party discipline by siding the palace's olive branch, Nepal has set new conditions for joining the government. (He should have been less harsh on the UML, the only member of the UML triumvirate who hasn't served as

deputy prime minister.) The RPP has a real problem. It can't afford to lose support or oppose Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand ahead of a stormy party convention. The four-way leadership contest is complicated by party president Surya Bahadur Thapa's longing to ram through a charter amendment and serve a third consecutive term. Some ex-panshes see the current crisis as a rare opportunity to prove their liberal democratic credentials. Others are lured by the monopoly on power they once enjoyed. The rest don't want another split in the most fragile party. If you're sure you're for the RPP or are part of the government, don't expect an answer until after the party convention. The status of Deputy Prime Minister Badri Prasad Mandal of Nepal Sahasana Puri, too, should be clear by then.

You can get a fair idea of the irrelevance of the smaller parties from how timid Lila Mani Pokharel's anti-rapes speeches sound amid Koirala's and Nepal's tirades.

The greatest metaphor perhaps has been Sher Bahadur Deuba's. By relying almost exclusively on Buthies and Bhatin, he ended up alienating almost everyone inside the country. From the silence that marked his ouster, you get a feeling that not many people in Washing-

by PUSKAR BHUSAL



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German Technical Cooperation Health Sector Support Programme

Within the framework of the Health Sector Support Programme (HSSP), GTZ provides technical assistance to the MoH / Department of Health Services in four areas: Primary Health Care, Reproductive Health, Physical Assets Management and Community Based Drug Management. For HSSP's Office in Silgadi, Doti and Kathmandu, qualified applicants are invited for the following immediate openings:

(1) Public Health Advisor to the DHO, Doti

Major responsibilities of the post:

- Support the DHO in formulating an integrated and comprehensive district health plan, including M+E system
- Assist and support the DHO in establishing and maintaining a health information system (District Health Profile), including supervision at various levels of the district
- Support the district health team in the implementation of public health programmes, i.e. DOTS, leprosy, immunisation, MCH
- Support the district health team in organising and carrying out basic training activities

Required qualification and experience:

- Medical Nursing degree with a Masters in Public Health
- Understanding of district health systems and health systems development
- Experience with participatory planning and management tools
- Clinical teaching / training experience

Applicants must be at least 30 years of age and have a minimum of five years working experience in a similar position, preferably with an international organisation. They must be fluent in English and possess good analytical and problem solving skills.

In addition, they must have the following:

- Willingness / motivation to work in a remote district
- An understanding of the cultural and traditional context influencing health seeking behaviour
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- Ability to work in a team

(2) Reproductive Health Advisor

Major responsibilities of the post:

- Provide technical advice to the HSSP team in the field of reproductive health, particularly adolescent health, Safe Motherhood, HIV/AIDS
- Support the technical team in preparing and editing technical reports

Required qualification and experience:

- Have a degree in nursing/midwifery, medicine or public health
- Have an understanding of Nepal's health care system
- Experience in reproductive health/ women's health
- Have English writing skills equivalent to a native English speaker

The vacancy is a contract position for initially 6 months, with the possibility of further extension, offering salary and other benefits as per GTZ Nepal regulations. Interested candidates should apply with a detailed CV, references, passport size photograph and contact telephone number to:

The Programme Manager, GTZ-Health Sector Support Programme
c/o GTZ OFFICE, P.O. Box 1457 Kathmandu.

The closing date for applications is 16th December 2002. Only short-listed candidates will be invited for an interview. No telephone calls, written or personal enquiries will be entertained in this regard.

Women are particularly encouraged to apply

BIZ NEWS

Dabur and Gorkha Brewery honour winners

Dabur Nepal has honoured three Nepal medal winners from the Asian Games in Busan. Bronze medalists in Taekwondo, Ritu Jimne Rai, Renuka Magar and Deepak Bista were given Rs 25,000 each by Dabur managing director, Ruma Sumshere Rana, himself a keen sportsman and the chairman of the South Asian Games in Kathmandu in 2000.

Gorkha Brewery, for its part, honoured Nepal's national under-19 cricket team which played brilliantly and was the runner-up at the ACC trophy 2002 in Singapore, thus qualifying for the next Asia Cup. Minister of Education Dev Prasad Ojha and Gorkha Brewery chairman, Mohan Gopal Khetan were present at the ceremony Tuesday where each player received Rs 10,000.



Chim-Chimney

If the Chimney is lit, then winter must be here. The Yak & Weta's famous Chimney Restaurant was founded by the legendary Russian, Boris Lissanovich and the lighting of the chimney in his restaurant is something of a tradition. And who better to light the chimney this year than Mrs Nazanova, wife of the Russian ambassador, who did the honours on 24 November. Borschi, anyone?

NIA officebearers

The second annual general meeting of the Nepal Insurers Association (NIA) has elected KB Basyal as President for 2002-3. Ragendra Khetan has been nominated President-elect for 2003-4. Mahendra Shrestha is vice president, S. Shrestha secretary and Saldendra Shrestha treasurer for two years between 2002-4. Fourteen of the 18 companies involved in the Nepal insurance sector are associated with the NIA.

Tourists from Mauritius

Nepal could attract thousands of Hindu pilgrims from Mauritius every year by offering concessional air fares in the Kathmandu-Delhi sector, says Mauritius' ambassador to Nepal, Daneel Saeed. "Nepal and Mauritius together could sell packages to tourists from around the world," he said. He added Nepal could also use the "tree port system" introduced by Mauritius to trade with African countries.

Room with a view

Sight seeing of a more leisurely persuasion can be had in Nepal's first revolving restaurant, Kathmandu Revolving Restaurant and Bar. The imported Australian equipment completes a 360-degree revolution while you enjoy your Chinese meal in air-conditioned comfort. The Bajra Group invested Rs 8 million in the two-storey restaurant centrally located at Ratna Plaza in New Road. The Bajra Group has invested Rs 8 million in this venture, hoping to attract upwardly mobile professionals and families who want a different dining experience. The two-storey restaurant seats 70 people and is perched on top of Ratna Plaza, opposite Bimal Bazaar in New Road.

OPINION

MAN BAKSHI/STAFF PHOTO

MAN BAKSHI/STAFF PHOTO

Throughout history some of Asia's greatest political transformations have been foreign educated leaders and intellectuals. As they went abroad, they gained international exposure, then came to lead their nation's call.

Since the 1950s, however, the movement is in the other direction. Despite threats involved, the potential for personal advancement draws thousands of talented and educated individuals from developing nations to Europe, Australia, Canada and the United States.

In Nepal, the graduates of Budhanilkantha School represent the cream of the nation's student crop. Each year the school produces Harvard and Oxford caliber candidates, as indicated by the significant number of students leaving to pursue higher education at top universities in the US and other countries.

The cost of their decision to migrate,

pursue careers and eventually settle in these nations is borne most heavily by Nepal. Though foreign remittance is a positive contribution to the economy, the brain drain ultimately is a cost to the state. Have students from Budhanilkantha and other schools become Amnikos? Are they captivated by the dream of freedom and prosperity as Amnikos was, lured by a Chinese emperor's promises of a beautiful wife and gold?

A few years ago, a Nepali politician addressed a convention organised by the Society of Ex-Budhanilkantha School Students (North America) (SEBS-NA) and All Nepalis Association (ANA) in Philadelphia. He reprised the crowd of mostly Budhanilkantha graduates, proclaiming his utter disgust with the nation's "kamardars" wasting their talent in a foreign land. How justifiable was his proclamation? More than half of all Budhanilkantha

alumni are presently pursuing careers in England and India. The British government refused to issue work permits to international students, ensuring most students returned to Nepal. Then, in 1992, Britain terminated its scholarship packages, and the students were readily accepted by American colleges and universities which sought talented foreign students providing scholarships and grants. Today, up to 40 percent of Budhanilkantha students go the US for higher studies where there are presently more than 300 Budhanilkantha graduates either studying or working.

ECONOMIC SENSE

Teething problems

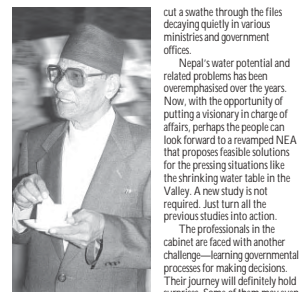
Let's look beyond criticism and pessimism.



The announcement of the expanded cabinet by the prime minister met with mixed reactions. The major political parties are busy criticising the move, but there are some sections that believe this could be the last chance to bring about some visible changes. Over the past month, the country's two leading political parties seem committed solely to their non-commitment to national interest. They have yet to provide any solutions. To be unable to answer questions on why our country's largest political parties have never worked towards a viable solution together is embarrassing. Our inability to take responsibility manifests itself in a strong Nepali brand of criticism laden with pessimism. That particular glass is always half empty.

The primary issues of the current cabinet are security, initiation of dialogue between the Maoists and the government, and setting election dates. However, while these are a priority, the government also has to deal with issues like the recent increase in oil prices. Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand has a tough job. It takes a strong person to lead a cabinet full of successful professionals who are leaders in their own right.

The Beed expects the current



cabinet to effect two significant changes that will have direct bearings on the economy: a newfound voice for the private sector and a stronger foundation concerning water policy. The private sector has always felt neglected. Now the cabinet can redress this situation and chart a map for the economy. A business like approach may finally jog government machinery, including the bureaucracy, to aim for quick resolutions on pending issues. A definite yes or no answer should

chance to effect two significant changes that will have direct bearings on the economy: a newfound voice for the private sector and a stronger foundation concerning water policy. The private sector has always felt neglected. Now the cabinet can redress this situation and chart a map for the economy. A business like approach may finally jog government machinery, including the bureaucracy, to aim for quick resolutions on pending issues. A definite yes or no answer should

(Readers can post their views or comments at artha@nclink.com.np)

by PHUDORJI LAMA SHERPA

A nation's call

A graduate of Budhanilkantha School ruminates on the tug of a motherland that needs educated Nepalis more than ever before.

It is not difficult to figure out why Budhanilkantha graduates are opting to stay abroad. But the issue remains: after years of work experience and becoming financially independent, is there any likelihood that these graduates will return? There is a similar trend among Chinese and Indian students in the United States to stay on. So, the brain drain is not a phenomenon restricted to Nepal. However, the cumulative impact of a lost and brightest not returning is more severe on Nepal. The state invested in their minds, and the state is not getting much back. And for it to happen, it is clear that the state needs to create the conditions so that the young Nepalis will want to return.

However, Budhanilkantha graduates still keep a strong attachment to ailing Nepal. Whether it is a film studies major with dreams of producing movie featuring women's empowerment, graduates discussing Nepal's current situation in a coffee house in Tim Square, organising events promoting Nepali culture in colleges, or putting together discussion programs on the insurgency, democracy or monarchy, our students value their precious links to home.

Visit the Society of Ex-Budhanilkantha School (SEBS) students web page: (www.sebsonline.org) and you can see a vibrant debate on Nepal. Students who have just arrived in the US sharing opinions, others contributing to debates in the Nepali media about caste, ethnicity, development and politics. Through the website, donations have been raised for Budhanilkantha School and sponsorship of 147 students in remote districts for the National Scholarship

Program run by SEBS. Some of the debates also focus on the graduates themselves, their future plans, and where returning to Nepal fits in. They must balance their personal plans, aspirations, careers, and the tug of a motherland that needs them now more than ever before. The pressure is certainly on.

Returning to Nepal offers no guarantees. Certainly they will develop mixed emotions regarding work and experience frustration due to the country's situation, or not earning enough. Yet, there are varying degrees of frustration everywhere. The mark of critical and innovative thinkers is the ability to create personal opportunities where none exist, rather than relying on the nation to do something for them. The measure of a productive and dignified life is the honest mastery over one's own life. And for this, Nepal offers plenty of scope.

When asked what his message to SEBS members in the United States and Australia would be, graduate Surman Maher Shrestha, an architect and planner for the Asia-Urban Programme in Japan, replies: "Guys, this is YOUR home! Wake up and accept your responsibility towards your country. Your little contribution could make a big change for national development. There is a lot of career prospects in our country too... Your country is calling, come home!"

(Phudorji Lama Sherpa graduated from the Budhanilkantha Class of 1999. He is currently doing his Bachelor degree in Asian history at Wesleyan University in the US.)

Kimff

Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival 2002

Once more, Kathmandu is hosting the much-awaited bi-annual Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival 2002. After the enormous success of the event two years ago, the organisers have put together an exciting exhibition of the best feature films and documentaries about mountains from around the world.

There are several things that make this year's festival special: it happens in the International Year of Mountains and Nepal is also about to mark the 50th anniversary of the first ascent of Sagarmatha. This year, a total of 53 films, documentaries and features from 23 countries, will be screened at the festival from 5-8 December, with 15 international delegates in attendance.

The films have been selected by the 108 entries received by the organisers, Himal Association. Of the films, there are three features, two documentaries and 48 are documentaries. Of the latter, 10 deal with mountain peoples, four are on climbing, five highlight extreme adventures, six have nature-related themes, 11 are anthropological and travelogue, three are about development issues, five

are on "alpine documentation", and four are experimental films. The afternoon of 7 December, the third day of the festival, will be devoted to a celebration of mountain women with a special selection of films and a discussion with invited speakers (Nepali Women's Seen Through Numaling).

The films in this year's festival range from *Jogimara Kyundharu* (The Living of Jogimara Nepal, 2002), which shows the human face of those caught in the crossfire of the Maoist insurgency, through an exploration of the grief of the families of 17 ordinary citizens killed in an avalanche, and branded "terrorists".

Kilimanjaro: To the Roof of Africa (USA, 2002) is David Breashears' latest large-format film, which follows a group of people ranging from 12 to 64 years of age as they climb up Africa's tallest mountain. *Daring Divine Peaks* (Japan, 2001) is a Hi-Fi film about the culmination of photographer Yoshikazu Shirakawa's 30-year-long quest to photograph the world's 100 most beautiful peaks. *Numaling* (Nepal, 2002) is a feature about how a young Limbu girl in eastern Nepal deals with life and men.

Then there is *Dhaulagiri Express* (Croatia/Nepal, 2001) in which renowned climber and filmmaker Stipe Bozice records top alpinist Tomaz Humar as he climbs the stupendous south face of Dhaulagiri solo.

The opening film *A Man Called Nomad* (China/Nepal, 2002) is a subtle, sensitive exploration of the changing world that nomads in Amdo, western Tibet are being forced to adjust to.

Although the festival is non-competitive, the audience will be encouraged throughout the festival to cast votes for an 'Audience Award', which will be presented at the closing of the festival. As part of the festival program, on 4 December the organisers will also host an international symposium, *Directions in Himalayan Climbing*. Speakers will include top UK climber Doug Scott, Nawang Gombu Bhutia, the first person to climb Everest twice, noted Indian climber and author, Harish Kapadia and Croatian climber Stipe Bozice.

On the last day of the festival, Stipe Bozice will give a lecture and slide show on his ongoing project, filming holy mountains around the world. Throughout the festival, the

royer of the Russian Cultural Centre will be home to an exhibition of black-and-white photographs by Kevin Bubrick, whose picture books include *Portraits of Nepal and Power Peaks of Kathmandu Valley*. There will also be a display of books on the Himalaya.

Also during the festival, veteran Reuters mountaineering correspondent Elizabeth Hawley will be honoured for her 30 years

of documenting Himalayan climbing expeditions and events. Hawley is currently working on a comprehensive book on Himalayan climbing.

The Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival 2002 is organised by Himal Association, the Patan-based non-profit group which seeks to inform the people of the Himalaya on issues related to their life and times. The

association has also organised Film Himalaya '94, Film South Asia '99, Film South Asia 2001, and KIMFF 2000. The present festival is being organised with the support of Eco Himal, the Swiss Development Cooperation, WWF-Nepal and ICIMOD.

(For more information: www.himalassociation.org/kimff)

HALL A THURSDAY 5 DECEMBER
Shi-Everest (50) 3:30 pm
 Slovenia, 2000, Janez Staud
 Doro Karicic sits down.
Boots in the Snow (15) 4:30 pm
 (Charme dar Bar)
 Iran, 2002, Shamsad Anand
 Young boy struggles to stay in school.
Rakhi Sitting on a Fence (25)
 Kyrgyzstan, 2000, Evgeny Kotlov
 Kyrgyz children follow alpinists.

LUNCH
In Search of Malana (73) 2:00 pm
 India, 1998, Vivek Mohan
 Life in a republic in Kulu Valley.
Kilimanjaro: To the Roof of Africa (42)
 3:30 pm
 USA, 2002, David Breashears
 12 to 64-year-olds climb Kilimanjaro.
Ganga Ma: A Pilgrimage to the Source (58) 4:30 pm
 USA, 2001, Pope Olan
 The Bay of Bengal up to a Himalayan glacier.

American on Everest (50) 5:40 pm
 USA, 1963
 Camera: Lute, Jersted
 When the Americans first made it.
Spirit of Snow (46) 6:50 pm
 USA, 2002
 Dave O'Leary
 The joys of backcountry powder skiing.

HALL B
The Keastar Saga (75) 11:30 am
 India, 2002, Rishi Patra
 Narrating an ancient Tibetan epic.
LUNCH
Reign of the Golden Eagle: Summit of Life (50) 2:30 pm
 (Im Reich des Stenadlers—Gipfelsturm des Lebens)
 Austria, 2000, Michael Schlamberger
 Species survival in the Alps.

The Second Step (26) 3:00 pm
 Australia, 2000, Gary Caganoff
 Australian amputee is determined to climb.
Festivals in Tuzhu (26)
 China, 2001, Leng Shan
 Celebrations in southwest China.

HALL A FRIDAY 6 DECEMBER
The Living of Jogimara (38)
 11:30 am
 (Jogimara Kyundharu)

Nepal, 2002, Mohan Manrai
 Families mourn the loss of their men in Kailash.

As White as Coal (11) 12:30 pm
 Iran, 2002, Nazan Nassepour
 A boy sells coal to support his family.

Making of Timeless (26)
 Switzerland, 2001, K-soul Cherix
 How to make a film on extreme skiing.

LUNCH
In Search of Malana (73) 2:00 pm
 India, 1998, Vivek Mohan
 Life in a republic in Kulu Valley.
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 China, 2001, Leng Shan
 Celebrations in southwest China.

The One (22) 4:10 pm
 New Zealand, 2000, Chuck Berry
 A breathtaking jump off a giant cliff.

Christmas Syndrome (25)
 Kyrgyzstan, 2000, Evgeny Kotlov
 Climbers in the city.
Indian Journeys: Shiva's Matted Locks (80) 5:10 pm
 UK, 2000, Hugh Thompson
 Following the Ganga.

We Homes' Chaps (66) 6:15 pm
 Nepal, India, 2001, Keesing Taiten
 Old boys and girls go back to school.
HALL A SATURDAY 7 DECEMBER
Found on Everest (48) 10:00 am
 USA, 2001, Riley Morton
 Rescue interrupts the search for Malory and Irvine.

My Sister and Her Allu Cloth (24)
 5:15 pm
 Nepal, 2001, Bhim Kala Rai
 Bhim Kala Rai tells her family's story.
Taller than the Mountains (23)
 Pakistan, 2002, Farooq Beg
 What mountain women of Pakistan do well.
Women Adventurers: Forbidden Journeys—Alexandra David Neel (60) 6:30 pm
 Canada, 2000, Christopher Rowley
 Documenting on the adventures.

HALL B
Ultimate Guide: Icecan (50)
 10:00 am
 Italy, 2002, Brando Quilici
 The story of the enthused Icecan.
The Most North 7,000 m Peak (18)
 11:00 am
 Georgia
 Nicolai Drozdov
 Georgian alpinists look back at tragedy.

They Who Walked Mountains (35)
 India, 2002, Manjula Khat
 Himachalis remember trading with Tibet.

The Stone from the Mountain (38)
 (Stenen fra Berget)
 Denmark, 2002, Asger Thor
 The splendid Scandinavian mountains.

Giving thanks to the Pachamama (15)
 12:15 pm

(Gracias a la Pachamama)
 Peru, 2002, Maria Mayur Sourash
 Andean rituals on the Peru-Bolivia border.
Nepal Mani (38)
 Nepal, 2002, Teasing Rishi Sherpa
 Reviving a Tibetan oral tradition.

LUNCH
Numaling (108) 2:00 pm
 (A Beautiful Flower)
 Nepal, 2002
 Nabin Subba
 Limbu woman deals with men and manners.
A Woman's Place (58) 4:00 pm
 Britain, 1984, Marianne Pletscher
 Swisswomen's former experiences Switzerland.

From Moccasin Square Gardens (70)
 6:30 pm
 Canada, 2002, Toshi Suzuki
 Yukon ice hockey players travel 6,000 km.

HALL A SUNDAY 8 DECEMBER
Daring Divine Peaks (52) 10:00 am
 (Kilimanjaro to 26,000 ft—Himalayans we too)
 Japan, 2001, Shunichi Uchida
 The finale of a 30-year passion for mountain photography.

Count up to One Hundred (8)
 (Conta Fina al Cento)
 Italy, 2001
 Frances Paladini/Maria Assunta Karim
 An artistic statement against child abuse.

A Tale Unfolds (7)
 Pakistan, 2000, Imran Babur
 Hunza fort comes alive.

The Winter at an Elevation of 3,000 m (62) 12:15 pm
 China, 2002, Leng Shan
 Qingqi learns tradition in Sichuan's mountains.

Breeze: Wind in the Park (21)
 2:00 pm
 (Breeze: Vento nel Parco)
 Italy, 2002, Daniel Cioaba
 Seasons in sounds and images.

Retenit Wall (30)
 Croatia, 2000, Stipe Bozice
 Solving the world's toughest rock wall.

Totenkirch Westwand (26) 3:20 pm
 (Erinnerungen eines frankischen Berggipfels)
 Germany, 1999, Hartwig Ederkauder
 Meditations on modern free climbing.

Dir (4)
 USA, 1998, Chel White
 A man's surreal obsession with dirt.

Passage (11)
 USA, 2001, Chel White
 The poetic and the terrible in a stylised collage.

Unizaba, (10)
 Canada, 2001, Sean White
 Unclimbing down a Mexican volcano.

Women through the eyes of Numaling 4:15 pm
 Discussion with invited speakers.
Voices of the Sierra Tarahumara (52)
 5:30 pm
 USA, 2001, Robert Brewster/Felix Gahr
 Between the World Bank and narcotics traffickers.

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A Man called Nomad (37) 12:00 pm
 China, 2002, Alex Gabbay
 Tibetan nomads tries to manage the old and the new.

LUNCH
In the Forest Hangs a Bridge (39)
 2:00 pm
 India, 1999, Sanjay Kulkarni
 A community comes together to build a bridge.

From Moccasin Square Gardens (70)
 6:30 pm
 Canada, 2002, Toshi Suzuki
 Yukon ice hockey players travel 6,000 km.

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America's second gilded cage



The richest Congressional district in the US is the so-called 'silk stocking' district of New York City's Upper East Side. With a per-capita income of \$41,151 per year. The poorest Congressional district, largely Hispanic-immigrant district in Los Angeles, has a per-capita income of \$6,997 a year.

In 1973 the poorest fifth of America's families had incomes that averaged \$13,240 a year (in today's dollars). In 2000 their average income was the same: \$13,230. By contrast, the richest 5 percent of America's families in 1973 had an average income of \$149,150, and in 2000 it was \$254,840.

This inequality gave a 2/3 income boost to the work-ethic, while in the middle it grew by only 10 percent, incomes at the bottom not at all. The most peculiar thing about America's rising inequality is that it is so American-just. Surely a society with a skewed income distribution is worse off than one in which incomes are more equal.

Following Nobel Prize-winner James Buchanan's utilitarian

What is worrying is Americans are not worried about their growing inequality.

principle of evaluating a society's social welfare by imagining that you have an equal chance of being poor and rich, it is easy to judge that the more equal society has better social and economic arrangements. It is then easy to say that—so long as redistributive taxes don't stave off economic growth—when inequalities rise, the government's duty is to tax the rich and transfer money to the poor to offset the rise.

Yet mainstream politicians aren't called for increasing the income tax. Even at the left, the boldest call is for the well-off to contribute their 'fair share' for government services. Eskine Bowles of North Carolina (a former chief of staff to President Clinton), a Senate candidate in the recent US elections, was judged bold and forthright for placing a higher priority on the federal government paying for prescription medicines than on a further cut in the highest marginal tax rate. Bowles lost.

Virtually no mainstream American politician seems opposed to eliminating the estate tax—a policy move set to concentrate wealth on no countervailing supply-side gain. As Clinton's Assistant to the President for Economic Policy Gene Sperling once wrote, staff aides who tell Congressmen that estate tax repeal...costing tens of billions of dollars...will benefit only a few thousand families are answered, 'maybe so, but I think I met every one of them at my last fundraiser.'

A striking increase in income inequality was not necessary to deliver rapid economic

growth. Most of the increase was between 1973 and 1995, when economic growth was slowed since the Great Depression. Save for the past half-decade, income gains away from the top have been so small that it is hard to argue people have better lives than their parents. So why aren't Americans alarmed by their country's rising income inequality? Part of the reason may be most Americans don't recognise what is going on. One poll found that 19 percent of Americans think their incomes put them in the top 1 percent of income distribution, and 20 percent more want to reach the top 1 percent someday.

American ideology and culture teaches the future will be brighter: you can build a comfortable life for your own hands; individuals should rely on themselves, not the state; people cross oceans and mountains for a better life, and preparation and industry leads to success. These are not beliefs conducive to social democracy.

Memories of the failed European-style social democracy after the Great Depression are dying out. The older and more enduring—at least it the Cold War—pattern of American ideology, culture, and political economy is resurging itself. Inequality, it seems, is as American as apple pie. (Project Syndicate)

(Bradford Delong is professor of economics at the University of California at Berkeley, and former Assistant US Treasury Secretary.)

Bush plans to increase US aid

WASHINGTON - New details about the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), a major initiative by President Bush to sharply increase US bilateral aid to poor countries, has drawn mixed reactions among NGOs, aid officials, and think tanks. While some feel the MCA will improve the effectiveness and the amount of US aid, others fear poor countries that fail to meet policy conditions will be marginalised.

Eligibility will be determined on 18 criteria in three broad categories according to the White House. These are 'ruling justly', 'investing in people', and 'economic freedom'. Under the scheme, poor countries that score above the median in the corruption criterion and at least half of the criteria in each of the three categories will be eligible to apply for MCA funds, awarded as grants, rather than loans.

The MCA fund for 2004 and 2005 is \$5 billion (\$1.6 billion and \$3.4 billion, respectively). In addition to the nearly \$10 billion in bilateral aid already provided each year. Beginning in 2006, the administration hopes to give \$5 billion for MCA each year. An independent body, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), consisting of cabinet-level officials chaired by the secretary of state will run the MCA. (IPS)

GM debate

LUSAKA - The Zambian government banned the import of Genetically Modified (GM) maize since the United States to save off famine. Nearly three million people face starvation and need about 600,000 tonnes of grain till March 2003. Government attitude hardened after Zambian scientists, sent to four western countries to ascertain the safety of GM food, returned with the verdict that 'there is no evidence to suggest that GM food is safe or unsafe'.

Agriculture minister Mando Sikatara claimed even the World Health Organisation (WHO) did not have authoritative answers and left decisions on GM foods to individual countries. Sikatara says introducing GM food would risk farmers planting the seed, threaten local varieties and create a dependency syndrome on patented seed from the North African Consumer League (ACL) Regional director, Amadou Kanoute said biotechnology was penetrating Africa through 'the backdoor' due to the food crisis.

US State Department spokesperson Richard Boucher, denounced Zambia's decision, saying Zambia was the only country of the five affected in the Southern African region, that had refused the food. Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe said they would accept GM maize in milled form to avert the risk of farmers planting it. (IPS)

Kava commotion

SYDNEY - Pacific islands have launched a counter-offensive to fight controversial European claims over the past year that their much-loved and relaxing brew, kava, could be harmful to human health.

November 2001, the European Country Regulatory Authorities placed restrictions on the sale of food supplements and herbal medicines containing kava, as kava extracts like kavalactones. Germany, France, Austria, Switzerland, Spain and Italy, as well as the US have bans or restricted the sale of kava and other kava-based products. Scepting international pharmaceutical interests may be behind the attack on kava. Pacific nations launched a major push this month to fight the health warning and bans. The Pacific's once lucrative export trade has fallen by more than 10 percent.

Kava is the popular name for the plant called pipper methysticum. Pacific islanders brew the roots and the stem of the plant, which they mix with water to make both a ceremonial drink and a recreational beverage. It is used as a natural medicine to relieve stress, anxiety and insomnia. (IPS)



On this 45th day of loss of our respected father and husband Major Mohan Bdr. Khatri (Rtd). We would like to thank the relatives, family, friends, acquaintances, reporters, columnists and strangers within and outside the country for publishing their words of praise for his work and sorrow on his demise. We appreciate the time energy and support they showered upon us with their personal visits as well.

IN APPRECIATION
Wife & Childrens



CHAYAVIT POONYARAT in BANGKOK

in a high school classroom here in Bangkok, Thailand, a young man takes out a condom packet, tears off the wrapper and uses a rubber model of a penis to show his male students how to use the prophylactic.

Sometimes, she also shows her class how female condoms and home pregnancy kits are used. Nakorn has been using non-conventional ways in her 23 years of teaching sex education, using frank, informal language and slang to get through to the more than 800 students she teaches at the all-male Sun Kularat school.

Her students also drop by Nakorn's office during breaks, to look at the books she has used or to have a chat with her. For her, that's the old-fashioned approach of using blunt, clinical and scientific language does not work in reaching out to youngsters in a country where talk of sex is often taboo.

'We have to make children feel that sex is a common matter, like when we ask about our hunger for food, so that they feel comfortable in seeking counselling on sex-related issues,' says Nakorn Sinjathit, who teaches 11th grade students, who are most around 17 years old.

The tactic she recommends is to 'speak the same language as students do and to keep an open mind.' There is no right or wrong answer when talking about sex, and every question needs to be answered, no matter how private, she insists.

Key to her approach in handling her class is the realisation that Thai youngsters are trying out sex at earlier ages these days, and need correct information about reproductive health. 'Children do not need to be taught to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).'

From the time she first introduced her frank-style to the school, teachers and parents fretted that the lessons would encourage premature sexual experimentation among students. 'Children do not need to be taught about sex. They would rather be taught about its ethical and moral aspects,' says an on-line comment posted on a news website here.

But Nakorn believes that a lack of

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Straight-talking Thai sex educators

The more sex is concealed, the more teenagers want to know about it.

their first sexual experience at 13. The 1999 Durex Global Sex Survey, sponsored by condom manufacturer Durex, found among the 16 to 22-year-old Thai polled, 88 percent said they were worried about contracting HIV/AIDS, only 23 percent used condoms.

Last year, HIV/AIDS was the second leading cause of death among Thai aged 15 to 24. Health ministry figures also reveal 300 to 350 babies are abandoned due to unwanted pregnancies each year.

Early this year, a group erupted when the non-government Sex Organisation published its 'Handbook for Teenagers' for children aged 12 years and over, but the education ministry withheld its distribution because of 'inappropriate' language on issues like safe sex, birth control,

menstruation and masturbation. In 1993, a World Health Organisation (WHO) survey of 35 sex education projects showed that sex education in schools did not encourage young people to have sex at an earlier age or more frequently. Rather, the survey showed that early sex education delays the start of sexual activity, reduces sexual activity among young people and encourages those already sexually active to have safer sex.

'I have never told my students not to have sex. Sex education is actually not a prohibition of sexual relationship. It is to equip our children with well-rounded knowledge about sex, to give them more alternatives,' points out Nakorn. 'The more sex is concealed, the more teenagers want to know.' (IPS)

Tackling e-wastes

TIANJIN - Eight Asian governments met here this week under the auspices of the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal to seek solutions to the growing deluge of electrical and electronic wastes—popularly known as 'e-wastes'.

'A few decades ago, very few families in wealthier countries and communities owned a personal computer or other electronic devices,' said Executive Director Xuesi Topfer of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

'Today PCs are becoming widespread in homes and are ubiquitous throughout the business world and in organisations of every kind. The emerging issue of e-wastes needs to be tackled urgently as the production and use of PCs continues to rise dramatically,' he said.

A number of Asian countries are generally considered to be the main importers of e-wastes generated around the world. Importing countries can earn significant income from reusing used PCs and dismantling obsolete PCs, monitors, and circuit boards and then recovering the gold, copper and other precious metals.

End-of-life PCs are sold as scrap or sent to other related equipment are made of highly sophisticated blends of metals, plastics and other materials. They also contain hazardous substances such as lead, cadmium and mercury. Workers in e-waste operations may face dangerous working conditions where health, safety and environmental standards may be compromised. (UNEP)

Hawking arms

TEHRAN - After 16 years of negotiations to sell advanced Hawk trainers to India, Britain may lose the deal, now worth \$600 million, to competition from the United States. In August, the deal only awaited a final cabinet approval according to Defence Minister George Fernandes. The decision was influenced by British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw's support for India during the military stand-off between India and Pakistan. Straw aggressively pushed the Hawk deal and pledged spares for British-built assets in India's armed forces. The supply was traditionally sourced from the former Soviet Union, now Russia, in order not to be caught without critical spares in a military emergency. But Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's BJP government favours diversified defence purchases and is looking towards the US. Washington recently announced that mandatory congressional approvals would be required for arms sales to India less than \$40 million, making way for fast-track sales of essential spares. This is a turnaround from the bans and controls imposed after India tested a nuclear device in 1974. (IPS)

Nuclear growth

ISLAMABAD - The Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) announced constructions for two new nuclear plants are expected to commence 'soon', raising concerns from green groups. Currently Pakistan has two nuclear power plants, the 84-megawatt Karachi Nuclear Power Plant (KANUPP-I) in Karachi and the 300-megawatt Chashma Nuclear Power Plant (CHASNUPP) near Manwal. PAEC plans to construct the new plants at the two sites—KANUPP-II and CHASNUPP-II as part of a nuclear energy strategy where the nuclear option has a 'firm footing'. Environmentalists are afraid the Chashma plant, which will draw water from the Chashma-Jhelum link canal and discharge it into the Indus River, is a serious potential risk in the event of an accident which could release radioactivity into some of Pakistan's most populated and farmed areas. Green groups are particularly perturbed by the secrecy and non-transparency exhibited by PAEC, and demand public discussions on the need for greater reliability on nuclear energy. Concerns essentially from the fact that PAEC has also been involved in the development of nuclear weapons. Critics doubt the credibility of the country's existing nuclear regulatory body. (IPS)

Why is terrorism different?

People all over the world react with visceral horror to attacks on civilians by the al-Qaida, Palestinian suicide bombers, Bosque or Chechen separatists, or by IRA militants. There seems to be a pause in the state of suicide bombings and other terrorist acts—only momentarily—perhaps this is moment to grapple with a fundamental question: What makes terrorist killings any more worthy of condemnation than other forms of murder?

The special opposition associated with 'terrorism' must be seen as a condemnation of means, not ends. Those who condemn terrorist attacks on civilians often also reject the ends the attackers are trying to achieve. They think a separate Bosque state, or the withdrawal of US forces from the Middle East, for example, are not aims anyone should pursue, let alone be violent means.

But the condemnation does not depend on rejecting the aims of the terrorists. The reaction to the attacks of 11 September underscores such means are outrageous whatever the end. A balancing of costs against benefits cannot be allowed here.

This claim is not as simple as it appears because it does not depend on a general moral principle forbidding all killing of non-combatants. Similarly, those who condemn terrorism as beyond the pale are usually not pacifists. They believe in killing soldiers and bombing munitions depots in time of war, and that inflicting 'collateral damage' on non-combatants is sometimes unavoidable—and morally permissible.

But if that is permissible, why is it wrong to aim directly at non-combatants if killing them will have a good effect on the war? Indiscriminate withdrawal from occupied territory, or grant independence? Dying to be dead, however one is killed. So why should a civilian death be acceptable if it occurs as a side-effect of combat that serves a worthy end, whereas a civilian death that is inflicted deliberately as a means to the same end is unacceptable?

The distinction is not universally agreed—certainly not by the major belligerents in World War II. Hiroshima is the most famous example of terror bombing, but both the Allies and the Axis powers deliberately slaughtered



What makes terrorist killings any more worthy of condemnation than other forms of murder?

killed deliberately by a terrorist or negligently as the side effect of an attack on a legitimate military target. But in our sense of what we are owed morally by our fellow human beings, there is a huge difference between the two, and the attitudes they express toward human life.

So long as it remains an effective means for weak parties to avoid pressure on their more powerful enemies, terrorism cannot be expected to disappear. But we should hope nonetheless that the recognition of its special form of contempt for human life is not, rather than being lost in a sea of its recent success. (Project Syndicate)

(Tom Nagel is professor of law and philosophy at New York University)

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"A revolution is no joke."

Chalphal, 24 November

अनिल
Excerpts from an interview with Anil Bohara of the CPN (UML)

Will public pressure or a people's movement help correct the faults in the constitution?

A revolution is no joke. Our party would like to solve the current problem through talks and understanding, not through violence. People don't revolt through choice. They do so because of circumstances, and we don't want to create such a situation. If people think that is a weakness on our part, they're wrong. Knowingly or unknowingly, they should not push us towards a revolution. We've revolted in the past. We can do it again if the need arises but a revolution should not be taken lightly. An aware public can help correct weaknesses in the constitution. In a way, it's a revolution brought about by thought. It creates public opinion. As long as the party workers and party hierarchy don't understand the party's stand on the present situation, the public's reaction will remain normal. We are concentrating on strengthening our organisation and thought. If the situation does not improve with time and the people's rights are violated, we won't keep silent. We will mobilise our party workers to make our point of view clear. But one has to be careful as a revolution is not something you play with. It can have serious and frightening consequences.

What is the party's view on a constituent assembly?

We are not against the word "constituent assembly". Historically speaking, the Nepal communist party was the first to raise the issue of a constituent assembly. A constituent assembly is one of many processes involved in framing a constitution. We formed this constitution through a specific process because after the fall of the Rana regime the constitution that was formed did not protect the rights the people had fought for. At that time it was an interim constitution. The situation is different now. After the 1950 people's movement, a new constitution was formed based on the understanding of various revolutionary powers. Apart from some rigidity, it upholds the fundamental rights of the people. We don't feel this constitution is old and worn despite the last 12 years and we shouldn't think in this manner. At this time, I think it is meaningless to dump the constitution and talk about a constituent assembly.

The Maoists say a constituent assembly and an interim government are solutions to the present crisis. What do you think?

At this point, it is inappropriate to talk about a constituent assembly. I've already made this clear. So let's leave it at that. People are repeating themselves like parrots without understanding the circumstances. First, they have to be clear on why we need a constituent assembly. If the reasons are to strengthen parliamentary democracy and the present constitution, or if we require an interim government to hold polls, then we should think about it. But if the demand for a constituent assembly is part of a workplan to dump the present constitution and system, then we are not in agreement.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

Bureaucracy had a hand in the failure of democracy.

— Sri Kant Regmi, former secretary at the Prime Minister's Office who resigned in protest of Bimal Koirala's appointment as the chief secretary. *Chitra Ra Bichar*, 27 November



"If we go round and round at this spot, I am sure we'll end up shaking hands someday."

श्रीकान्त रेग्मी, नेपाल समाचारपत्र, 27 नवम्बर

Failed states

Anga Raj Timilsina's commentary in *Kantipur*, 24 November

Child soldiers are the latest casualties of the Maoist violence that has claimed 7,000 lives. We seem to be moving closer towards the rank of violence-ridden, failed states of Africa. The donor community is afraid Nepal is falling into a vicious low income, low capital, low production spiral. One can easily imagine what will happen if the economic growth rate of a poor country like Nepal declines to zero.

A history of failed states around the world shows three factors change nations: they are violence, poverty and political instability. These three elements are responsible for pushing Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Congo and Afghanistan into "failed state" status.

Nepal's downfall has been poverty. In the last few decades we have failed to attain a necessary growth rate of 5 percent. The future will almost certainly see an intensification of the conflict between the security forces and the Maoists. Nepalis killing fellow Nepalis could escalate into a civil war that traps us in a cycle of violence. Similarly, the political ambition of the king and the selfishness and of political parties are proof enough that Nepal has already fallen into a period of unprecedented political instability.

Pro-public

अनिल
Aparanah, 22 November

There are murmurs that certain people have decided to join the government, but only if it corrects his mistakes. In this rather transparent drama, these people publicly refute any political ambition but privately are lining up against the king in the cabinet mistakes during the last 12 years were responsible for the nation's present state of affairs. But instead of correcting their own mistakes, they now want the king to correct his.

Are these leaders responsible for forcing the king to make the royal move of 4 October? All his Majesty did was to try to rescue the country from total disaster. Nothing stands in the way of these leaders if they submit to the electoral process after restoring peace in the country. For this they must show their

strength and political efficiency. But where is such leadership? If attempts are made to impose something upon the people nobody will readily accept it. The people are supreme. There is no other alternative than to seek popular mandate if we work for the people.

"Mend ways"

Interview of Senior Advocate Krishna Prasad Bhandari in *Deshanet*, 24 November

The slogan of an apolitical seems inappropriate when looking at the national and international scenarios. The Maoists should give up this demand. Neither India and China are likely to support a call for a republic, nor one for an active monarchy. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India supports the Maoist movement, but not an active one.



But these national and international trends seem to have given both the right and the left the impression that they use it to push their agenda. The Maoist and pro-peace forces must mend their ways for the sake of the nation and initiate reconciliation. Both the Maoists and palace want a decisive war, which is not good for the country.

It's not feasible to have a constituent assembly immediately, but if the new constitution is endorsed simultaneously by the king and the people then it will not be disadvantageous for Nepal. The way out for the present crisis is to call a

round table conference of different political parties and non-political personalities who have a "clean image". An interim government should be formed on the basis of such a conference and that government should negotiate with the Maoists. Any other step is likely to be risky for the king.

"Missing"

Nepal Samachar, 24 November

Seven police officers who had gone to the US for training related to Border Security, have gone missing. A group of security officers who were deployed in the Nepalese Army, the Armed Police Force and the Nepal Police had undertaken the two-month training sponsored by the US government. Upon its completion, the officers returned home minus ten from the Nepal Police contingent. Police in the US have located three "missing" police officers who were deported. A search is on for the rest of the absconders.

PM or PA?

Chitra Ra Bichar, 27 November

The expansion of the cabinet is said to have been on the recommendation of the prime minister, but our sources say his nominees were, in fact, totally ignored. Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand had forwarded four names from his own party, the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), on the morning of 18 November. None of them were included in the cabinet expansion announced later the same day. Sources close to Chand named the four as Joga Meher Shrestha, Dipak Bohora, Prem Bahadur Bhandari and Ram Krishna Acharya.

At present, the prime minister functions more like a personal assistant. His main responsibility is to implement decisions made somewhere else. He was told about the expansion in his own cabinet only a few minutes prior to the official announcement. Prime Minister Chand has been deprived of all his decision-making powers—he cannot even transfer or grant promotions to civil servant. His rights are confined to posting non-official level civil servants.

Back at Sundarjal >22

"Nationalism, democracy and economic development are all linked."

BP finds solace in a spiritual-religious analysis of his predicament, and is relieved that he now understands the nature of the obstacles of his "pilgrimage" in jail. Newspapers are finally delivered. BP and Ganesh Man Singh discuss the king's national day speech, and examine the role of Tulsji Giri and Surya Bahadur Thapa. These pages are from BP's diary written in English from his jail cell in Sundarjal. Pages from it are serialised in this space every fortnight.

19 February, 1977

Sundarjal
I am in a very good mood today. Primarily, this mood was induced in me by my realisation that I am engaged in some kind of a great spiritual-religious undertaking, and any undertaking that invites total dedication to the point of death is a spiritual undertaking and that is my work... all kinds of frustrating encounters a man has to face. I am doing the same. My mental weakness that used to assail me, despair that used to grip me, they are all evidence of obstacles to the spiritual progress. Buddhism speaks of the temptations of Mara, these assaults of Mara are conquered in the mind, or you cannot accomplish any great undertaking. When this realisation dawned upon me yesterday I felt relieved and became normal. Mental torture that this segregated incarceration is inflicting on me which sometimes make me sink into the darkened depth of despair is a part of the suffering which I must undergo to fulfil the great objective—which is about spiritual objective—that I have set before me. Now I understand the nature of obstacles to the progress of a pilgrimage which I am set upon.

I washed some clothes and bathed. Did massage my body with oil, which has become my practice before bath since I came here. Bathed in plain water under a running tap. I think I am taking a bath today after 4 or 5 days. Sushila will pucker her nose when she hears this. She used to force me to take regular bath and change clothes everyday. Here I do whatever I please me, but I always remember Sushila. I keep gazing on a photo of her which I have pasted on the cover of this diary. She is so full of life even in this tiny and slightly overexposed photo that her eyes seem to speak to me. Sometimes I think through the play of light, she looks sad, sometimes a little aged, and gloomy, and sometimes a little down, but most of the time she is delicately smiling. Just a glimpse of a smile that lights up her whole countenance. Every moment I become sentimental to look at the picture and sometimes my eyes moisten with emotion. If only she could know this—know how deeply in love I am. I hope and pray she is all right and is not over-worked on my score.

We again asked the major to tell the people responsible for detaining us here—the major pleads his lack of authority—to arrange for interviews. GM wants to know what happened to his daughter who will have to go to Darjeeling for her studies. The major, as usual, promises to convey our insistence on regular interviews to the higher authorities.

Today the idea of a hunger strike for some basic right of prisoners is agitating my mind. Every time when I am arrested in Nepal I have to fast for a certain time. I fasted for two days during Mohan SSS's (Mohan Sunshere) arrest and for 13 days in Mahendra's time. Perhaps I will have to go on hunger strike in Birendra's time also. I am not in a hurry, but the idea is constantly in my mind today. Since it may be the end of me, I don't want to undertake it lightly-headed. Moreover, I have to learn writing my autobiography and the history of the Nepal

Congress. I have started writing the history of the NC. It may take more than a month. I may even take three months. Autobiography may take another two months. Then I have got to write short articles on Nepal's politics. Then I am thinking of writing a novel on the sociopolitical situation as it obtained on the eve of the 1950 revolution and thereafter. Therefore, I am not in a hurry.

20 February

Sundarjal
Today, after a lapse of four days we got the two papers that are supplied to us. We read with interest the king's speech on the occasion of the National Day. He didn't come to Kathmandu from Dhankuta for the occasion, effectively downgrading the importance of the day. The usual practice was that the king took the salute from the military detachments, students, youth and others and reviewed tableaux and floats. Guns would boom in celebration of the day. But this one such function took place. The king made his statement before a gathering in Dhankuta. His speech appears to be some kind of a reply to our stand—i.e. to the statement that I made on arrival here—whose main theme was that nationalism in today's context couldn't be divorced from democracy. The king reiterates this position of ours, but adds that his system is a democratic system. The main point in my statement was that if nationalism can't be sustained without democracy, so also democracy can't be sustained without speedy economic development with socialist orientation. The king also put emphasis on development without, of course, suggesting that the development should have egalitarian orientation. King (PM's) Tulsji Giri's speech on the occasion appeared to be a laudable performance—a little difficult, the language very heavy and which is not the character of his language and style. An interesting development seems to be the reference of Surya Bahadur Thapa who is now out in support of this system and of the leadership of the king. In my considered opinion he was India's agent when he was PM and quite sometime afterwards too. It seems he has changed his loyalty from India to the king. Perhaps he is in the Q—one among many candidates angling for king's favour to replace King. GM thinks that the speech of the king refers to our stand, and is in preparation of the ground for a dialogue with us. I am not so hopeful. GM says that he was not hopeful of the late king's positive response. In the present situation which is not very favourable for the king, he is hopeful of a favourable response from the king. I am not so sure.

Read for some time, wrote a few pages. I am totally dissatisfied with the quality of my writing. I am writing a history of the NC and I seem to wander over wider lands in a rambling fashion rather than concentrate on the central points and progressive development and clarification of the ideals and objectives of NC in course of its history. NC has developed both organisationally and ideologically as it progressed meeting one challenge after another in the changing situation of the country.

Got a penholder from the market for which permission was granted. I am writing this with the new pen.

ENCOUNTERS by MEGH RANJANI RAI

Mother Nepal

She struggles as she always has, not expecting any help.

They say the Grand Hyatt in Mussoorie is a "7-star" hotel. It is plush enough for a conference on mountain farming systems. Having slid through the polished lounge, past plastic palm trees giving a virtual desert ambience, muted lights, and sinking into a bed that is no sturdier than an Olympic trampoline, I feel a tingling of guilt and worry.

Many Nepalis seem willing to have US military help to wage war, what happened to our self-reliance, our sincerity and integrity, our trademark generosity of spirit? Where are the development pundits? Where are the gender experts analysing the desperately more desperate situation of Nepal women, now caught in conflict?

I stand on the podium and look at the sea of faces: government officials, scientists, researchers, development workers, diplomats. I feel like here to discuss marginal women. I feel dizzy with the sheer enormity of the challenge. The sterile developments suddenly sound irrelevant. I sound like the mad monk, as I talk of conflict that pushes the marginalised even more to the periphery.

We know the definitions, of course: someone or something on the periphery, someone debarrated from receiving benefits commensurate to their status. In the case of land, we could simply understand it as "not fertile enough for profitable farming".

Aspects of marginality in mountain areas are marked by poor inaccessibility, degraded environments and exploitation of natural resources such as forests, population growth and fragile mountain ecosystems. Within all this, the women are "doubly marginalised" by social discrimination and increasing workload.

Today they are "triple marginalised" by a conflict that is making life of a mountain woman in Nepal even more difficult. Besides the increased hardships and lack of food, there is bereavement, families torn asunder and migration isolating her and forcing her to fend for herself. From only "worrying about" providing for her family, she has now become sole provider. She is not just a contributor of labour to mountain farming systems, she is the only one left to take care of the young and the elderly.

Impacted male migration has cleared the villages of able-bodied men. Male migration left women to manage the best they could, but the hope remained that the household family income would be supported by remittances. Today, men are migrating to get away from direct recruitment by the insurance, or to escape the security forces. They haven't migrated for jobs, they have run for their lives. Women are forced to take over the men's chores as well: ploughing fields, maintaining irrigation canals, protecting community forests, and selling produce.

And the conflict restricts development aid that was targeted at making women better: capacity building, empowerment, micro-credit and, as last resort, food for work. Mother Nepal is struggling as she always has against overwhelming odds, not expecting any help.

The Ranas of Nepal

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THE RANAS OF NEPAL

The Tibetan community in Nepal would like to express deep sorrow at the demise of the respected scholar, statesman and champion of human rights and freedom, Mr Rishikesh Shah, on 14 November 2002.

Tibetans in Nepal and all over the world are grateful to him for his insalubrious contribution to the cause of the Tibetan people. He will always be remembered with affection and have a special place in our hearts.

We pray to Lord Buddha for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

Tibetan community in Nepal

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Carlsberg Green Bar of the month

JATRA AT THAMEL

Jatra Ma Music Jam: Acoustic sounds by The Strings, 29 November. Win beers and free tickets to 1974 AD concert, at Jatra Restaurant & Bar, Chakrabarti, Thamel. Contact 211010

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVALS AND EXHIBITIONS

- ◆ **In Search Towards Freedom:** Painting exhibition by Purnima Yadav at NAFA Art Gallery, Naxal, 26 November-5 December.
- ◆ **French Film Festival** organised by Alliance Française de Kathmandu, dedicated to the portrayal of women in French cinema, 29 November: La Vie Revee des Anges (Dream life of Angels) 5PM, 30 November: Venus Beade (Venus Beauty) 1PM, Le Blue des Villes (The Blue of the Cities) 3.15 PM, La Dilettante 5.15 PM, 1 December: Haut le Couers (Chin Up) 1PM, Rien a faire (Nothing to do) 3.15 PM, Love Me 5.15 PM, Tickets at French Embassy, Alliance Française or half an hour before the show at the venue, the Russian Cultural Centre.
- ◆ **Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival 2002** 53 films from 23 countries. Russian Cultural Centre from 5-8 December. Tickets at Mandala Book Point, Kantipath, Suwal Music in Movies, Lazimpat, Saraswati Bookstore, Pulchowk, and Himal Association, Patan Dhoka. www.himalassociation.org.kimf

EVENTS

- ◆ **Meditation for the lazy and the inspired:** Wayne Antis followed by Sunita Mishra performing classical music (vocal) 5-6.30 PM on 29 November. Free entry. **Lymph Drainage Class** with Joanne Claira, 9-10AM on 27 November, 4 December. Rs 100. **Yoga with Carolyn Bosh**, 8-10 AM on 30 November. Free. Venue for all events: Everest Book Store, Baber Mahal Revisited, 253337.
- ◆ **Fulbright Alumni Association Nepal's Annual General Assembly Meeting** at USEF Nepal/American Centre, Gyaneshwor, 4PM on 4 December. Registration: 3.30 PM on . Confirm by 1 December at faan1981@yahoo.com
- ◆ **Pass the Butler:** The Sterling Club HAMS presents Eric Idle's comedy at the British Embassy Hall, 7PM from 5-7 December. Tickets: Rs 800 (includes dinner), Proceeds to the AWON Scholarship Fund, 410583
- ◆ **AWON Holiday Bazaar** Gift items, children's games, food and drink. 10AM-5PM, 7 December. Entry: Rs 50, free for under 12s. Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu.
- ◆ **Summit Christmas Bazaar:** Textiles, wood carvings, ceramics and barbeque. 4-9PM, 13 December. Free entry. Summit Hotel, 521810
- ◆ **Christmas Canapes and Entertaining** cooking demonstrations by Chef Thomas Kilroy followed by sumptuous lunch with wine. Rs 850, 10.30 AM on 30 November at 1905, Kantipath. kilroy@wink.com.np. 225272

MUSIC

- ◆ **Maya Centre of Performing Arts** presents a jam session of the greats at Moksh (inside Club Hardi), 8PM till late on 29 November. Free entry. Moksh, Sansa, 528703
- ◆ **Live music** by Catch 22, Friday nights at the 40,000 1/2 ft Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, Thamel, 414336

DRINKS

- ◆ **The Coffee Shop** Hotel de l'Annappura for world class coffees from Kenya, Brazil and Colombia.
- ◆ **Paddy Foley's Irish Pub** Live music on Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday nights. 416096.

FOOD

- ◆ **Multi Cuisine** at Nanglo's Deli, relocated to Durbar Marg, 224707
- ◆ **Wood fired pizzas, cocktails and coffee** at the Roadhouse Café, Thamel, 261057, 426475
- ◆ **Winter weekend barbeque lunches**, poolside at Godavari Villa Resort from 30 November, 560675
- ◆ **A Taste of Africa** 7PM till late, 30 November. Dinner and dance: Rs 650 per person, 526530
- ◆ **Barbecue** at the Terrace, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, Rs 550 plus taxes, 7PM-10PM. Complimentary entrance to Rox Bar, 491234

GETAWAYS

- ◆ **The Great Godavari Getaway** weekend packages including room with breakfast and dinner, 25 percent discount on health club facilities. Godavari Villa Resort, 560675
- ◆ **Birdwatching, short hikes, writing** 30 minutes from Kathmandu at Shivapuri National Park. Rs 1,850 per person with dinner and breakfast, Rs 925 per child 5-14 years Shivapuri Heights Cottage, www.escape2nepal.com. Email: steve@escape2nepal.com

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

NEPALI WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

VS-28-1102030403047

The remarkable feature in the satellite pictures we have been following of the convectional clouds over the Bay of Bengal, was headed our way, but the westerly jet stream has now pushed it away rapidly towards Burma. However, looming over the horizon is another couple of frontal systems over Iran and Afghanistan. They will bring high fast-moving cloud cover which will quickly pass. The cyclone has left some residual moisture which could manifest itself in clouds. Expect lower day temperature, and slightly elevated night temperatures.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
22-07	21-07	22-07	23-07	24-07	25-07	26-07

BOOKWORM

Challenging Untouchability: Dalit Initiative and Experience from Karnataka
Simon Chakraverty and GK Kamrath.
Sage Publications India, 1998
Rs 472

This volume is an important effort to understand the paradoxical situation of the Dalits and to capture grassroot realities. Contributors describe the status of rural untouchable castes and study their efforts at challenging daily humiliations, the vitality of Dalit movements and their contribution to Indian society.

Dalits and the democratic revolution: Dr Ambedkar and the Dalit movement in colonial India
Gail Omvedt
Sage Publications, 1994
Rs 448

Omvedt focuses on Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka to trace the history of the Dalit movement from the 19th century to the death of BR Ambedkar. Her original material is based on a modified historical materialism, factoring in gender, class and caste. It concentrates exclusively on the colonial period.

Growing up untouchable in India: A Dalit autobiography Vasant Moon
Gail Omvedt trans.
Vistar Publications, 2001
Rs 400

The first of its kind to be published in English, Moon's autobiography reveals a complex, rich social culture where Dalits are seen as a community with strong bonds, struggling and striving to shed their sense of inferiority. It includes an account of BR Ambedkar and Dalit conversions to Buddhism.

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

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The acclaimed director Sam Mendes directs Tom Hanks (Michael Sullivan) and Paul Newman (John Rooney) in Road to Perdition, a Depression-era crime thriller, based on a novel by Max Allan Collins. Hanks departs from his usual wholesome roles to play a hit man for the Irish mob in Chicago who is bent on revenge after the death of his beloved wife and son. Expect a lot of good versus evil conflict around the themes of family, loyalty and betrayal. The straightforward storyline is complemented by stunning visuals, great direction and acting worthy of the Oscars. 119 minutes.

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Road to Perdition

BBC on FM 102.4

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Sun	0615-0645	BBC Agenda
Daily	2045-2115	BBC gfnrl :Jf
Daily	2245-2300	BBC gfnrl :Jf
Sun-Fri	0740-0800	PsJsgv-JBof klqsf
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Holes in the Himalaya



It's been a whole week of golfing in Pokhara and Gokarna.

SRADDHA BASNYAT IN POKHARA

Even in Nepal, young, talented golfers are stepping to the tee and dazzling us with their swing. Eleven professionals took part in the fourth annual Surya Nepal Western Open last weekend in Pokhara's scenic Himalayan Golf Course which has been described as one of the most vertical courses in the world.

"What it lacks in refinement, it makes up for in character," quipped one player. Nepal pro, Ramshir Nagarkoti, won the Pokhara event.

Organised by Surya Nepal, the tournament aimed to encourage local participation while giving Nepal professionals some practice before the

biggest golf event of the year, the Surya Nepal Masters. This four-day event, that ends 30 November at the Gokarna Forest Golf Resort, is part of the Indian Professional Golf Association (IPGA) tour. It is also the only easy opportunity for many Nepal professionals to perform in an international event.

Major Ram Bahadur Gunung, chairman of the Himalayan Golf Course here, gives full credit to Surya Nepal. "I cannot think of any other corporate house that has done so much for golf development in Nepal," he told us. However, Surya Nepal had to overcome many hazards and immovable obstacles. "Golf is not popular in Nepal," says Rabi Raj Regi of Surya Nepal. "There are a handful

of courses, very few Nepal professionals, and most importantly, there are not enough opportunities." It is obviously going to take time to establish professional golf in Nepal. People feel golf is too expensive, but when more people play, the expense decreases," he adds. "If the tour comes we can raise the standard of golf in Nepal."

Taking part in Gokarna are past Indian champions, Ullam Singh Mundy and Ferenc All. Leading Nepal pro, Dipak Thapa Magar is also competing with Ramshir Nagarkoti and Pashupati Sharma. Nagarkoti and Sharma have played on the Indian

spend an average of five times more per capita than back-packer travellers. Chakraverty is all praise for the Himalayan Golf Course in Pokhara. "This is a breathtaking course, the natural beauty is stupendous," he says.

Nepal pros themselves admit that Nepal has not met its mark in golf. Deshak Acharya, 27, started playing golf at age five. He is passionate about the sport and feels lucky that he was able to turn his hobby into a profession. He has played on the Indian tour and qualified for the World Cup, competing against top players from all over the world like Constantino Rocca from Italy and Antonio Costa from Germany.

Likemost Nepal professionals, however, Acharya cannot make a living from it and supplements his income by coaching. "It is tough to be a professional in Nepal. People feel golf is too expensive, but when more people play, the expense decreases," he adds. "If the tour comes we can raise the standard of golf in Nepal."

"This is a huge step forward," Sachdev told us. And what a fantastic way to promote Nepal, too. Says Sachdev:

"Along with a full week of press coverage, these well-known professionals will take back the word that Nepal is a great place to visit."

Gokarna Forest Golf Resort and the Himalayan Golf Course in Pokhara (top)

tour in the hope of improving their game. However, they soon found they were not earning enough to sustain their expenses between tournaments and returned to Nepal.

Here, they are so busy coaching at the Royal Nepal Golf Club that they find little time for practice. It is difficult to afford a caddy, and golf equipment is expensive. While foreign professionals change their golf set each year, Nagarkoti has been using his current set for eight years.

Suman Sachdev, director of Le Meridien Kathmandu's Gokarna Forest Golf Resort says this high profile sports event puts Nepal on the golfing map and the tremendous response to the Surya Nepal Masters is testimony to this.

"Nepal's professional golfers and top amateurs get a chance to compete with the region's best players on an international standard golf course on their home turf."

"This is a huge step forward," Sachdev told us. And what a fantastic way to promote Nepal, too. Says Sachdev:

"Along with a full week of press coverage, these well-known professionals will take back the word that Nepal is a great place to visit."

NOW alive & cooking

CAFÉ MITRA

CAFÉ MITRA is a new concept in Nepali cuisine. It is a place where you can enjoy the best of Nepali food and drink. The menu includes a variety of traditional Nepali dishes, as well as international favorites. The atmosphere is warm and inviting, making it a perfect place for a meal with friends or family.

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Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Drive slow, avoid turnover

There is a guy we know who took his girlfriend Ruth for a test-drive on his new motorcycle. While zooming downhill from Maharajgunj he hit a pothole at about 90 kmph and Ruth got thrown off the back. So he drove on ruthlessly.

As many of us have observed, there are a lot of other motorcyclists also driving around ruthlessly right here in the nation's capital where they are a threat to the life and limb of innocent civilians. The question is what are the concerned higher-up authorities in the interim council of ministers going to do about this?

Hint: one way to stop this menace is to ask drivers caught speeding to write "I will not drive ruthlessly" 25 times on the blackboard. That should do the trick.

Disciplined driving needs constant reminders for drivers through roadside slogans, and here I'm afraid we lag far behind a certain neighbouring country which has set up large and imaginative billboards along accident-prone stretches of their roads that read: "This is a highway, not a runway", "Be gentle with my curves", "Better late than forever", "Road gets wet when it rains", "In the land of the lama, don't be a gamer", or "Drive slow, avoid turnover". Here in Kathmandu, things haven't reached that stage yet where we have to write harkus to enforce road discipline. We should just stick to 10+2 simple easy-to-grasp traffic signs like the following.



Warning: Look out for garbage falling from fourth-floor window.



Two suspicious objects on the road. Call Interpol.



Potholes on road. Swerve to avoid.



No urinating here 8AM-4PM on weekdays.



Sign at airport parking lot.



Bank robbery in progress. Medium-built gentleman and short female perpetrator both dressed in black running towards getaway car. Give way.



Caught using your mobile? Pay bakshesh not exceeding this amount to officer on duty.



Yipee! Someone who knows where to cross the street!



Look Out: Motorcyclist driving ruthlessly.



Enough of this nonsense. Back to work.



Go around Tundikhel three times before you figure out a way to take the correct lane for Tripureswor at Bhadrakali roundabout.



Caution: Fishermen at Tin Kune Aquaculture Farm, don't create waves.