



Sharan to Dilli

Shyam Sharan, Ambassador of India in Kathmandu since October 2002, was appointed Indian Foreign Secretary and is expected to take up his post in early July. During his time in strife-torn Nepal, the Bihar-born Sharan built a reputation for plain-speaking even as the Indian military assistance to Nepal grew by leaps and bounds. His term saw the path cleared for the



Birgunj dry port and he lobbied New Delhi to develop transport infrastructure on both sides of the tarai border. The 57-year-old career diplomat was tipped for the top job in

South Bloc by the earlier BJP government and he was the first diplomat called in for consultations by the new Foreign Minister, Natwar Singh. In New Delhi, Sharan is expected to work closely with India's recently appointed National Security Adviser JN Dixit.

Bumpy road

Deuba tries to cobble together a government five weeks after Surya Bahadur Thapa's resignation

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

For a prime minister known for 'jumbo' cabinets, Sher Bahadur Deuba's past week was spent waiting to hear from interested parties, most importantly the CPN (UML). When the phone did not ring, he announced the name of two ministers from his own Nepali Congress (Democratic) at press time Thursday. He left the other posts dangling before would-be ministers in the UML, but it seemed unlikely that they would bite.

The anointed two were Deuba Congress stalwarts Bimalendra Nidhi and Prakash Man Singh who stood by the prime minister right since his split with the Nepali Congress nearly two years ago. Nidhi received two portfolios, Commerce, Industry and Supplies as well as Education and Sports. Singh got stewardship of the Ministry of Works and Physical Planning.

The lame appointment of just two ministers indicated obstacles in Deuba's efforts to get a major party to join him. Burdened with mandates assigned by the palace, as well as credible rumours that Narayanhiti was also incongruously pushing its choices, the prime minister found it difficult to woo parties still committed to fight royal 'regression'.

There remains the possibility that the UML leaders will push through a marriage, particularly the two who have eyes on the post of deputy prime minister (Bamdev Gautam and Khadga Prasad Oli). But the longer it

takes for the party leadership to agree to join Deuba, the less likely it is that they will do so, as naysayers begin to build up opposition.

Indeed, the delay in building a cabinet fuels speculation that Deuba may follow the failed footsteps of his predecessors Lokendra Bahadur Chand and Surya Bahadur Thapa. If this happens, the primary responsibility will lie with King Gyanendra for not giving his third nominee prime minister a free hand. Deuba needs independence from the palace in order to build credibility among politicians and public alike.

In essence, the new prime minister is forced to speak the same language as his nominee predecessors Chand and Thapa because his terms of reference from the palace are identical: create an all-party government, seek peace (with the Maoists) and plan elections. Neither predecessor managed to get past the first stricture.

The Nepali Congress declined to support Deuba, even though the courtesy call he paid Girija Koirala upon being appointed prime minister on 2 June hinted at rapprochement. The CPN (UML), gung-ho about joining government, immediately withdrew from the streetside anti-'regression' agitation. But after four days of wrangling, its Central Committee decided to leave the decision to the smaller Standing Committee. Madhab Kumar Nepal, not in the running for a ministerial berth, is said to be reluctant.

SCENT OF SUCCESS: His spouse prepares Bimalendra Nidhi for the swearing-in ceremony at Narayanhiti Thursday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

One factor that made the left party wary was Deuba's slip in his first press conference two days after his elevation, when he announced he was not for a constituent assembly. This was an idea he had found favour with during the demonstrations. "That was when I was party president, but now I am prime minister," he said. The UML's trust in Deuba was further eroded after he began to stress elections and not the peace process. The leftist party desires an all-party roundtable, leading

to a government with Maoist participation, an election and possibly a new constitution.

In his radio and television address to the nation on Wednesday evening, Deuba was in damage control mode saying he would do what the major parties wanted. He also refrained from specifying poll dates. But those who hoped for some drama—an announcement of a full cabinet or perhaps a ceasefire—were sorely disappointed. ●

Times nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll # 140

Q. Should the five parties have met the king's deadline for a common prime ministerial candidate?

Yes	65.4%
No	28.4%
Don't know	3.2%

Total votes: 1,192

Weekly Internet Poll # 141. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Is Sher Bahadur Deuba likely to get the Maoists to agree on a ceasefire?

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Published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd, Chief Editor: Kunda Dixit
 Desk Editors: Trishna Gurung, Jemima Sherpa
 Design: Kiran Maharjan Web: Bhushan Shilpakar
 Advertising: Sunaina Shah advertising@himalmedia.com
 Subscription: Anil Karki, subscription@himalmedia.com
 Sanchaya Kosh Building, Block A-4th Floor, Lalitpur
 GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal
 Tel: 01-5543333-6, Fax: 01-5521013
 Printed at Jagadamba Press, Hatiban: 01-5547018



OUT OF THIS MAZE

It is our current misfortune that many analyse King Gyanendra's appointment of a new prime minister last week in terms of victory or defeat for the palace or the parties.

Actually, both lost. There are no winners in a confrontation between forces that are supposed to be on the same side, especially when they are fighting so close to the edge.

It is wrong for the palace to rub its hands in glee about breaking the five-party alliance. The job of a constitutional monarch is not to divide and rule over political parties, it is to persuade them to work together to resolve the more threatening crisis that has engulfed the nation.

One wouldn't be surprised about an unprincipled politico eating humble pie. But it must be said that for someone with King Gyanendra's reputation for haughtiness, it was a major climbdown to bring Deuba back.

But there is no need for the Sher Bahadur camp to pop champagne corks. The third-time prime minister better start doing some serious homework on his three-point checklist. His first order of business is to get a can-do team off and running, not another lazy and greedy jumbo cabinet that is hell bent on plunder like last time. The indefinite nationwide education strike called by the Maoists is the initial major challenge. Clearly, this is a rebel tactic of disruption to force the government to negotiate. How is Deuba going to juggle that with the military's current aversion to a ceasefire?

The prime minister also has to be much more precise when he opens his mouth. Any waffling like we saw in media interviews and at the National Human Rights Commission anniversary on Saturday will send the wrong signals. He received another chance to set things right and, for the country's sake, he better not bungle again.

Deuba's arch-nemesis, Girija Prasad Koirala, is circling like a vulture waiting for him to do just that. Which brings us to the question of the second Mr G: this man also has attitude. What he sees as consistency others see as stubbornness, what he perceives as a struggle against regression most Nepalis see as a self-seeking effort to put himself and his coterie back in power. He sees himself as his brother's protégé, but even his own colleagues don't believe it.

The man who has been prime minister longest since 1990 must own up to the massive malgovernance during his watch. But instead of hints of behaviour change we see a familiar dog-in-the-manger mind-set: if I don't have it, I won't let anyone else have it either.

The king has made a concession, Koirala can't move the goal posts again just because the palace made someone he didn't like prime minister. The country is in a much deeper crisis now than in 1994, he can't keep playing the same old games.

The Nepali people want peace. They really don't care who delivers it. Let's not split hairs about who did what and when to whom. We urge the remaining four parties not to be too hung up on process, but make a visionary and statesmanlike compromise for stability. It won't be seen as a weakness. In fact, when the time comes, the people will reward them for it.

Same difference

As the demands of the political parties and the Maoists are converge, there is no need to kill any more Nepalis

Now that the republican slogans on the streets sound more radical than Maoist graffiti on school buildings across Nepal, it is getting increasingly difficult to see a difference between the political agenda of the parliamentary parties and the rebels.

GUEST COLUMN
 Man Mohan Bhattarai



More than 10,000 Nepali have been killed in the Maoist war, but not a single person died in the street agitations by the political parties. Yet, both are fighting for the same things!

The student unions and the parties hijacked the republican slogan from the Maoists who have now lost their *raison d'être*. There is no need to keep spreading terror in the name of a 'people's war'.

It is true the present constitution doesn't completely encompass Nepal's plurality. A new one will have to be crafted soon, and it will have to contain provisions to include our multiethnic, multilingual reality, geo-politics and include marginalised Nepalis.

If Comrade Prachanda agrees to this, there is no need to kill and destroy anymore. All

the political leaders, intellectuals, the international community and civil society who are pressing for talks should look ahead at who will benefit and who will lose. Until that is clear, talks don't make sense and may even mark the start of another war.

In a statement last month, Prachanda called on the king, the political parties and civil society to work towards 'united negotiations at an all-party political conference that lays the groundwork for the formation of an interim government and a new constitution'. Prachanda's reasoning is that strategic parity between the state forces and his guerrillas makes it imperative to agree on a political resolution through a new constitution.

But there are grounds to doubt whether a 'strategic parity' has actually been reached, and whether the military situation on the ground is any different than it was. Are the Maoists really more powerful? Given that they exert their power through murder and terror tactics, it looks like the state is still superior.

In which case, we have to ask: what is the real reason to talk? What should be the agenda? At a time when most political parties are coming around to the need for a constituent assembly, Prachanda is talking directly about a new



LETTERS

MASSACRE BOOKS

Bikram Sambat 2061 may be the year Nepalis start to come to terms with the royal massacre. For many reasons, they badly need to do so. In retrospect it now seems that they carried on and accepted the new king in the massacre's aftermath altogether too easily ('June first', #198). It seems that they are now asking the unanswered questions about the

massacre more openly and more keenly—perhaps because of the increasingly strident republican slogans being chanted on the streets. In the same issue, Daniel Lak's 'The massacre books' about the recent slew of books on the subject, in my opinion, does a major disservice by dismissing Westerners' accounts as derivative, Orientalist and obsessed with the odd. Not having read them, I cannot speak for all the books, but one of them—Willessee and Whittaker's *Love and Death in Kathmandu* (Rider 2003)—is much better than Lak represents it. Yes, it is written in a simple and popular style. Yes, the cover is a little lurid. But no, it does not provide 'a shallow, derivative account'. It is in fact a clearly and coherently written, carefully organised and apparently truthfully reported result of serious research over many months. It is derivative only in the sense that the authors have read what others wrote on the subject and tried to

take account of it in their narrative—a process which is usually described as scholarly. It is not true, as Lak claims, that the authors give no 'off-the-record' accounts, nor is it true that they ignore the opinions of ordinary Nepalis (they are well aware of what they think but say 'You simply could not sit across from these survivors [of the massacre], listening as they recounted the horrifying details, and doubt their story', p256). Nor is it fair to imply, as Lak does, that the authors are endlessly boasting and inserting themselves into the narrative.

Perhaps Daniel Lak is too close to the subject. But, whatever the reason, he has failed to provide a generous and intelligent critique of the books he is reviewing. Maybe these books do focus on Nepalis' religious beliefs. But is this Orientalism? On the one hand he criticises Gregson, Mishra, Willessee et al. for not taking Nepalis' beliefs about the massacre seriously enough and for not talking to ordinary Nepalis. On the other hand, he faults them for

taking ordinary Nepalis' religious beliefs too seriously. One thing King Gyanendra evidently has in common with his people is believing firmly in the powers of Hindu gods and goddesses. Intellectuals who belittle this do not help themselves understand what they are attempting to describe.

Lak ends by praising and recommending a French spy thriller fantasy which, he tells us, has the massacre as the outcome of a plot by the SAS and CIA. Is this really where Lak wants the debate to go? Further into the realms of fantasy and away from plausible explanations that can be squared with the eyewitness accounts and facts that can be established? If the debate about the massacre is to advance, those who oppose the official explanation need to come up with a plausible alternative account that has fewer holes in it and they have to explain how it is that the Maoists, who have been trumpeting the 'murderer' charge from day one, have so far failed to find or produce any evidence to support their case—which they would have

every reason to do if it existed.

Nepali Times should get the massacre books reviewed by someone who is interested and capable of arguing about the material in detail, not someone who knows the story already and is willing to dismiss them all out of hand.

David Gellner, Tokyo

ON THE JOB

I found Ashutosh Tiwari's 'On the job' (Strictly Business, #198) on MBAs getting exploited in Nepal thought provoking. I know of two individuals who are currently working in supposedly prestigious institutions in Kathmandu. One has an MBA from a London business school and the other has his from a Top Ten MBA school in the US. Both have 3-5 years of experience in Kathmandu. Their MBA skills are of literally no use in the Nepali context. I don't see how pure MBA skills can be utilised without the existence of market-led and policy driven economics. Before we can see the day when MBAs can lead the Nepali business scene, Nepal



constitution. Students are holding republican referendums in campuses, while Prachanda raises the need of talks with the king.

None of the forces pushing for a 'constituent assembly', a 're-worked constitution' and a 'new constitution' have said what they mean. Prachanda, on his own, can't show us the way forward. Marxism, Leninism or Maoism are not ultimate truths and people who see only one dogma as the answer to societal contradictions are just being duped.

Today the world has moved beyond 'isms'. We need policies that offer real solutions to real problems. Is there place for freedom of thought and discussion in Prachanda's new constitution? How will the new regime be any different from the old one?

Maoist victims who criticise Prachanda are immediately killed. In the past nine years, buses with passengers inside have been torched, people have had their legs broken with axes, farmers have been displaced and their harvests looted. Is this revolution?

Prachandapath alone doesn't have the answers. So far, the agitating parties, the Maoists and civil society haven't sat down together to find a way out, even though there isn't much of a gap anymore on the questions of the monarchy and the army chain of command.

There is nothing more absurd than to say you want to negotiate a republic with the monarch. The Maoist demands are now no different than those of the political parties. There is no need to kill Nepalis anymore. ●

Man Mohan Bhattarai is a youth leader in the Nepali Congress (Democratic).

Re-imagining the state

Can King Gyanendra's corporate values reinvent Nepal?

Nepal functioned with a caretaker premier for a month and no one outside active politics actually noticed. Sher Bahadur Deuba is taking his own sweet time putting together a team. It's business as usual at Singha Darbar, Bhadrakali and

STATE OF THE STATE
CK Lal



Naya Sadak: the capital's administrative, military and commercial hubs. King Gyanendra succeeded in making policies appear superfluous by harping on cleanliness and competence. Kathmandu's apolitical bourgeoisie is ok with that.

From his business background, King Gyanendra brought a corporate outlook to running the country: clear goals, clean methods, competent managers, and customer satisfaction are its main focus. His model of multiparty democracy is one dedicated to the greater interest of the nation with hereditary top-down guidance, akin to running a private limited company.

King Prithvi Narayan Shah imagined Nepal as a Gorkha Empire and succeeded in creating it through conquest. Bhimsen Thapa re-conceptualised the kingdom as a turf of competing feudal interests of Gorkhali nobles and ruled the country as a powerful Mukhtiyar by playing clans off against each other. The tiger he was riding devoured him in the end.

Learning from that, Jang Bahadur began by eliminating all possible competition at the Kot and re-configured Nepal as a vassal



state of the British Empire. It served the interests of his clan, though not his own children, for over a century.

The Ranas became a liability after Indian independence and King Tribhuban was prevailed upon by his advisers to present himself as a ruler of a client state in the court of the new emperors in New Delhi, resulting in the 'Dilli Samjhauta'. It worked and Shahs replaced the Ranas.

King Mahendra recognised the zeitgeist of the Cold War and began to build an administrative state capable of withstanding the communist contagion. Panchayat replicated the Mao model of state, replacing Marxism with a peculiar mix of nationalism and Hinduism as the opium of the masses. His son, Birendra, wanted to build a market state. He handpicked whiz kids from the best Western universities to give the people economic rights, while curtailing political rights. The greatest

achievements of the Panchayat years was the physical infrastructure that transformed Nepal into a unified market with a single currency, a road network, banks and police posts.

BP Koirala had imagined a social democratic Nepal. It didn't happen in his lifetime, but did succeed in laying the foundation of a new Nepal, different from the imagination of its rulers. If the Kathmandu nobility hates Koiralas so much, they have every reason to do so. BP challenged their cosy world of royal servitude.

Madan Bhandari fine-tuned BP's social democracy and came up with his visions of people's pluralism. Compared to the confusion of BP's Fabian ideals, Bhandari's certitude was alluring.

The Maoist imagination of the state is the mirror image of King Mahendra's administrative structure. Baburam Bhattarai, the Bahun urban planner turned revolutionary, replaced geographer

Harka Gurung's economic units with ethnic divisions in the Maobadi version of Mahendrabadi unitary state.

"Imagination," said Einstein, "is more important than knowledge." By repeatedly emphasising attributes like competency and cleanliness, King Gyanendra downplayed the potential of imagination, that embryo of all knowledge. Politics is as muddy as the rice paddies and stinks like manure decomposing in pits, but it is the monsoon that regenerates life.

Nepal needs to be re-envisioned as a political entity. Parties out in the streets need to get from agitation to movement mode and begin building a body of knowledge of an inclusive state. It has to begin at the level of imagination. Deuba's recent appointment as the royal General Manager should be the start of that process, not the conclusion. ●

has to have well defined economic policies with all market variables defined and under a controllable realm. For example, how can an MBA predict the market or manage demand and supply when bandas paralyse the nation for more than a quarter of a year and inflation is probably the highest in the world? Without precise and clear national economic policies and consistent political institutions, MBA skills will not be of much use in Nepal.

DB Mahat
Baltimore, USA

ALMS RACE

Navin Singh Khadka's 'Alms race' (#198) states the Royal Nepali Army is going through its 'biggest ever expansion in history'. What he doesn't say is that even with its present strength, there doesn't seem to be much security. I returned to Nepal in early March and in just this three month period there has been unprecedented attacks on journalists, open police abuse of many involved in the five-party action, tear gassing of a hospital, arson attacks on buses,

abductions, disappearances, killing of civilians by Maoists as well as the security forces and armed police obviously under the influence of alcohol terrorising the general population. This list is, of course, not exhaustive. All this with a combined RNA troop strength and paramilitary Armed Police Force of approximately 95,000.

Possibly, the so called 'security forces' should be more appropriately renamed 'insecurity forces'. The question that must be asked is: has the doubling of the security forces in Nepal in the past three years improved security? In the Panchyat days pre-1990, when the security force numbered 20,000, Nepal suffered in many ways but security was not one of them.

If security continues to deteriorate in an inverse proportion to an increase in army strength then when the troop strength reaches 150,000, as Khadka's article suggests, Nepal's security situation will probably resemble Somalia or Bihar. Let's hope this

will not come to pass, but where I once saw smiles and dreams on the faces of my Nepali friends and acquaintances, I now see uncertainty and fear.

D Michael Van De Veer
Hawaii

CHINS UP

I've been laughing, despite the chaos, over the last two Under My Hats by Kunda Dixit (#s 198, 199) about nitpicking in Nepal. I always begin with the column so I can face what is on the front page. You are helping a lot of us keep our chin(s) up. Many thanks always.

Suzy Conway,
Lazimpat

NEPATHYA

Thank you for covering Nephathya's tour. I salute the band and the organisers for their courage in defying the bandas and taking the message of 'Education for Peace' outside the Valley. I am glad that Nepal does not equate Kathmandu in Nephathya's vocabulary. Every Nepali has the responsibility of establishing



ANUP PRAKASH

peace. Their music and action may make a difference to the disenchanted and silent masses that do not follow the political parties, the palace or the Maoists. The band gave them a voice. Please keep the up good work. Nephathya is among musicians like Bob Marley, Lady Smith Black Mambazo and Bono who seek peace and justice. It was reggae musicians like Alpha Bondie and Serge Kassy who brought down the dictatorial regime in the Ivory Coast through their music and

lyrics. Nephathya's cause is a song of freedom—freedom from violence, political instability, corruption and poverty. I hope they keep fighting because you never know, it could lead to solutions.

SN Singh, email

NOTE:

From this week, to mark its 200th issue, *Nepali Times* begins a full-page book section on p20 to replace Gurkha testimonies translated from *Lahurey ka Katha*.

The other war

Armed robberies, looting and plunder is rife in the lawless south



NARESH NEWAR
in MAKWANPUR

Every night in the Siwaliks, villagers arm themselves with bamboo sticks, sickles, spades, spears and khukuris to fight gangs of armed robbers who operate with impunity. The police are too afraid to come here, the army considers the matter of low priority and it falls in the government's blind spot. The Maoists have done little more than punish the few looters captured by villagers.

"We have to depend on each

other," says 70-year-old Chandra Lal Khadka in Tongra village, a two-hour walk from Hetauda. He sharpens his sword every morning in preparation for his night duty that ends at 3AM. With both sons working abroad, he is the only man in the house and considers it his duty to protect his family and property.

Khadka is part of a 100-strong volunteer group of men, women and children who banded together in April after Sananitar, Lamitar, Masiney, Mildara and Tongra were all raided. Two months ago in

Masiney, a gang of looters not only robbed a household but also raped a teenage girl and two daughters-in-law of the same family. The case was never reported to the police for fear of social stigma against the victims. That night, the same gang attacked four other houses and left with Rs 400,000 in jewellery and cash—the entire life savings of the families.

Ram Krishna Gotame, a 69-year-old farmer, was among those robbed. With tears he recalls how the robbers burst into his house around midnight. They put a gun to his head, a khukuri to his neck



From l-r: Villagers on patrol, Laxman Thapa shows the bullet wound on his chest, robbery victims Ram K Gotame and his wife, 70-year-old Chandra Khadka prepares to go for the "battle" against the dacoits



and warned him not to call for help. All he had was Rs 300, so they took his gold wedding ring and his wife's earrings and necklace. Although Gotame attempted to file a First Information report (FIR) on 5 May, the police clerk refused to register the case. He was told that the villagers should have captured the gang as evidence and handed them over to the police. "We are victimised in every way. Who can we turn to?" asks Gotame.

The callous police reaction prompted the villagers to form their own patrol. Everyone volunteered.

"I need to protect my village. I'm not afraid of these looters," says 14-year-old schoolboy, Amrit Gautam. Armed with a spear, he and his father watch over their village at night. It is dangerous work—several villagers have been injured severely after encounters with armed robbers.

It was the night of 2 May when Laxman Thapa, 23, heard shouts of alarm. Just as he left his bed with a heavy bamboo stick, the looters fired and the bullet hit him in the chest. The villagers couldn't take him to Hetauda that night because of the curfew. There was a strike the

Looking back at Reagan and D-Day

History loomed large over the past week in America and Europe. The media spent much of its time looking back. Sunday, 6 June was the 60th anniversary of the D-Day landings in northern France, an attack that forged a lasting alliance between western democracies and helped bring World War II to an end.

Wall to wall coverage plans were somewhat derailed though, by the death of former US President Reagan the day before the anniversary. He passed away at age 93, one of the most successful American politicians of modern times. His death

HERE AND THERE
Daniel Lak



should have been seen as the

end of nine decades of a life enjoyed to the fullest. But Reagan suffered from Alzheimer's and he died unable to recognize his wife and family. A tragic note sounded after his long years of public life.

Reagan was a hugely controversial president for many Europeans and Americans on the left of the political spectrum. When he first came to power, he was often ridiculed as a cowboy and "B" movie actor reading his lines from cue cards. Much was made of his habit of not working very hard, or being unconcerned with

History wears rose-coloured glasses



President Bush at the 60th anniversary of D-Day in Arromanches, France on Sunday.

details of policy. At one point in his first term, he was trailing badly in public opinion polls, the economy struggling and American forces locked into a bitter internecine war in Lebanon.

Ever the politician, Ronald Reagan pulled off a second term election victory that can only be described as a landslide, and for several more years he was the most popular American president in history. Then came the Iran Contra scandal and the public

hearings that showed his to be a White House largely out of control and run by dangerous ideologues like Oliver North. He reached the end of his second term damaged by the scandal but still well-liked as a human being by most American people.

If the eulogies to his life are any indication, history has been very kind to Ronald Reagan. The mainstream American media has made much of his optimism and sunny personality. It has played down his

sleepy approach to work, his lapses in memory and the scandals that blighted his later years in office. This is as it should be. When someone dies after a largely successful life, their down moments matter less than their achievements.

Yet many people in Latin America beg to differ. Nicaraguans or El Salvadorans remember a Reagan administration that funded violent, dirty wars in their countries. Many lost family members in the most horrendous circumstances. Left wing Europeans cling to their cowboy imagery but also resent an American government that installed nuclear missiles in NATO and US bases in England, bombed Libya, invaded Grenada and Panama. To them, Reagan's foreign policy moves seemed more like cynical adventurism than a measured approach to international crises.

But Europe was liberated from Communism on Reagan's watch. Some credit the late former president, others say Gorbachev had more to do with it. The point is this:

History wears rose-coloured glasses, or at very least, it balances points of view. Today's Nepali public figures—the king, the Maoist leadership, the politicians—may have something to look forward to, after all. ●



next day, so someone walked all the way to the town and managed to bring an ambulance back to Mildara. His courage has now inspired hundreds of villagers to band together to protect themselves.

There is a strong unity among the villagers, but there is one problem. The Maoists asked them to stop the night patrols, saying it was difficult to tell between robbers and villagers in the dark. They also warned that the villagers risk an 'encounter' if they come too close to Maoist areas. On 3 May, a patrol group that went to help a neighbouring village was attacked by rebels. "There was a total misunderstanding and miscommunication," says Rajendra Karki, who adds that fellow villagers will hold a meeting with local Maoists

to reach an agreement about how to combat robbery.

While these incidents have increased in the Siwalik, the nightmare is nothing new in the tarai, the new crime central. There are armed robberies almost every night in the villages of Rautahat, Saptari, Morang, Itahari and Siraha districts. In the last two months, 150 houses were looted in Rautahat alone. The police have fled because of the Maoist insurgency and the people are preyed upon by robbers from across the border. Last month, several villages were not only looted but the robbers also raped, tortured and killed locals. On 25 May, a gang of 150 raided the village of Bardangi in Biratnagar. Those who protested were beaten severely and a young girl was killed. Earlier, on 17 May

at Inarwa, a group of armed robbers attacked three houses where they mercilessly battered and raped two girls, one of them just eight years old. They then abducted 17-year-old Sita Sada, who hasn't been returned yet.

The looters reportedly take their time. They know the police will come later, mostly a full day after the incident is reported. The need for security has never been so strong, but the police have taken no effective action. "We won't be able to do the task alone, the security system should be reviewed soon," says Additional Inspector General Govinda Thapa. He adds that the police need new arms to fight both the Maoists and the armed robbers.

But as the city-based police and security forces concentrate on dealing with the Maoists, the threat from robbers grows every day in the terai villages. The only option left for the villagers is to build their own defences. Everyday, more families are joining the patrol teams. Debinagar in Butwal has about 2,500 members armed with swords, knives, sticks and khukuris.

The villagers aren't waiting anymore for the police to fight crime for them. All they are asking now is the government give them combat training and provide ordinary guns. The government has not responded so far. ●

'Dip in Valley crime' p8

Strike out

It has been five days and counting since educational institutions around the country were forced to close for an indefinite period of time. The banda, called by the All Nepal National Free Students Union Revolutionary (ANNFSU-R), could not have come at a worse time. The organisers are underground and the newly appointed Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has yet to announce a ministers council. Without negotiations between the two, the demands put up by the student organisations will not be met and until that happens, schools will not be allowed to reopen.

Deuba acknowledges the difficulty of the situation and says the problem will be dealt with once an education minister is appointed. It will not be that simple to hammer out an agreement. The first and most important demand made by the rebel students is the withdrawal of the terrorist tag. "If that is done, we will let classes resume," ANNFSU-R President Lekhnath Neupane stated in several radio interviews.

That is not something a minister can decide on his own. Removing the terrorist label from the Maoist students does the same for the rebels as a whole because the Maoist camp is made up of many groups: students, unionists and associations of different professionals. Such a blanket withdrawal needs cabinet level consensus and whether it will be amenable to this path depends on the government's future plans and policies.

In the meantime, the biggest casualties are the students. Frequent bandas called by different political parties forced many institutions to start extra classes during weekends and holidays to make up for lost days. Unfortunately, their efforts were halted by the most recent banda called by ANNFSU-R. The two organisations of private schools, the Private and Boarding School Organisation Nepal (PABSON) and the National Private and Boarding School Organisation Nepal (NPABSON), submitted memorandums to the prime minister asking the government and rebel students to negotiate. But until a cabinet is decided upon and the Maoist students decide to emerge, both organisations and all of Nepal's schoolchildren will be forced to wait.

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The Everest Bahn

Climbers are taking giant leaps for mankind

The Guinness Book of World Records should dedicate a separate chapter to the exploits on the world's highest peak. All the feats on Everest: first by south-east ridge, first by South Col, first by the north face, first by the south-west face (the hard way), first without oxygen, first alpine solo, first traverse, first woman, youngest, oldest, first downhiller, first handicapped, first internet millionaire or movie mogul, first paraglider, fastest, slowest...

LONDON EYE
Joti Giri



This rat race for records along with traffic jams on the summit ridge has trivialised the noble pursuit of climbing. Or has it?

This trend of breaking records is a

sign of times and a reflection of the self-obsessed world of instant gratification that we live in. There are different breeds of climbers taking to the slopes these days and, for them, summit fever is all the rage. They are of the egotistical and adrenalin-seeking variety, the ones who heli ski the virgin slopes of Whistler in winter and go shark diving in South Africa in summer. Summiting the highest mountain has become the ultimate uber adventure challenge, besides booking a more expensive ticket on the Soyuz rocket. Mountaineering, like everything else, has become democratic and market-led.

But there is nothing trivial about the latest record by Pemba Dorji. This indeed was a feat of true Herculean and Olympian proportions, a breathtakingly superhuman effort. Eight hours and ten minutes from Base Camp to the top is approximately 400 vertical metres per hour in the Death Zone. Outstanding, considering that the marathon record on flat terrain is 20 km/h. Predictably, Dorji's record is being contested.

What is the high bar in setting the fastest time to scale Sagarmatha? The 1968 Olympics was a defining moment for the humankind, when Jim Hines broke that magical 10 sec barrier (9.95). So is sub 10 hours, the sub 10 sec version of Everest summiting? The dispute between eight hours 10 minutes or ten hours 56 minutes (which still stands in the world record book) is all secondary. What matters is that this is a giant leap for mankind, pushing the physical boundaries of human limits.

In Britain, the land still consumed by the debate over whether Mallory and Irvine reached the top in 1924, the fastest climb of Everest hasn't registered a blip. Maybe the purist in the mountaineering fraternity and establishment regard this as part of the trivialising process, going against the ethos of the noble art. Climbing, however, has evolved from an elitist pursuit to a sport with more mass appeal. If it was a climber from the Alps or the Highlands instead of a native of Rolwaling, would there be more interest here?

On an average season, there are 50 licenses issued for Everest at \$50,000 per expedition. The Everest Industry is now a cash cow for the government. Everest alone, without considering other peaks, on average generates \$2.5 million a year. The NMA are trying to make mountaineering and training more accessible (see 'Trained to climb', #198) but a lot more needs to be done to make it more accessible to other Nepalis besides just the Sherpa community.

Surely some of the revenue generated could be ploughed into setting up centres like the famed Himalayan Mountaineering Institute in Darjeeling where courses and qualification on alpine climbing, mountain leadership and mountain guides could be made available. Individuals can rise to their own challenges and summit their own Everests.

Official commercial Everest season is over for this year. What will next season hold on the Everest Bahn? Another fastest ascent record, maybe a first Jamaican. Why do they do it? Maybe it is the highest natural rush, or maybe it is only human to want to climb the highest mountain. ●



Kaji Sherpa on top in his labeda surwal and topi in 1995, his fifth ascent completed in 20 hours.



UNCENSORED

Top 10 Charitraheen Chelis' causes

The last meeting of the Charitraheen Chelis took place at an undisclosed restaurant in Kathmandu, at a table right next to a man who was openly smoking pot. The Chelis ordered beer and margarita and gin slings for themselves.

CHELIS
Rosy Chhetri



It was not long before they began giggling. It all began when one Cheli brought up the 108 sexual positions depicted in a Bhaktapur temple. "If you want to try them out, you'd have to go and see them with your partner," she said. "Otherwise how would he know what to do? Okay, your leg there. My head here. Your arm there."

The agenda of their meeting was: 'The Top Ten Causes That The Chelis Believe In' and here they are:

- 1 Legalised prostitution. A win-win situation all around.
- 2 Citizenship through mothers. Recently, Badi women threatened to stage a naked protest in Kathmandu if the government did not grant their children citizenship without identifying their fathers. The Chelis applaud their spirit.
- 3 Unconditional abortion. Why the approval of the husband/father/guardian?
- 4 Rape is not just limited to the forced penetration of the vagina. Think anal rape, oral rape, then see Nepali law.
- 5 The movement to restore democracy. How sexy is that?
- 6 The movement for the rights of Dalit women.
- 7 The language rights movement. Trilingualism is hip.
- 8 The human rights movement, in all its ascendancy. Right now, the Chelis would like to draw attention to state-sponsored rape, when one state official commits rape, and others help to hide it.
- 9 An end to our centuries' old tradition of impunity.
- 10 Local ownership of natural resources.

That's ten. But by this time the

Chelis were riled enough that they wanted to continue:

- 11 Decentralisation. Give us back our DDCs and VDCs and Wards.
- 12 Anti-banda gestures. Kathmandu motorcycle rallies, car rallies, marches etc. against bandas are cool. Bandas on bandas. Please?
- 13 Transparency and accountability. Now, before you nod your head knowingly, it should be said that the Chelis were talking about corruption in NGOs and INGOs. Of course, the government (what government?) should be transparent and accountable too. But so should the NGOs and INGOs.

At this point, an irate side conversation took place between two Chelis. The gist was:

- 14 Newspapers must pay more to their staff and writers.
- 15 Labourers should be compensated during bandas by those who call the bandas. (This excludes rickshaw drivers who earn plenty during bandas).
- 16 Mothers' groups, or Aama Samuha. A brief outcry broke out at this point about daughters who are oppressed by their mothers, but was quickly quelled.
- 17 The Chelis feel that the women who rescued their abducted husbands from the Maoists represent the best of Nepal.

Again, a streak of frivolity broke out. Some Chelis wondered why unmarried men weren't called Budo Kumars, as unmarried women are called Budi Kanyas. Other Chelis wondered why women wear dupattas over their salwar-kamij; why the modesty, man? Burning dupattas is the equivalent of bra-burning. It must be done. (Tomorrow noon, at Ratna Park). They then continued:

- 18 Some of the families of people who have been disappeared over the past few years are beginning to set up their own support structures, looking after each others' children

when they have to go and look for their disappeared family members, etc. This is a cause worth supporting.

- 19 Secularism.
- 20 Republicanism.
- 21 Reform in the aid industry. While the more radical Chelis demanded (fists banging on the table) that we send all aid organisations packing, the more moderate Chelis prevailed, leading to a unanimous demand for the immediate reform of the aid industry, so that aid helps and not harms Nepal.
- 22 Bottom-up globalisation. (No, not, bottoms-up, bottom-up). This is as opposed to top-down globalisation, a topic that some Chelis became very, very animated about.
- 23 An end to militarisation. Make copious love, not copious war.

Again the conversation got sidetracked. There is, apparently, a difference between clitoral and vaginal orgasm. It all depends on your position. (See introduction, above). The conclusion was, and here I quote, "The missionary position assumes that orgasm is vaginal, whereas actually, orgasm is a clitoral phenomenon."

At this point, one of the Chelis said that when she was a student, she came across the word *karani* in her textbook. She asked her father what it meant, but he didn't tell her. Neither would her teacher. That's how she realized it meant sex. A Cheli yelled, "Karaunc? To scream? Does that really mean sex?"

It all deteriorated from there. Some Chelis wondered whether they should turn the Charitraheen Chelis into a dating service. Others lamented the lack of anonymity in Nepal, which makes dating so unpleasant.

The meeting disbanded with one Cheli singing, "Rejoice, rejoice, you have no choice," referring not, as one would think, to dating in Nepal, but to the aid industry. ●

Rosy Chhetri is a feminist with unrestricted access to the Charitraheen Chelis, and regularly files minutes of their underground meetings

The dirty dozen

SUNIL POKHREL

Chemical pesticides helped eradicate malaria from the inner tarai valleys in the 1960s and helped boost Nepal's agricultural productivity.

At a time when there wasn't much awareness of the longterm environmental dangers these chemicals posed, the government, impressed by what the pesticides could do, imported more than it could use.

Between 1989-1993 alone 114 tons of pesticides were disposed of secretly: just poured into the ground or rivers. When news of this leaked out, environmentalists and journalists started protesting. A plan to incinerate the pesticides in the Hetauda cement factory kiln was also halted.

There are still 74.16 tons of expired pesticides lying in warehouses in Kathmandu, Nepalganj and Amlekhganj. Of these, 36 tons are persistent organic pesticides (POPs) which Nepal has to get rid of by 2005 in accordance with the Stockholm Convention, of which it is a signatory.

The Ministry of Population and Environment (MOPE) has got \$319,000 from the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to dispose at least of the POPs. But a bitter tug-o-war between MOPE and the Ministry of Agriculture about who should handle that money is delaying the disposal of the pesticide.

"We have the expertise, the chemicals are in our warehouses, how can UNIDO and GEF give money to a ministry that has no experience or authority?" asks a senior official at the Ministry of Agriculture.

Pesticide registrar Bhakta Raj Palikhe says he wrote the project proposal for the UNIDO grant and doesn't see why it should go to MOPE. "They are not going to get any help from me about where the stockpiles are or its safe disposal," he says.

It will be impossible for MOPE to dispose of the chemicals without the cooperation of the Ministry of Agriculture. The deadlock has already lasted one year and if it is delayed by another year the money will lapse. MOPE officials say they are going to ask UNIDO/GEF for an extension. It took half a year just to appoint the coordinator for the project, Rajaram Adhikari from MOPE. He has no doubt who is to blame: "We have not made any progress because of the non-cooperation from the Ministry of Agriculture." The Chief Secretary has tried to mediate between the ministries but failed.

In 2000, a Greenpeace team made an inventory of the chemicals in Khumaltar and Amlekhganj, and many of the drums and containers that were made leakproof still bear Greenpeace stickers. Then in 2002, Greenpeace persuaded the European umbrella organisation

Official wrangling and greed delay the cleanup of an obsolete stockpile of dangerous pesticides



ALL PICS: MOHAN MAINALI

of pesticide manufacturers, CropLife, to take back the chemicals from Nepal and asked the government to respond. Kathmandu ignored this.

CropLife even wrote a letter to the Nepali ambassador in Brussels stating its willingness to take back all the pesticides. The Foreign Ministry passed the request along to the Ministry of Agriculture and MOPE. Neither responded to the offer. "It is not our job to write a letter to Crop Life," says a senior Ministry of Agriculture official, confirming that he didn't write back to the Foreign Ministry either. Earlier this year, Greenpeace wrote an urgent email to the authorities (see box) urging action. Nothing has happened.

Environmentalists say the official indifference is a proof of greed. There are no personal incentives for anyone to facilitate the repatriation of the chemicals, and if CropLife takes away the chemicals there will be no need for UN project money either.

MOPE says it is using the UNIDO/GEF money to prepare an inventory of POP chemicals. But that inventory was already produced in 2002 by the Bureau of Standards with a \$2,000 grant from UNEP. Even if somehow the ministries declare a ceasefire and manage to send off the 36 tons of POP chemicals, the question is: what will happen to the 38 tons of the remaining pesticides in rotting containers in Khumaltar, Nepalganj and Amlekhganj?

No one in either ministry has an answer to that. ● (KPK)

Letter from GREENPEACE

>Sent: Tuesday, February 10, 2004 14:29
>Subject: CropLife ready to return all Obsolete Pesticides from Nepal to Europe
>From: Andreas Bernstorff
>Greenpeace
>Toxic Trade Project
>Hamburg, Germany

>To:
>Mr K K Shrestha, Plant Protection Directorate
>Mr B R Palikhe, Pesticides Registrar
>Mr Sapkota, Executive Director, NARC
>Mr Dhruva Manandhar, Chief Entomologist, NARC
>Mr P Manandhar, POP Focal Point, HMG

>Dear Sir/s
>I hope you receive this letter in good health and I wish you a very good 2004.
>As you remember, Greenpeace with your kind support cleaned up, made safe by repackaging and prepared for sea transport all obsolete pesticides in Khumaltar, Lalitpur on October 2001 and January 2002 in order to safeguard the wellbeing of the neighbouring inhabitants and workforce on spot and to protect the environment.

>Greenpeace also made public the issue of obsolete pesticides in Nepal via European media in October 2001. "CropLife International", the global umbrella organisations representing almost all pesticide producers, then, also in October 2001 offered to the Nepal government support in solving the problem. In February 2002, we asked you to please respond to this offer. You find our letter attached to this document.

>After talking to CropLife again, recently, I wish to tell you that the offer still stands. I now trust that CropLife along with member companies like BAYER and associated/ "cooperating" companies like Shell will seriously take care of their products and retrieve the 75 tonnes of obsolete pesticides in Khumaltar, Amlekhganj and Nepalganj. However, they are still waiting for your answer.

>I now ask you to review the process and signal your willingness to solve the problem and welcome support. Without that, international industry organisations find it difficult to act.

>CropLife activities of such kind are in no conflict with international funding of Enabling Activities re Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) like PCBs/Obsolete Pesticides under the Stockholm Convention. WE have made sure about this with the competent UNIDO/GEF staff. On contrary, they would be very fond of seeing industry take responsibility.

>Please write to CropLife and their manager in charge.
>Andreas Bernstorff



Barrels of mercury-based chemicals being manhandled (top) at the Amlekhganj warehouse (below).



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Dip in Valley crime

Odd, because it is up everywhere else

At a time when the rest of the country is reeling under a crime wave, official statistics show that robberies are down in Kathmandu Valley. There has been a spate of serious armed robberies in the past few months, but the number of break-ins and burglaries appears to be down.

It could be that people are more scared than before to report crime to police, or it could really mean that there is a drop in crime. At the Sorakhutte Police Station near Thamel, the officer on duty looks bored. He says murders, robberies and violent gang wars that his beat used to be notorious for are now all gone. "Now we deal with ordinary cases like minor thefts, family quarrels and juvenile delinquents. The place has become quite safe and there are no reports of big crimes," he tells us.

In the lobby, a middle-aged woman coaxes a policeman to release her teenage son and his friends who were arrested for eve teasing in Thamel. Nearby, two men in their 30s are persuading another officer to arrest three young hooligans who beat up their friend. Petty crimes are routine, and the police are happy nothing serious has been reported for weeks.

The police station in Maharajgunj, responsible for policing areas from Gongabu Bus Park to Gopi Krishna Hall area near Chabahil, have experienced a similar lull. "We deal mostly with domestic violence and smalltime drug addicts," says a constable who recalls a time when rival gang members would slaughter each other in broad daylight at Chakrapath.

According to police data from July 2003-March 2004, crime rates have dropped with only 25 robberies and 30 murders reported. Police admit the public doesn't want to believe that crime rates have fallen, but say it really has. "People think we are busy controlling riots and no one is nabbing criminals, but it is not true," says a junior police officer at the Maharajgunj Chakrapath station.

Media speculation that crime is increasing due to the influx of migrants from Maoist-affected districts is also dismissed. DSP Ganesh KC at Hanuman Dhoka police station stands by the official data, "Our reports clearly prove that the Valley has not seen a rise in serious crime for many years."

Analysts say serious crime may have gone down as a result of police being withdrawn from most rural areas and moved to the cities. For the first time in memory, most stations have surplus manpower.

The force has swelled to 45,000 and each major station has more than 95 personnel for investigation, inspection and monitoring. The absence of parliament also means that there isn't as much overt politicisation of the force so they don't have pressure to go easy on criminals with political patronage. "We can do our work more independently without worrying about who we are arresting," says one police officer who, like the others interviewed for this story, wanted to remain unnamed.

The rise in the number of security companies is another reason for the drop in crime rate and even private houses now have their own security (*see box*). The police also introduced a public-police partnership program in over 40 places around the Valley to reduce crime. Civilians work as informers and the guilty are nabbed easily. ● (Naresh Newar)

Security counsel

The public perception is that since the security forces are busy fighting the Maoists, khaobadis and armed robbers are running loose.

This has meant a boom in business for private security agencies who can't cope with the demand from banks, businesses, factories and now even private houses. "Companies like ours relieve the burden of the police to a great extent," says Mohan Sitaula, director of Kantipur Security Guard, who began six years ago with just five guards. Now

Kantipur has over 500 guards working in over 160 postings around the country.

Manohar Koirala, manager of Group 4, the country's largest private security company, says it has brought international security standards to Nepal. "The level of public safety has grown due to security companies," says Koirala. Started in 1996 with 160 guards, Group 4 has grown into a 4,500 strong army in its own right. The company also trains people on safety measures and installs electronic security systems for 300 companies all over Nepal. But competition is stiff and prices are competitive.



KIRAN PANDAY

BIZ NEWS

AAA

There is nothing anonymous about the Association of Administrative Assistants (AAA).



The group was established for the first time in Nepal, with help from professionals and various organisations, to provide help and networking for administrative support staff. It has 40 members and organised its first program at Park Village Resort in Budhanilkantha on Sunday to promote cooperation and interaction, and discuss legalising the association, fund status, publicity and future programs.

Visit Nepal

Tourist arrivals in May reached 22,278, an increase of 22 percent compared to the same month last year. While the inflow of Indian tourist arrivals is still good, the growth in May arrivals is not remarkable. Nepal Tourism Board said frequent bandas, demonstrations and the suspension of the travel plans because of their national elections affected arrivals by Indian nationals. The good news is that long haul markets like France, Germany, the UK and the US did very well, partially due to the trekking season. Compared to the boom tourist year of 1999, arrivals in May 2004 were still down by 42 percent.

NEW PRODUCTS

HOT ROD: Despite 40 years in the business, Himal Iron and Steels proves it's still got an edge as it unveils the new Himal Tempcore iron rods. Manufactured under the process patented by CRM Belgium, the rebars have undergone extensive quality tests before being released on the Nepali market, and with a promise that at 20 percent more strength than ordinary bars, these are ideal for use in earthquake-prone areas.

HAIR TODAY: The three-day Sunsilik Hair and Style Show from 3-6 June combined the talent of renowned Indian hairstylist Jawed Habib and Sunsilik, a leading haircare brand from Nepal Lever. Habib's visit to Nepal was also the perfect opportunity to launch his parlour and training school at Kasthamandap that will undoubtedly have our tresses in top shape.



Insurance in the age of terrorism

Global terrorism has both helped and hindered the insurance business, and the same goes for Nepal where we face our own homegrown insurgency. Dip Prakash Pandey, General Manager of Everest Insurance, talked to *Nepali Times* about the impact of 9/11 in the local context, Indian insurance companies and future trends.

Nepali Times: How has terrorism affected the insurance business?

Deep Pandey: In a way, it was a blessing in disguise for the industry. Before 9/11, most people lacked awareness about the necessity of insurance. So there has been 20 percent growth and there is potential for more, mainly because the aviation industry is rebounding. New products are coming in. Our own company is bringing in new products. For instance, we see a huge potential for insurance gains in Nepal with regard to international adventure tourists, trekkers and mountaineers who come here.

The government formed a pool to which insurance companies have contributed Rs 50 million. If this pool is developed in the right way, we can work to create another reinsurance company to serve the poor. International insurers exclude the risk of terrorism, so we have not been given such coverage. But, we managed to find the reinsurance support from the General Insurance Corporation of India. We studied the market and past records of losses before fixing the present rate.

What kind of property do people usually insure in Nepal?

Vehicles, because the main growth has been in automobiles which is financed by banks and other financial institutions. There is some retail insurance, but it hasn't shown much growth. The area we could have a major premium volume is still out of our reach: home insurance. Very few people insure their homes. It helps now that bank-financed home loans are coming in.

Are you worried about the arrival of Indian insurance giants?

As per the law, any property in Nepal has to be insured under a company registered in Nepal. So the Indian involvement has been in life insurance policies.

How clean is the business?

The chances of malpractice are always there, but it is being controlled because of competition. With so many companies coming up, everyone wants to be the best and lure more clients. There are cases of bad deals that usually happen in marine transit but such incidents are rare because of communication and travel trade development. Foreign insurers provide transit cover only till Kolkata, now people buy coverage from warehouse to warehouse. This has pushed up the premium volume for the Nepali insurance industry.

Do you think the recent railway agreement between Nepal and India will check problems of pilferage?

I feel chances of losses are minimised as long as the insurance industry exists. The premium volume should come down and the ultimate beneficiaries will be the consumers.

What percentage of your business is aviation?

At present Everest Insurance does Rs 300 million premium and around 45 percent of our business is aviation. We started in 1994 and in a decade we are number one according to the Bima Samiti. Last year we settled three claims amounting to \$4.5 million.



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The fatal lure

Books on how revolutions devour their children

CK LAL

Totalitarianism of the right is easy to detect. They have a fascist streak and usually glorify a nation, a state or a race as better than all others. Totalitarianism of the left is politically correct and couched in the jargon of proletarian internationalism so it is more difficult to take to task.

Despite the failures of all kinds of communism, the colossal price paid by citizens for the cause of revolution, its fatal lure persists. It is not just our Maobadi, even analysts dissecting the sudden resurgence of armed insurrections worldwide carry a hangover from the early 19th century dogmas of conservative versus progressive.

Before she took her studies to Kumaon due to the insurgency in Nepal, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) researcher Marie Lecomte-Tilouine worked out of Dullu. She found the fascination of Maobadi cadre in Dailekh with the French Revolution intriguing. Even Baburam Bhattarai seems to revere Robespierre's Reign of Terror, forgetting its role in the rise of Napoleonic monarchy immediately afterwards.

Victor Hugo captures the tragedy and trauma of that period in *Ninety-Three* (Carrol & Graf Publishers Inc, New York, second printing 1989). He writes: 'The bronze mask of civil war has two profiles—the one turned towards the past, the other set towards the future, but both equally tragic.'

Responding to Edmund Burke's lament about the end of regal graces in France, Thomas Paine wrote that in mourning lost royal plumage, the British parliamentary orator had forgotten the birds from which the feathers were plucked. Hugo sums it all up in one sentence: 'Man breaks and destroys, man lays waste, man kills, but the summer remains summer, the lily remains the lily, the star remains the star.'

The seeds of Stalinist red terror were sown in the October Revolution itself. John Reed's *Ten Days That Shook the World* (Progress Publishers, Moscow) presents a 'slice of intensified history' as the author saw it in Petrograd of November 1917. Re-reading the book in Nepal in 2004 makes it clear why Rosa Luxemburg warned Lenin that their revolution could swiftly move from 'the dictatorship of a class to the dictatorship of a party, to be followed by the dictatorship of a committee of that party and eventually the rule of a single man who will soon enough dispense with that committee'.

Disintegration, decomposition and doom seem to be the life cycle of revolutions, as totalitarians who rule

by terror reap what they sow.

Tragically, our own comrades don't seem to take any lessons from history. The UML still carries the portraits of Lenin, Stalin, Mao and Kim Il Sung even though the late Madan Bhandari gave them a decent burial with his Bahudaliya Janabad in the early 1990s.

Rosa Luxemburg's dark predictions of revolutions devouring their own turned out even more chillingly true in New China where Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping evolved into *The New Emperors* (Avon Books, New York, 1993). Historian Harrison E Salisbury has painstakingly chronicled the internal feuds that triggered the Cultural Revolution and the purges of genuine revolutionaries as Mao's cult of personality took hold.

The true human cost of Mao's revolution on the Chinese people is chronicled in Jasper Becker's *Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine* (The Free Press, 1996). Becker traversed China interviewing survivors of the 1958-1962 famine in which up to 30 million Chinese died—more than Stalin's purges and Hitler's genocide put together. It is a chronicle of state terror, cannibalism, torture and murder during Mao's 'Great Leap Forward', an attempt at social engineering gone horribly wrong.

A more concise account of that period can be found in Alan Lawrance's *China under Communism* (Routledge, 1998) which looks at how Mao's brand of Marxism was forced to adopt Deng's reforms ("I don't care if a cat is black or white as long as it catches mice") after his death.

In *Red China Blues* (Bantam Books, London, 1997) the Chinese-Canadian author gives a first-hand account of the Cultural Revolution in which she participated as a starry-eyed Maoist. Jan Wong's disillusionment comes in the early 1990s, as she goes through her rites of passage in Beijing on the 100th birthday of the Great Helmsman himself when she starts singing in the Great Hall of the People.

Another insider's account is *Red Color News Soldier* (Phaidon Press, London, 2003, £24.95) by Li Zhensheng, who used to be the official party photographer during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) when the Gang of Four ran amok. Estimates of the victims of Red Guard terror run into millions and millions, but the statistics don't have the power of Li's pictures. The most haunting is at the end of the book: a series on the execution of Wan Shouxin, a revolutionary killed by revolutionaries.

Often, war becomes a statistic. But images like these remind us that every number represents a human tragedy. ●



Analysing the Maobadi

A systematic study of Maoism's resurrection in the Himalaya in 1996 started surprisingly late.

One of the first local books to explore the terrain of Maobadi insurgency was *Domestic Conflict and the Crisis of Governability in Nepal* (CNAS, Kathmandu, 2000, Rs 525) edited by Dhruva Kumar of the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies. Though not specifically devoted to the study of the Maobadi, it gave an academic veneer to the conventional wisdom about the rise of armed conflict in the kingdom. A more detailed primer on Maobadis is the collection edited by Prakash Shrestha, *Quest for Peace* (SAP-Nepal, Kathmandu, 2001) in which leaders of nascent civil society in the country indulge in their favourite game of discrediting each other when not laying all the blame at the doors of squabbling politicians.

In the October 2002 issue of the *Dialogue Quarterly* (Asha Bharati, Delhi, 2002, \$15) its editor BB Kumar focused on the 'Maoist Insurgency in Nepal and India'. One of its contributors, the former director of India's Intelligence Bureau MK Narayanan, is now Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh's security adviser. Narayanan advises fighting the insurgency the old way, but will it work?

Deepak Thapa has edited one of the most comprehensive books to introduce the Maobadi insurgency to outsiders, *Understanding the Maoist Movement in Nepal* (Martin Chautari, Kathmandu, 2003, Rs 475) which begins with premonitions and ends with profiles. The breadth of the book has been acquired at the cost of analytical depth. Thapa has covered some of the lost ground in a subsequent book that he co-wrote with Bandita Sijapati, *A Kingdom Under Siege* (the printhouse, Kathmandu, 2003).

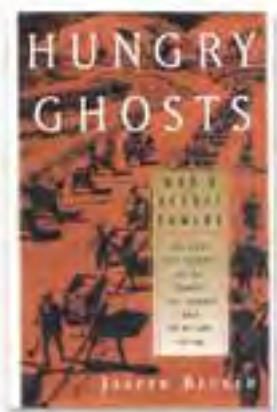
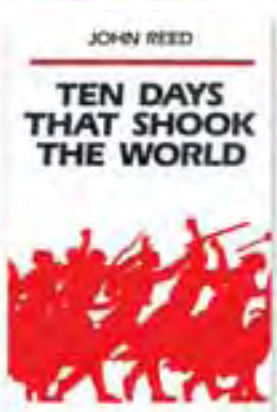
JNU professor SD Muni's monograph for the Observer Research Foundation *Maoist Insurgency in Nepal* (Rupa & Co, New Delhi, 2003, Rs 312), not only fails to break new ground, it doesn't even succeed in regurgitating old facts. By copiously quoting Maobadi ideologue Baburam Bhattarai, Muni shows it is possible to read all the books and yet remain wedded to your favourite dogma. *The Price of Neglect* (Bhrikuti Academic Publications, Kathmandu, 2004, Rs 1,295) by our only conflict doctor Bishnu Raj Upreti is an addition to the 'politically correct' analysis of the insurgency that uses an academic format to prove the obvious: Nepal is poor, misgoverned and unjust, hence it is a fertile ground for rebellion. Upreti raises questions, but leaves them largely unanswered.

Academic analyses of the Maobadi are understandably sketchy. After all, it is still a war in progress. Risks for critics can be for real. Still, it is difficult to understand the sympathetic undertones of a lot of the material on the Maobadi.

The next book someone should work on is the political entrepreneurship of the Maobadi insurgency to shed some insight into the strategies of its leadership. But it probably needs an insider to write it, and the author probably won't be an insider for much longer if it is written.

And maybe we should put a moratorium on people telling us what the problem is: what we need are solutions. Someone someday may show the courage to tear the insurgents' revolutionary mask. That may seem a long way away, but history has a way of dealing with statues: it topples them. Marie Antoinette and Jiang Qing, the right and left banks of extremism, are subsumed by the mainstream of the people's will. In Nepal, too, history will take its course.

(CKL)





NEPALI Times

200



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Advertising

industry battles adversity

and hopes for better times

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

Braving the economic slump, Nepal's advertising industry has adopted a 'when the going gets tough, the tough get going' policy. And it's working.

After waiting and watching the steady economic downturn for three years, the industry has hunkered down and established itself as an effective market force even in these difficult times. Proof: the increasing number of media outlets fuelled by advertising. In just the past year, there have been four new tv channels, 10 new FM stations and three new magazines.

"Despite everything, the advertising pie has grown bigger and this has helped the growth of the media," says Joydeb Chakravorty of Thomson Nepal. "Today, clients have realised that it pays to advertise even in times of recession."

In the short span of a decade, Nepal's advertising has gone through the boom of the late 90s followed by the bust in the early 2000s. But despite this cycle, advertising executives see the glimmer of an upturn.

Nepali professionalism is catching up with international trends and standards. Joint ventures with foreign partners have helped. There are about 20 active advertising agencies, although more than 60 agencies are registered with the government.

Unlike in the past, when clients dictated their positioning and content to ad agencies, the trend now is to leave it up to promotion professionals. All the producer has to do is brief the advertiser about the product and give general guidelines. As a result, a lot more creative commercials are cropping up on tv and the print ads are of higher standard. Even the radio jingles are getting catchier.

"Being creative is the main challenge," says Ranjit Acharya of Prisma Advertising. "That is why clients now come and ask us to design an entire multimedia campaign."

This is a far cry from the days when, not too long ago, placing an advertisement meant either bringing out notices through commission agents or giving donations to publishers. Officials in government agencies usually had relatives or friends serving as ad agents for placements in state-run newspapers, radio and tv. The limited private publishers used to queue up at business houses and politicians' residences to get donations in the name of advertisements on occasions like festivals or royal birthdays.

Nepal's consumer-led growth in urban areas has shown a massive impact in the industry, and manufacturers have seen sales soar as a result of a successful campaign. Sure, there are a lot of copycats who latch on to any approach that is a success, but the creative ones are always one step ahead and doing new things. Indications of the new trend are increasing numbers of humorous commercials on tv, the use of celebrity figures and the combination of mixed-media messages.

As more and more products in the same segment come out in the market, competition has got stiffer and this is reflected in the advertising. The instant noodle market is a prime example, as there are more than 50 brands, out of which 10 are heavy advertisers. Increasingly, they are relying on the expertise of the ad industry to make their noodles stand out from the rest.

Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG), as they are known in advertising jargon, are the ones most frequently advertised in the media. They include day-to-day consumer items like soap, detergents, shampoo, food items and packaged snacks. A new entrant is the consumer electronic segment, Samsung's



recent DigitAll Celebrations 2004 campaign being the latest example. Advertisers say their Nepali clients are now much more demanding of quality and content in their ads, as they have seen what a successful advertising campaign can do. They cite the example of commercial banks which, till recent years, would only put out vacancy notices. "Times have changed," says Subu Shrestha of Business Advantage. "Banks are striving to get ahead of competition and creating their brands through aggressive ad campaigns."

Some 60 percent of the annual Rs 200 billion ad pie in Nepal goes to radio and tv, while the rest goes to newspapers and magazines. This share of the electronic media is growing and will dominate even more of the market, according to trade experts. The ban on cigarettes and liquor on radio and tv has been the saviour of the print media.

Another fast-growing segment of the ad market are billboards. Signage technology has advanced and new flex hoardings have nearly wiped out the unattractive, labour-intensive painted signs. Advertising agencies say 15 percent of the annual ad expenditure is now going to billboards. Some media houses see this as a threat, and have even formed a cartel to pressurise the government into restricting or banning billboards. But the Valley's municipalities derive so much revenue from them that a ban is unlikely.

Despite the urban middle class-led growth in consumer spending that is fuelling the advertising growth, industry analysts say this is not sustainable. Many manufacturers and service industries are deliberately keeping a low profile and waiting for better times.

Under normal circumstances, manufacturers allocate significant budgets for advertising purposes, but because of the current political disruptions there are often cash flow problems. "Now they pay us only after they have paid for everything else," says Madhav Timilsina of Crayons Electra Nepal. "That shows that advertisement is simply not the priority for now."

Then there are products, mainly of multinationals, that continue to advertise despite hard times. Nepal Lever, Coke, Pepsi, DHL and Kodak are some of the heavy advertisers. But even here, analysts say the advertising budget would grow several fold once stability returns to the country.

In fact, the insurgency and political uncertainty has capped the growth in the advertising industry. And in doing so, it has also held back growth of the media. ●

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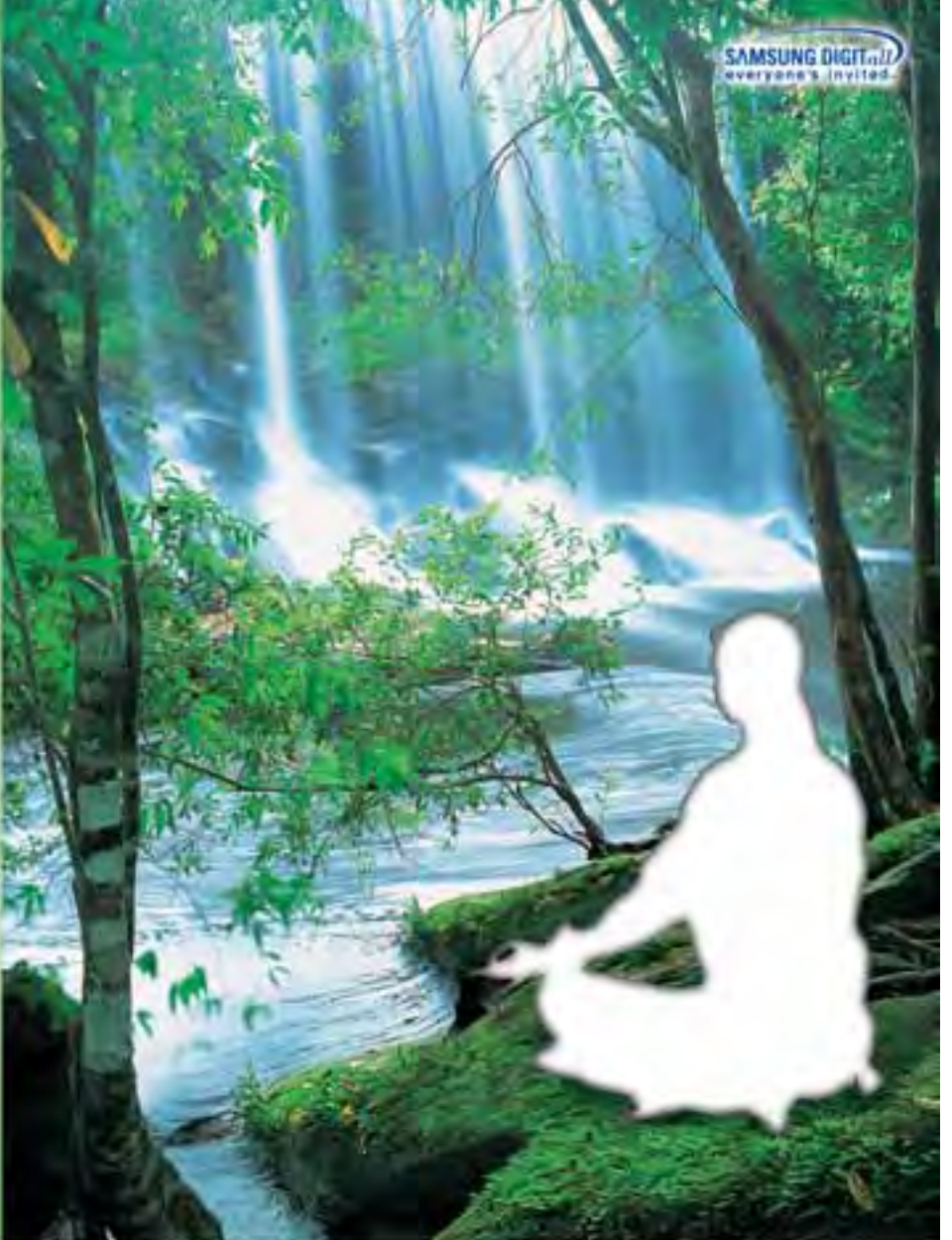
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NT adspeak

Many congratulations on your 200th issue. We opened our showroom in Nag Pokhari almost two years ago and immediately started advertising in the *Nepali Times*. It enabled us to reach a wide audience that has a modern approach, discerning taste and demands the best. Many of your readers have also become our clients.

Luca Corona
Managing Director
Kalinta

Nepali Times has an excellent quality. The paper and printing is among the best in Nepal and is truly world class. The paper offers an opportunity to target an affluent class of people with premium products. The marketing staff is great and provides good customer satisfaction.

Rakesh Mohan
Managing Director
Nepal Lever

Nepali Times is an effective communication media, especially in the higher socio-economic bracket and with the expatriate community. We have advertised regularly in the paper and will continue to do so in future. I am personally very impressed by the content and the print quality. I would like to congratulate Himalmedia for a job well done.

Shekhar Golchha
Managing Director
Golchha Organisation

Over the past four years, reading *Nepali Times* has become a fixture in the Friday morning schedule of Kathmandu's elite. Its reach amongst intellectuals, professionals, expatriates, politicians, businessmen and the masses has made it an ideal vehicle for promoting brand awareness.

Rajendra Khetan
Khetan Organisation

We have advertised Transavia airlines and Martinair on the front page of *Nepali Times* and we are happy with the brand awareness it has generated in our focus market. We hope to continue this relationship for our Outbound Malaysia tours in the future.

Subodh Rana
Managing Director
Marcopolo Travels

Nepali Times caters to a select segment of customers that fits the target recipients for our campaigns, unlike dailies that aim at the masses. With respect to the automobile business, your paper is the appropriate medium to reach the best section of readers who are potential customers.

Binita Pradhan
Executive Director
AVCO International

If the window to the world can be covered by a newspaper, I have no reservation in saying it is *Nepali Times* in Nepal. Congratulations on your 200th issue and we wish you all success.

Mila Rai
Director of Sales
Hotel Yak & Yeti

Nepali Times appeals to a certain class that appreciates quality. It has maintained its standard and this is what makes it an excellent platform to advertise high-end products. Furthermore, the management is very cooperative and supportive.

PM Shrestha
Managing Director
Nepal Pashmina Industry

Congratulations on reaching the landmark 200th issue of *Nepali Times*. We believe your paper follows a very high standard of journalism and analyses that is read by the elite intelligentsia of Nepal, making it an excellent medium for us to reach this audience.

SK Das
Zonal Manager
Dabur Nepal

Nepali Times has certainly taken Nepali media to a different level. The presentation, layout and content all makes one somewhat

addicted. Due to this, the major part of our advertising campaign is planned out with *Nepali Times*, and this has made a positive impact within our target group of customers. We have also introduced the *Nepali Times* on board our flights exiting Kathmandu.

Gyan Amerasinghe,
Area Manager Nepal
Qatar Airways

I am sure it has been an uphill task, but right from the first issue *Nepali Times* set new standards in terms of quality reading. It has maintained a responsible attitude towards society by being non-biased, apolitical and not making any assumptions before reporting. Congratulations and keep up the good work.

Samson Rana
Director of Sales and Marketing
Seti Cigarette Factory

Congratulations to *Nepali Times* on four years of its publication. This weekly is highly valued for its national issues, clarity, accuracy and sensibility. We were delighted by positive response from locals and expatriates through advertisements placed in your paper.

Shreedar P Acharya
Managing Director
Godavari Village Resort

Nepali Times provides in-depth and thorough analyses of situations and the content is well written. What we really like is that you appreciate other competitors, as you carry a section on the most newsworthy articles from the Nepali media. We wish you more success in the coming years.

Saurabh and Srijana Jyoti
Jyoti Group

The content of *Nepali Times* is probably the best in terms of quality so everything that is printed in it is read with great interest. And that gives my company a reason to believe that my advertisement is also read with equal interest. In other words, prospective buyers are getting the message!

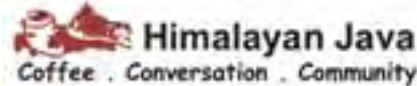
Bijen Jonchhe
Managing Director
Metro Mall

Cover story The best of 200



CONGRATULATIONS!

#200





MIN BAJRACHARYA

'Puppet prime minister'

Baburam Bhattarai in *Kantipur*, 8 June

यज्ञनिपुर

Sandwiched between the revolutionary 'people's war' and the parliamentary people's struggle, King Gyanendra used Sher Bahadur Deuba for protection. What remains to be seen is how far the inclusion of Deuba will complicate matters in the tussle between the people's republic and the monarchy.

The political forces and civil society both showed that they have gained political maturity by equating Deuba's status to that of his predecessors Lokendra Bahadur Chand and Surya Bahadur Thapa. There are exceptions like a few within the CPN (UML) who want to be part of the Deuba government.

At least Deuba was an elected prime minister when he was sacked almost two years ago. Now he is merely another monarch nominee. Comparisons cannot be drawn between the two, making it incorrect to say the king's move of 4 October 2002 has been rectified. The Nepali Congress, under the leadership of Girija Prasad Koirala, comprehends this fundamental difference but the self-proclaimed leftist UML leadership is either playing dumb or has yet to understand the matter. We can only hope the UML does not commit suicide by joining the Deuba government.

Why did the king reappoint the same man he sacked from the same position on the grounds of incompetence? Was it under duress or yet another conspiracy? On the surface, it appears that the king made a reconciliatory move by 'reinstating' the same prime minister he threw out of office. This is an illusion. If the monarch was honest, he would have made a royal declaration to clarify the dispute on state power and sovereignty. He would have examined himself and declared Deuba's restoration without any ambiguity. Instead, he gave Deuba a list of things to do, similar to the conditions he set upon Chand and Thapa—as if they were his sincere servants.

The king's latest move attempts to kill many birds with a single stone. Prompted by a few foreign advisers, he asked Deuba to hold on to the reigns of state power and get rid of the major parliamentary parties and us. Deuba was the right candidate for this job because he possesses traits that no other contemporary political leader has—the image of a democrat and a Kangresi with the heart of a royalist. This is how he can dupe the people better than Chand or Thapa.

Secondly, Deuba has no opinion or ideology but is very ambitious. Such people gravitate towards different power centres depending on the time and situation. He uses others and is used in turn. Deuba floated from Girija Prasad Koirala to Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and now he is in Gyanendra's camp. No one can say where he will be tomorrow.

Thirdly, through then-US Ambassador Julia Chang, Deuba established a good relationship with the West. He consolidated his position with India through the Mahakali Treaty. By splitting the Nepali Congress, he scored points with the royal palace and by declaring a state of emergency and mobilising the army, he won credibility for a tough anti-Maoist stance. He also curried favour with the *nouveau-riche* and smugglers with a Pajero and Bangkok culture. The final point was Deuba's opposition to the republican cause in the recent protests, which obviously helped the king.

Under these circumstances, Deuba is but a shield—a puppet prime minister. If anyone takes his reappointment as regression redressed, it will be a grave mistake.

Dial-in rebels

Drishhti, 1-7 June

The Maoist rebels are not equipped solely with guns and grenades. They now have modern means of communication like satellite phones, allowing rebels in Khandbari and Swragadwari in the east to stay in touch with comrades in Gulmi and other western districts of the west. It not only helps the Nepali rank and file but they can also call relatives living abroad.

"Hello! Can we have our mess there today?" asks Amar, second-in-command at the Mangalsen First Brigade Battalion, on a satellite uplink from Gulmi. "HQ and a company will arrive today, everything should be ready." After he's done, a group gathers around to briefly exchange greetings with their comrades. "We have been unable to meet after the Beni attack, but thanks to modern technology, we can talk like this," a Maoist said, pointing to the set.

The phone was then handed over to Bam Dev Chhetri, a Maoist central member, who had to contact his superiors. During his stay in New Delhi, Chhetri familiarised himself with all kinds of communication mediums and his expertise helped the Maoists establish a functional network across the country. "We developed our system to suit our needs," he says.

Intercom communication has revolutionised the Maoist side: the rebels across the length and breadth of the country now have a tangible link with each other. Mother units that have a range of 80km and cost Rs 30,000 each have been installed in different districts with technical teams for operations. Each primary set has a secondary system of around a dozen telephones. These sets cannot be used to contact anyone outside the network but do, however, intercept signals from

security force walkie-talkies. Getting advance notice on the movement of troops is now as easy as listening eavesdropping.

In rural areas, where locals have not seen ordinary telephones, the sophisticated machines imported from Singapore, Germany and Belgium carried by rebel leaders are objects of wonder. "In the army, only ranks above battalion commander are given satellite phones," says battalion commander Sudeep. "But each district headquarters controlled by of our party has one."

The rebels also use very high frequency (VHF) phones installed by the government in different districts. They destroyed repeater towers in areas out of their immediate control but have kept the system functioning everywhere else.

Back in power

Homnath Dahal, spokesman for NC (Democratic) in *Bimarsha*, 4-10 June

राजदिवस

The reappointment of Sher Bahadur Deuba to the post of prime minister ended the chaos in the country. His reinstatement means the government that the king dismissed almost two years ago is back in power too.

While other political parties argue that Deuba's reappointment by no means includes his former government, what they need to understand is at present the constitution is inactive except for Article 127 that the king uses time and again. It is employed exclusively in difficult times, although this too has become a matter of debate. The Nepali Congress (Democratic) agrees the appointment of a prime minister should take place through Article 36 or Article 42 Clause 1 and 2, but the country is not in a position to implement that because we lack a parliament. If Madhab Kumar Nepal and Girija Prasad Koirala

were to be made prime minister, their appointment would take place under the same article that allowed Sher Bahadur Deuba to resume that position. The only way to revert to the normal working of the constitution is for elections to take place.

Deuba's appointment may appear like that of Lokendra Bahadur Chand and Surya Bahadur Thapa, but there are differences. Practically and politically, Deuba's appointment confirms the reinstatement of his ousted government because it was him that the king sacked for incompetence. If interpreted from a constitutional point of view, there may be several angles, but politics is not just about constitutions and laws. There are equally important political messages to take into account.

The prime minister represents the government. Therefore, his reappointment is tantamount to the reinstatement of his government. There is no doubt about it, although he can change the ministers of his cabinet. This is why Deuba's appointment should not be taken as that of an individual, but rather as that of a government. There is no other alternative. We are back where the unconstitutional processes first began and this is precisely why we must accept the use of Article 127 for the last time. Together, we must steer our course out of this mire. This will not be possible without an all-party government that includes the Nepali Congress and the CPN (UML).

Home to Baghdad

Nepal, 6 June

नेपाल

Firaj Alwaka has the distinction of being perhaps the only recognised Iraqi refugee in Nepal. "I suffered this fate because I couldn't bear the brutality and heinous atrocities in my country anymore," says the 29-year-old. He arrived in



Placard: Movement

Deuba: Hurry, Madhab, hurry!

Street signs: All party government, peace talk, election

राजधानी *Rajdhani*, 6 June

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"For bigger political goals, such pains have to be endured."

Lekhnath Neupane, president of the All Nepal National Free Students Union, on the education banda, Radio Sagarmatha 102.4, 6 June

Kathmandu on 25 July 2000 after leaving Iraq through Jordan. His final destination was New Zealand through Kathmandu and Hong Kong—a deliberately circuitous route to elude Saddam Hussain's secret agents. Forced to leave after his life was threatened for protesting against Saddam's regime, Alwaka was sent back to Kathmandu by security officials in Hong Kong. Then 9/11 happened, changing Western perceptions about Muslims. Unfortunately, it also affected Nepal's perception of Alwaka and he was arrested. After being jailed for four months, he was finally freed and accorded refugee status by the UNHCR.

He is learning Nepali and English, although the meagre Rs 3,700 that he receives from the commission doesn't meet his expenses. More than half is spent on rent alone. The US-led war on Iraq had Alwaka worried, "Imagine my condition, living in a foreign country as a refugee with no contact with loved ones caught in the middle of a war." He adds that he was "very, very happy" when Saddam was finally caught. Now all he wants is to return home.

(Nepalnews.com)

Discrepancies

Kantipur, 6 June

It is strange that Supreme Court (SC) Judge Krishna Kumar Barma dismissed charges against Gordon William Robinson, the British national arrested with three kg of heroin, when he was responsible for the tough verdict handed out to Rita Dahal. The controversy surrounding the Robinson case has far from abated with legal experts concluding that Barma and fellow SC Judge Baliram Kumar's ruling on the Briton's case was flawed. They have requested a full inquiry into the matter.

Barma, now on extended leave, sentenced Dahal to 15 years imprisonment and a Rs 500,000 fine for possessing 276g of brown sugar two years ago. The verdict was based on the statement of confiscation and the police report. In Robinson's case, his confession was completely ignored. The judges also dismissed the police statement, saying it could not be recognised in court because it lacked the signatures of government officials and local representatives. (Nepalnews.com)

Call it off



NEPALNEWS.COM

One of the seven Modern Indian School buses damaged by a Maoist bomb at the school premises on 9 June in Kathmandu.

Editorial in Samacharpatra, 8 June

Education is among the worst affected areas in the current political climate of instability.

Despite commitments made against the disruption of education, parliamentary parties and the Maoists directly attack schools and colleges with constant bandas to leverage their demands. The latest is the indefinite educational strike called by the Maoist-affiliated All Nepal National Student's Union (Revolutionary) that began last Sunday which has stalled education nationwide.

Even village schools are closed although the strike was meant for those in cities and district headquarters. No one wants to face the Maoists' wrath, evident in their attacks on ambulances, passenger buses and schools during recent bandas. Their fear is exacerbated by regular abductions of both students and teachers. The presence of either the Maoists or the security forces in schools further traumatises the children.

The latest school banda has kept 7.7 million students away from their classes. This month alone, schools have been closed for over nine working days due to political strikes. How long will it take for them to allow our children back to school where they ought to be? Futures are at stake and yet the regular bandas called by political parties and their affiliated organisations don't end.

The ANNSU (R) is asking the government to withdraw the Maoist terrorist tag. It also wants private schools to slash fees by 25 percent. Until these conditions are met, it threatens to continue the banda. While these demands may not be completely unreasonable, this is hardly the right way to go about things.

It is true that most private schools charge unreasonably high fees. It is necessary to reduce it so that all Nepalis can afford to give their children a better education because quality in government schools has eroded in the past few years. However, closing schools creates even more problems and parents are put in a difficult position. If the revolutionary students want to prove their social and political worth, they should halt the banda immediately. Then the government can work towards fulfilling their demands.

The Deuba government already has plans underway to restart peace talks with the Maoists. While there are chances for an environment conducive to negotiations, the biggest stumbling block in the way is this indefinite educational strike. Call it off.

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The S-21 prison, now the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, where Khmer Rouge prisoners were tortured and killed.

They can hide but they can't run

Unlike other war crimes, the perpetrators of the Cambodian genocide are still scot free, but that may change

These days suspected war criminals from Rwanda to Serbia to Sierra Leone are in the dock. Dozens are still on the run, but hope remains that they, too, will face justice. This is not true of the perpetrators of the

OPINION

James A Goldston

Cambodian genocide of the 1970s. They remain free, and nobody is looking for them.

A quarter of Cambodia's population of eight million was executed, starved to death or succumbed to disease during the Khmer Rouge rule from 1975-79. There has been no real trial, no truth commission and no official acknowledgement of one of the

most heinous crimes in human history. As a result, many Cambodians born since 1979 do not understand the scope and gravity of the atrocities. Meanwhile, the anguish and sorrow of survivors, almost all of whom lost loved ones, have not found redress.

This may be about to change. A year ago, the United Nations and the Royal Government of Cambodia agreed in principle to establish an 'Extraordinary Chambers' composed of Cambodian and international prosecutors and judges to investigate and try the 'senior leaders of Democratic Kampuchea and those who were most responsible for crimes' under Khmer Rouge rule. Ratification of

the agreement has been delayed by the stalemate among Cambodia's bickering political parties following last year's elections. But a breakthrough appears close.

The formal decision to create a tribunal for the Khmer Rouge represents a major achievement after a decade of diplomatic effort. To implement it, however, a number of hurdles remain to be overcome. The first obstacle is cost. Outsiders will inevitably bear the lion's share of the budget for the tribunal. The current estimate of \$50 million over three years has shocked donor governments. But this compares favourably with the Special Court in Sierra Leone (more than \$70 million over three years) and the \$100 million spent annually on the international

courts for Rwanda and Yugoslavia.

The price is appropriate. The US and other Western governments fueled Cambodia's civil war in the 1970s, then lent the Khmer Rouge legitimacy in the 1980s by insisting that they continue to occupy Cambodia's seat at the UN. If the Khmer Rouge trials are to proceed, donors must act quickly to come up with the necessary funds.

The second hurdle stems from the fact that Cambodia's tribunal will be the first internationalised court in which domestic judges form a majority. This poses a particular challenge in a country where lawyers were among the targets of genocidal violence, where few sitting judges possess formal legal training and which has little tradition of judicial independence. In order to ensure a credible process, Cambodia and the UN must select judges of the highest caliber, not those that toe a party line. The UN must make clear that it will halt the tribunal if it falls short of international standards.

The third hurdle is the danger that the Extraordinary Chambers

will be regarded as the end rather than the beginning of a longterm search for accountability and legal reform. Given time and resource constraints, it is unlikely that more than a dozen defendants will be tried. But thousands of others took part in the violence. Their many victims will rightly seek some form of accounting, at a minimum, an official record of the crimes they suffered. Before long, an effort to document and publish the truth will be necessary.

The Khmer Rouge prosecutions will not be perfect. But they are necessary. Pol Pot died in 1998, but aging senior associates like 'Brother Number Two' Nuon Chea and ex-Khmer Rouge president Khieu Samphan live freely in Cambodia. With sufficient resources, and a determination not to compromise on quality, the Extraordinary Chambers can provide a measure of justice for the victims and an example of law's power to serve the public good. ●

James A Goldston is Executive Director of the Open Society Justice Initiative

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The banality of evil

The idea that America is morally superior, or that it has been divinely chosen as a leader of nations, is dangerous

One consequence of the Iraq war is to expose (once again) the false divide between 'civilised' and 'barbarous' nations. The United States seems as capable of barbarism as anyone else. Much of the time the barbarism in Iraq goes unrecorded, as when American tanks sweep

Hatred and violence against Others seem to be manifested most powerfully as the result of fear: they are survival reactions. The descent into barbarism generally occurs in the midst of economic crisis or when localised violence has already flared. Fear leads one group to coalesce in order to protect itself, perhaps by attacking a competing group.

This pattern was evident in Yugoslavia's wars of the 1990s, where ethnic communities that lived together more or less peacefully became enmeshed in civil war in the midst of a deep economic crisis. Similarly, Israelis and Palestinians have both engaged in barbaric acts in a tragic interplay of mutual fear that empowers extremists in both communities. There is no glory on either side of the Israel-Palestine debacle. But Israel, with its vastly stronger army, could and should have taken much wiser political decisions than occupying the West Bank with settlers.

American reactions to the Abu Ghraib torture scenes, followed by the beheading of the American hostage Nicholas Berg, show clearly the route to barbarism in a supposedly civilised country. In May 2004, *The New York Times* polled readers in a city in the US heartland, Oswego, Illinois. One retired businessman said, "Let's kill them all. Let's wipe them off the face of the earth." A Nazi leader would not have said it differently.

A tow truck driver said that the beheading "just affirms what I thought before. We're not being tough enough. This is something that we've got to do. We should attack our enemies directly and not back off till we succeed". Barbarous thinking

comes easily, and right-wingers fuel the fervor, as when Rush Limbaugh said on his radio program: "They're the ones who are perverted. They're the ones who are dangerous. They're the ones who are subhuman. They're the ones who are human debris, not the United States of America and not our soldiers and our prison guards".

The US is more depraved than other countries, it's just that human society, even in the 21st century, is capable of sliding into barbaric thinking and action, no matter the level of 'development'. The idea that any nation is morally superior, or that it has been divinely chosen as a leader of nations, is dangerous.

Once we recognise how vulnerable all of the world is to this kind of descent into violence, the importance of international law and international institutions such as the United Nations become all the more obvious. The UN successfully resisted the powerful pressures of the US to condone a war with Iraq despite repeated US claims, now known to be false, that Iraq was in possession of weapons of mass destruction. The UN process worked. It was US policy that failed.

The need to subject even the most powerful country to international law will be one benefit of the otherwise disastrous war that the US launched in Iraq. If this lesson is learned, the world will be far safer. America itself will be safer, in part because it will be less likely in the future to unleash a spiral of violence fueled by its own irrational fears and misunderstandings of the world.

● (© Project Syndicate)

Jeffrey D Sachs is Professor of Economics and Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University

Low-rise jeans

Slutty and bad for health

LEAH M'LAREN in TORONTO

"Always cover your kidneys," a shiatsu therapist told me recently. "They hate the cold." I wasn't wearing anything spectacularly revealing, just a simple T-shirt and jeans. But because of the current trend that dictates all jeans must skim the pubic bone and all T-shirts must ride above the navel, my kidneys were, I must admit, exposed.

Almost all of the clothes I own make it impossible to avoid showing them off. It's as if the influential fashion arbiters of the world got together and decided that the strip of fabric that used to encircle the widest, fleshiest portion of a woman's midriff must be abolished. As my jeans and skirts creep lower, I've had to buy a new set of discreet low-rise panties to avoid that wanton intern look, so popular among 12-year-old girls.

Before the rise of low-rise, jeans were the one garment modern women could depend upon to lift, smooth and contain the female form. Low-rise jeans do the opposite. They exacerbate problem areas. Worse yet, they create whole new areas of concern for already insecurity-plagued women.

Who even knew about those frightening little knobs of pudge on the lower back before this unwise convergence of low-rise jeans and T-shirts made for Smurfs?

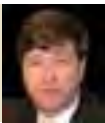
The onset of summer unfortunately encourages a dangerous practice of Aspirational Dressing. This mode of self-apparelling works according to the overoptimistic *Field of Dreams* mentality—ie if you wear it, the body will come. And what a truly contagious mass delusion Aspirational Dressing is.

After my shiatsu massage, I put on a demure wrap dress and went to a dinner party. I struck up a conversation with a very nice neurosurgeon and decided to enlighten him to the danger low-rise jeans pose to the kidneys. He chuckled and told me that the kidneys are well insulated and that it is unlikely exposing them would lead to kidney failure.

He may be right. But just to be on the safe side, I suggest we all give the butt cleavage a break this summer. ● (TG&M)



OPINION
Jeffrey D Sachs



into Iraqi neighborhoods and kill dozens of innocents in the name of fighting 'insurgents'. But barbarism is found in many quarters, as the grisly beheading of an American hostage made clear.

Every society, under certain conditions, is vulnerable to a descent into barbarism. Many historians have argued that German society under Hitler was somehow uniquely evil. False. Germany was destabilised by defeat in World War I, a harsh peace in 1919, hyperinflation in the 1920s and the Great Depression of the 1930s, but was otherwise not uniquely barbarous. On the contrary, in the early part of the twentieth century, Germany was one of the world's richest countries, with enviably high education levels and scientific prowess. Hannah Arendt was closer to the mark when she wrote about the 'banality of evil', not its uniqueness.

There seem to be two common characteristics of the descent into barbarism. The first is the relentless human tendency to classify the world as Us versus Them, and then to reduce Them to sub-human status. Such classifications probably evolved because they strengthened the cohesion of the 'in' group, facilitating cooperation by harnessing hatred for those outside.

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Behind the green

Never forget that perfect grass is a lot of work

Watching Wimbledon tennis, we hear about the great care required to keep the grass courts in perfect condition. We are also subjected to in-depth analyses of the groundskeeper's efforts in preparing the cricket pitch to favour the home team. We see the immaculate condition of soccer fields before a game starts.

A golf course is all these added together and multiplied ten fold. Over 100 acres of undulating fields with different varieties of grass, cut to different specified lengths, right down to the putting greens, are

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



trimmed evenly to measurements in millimetres. Lakes, ponds, streams, sandy bunkers, thousands of trees, flowers and shrubs: who is

responsible for what appears to be a Herculean task of keeping all these elements in good condition?

A lot of possible headaches in golf course maintenance are minimised with good course design, construction and landscaping. However, no matter how much foresight and design skills are employed during construction, the reality is that keeping an immaculate green is an ongoing and demanding prospect.

Once the course is built, it starts to mature and nature steps in. Without intensive maintenance, the course soon degenerates, as often seen in under-funded or loosely managed facilities.

In most parts of the world, sophisticated machinery and expensive organic and inorganic enhancers play a much more important role than humans. However, in Nepal and other less affluent countries, it is preferable to make use of people, providing much needed job opportunities.

Work on the golf course starts well before sunrise—to ensure it is playable for the early morning enthusiasts, and carries on until close to sunset. Some of the daily tasks include cutting greens and fairways, watering the grass, applying required pesticides and fertilisers to keep the grass healthy, planting and trimming the flora, smoothing out sand bunkers and the never-ending removal of weeds.

Most of the maintenance team start out in easier jobs. With training and experience they work their way up to more complex tasks of cutting



the greens and applying exact doses of fertilisers and medicines. For example, Bacchu Ram Pandey at Gokarna Golf Club began as a layman but today has adequate knowledge to handle the greens. Recently when I commented to him that hundreds of visitors have shown great appreciation for the smooth greens at Gokarna, he replied, "I really enjoy my job and we are all lucky that golfers enjoy the playing conditions of this course. We try to give our best to keep it in this condition."

It is quite natural that, as in many other fields, people forget the ones who work behind the scenes. It is no different on golf courses and we should remind ourselves of this and appreciate the hard and dedicated work put in to keep the environment at these enjoyable levels.

Even a slight loss of concentration while performing sensitive maintenance tasks can spoil the playing conditions, which immediately invites criticism from discerning golfers. However, don't forget the converse: give encouragement for a job well done!

Most comments from visitors are compliments on the great design of the course or the beautiful natural conditions. Occasionally, when we receive a compliment like this one from a visitor from across the world—"Wow, the course is playing wonderful, the greens are true and very well manicured and the bunkers are great even after it has just rained!"—we smile and let them know that they are appreciating the work of our maintenance staff. ●

Deepak Acharya is a Golf Instructor and Golf Director at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu.
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Football's coming home...

On a tv near you! Technology is a wonderful thing when it becomes possible for Nepali football fans to watch the best European teams compete for EURO 2004.



Group A Saturday 12 June
PORTUGAL vs GREECE
10:15 PM

In true UEFA European Championship tradition, the opening match of EURO 2004 features the hosts Portugal. Greece, who defeated Spain in Madrid in the run-up to this competition, is a technical and highly defence-oriented team. If they can handle the weight of expectation, then the home team have the potential to ensure the figurative fireworks on the pitch outdo any launched in the ceremony beforehand. A note of caution for Greece: since the finals expanded in 80s, firstly to eight teams and then, from 1996, to 16 teams, the hosts have never lost their opening game. Watch out for Portugal's appallingly bad-looking Nike jerseys.

PORTUGAL probable starting lineup: Ricardo, Ferreira, Andrade, Couto, Rui Jorge, Costinha, Petit, Figo, Rui Costa, Simão and Pauleta.

GREECE probable starting lineup: Seitaridis, Dellas, Kapsis, Fyssas, Tsiartas, Zagorakis, Karagounis, Giannakopoulos, Charisteas and Nikolaidis.

SPAIN vs RUSSIA
1AM

The first two UEFA European Championships were won by the Soviet Union and Spain. Now the modern-day Russian side are up against a Spanish team hoping for a first major honour since that triumph in 1964. Both teams needed a play-off to reach Portugal—Spain against Norway, Russia versus Wales—but both have high hopes of progressing past Group A. This is the first

official competitive meeting between Russia and Spain, although Spain did beat the Soviet Union in the 1964 final. Spain will be looking to overcome the jinx of never being able to do well in major competition and it has the best options in midfield with a string of talented players including Juan Carlos Valerón, Joaquín Sánchez and Rubén Baraja. **SPAIN** probable starting lineup: Cañizares, Puyol, Marchena, Helguera, Bravo, Baraja, Alonso, Etxeberria, Raul, Vicente and Morientes.

RUSSIA probable starting lineup: Ovchinnikov, Anyukok, Sharonov, Smertin, Evseev, Gusev, Mostovoi, Alenichev, Aldonin, Sychev and Bulykin.

Prediction: Spain 2 - 1 Russia

Group B Sunday 13 June
SWITZERLAND vs CROATIA
10:15 PM

This promises to be an intriguing match in Leiria, featuring two of the bookmakers' outsiders for the tournament playing just hours before the long-awaited meeting of Group B favourites France and England. Croatia proved they can hack it on the biggest stage both in EURO 96 and the 1998 FIFA World Cup. Switzerland are another nation on the up. Both have a rich crop of talent and know this match is the one to win. Switzerland under Jakob Köbi Kuhn are an attacking side, and in the qualifiers made full use of the talents of the likes of Hakan Yakin. That form will be needed against a Croatian team that plays with passion. They can also be credited for having the best looking jersey by far.

SWITZERLAND probable starting lineup: Stiel, Haas, Berner, Henchoz, M Yakin, Frei, Muller, Chapuisat, H Yakin, Wicky and Rama.

CROATIA probable starting lineup: Pletikosa, Tomas, Tudor, Simic, Rapaic, Bavic, Kovac, Klasnic, Babic, Leko and Prso.

Prediction: Switzerland 3 - 3 Croatia

FRANCE vs ENGLAND
1AM Monday

This is surely one of the most enticing in the group stage. The holders, the only side to qualify with a 100 percent record, face a difficult opener. England are not only fervently supported, they have a young, well-organised team capable of beating anyone—if the mood strikes them. These nations are natural rivals in any sporting arena, and this game is given added spice by the fact that so many of the French squad have been 'Anglicised' by plying their trade in the English Premiership. While France has the most well-balanced squad in of all 16 teams, memories of their remarkable flop in the World Cup are still fresh. But if they play their best, it is hard to see the English coming away with three points from this encounter.

FRANCE probable starting lineup: Barthez, Sagnol, Desailly, Thuram, Lizarazu, Vieira, Makelele, Pires, Zidane, Trezeguet and Henry.

ENGLAND probable starting lineup: James, Neville, Campbell, Terry, Cole, Gerrard, Beckham, Lampard, Cole, Owen and Rooney.

Prediction: France 3 - 1 England



Maoists review books on Maoists

The #9 of 'The Worker', the Maoist party bulletin in English carries a review of recent books on the Maoist insurgency in Nepal titled 'Proverbial Blind Men's Portrayal of an Elephant' written by a certain 'Laldhoj'. Excerpts from the review:

The People's War in Nepal: Left Perspectives
Arjun Karki and David Seddon (eds)
Adroit Publishers, Delhi, 2003
IRs 600



The year 2003 marked a watershed in the publication of numerous books and research papers on the revolutionary movement in Nepal, both within the country and outside. This is definitely a sign of universal acknowledgement of the revolutionary movement as a serious political force by both friends and foes alike. The books and publications under review, however, can be taken as important samples representing the viewpoints of major power centers in Nepal and abroad, particularly India and the USA.

Despite their varying strategic and political interests, all the publications seem to have one thing in common: their empiricist method of enquiry and presentation. As a result, they miss the 'forest' and harp about individual 'trees' in their own narrow perspectives. This is not surprising given their bourgeois, or at the most, revisionist or neo-Marxist outlooks. Consequently, most of the time their assessment of the epoch-making revolutionary movement in Nepal is a crude reminder of the proverbial blind men's description of an elephant.

There are factual errors galore on crucial historical events, personalities and policy decisions, some of which may be condoned, however, for lack of access to authentic sources in an underground revolutionary movement.

The People's War in Nepal: Left Perspectives, edited by Karki and Seddon, is a collection of documents, articles and interviews from the revolutionary camp, as well as from other 'left' and revisionist groups. Relatively, the book provides a fairly objective account of the movement, except for some nakedly motivated vituperation from such known opportunists like Mohan Bikram Singh and Pradip Nepal. The introductory piece by the editors is quite objective, except for some factual errors and limitations of their own social democratic outlooks.

One of the factual errors, or willful distortions, repeated in this book as well is the claim that the then United People's Front, Nepal (UPFN), led by Com Baburam Bhattarai, was forced to boycott the parliamentary elections in 1994 because of the withdrawal of recognition to the Front by the Election Commission.

Among the other 'left' contributors to the volume, whereas Govind Neupane makes serious efforts to construct a class analysis of the rebellion, Mohan Bikram Singh, Pradip Nepal and Sujata Sakya thoroughly expose their own Right revisionist bias against the revolutionary movement through lowly slander and wild canards.

Understanding the Maoist Movement of Nepal, edited by Deepak Thapa, also provides a collection of articles mostly from a non-left perspective, but it lacks rigor and analytical coherence, except perhaps those by A Andrew Nickson and Kanak Mani Dixit, and of course, within their own ideological limitations. The inclusion of a fictitious piece by some imaginary 'Maoist activist' in 'The Maoist View' section has definitely reduced the credibility of the book.

Moreover, malicious propaganda such as 'The one factor that is uncontested is that India is the staging ground for the Maoists of Nepal' (p252), that too, from the pen of editor Deepak Thapa himself, seriously challenges the objectivity of the entire exercise.

A Kingdom Under Siege seems to be a mere extension of Understandings, though this one is a single composite project by Deepak Thapa with Bandita Sijapati. The presentation is too descriptive and lacks analytical depth.

However, some poignant scenes like that of 11-year-old Dilli Biswakarma feeding his two siblings, both whose parents were killed by the police, deeply touch the sensibilities of any reader.

Maoist Insurgency in Nepal by S D Muni, who is a known hand on Nepal and is believed to enjoy some access with the South Block, provides a fairly accurate account of the events, except for some factual errors, and is surprisingly not very biased against the revolutionary movement. Originally prepared as a research paper for Observer Research Foundation in Delhi the book should provide useful fodder for policy makers in India who seem to be pulling in different directions at the same time...Muni's plainspeak:

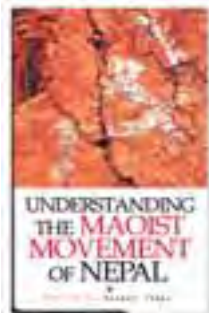
'India's image in Nepal today is that it is an ally and supporter of monarchy. India needs to bring the Maoists and the political parties together, which, in the process will also moderate the Maoists' extremist stance and use of violent methods. It is this combination of the main-stream political parties and the Maoists which can contain monarchy's powers, help India emerge as a people-friendly neighbour and reduce the excessive influence and strategic presence of the Western powers.' (p 66-67) Only time will tell whether it will have any impact in the corridors of power in Delhi.

It is, however, quite unbelievable that a research scholar of Muni's caliber should repeat such unsubstantiated claims about the so-called 'Compact Revolutionary Zone' (CRZ) supposedly planned by the Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organisations of South Asia (CCOMPOSA) to link Nepal with Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. This is just a figment of imagination by some journalists (or intelligence agencies?), who seem to have floated the idea to instigate the Indian state for a military intervention in Nepal. A similar insinuation was made by Deepak Thapa in his Himal South Asia (April, 2002) article (reproduced in *Understanding the Maoist Movement of Nepal*), which has since then spread like wild fire in the pro-establishment publications of Nepal and India. The real truth is that CCOMPOSA is a mere ideological-political platform of Maoist parties and organisations of South Asia and has never formulated any plan or resolution on the so-called CRZ.

Insurgency in Nepal by Thomas A Marks, a former US government officer, well-known strategic expert and author of *Maoist insurgency since Vietnam* (London, 1996), provides a glimpse of the current thinking of the US ruling class on Nepal. Marks is unabashedly unapologetic about his militarist thinking and his public support to the hated monarchy and it's mercenary Royal Army. On his latest visit to Nepal in January 2004, he is reported to have openly advocated a military solution to the so-called 'Maoist problem' as against the near-unanimous view of other foreign powers for a 'political solution'. It is, therefore, not at all surprising that he advocates for more military aid to the royal regime at the end of his monograph thus:

'Lest Nepal prove similar (to Colombia and southern Philippines), it is imperative that Washington proceed with an adroit mixture of reasoned advice and adequate material aid and training. Given the nature of the foe, the existing US military role seems destined to increase in prominence.' (p 31-32). One is just tempted to remind the learned author that further military involvement of the US in Nepal may be 'destined' to repeat the ignominy of Vietnam in the 21st century.

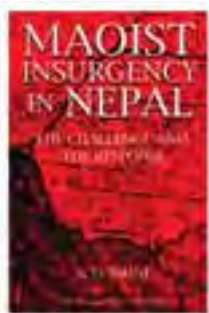
While going to press a new book has been received, which does not seem to be much different from the books just reviewed.



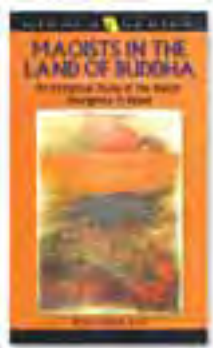
Understanding the Maoist Movement of Nepal
Deepak Thapa (ed)
Martin Chautari, Kathmandu, 2003
NRs 475



A Kingdom Under Siege: Nepal's Maoist Insurgency, 1996 to 2003
Deepak Thapa with Bandita Sijapati
the printhouse, Kathmandu, 2003
(price not stated)



Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: The Challenge and the Response
SD Muni
Rupa & Co, New Delhi, 2003
IRs 195



Maoist in the Land of the Buddha: An Analytical Study of the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal
Prakash A Raj
Nirala Publications, New Delhi, 2004
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Domestic Conflict and Crisis of Governability in Nepal
Dhruba Kumar (ed)
CNAS, Tribhuvan University, 2000
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"Lata ko desh ma gaando tanderi." (In a land of fools, even a man with a goatee can be a hero.)

HeroJig's Adventures
Our HeroJig was last seen at Base Camp, where he was researching his new illustrated book...

Where's Waldo?
by HeroJig Cartooning and Ballooning of Time!
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The individual interests me more than what he makes because I've noticed that most artists only repeat themselves.
Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968)

Next Change: Pages from the lost manuscript.

HeroJig's Adventures with Tiffen can also be seen at www.extreme-nepal.com (c) 2001 by jigme gaton - permission to be yourself.

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ Infinity's Journey till 15 June at Park Gallery, Lazimpat.
- ❖ Paintings by Krishna Manandhar till 15 June at Buddha Gallery, Thamel. 9AM-8PM
- ❖ Faces and Aspects of Boudha Photos by Mani Lama at The Saturday Café, Boudha. 2073157

EVENTS

- ❖ Monsoon wine festival at Kilroy's of Kathmandu, Thamel.
- ❖ 4th Bagmati River Festival till 21 August
- ❖ Cigar Tasting Dinner 19 June at 1905, Kantipath. Limited reservations. 4432313
- ❖ Art of Living 15-19 June at DAV School. 9951024927



MUSIC

- ❖ The Beatles Revisited 7PM on 12 June, Dechenling Beer Garden. 4412158
- ❖ Ultimate 1974 AD Rock Show 3PM, 19-20 June at BICC. 5528703
- ❖ JCS Trio at Fusion every Friday, Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488

FOOD

- ❖ Summit's Barbecue Dinner with vegetarian specials. Summit Hotel. 5521810
- ❖ Vegetarian Creations at Stupa View Restaurant. 4480262
- ❖ Organic Market every Saturday at Baber Mahal Revisited.
- ❖ Executive Lunch at Toran Restaurant, Dwarika's. 4479488

GETAWAYS

- ❖ Wet & Wild Summer Splash weekends, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ Weekend Special at Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha. 4375280

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NEPALI WEATHER by MAUSAM BEED



There will be no relief from the rains as the extended pre-monsoon merges with the monsoon starting early next week. Differentiating between the two is a challenging task for meteorologists, making an official announcement on the arrival of the wet season tricky because clear indicators are lacking. This satellite image taken from Thursday afternoon shows a cyclone over the Bay of Bengal. If it moves west, Nepal is in for a very wet seasonal start. We are under shallow clouds that will bring rain mostly at night but Valley residents should ready themselves for sudden short showers in the afternoons.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fri 29-18	Sat 28-17	Sun 27-16	Mon 27-16	Tue 29-17
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BOOKWORM

The Great Arc: The Dramatic Tale of How India was Mapped and Everest was Named

John Keay
Harper Collins, 2000
Rs 700

The Great Indian Arc of the Meridian, begun in 1800, was the longest measurement of the earth's surface ever to have been attempted. Its 1,600 miles of inch-perfect survey took nearly 50 years, cost more lives than most contemporary wars and involved equations more complex than any in the pre-computer age.

Courtesy: Mandala Book Point, Kantipath, 4227711, mandala@ccsl.com.np



Hum Tum is old wine in a new bottle. The up-to-the-minute attitude has a very traditional Bollywood heart. The packaging may be contemporary, but the content is pure, unadulterated Indian emotions. Kunal Kohli's movie is a romantic comedy starring Saif Ali Khan (Karan Kapoor) and Rani Mukerji (Rhea). Essentially, girl meets boy, girl hates boy, girl meets boy again, they fall in love. *Hum Tum* is fun in a 'men are from Mars and women are from Venus' kind of way. Luckily opposites attract and despite the foibles, we get a happy ending.

JAI NEPAL CINEMA



Hum Tum

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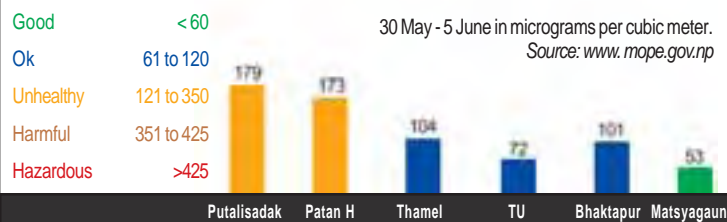
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KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

The Valley air quality improved last week, with all six monitoring stations recording a fall in PM10 (particles small enough to enter the human body) concentrations. Even so, Putalisadak's air remained in the 'unhealthy' range for all seven days. It seems if you're in search of some fresh air, it would be best to head off to Matsyagaon, where the air was 'good' - with less than 60 particles per cubic meter - for most of the week.



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HAPPENINGS



MIN BAJRACHARYA

WEIGHTY MATTERS: Hari Khadka (l) and Dinesh Raut calculate the weight of King Gyanendra's ring at Birendra Sainik School on Wednesday.



KIRAN PANDAY

STAR NUN: Ani Choying performs at a fundraising concert on Saturday at the Bluestar Hotel.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

SPLASH: Friday afternoon's torrential rains turned the road behind the royal palace into a river.



KIRAN PANDAY

NOT PC: Computer parts lie scattered at Modern Indian School after Maoists bombed their buses and the lab on Wednesday in Chobar.



KIRAN PANDAY

SHALOM: Tundikhel experienced the sounds of Israel at the second international folk music festival at Tudikhel on Wednesday.

NEPALI SOCIETY

Hero Yasuhiro

When Yasuhiro Kishimoto first came to Nepal in 1994, what he knew about the country could be summed up in three points. "This was the mystical land that a Japanese monk wrote about more than a century ago, it is the birthplace of the Buddha and, of course, Nepal has a lot of mountains," he says with a grin. He knows more now.

People never expected Yasuhiro, a globetrotter who has visited 50 countries, to get very far. Born in Osaka, he was confined to a wheelchair from childhood. His father died early, and it was a hard life for his mother and grandmother who took care of him. Yasuhiro could have given up, but he developed a fierce determination to

prove himself. "I often went hungry to buy books instead," he recalls. He studied psychology, philosophy and history, and started writing poetry at 15. Today he has authored a dozen books—poetry, a few stories, a wrenching account of being differently-abled and some on Nepal. Yasuhiro even became something of a celebrity with a movie-documentary called 'Aastha' based on his life.

All the royalties go to Yasuhiro's pet project—the Nepal Kishimoto Primary School in Pokhara, where 180 students receive free education.

The student body is made up mainly of dalits, refugees and minorities. Whenever possible, the teachers are also from marginalised groups. Even though the school has run for about seven years now, funding is a problem. Yasuhiro makes a little from the sale of his books and the Kishimoto Gakuya No Kai Foundation in Japan where about 300 members give donations and sell coffee for ¥100 per cup to raise money. The most recent fundraising attempt was the 'Himali Chhori' CD. Yasuhiro penned the lyrics in Japanese and an impressive list of artists worked on the translated versions, including Alok Shree, Yam Baral, Sachin Singh, Sambujit Baskota and Ramkrishna Dhakal.

There are other concerns—visa problems and Yasuhiro's declining health. Speaking through a translator, Yasuhiro says his body doesn't work as well but his major worry is the children who depend on him. "When I was poor, I came up a step at a time to where I am," says the frail looking Yasuhiro. "Now I'm helping others through education." He speaks calmly of not living very much longer, yet immediately afterwards he confides he does have something big scheduled for next year: "I'm going to Everest base camp!" he declares. There's no doubt about it, Yasuhiro is a hero. ●

(Jemima Sherpa)



MIN BAJRACHARYA

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Politically incorrect news

While every effort is made to verify the accuracy of news items printed in this paper, being humans, we journalists sometimes err on the side of caution and make things up. Let he who doesn't fall into that temptation cast the first stone.

In most countries, including yours truly, the constitution allows journos to get away with the most outrageous things just because our founding grandfathers in their wisdom thought there was a slim chance that in four years we may actually get something right. This being Nepal, scribes opine all the time and, yes, sometimes they even manage to tell the truth.

Be that as it may, there are many pitfalls and potholes on the road to a free and responsible media, and we have fallen into every one of them. Luckily, we have emerged with our pride intact and can hold our heads high as the custodians of the fourth real estate. After all, politicians and journalists have a symbiotic relationship, which means they scratch our back and we scratch theirs. It's win-win: heads we win tails they lose.

And with that brief preamble, we can now get into the bit that our valued clients have been eagerly waiting for, which is the section containing items of news that didn't make it to the national press because our alert fact checkers found that they were politically incorrect:

Nepal breaks another world record

BY OUR SPORTY REPORTER

Kathmandu—With the Olympics only two months away, Nepal has set a new world record as the first country in history to do without a government for ever so long.

Nepal won the marathon non-government endurance event by clipping a week off the previous record-holder Nauru, which has had no government to speak of since the Pacific atoll nation ran out of guano. It was a proud moment for Nepal as the double triangle was raised to the tune of the national anathema.

"It just shows that we don't need government or a cabinet, they are an unnecessary expenditure and we can do perfectly all right without them," said Nepal's incoming prime minister Sher Bahadur Chand, err sorry, Lokendra Bahadur Thapa, nope, Surya Bahadur Deuba...

Sorry, we seem to be having technical difficulties with that visual. Meanwhile, in other developments, the prime minister today launched a new beer, Royal Challenge, amidst a function at the BICC and said, this is an exact quote: "Hic!"

He added that the appropriately named beverage provided Nepal's yet another international quality brew to drown their sorrows in.


Wife eats husband

Sarlahi—Unable to resist the delectable charms of her husband, a housewife in this district has set off a new culinary trend by eating him up, reports RSS.

Police said they started getting suspicious when they could not trace the whereabouts of the husband, and detected a foul smell in the kitchen. Up to here, this news item is 100% true.

Nutritionists said most Nepali women suffer from low haemoglobin counts and eating their better halves was a good way for them to kill two birds with one stone. By dining on lazy husbands instead of with them, the National Institute of Demography said, wives would not only be getting much-needed nourishment but would also balance out Nepal's skewed male:female ratio. "It's a win-win situation," said one official.

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