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The next issue of Nepali Times will be on 29 October.

Times

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Weekly Internet Poll # 158

Q. Do you think the human rights situation in Nepal has improved or deteriorated in the past one year?

Total votes:1,001

Weekly Internet Poll # 159. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Should the king talk directly to the Maoists?

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KUNDA DIXIT

Ever since Himalmedia started commissioning public opinion polls in 1999, the results have indicated that the country is sliding into an ever-deepening crisis. The conflict has intensified, with half the 10,000 people killed since 1996 having died in the past two years. The royal massacre was an indelible blow to the national psyche. The kingdom's infrastructure and development have been pushed back decades. The democratic process is in reverse gear: parliament and local bodies are in limbo, an elected prime minister was sacked, the king took over and there have been three royal-nominated governments in quick succession.

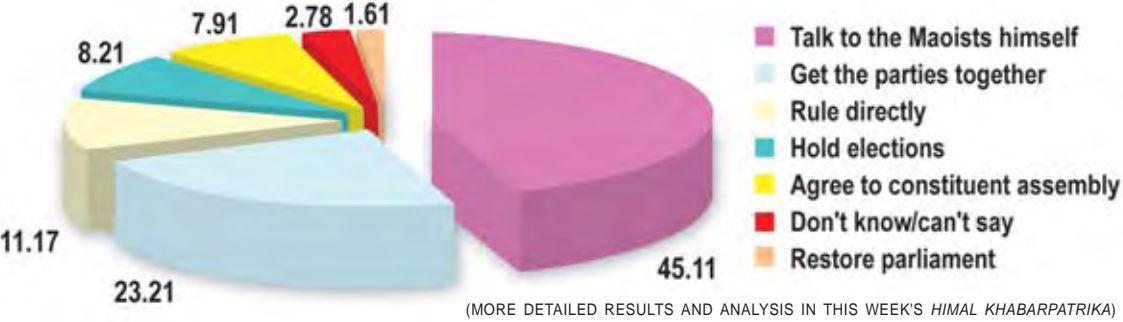
With their changing fortunes, the people have also sharpened their perceptions of what is wrong with the country, who is responsible and what should be done to bring things back on track. One of the most glaring transformations since last year's poll is the stark polarisation in the polity: the people blame the king and the Maoists for the mess, and they think the two should talk. Some still think the political parties should be involved in a solution, but the public mood reflects their diminished role.

In 2001, most respondents in

Yes and no

In a new Himalmedia public opinion poll, Kathmandu Valley residents show a split personality

What should the king do to end the crisis?



our nationwide poll felt democracy was in danger and the threat came from the political leaders. They didn't blame the system, but the parties. Last year, 63 percent of respondents in another nationwide poll blamed the party leadership for taking democracy down. But this year's Kathmandu Valley poll shows that although cumulatively more than 20 percent still blame the parties, the two entities they hold most responsible are the Maoists (18 percent) and the king (12 percent).

Although there is talk of elections, most people don't

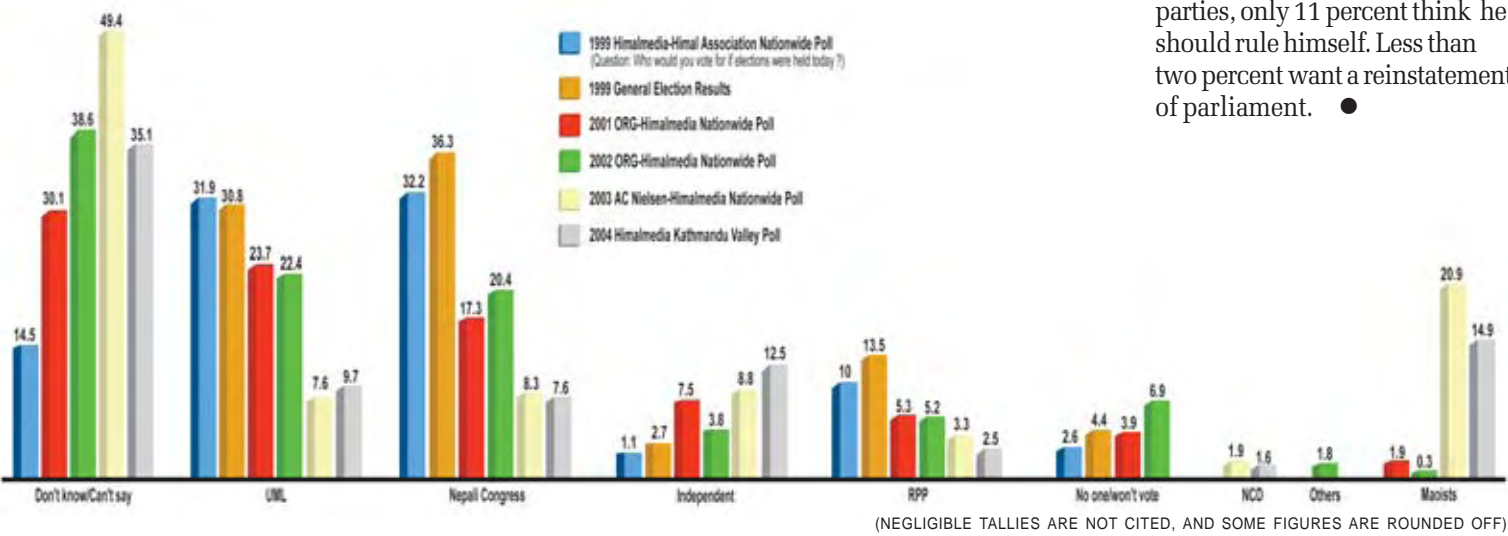
believe they can be held. Since 2001, Himalmedia has been tracking public response to the question: if elections were held and the Maoists gave up violence who would you vote for? The number of undecideds has grown, the mainstream parties are now in the single digits, and the numbers who say they will vote for a disarmed Maoist party has shrunk by half from last year to nearly 15 percent. Interestingly, a full 15 percent in the capital wouldn't even bother to vote.

Being traditionally more conservative than rural Nepalis, Kathmanduites have contradictory opinions about the

roles of the parties and the king. While they have in the past blamed politicians for the country's crisis, today over 40 percent want the same parties to get together to solve the problem. Similarly, nearly half the respondents think the king is actually in charge and one-third say he should be responsible for setting things right. Asked what the king should do, 45 percent say he must talk directly to the Maoists himself. Interestingly, this is also what the Maoists say they want to do. A quarter say he should get together with the political parties, only 11 percent think he should rule himself. Less than two percent want a reinstatement of parliament. ●

Editorial p2
Dasain wishlist
What Kathmandu thinks p4-5

If the Maoists gave up arms and elections were held, who would you vote for?



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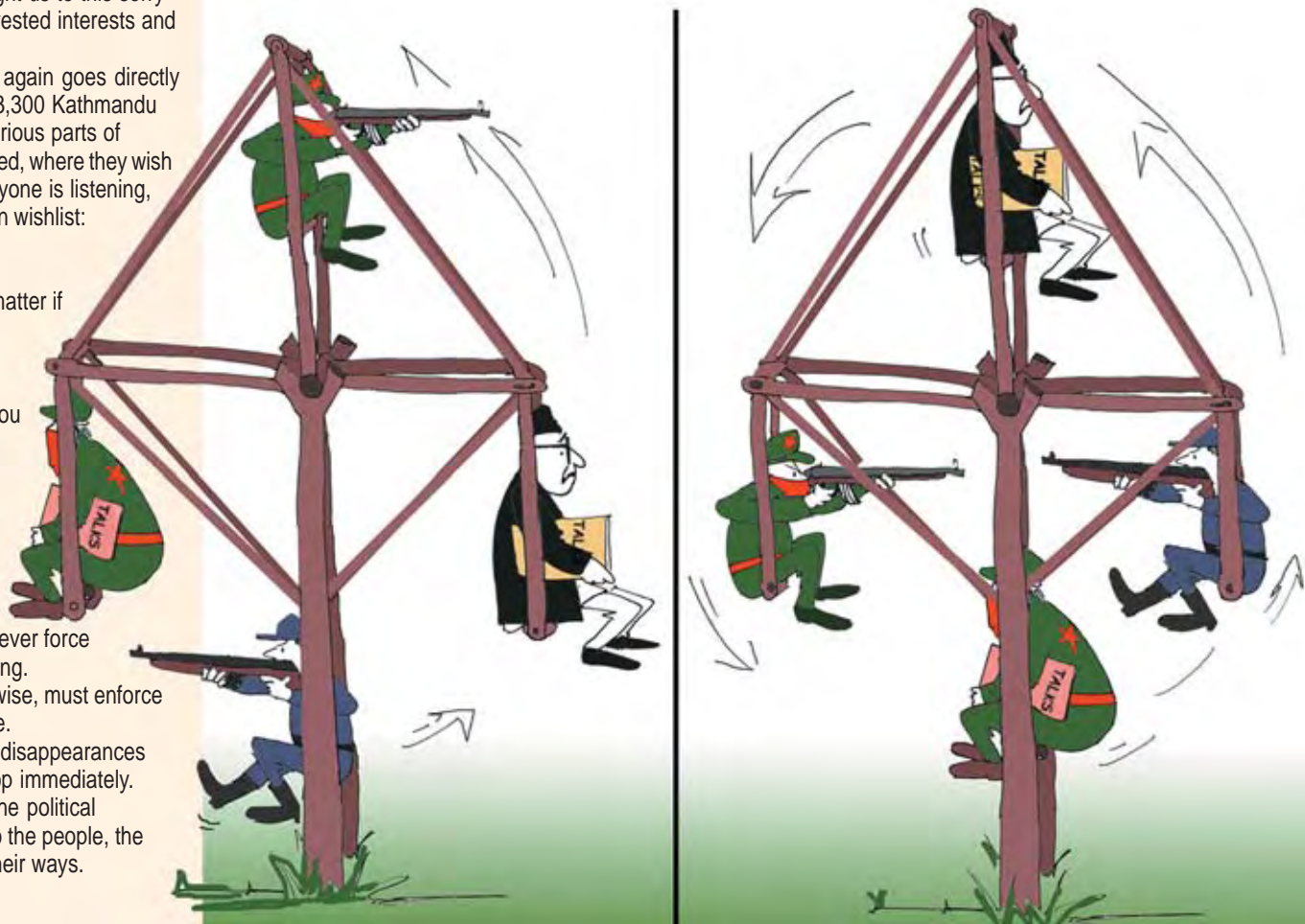


THIS YEAR'S DASAIN WISHLIST

It is difficult for the people to be heard when they have no representation. Despite the overwhelming desire for an end to the conflict, there is no organised way for Nepalis to express this wish. Political parties haven't given up the antics that brought us to this sorry state, and politicised civil society groups often have vested interests and speak with hidden agendas.

This year's Himalmedia public opinion poll once again goes directly to the people to find out what they think. More than 3,300 Kathmandu Valley residents, nearly half of them migrants from various parts of Nepal, were asked last week where the country is headed, where they wish it was headed and how to go about it. We doubt if anyone is listening, but on the people's behalf, we paraphrase their Dasain wishlist:

1. Water, clean air, jobs.
2. It doesn't matter who declares it first, it doesn't matter if it is unilateral or bilateral, but we want a truce at least over Dasain-Tihar.
3. Stop paying lip service to peace, stop turning it into a political slogan, show us you mean what you say.
4. We don't want a fig-leaf election. First get an agreement on truce and talks.
5. The government must prove it is serious about delivering services by at least ensuring relief and rehabilitation to those directly hurt by the conflict.
6. Never close schools, never target children and never force them to attend indoctrination and military training.
7. No political force, whether underground or otherwise, must enforce bandas and blockades with the threat of violence.
8. The targeting of unarmed civilians, abductions, disappearances and extra-judicial killings by both sides must stop immediately.
9. The Maoists must renounce violence and join the political mainstream, the king must restore power back to the people, the political parties must prove they have mended their ways.
10. Find and punish the corrupt.



The war ideology

Only the people's representatives can give voice to the yearning of Nepal's silent majority for peace

Despite all the lip-service, negotiations are not on the priority list of either the government or the insurgents. Both are quite happy with a stalemate that is hurting everyone else, as long as they can blame the other side for intransigence.

STATE OF THE STATE
CK Lal



And it's not that there is a shortage of conflict resolution experts or negotiators. Conflict resolution is a thriving cottage industry that keeps an influential section of local intelligentsia gainfully employed.

Accompanied by laptop warriors from donor countries, they are busy capacity-building for peace. And all the peace seminars have been a life-saver for the ailing hospitality industry.

Urban dwellers, yearning to organise against war, are expressing it through prayer vigils, music concerts, art exhibitions, street theatre, rallies and even beauty contests. But the silent majority is begging for peace the only way it knows how: by keeping silent. Silence, it seems, is the only way to express dissent. Paradoxically, this overwhelming majority seems too feeble to influence a tiny minority of warmongers. The change-makers can only be brought together by creating a strong public demand in favour



ANUP PRAKASH

of peace. In the past six years, the Maoists devised and implemented a five-step action plan to create public opinion in favour of their war.

First, they concentrated on select intellectuals who could create legitimacy for their ruthless campaign in the mid-west mountains.

Personalities like Rishikesh Shah (alleged this week by UML ideologue Modnath Prashrit to have been a bridge between the Narayanhiti and the Maoists), Daman Nath Dhungana (one of the biggest beneficiaries of post-1990 order, and speaker of the first parliament) and Padma Ratna Tuladhar (an 'independent' communist and a minister in the short-lived UML

minority government) conferred political legitimacy on the Maoists. Shah is dead, but the Dhungana-Tuladhar duet continues to champion the Maoist cause from every pulpit.

Second, the Maoists enlisted the support of the urban intelligentsia to oppose every counter-insurgency campaign of successive governments. Fighting with antiquated weapons to save the state from annihilation, the police got no support from the comfortable classes in Kathmandu Valley even as they were slaughtered.

Third, influential sections of Nepali media were lead down the garden path to report nice things the Maoists were up to in their influence area: parading in

fatigues with red-star bandanas, smashing liquor bottles, or punishing violators in kangaroo courts. Reports of journalists embedded with Maoist militia were even more alarming: they openly glorified atrocities.

Fourth, the Maoists succeeded in summoning vocal support of influential professionals to publicly oppose the mobilisation of the army to fight the fast-spreading inferno. The reason: 'one Nepali shouldn't kill another', as if those being killed by the rebels were somehow less Nepali. But many of us bought this argument without bothering to question its premises.

Finally, the insurgents played one political group

against another. With friendly winks from powerful quarters, the UML paralysed the third parliament by boycotting the entire winter session. Sher Bahadur Deuba became premier for a second time in 2000 with the good wishes of Courageous Leader Prachanda. The mainstreaming of the war ideology was thus complete.

All that was needed was to force the Royal Nepal Army into the battlefield, and the Maoists extended an armed invitation by ransacking the Dang barracks in November 2001. After that the military didn't need any 'all party consensus', a condition it had been putting to the government to get into action. It simply got the Deuba government to issue a state of internal emergency and began to manipulate the situation to its advantage. Allowing the term of the local government units to lapse, getting parliament dissolved, and having the premier dismissed when he refused to resign signified the relentless march of the war ideology.

To rebuild an effective peace ideology, this entire process needs to be reversed. If we don't allow politicians to shout slogans and disrupt traffic, gunmen will control our lives and there will be no traffic to disrupt. It's not much of a choice: Girija Prasad Koirala's street agitators, or leaving the country in the hands of the military or militia. ●

LETTERS

MRG
I am truly baffled by CK Lal's State of the State column 'Blind Alley' (#216), where he attempts to portray Girija Prasad Koirala as a man of steel, integrity and as someone who sticks to his position. Lal's premises and assumptions are full of fallacies. His argument for the revival of the House of Representatives makes little sense given the fact that he cites only one particluar premise to prove his point. However, he adeptly discards many more reasons why Girija is probably the main man responsible for the dissolution of the parliament in the first place. Girija and others have made a mockery of parliamentary democracy over the last ten years, using it to scuttle democracy whenever it was politically inconvenient. They have built themselves and their party apparatus at the expense of the people. Girija is the same person who defied the Supreme Courts orders and is being sued for contempt of court. In a civil society, as he mentions, it is the rule of law, but Girija thinks the law does not apply to him. Is this a man of steel and principle? Koirala lives in a hallow cocoon of neo-Sri Tin Maharaj ideology. I am sure writing a weekly column is hard given the condition of the nation. If Lal can't think of a good column, he could take a sabbatical.

SN Singh, email

PEACE CORPS
It was a shame to end the Peace Corps program in Nepal, even if the halt is only temporary ('End of an era', #216). I know of one example, of I'm sure there are many others, where Peace Corps engagement has helped many other Nepalis. A good friend who lives in California was sponsored more than 20 years ago by a young Peace Corps volunteer. After successfully completing high school while living in a boys' orphanage in Kathmandu, he requested to study in America and his Peace Corps brother agreed. Two academic degrees followed for this bright and ambitious young man, then a career as a successful accountant. Now, he has decided to give back to his birth country and help others benefit from his good fortune: he started a children's home in Godavari where today 35 children live happily and with great promise for the future. One good Peace Corps deed multiplied many times, as these children grow up and will in turn do a good deed for their society. I'm sure there are many similar stories. The Peace Corps has been important in Nepal and needs to return.

Heidi Feldman, Pacific Grove, California

INCOMMUNICADO
Re Rajendra Dahal's 'Incommunicado' (# 216). Time has come to review the performance of all stakeholders who are based on terms of reference given by the king but paid by us Nepalis to manage the country properly. Two years ago King Gyanendra took over people's power by saying that he was rescuing the country from chaos. Major parliamentary forces will be completing two years of agitation against the October Fourth move by promising their voters a lasting solution. Only the UML, which joined the king's government to work for a resolution of the conflict is thinking about it. For all other parties it is all about retrieving power and privilege. The Maoists maintain they are the only ones who can set things right, but after ten years they are nowhere nearer their goal, and in the process have destroyed, brutalised and militarised the country. The Nepali people have heard it all, they have endured their malgovernance, and have trusted them with being sincere about peace only to be let down over and over again. Isn't it time to go for international mediation to start a peace process?

Meena Poudel, Newcastle, UK

RANT
Why is Nepali Times still publishing things like Daniel Lak's completely outdated anti-Fukuyama rant ('Alas history did not end', #216)? It's so clear that Lak is covered in white guilt and is either dumbing himself down or just looking for something to whine about. Like almost everything he writes, the article is outdated, sweeping and vague, usually circa 2000/1 and ends with a reluctant little nod in Nepal's direction.

Hariom Dhakal, Boston

In 'America's gain was the world's gain' (Here and There, #217) Daniel Lak talks about how US immigration policies in the last few years is wrecking the US economy as it has restricted the inflow of well qualified workers from abroad. I think that the restriction may have more to do with the dotcom bust and the shrinking of the much hyped IT industry, something that has reduced the demand for IT graduates. The 'cyber boom', as people like to call it, was fuelled by heady but unrealistic expectations and people need to be made aware and not taken in by such fake booms that cause small investors to lose lots of money, sometimes their life savings or their nest eggs they built up to make life comfortable during retirement.

Saurav Jung Thapa, Hampshire College, USA

MICKY
Re: 'Badal pari ko desh ma' by Prem Subba. Growing up and dreaming of being successful musicians, I remember jumping in to even mediocre shows that came along our way just to get our names out. I vividly remember Micky at the keyboard. No one would know how the gig would turn out, but there was one thing to be sure.
Micky would always make us feel like we were an instant hit regardless of the outcome. Every sense of pessimism that his friends had were instantly over come by his trade mark smile and a great sense of humour. May his soul always rest in peace.

Sushil Bogati, Seattle, USA

CORRECTIONS
The writer of 'Chitrakars' in the Letters section of #217 was Kiran Chitrakar and not the name that inadvertently appeared in the hardcopy edition.

Durga Baral's 'Disappeared' (page 2, #217) is a charcoal and acrylic on canvas work and not as mistakenly stated.



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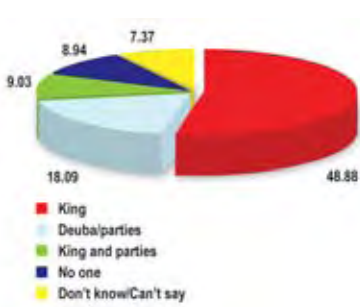

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What Kathmandu Valley thinks

Whoever broke it must fix it

Who is actually in charge in the country today?



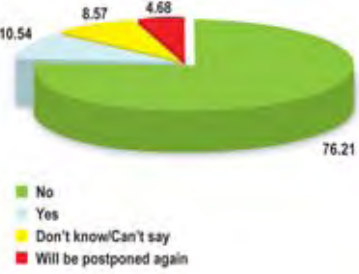
HARI SHARMA

King Prithibi Narayan Shah stood on Chandragiri Pass in 1768 and looked down at the prosperous and fertile valley called Nepal. The kingdom he unified became synonymous with its new capital.

Today, Maoists rebels are on the Valley rim and are also looking down at the capital, coveting the prize that is Kathmandu. The Valley's attraction as the political and economic epicentre of the country has been augmented by the relative security it provides to the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced fleeing the insurgency.

Nepal is more Kathmanducentric today than it ever was: the only international airport is here and it is the industrial and cultural hub. The Valley's population has doubled to 2 million since 1990 and nearly one in every 10 Nepalis now lives here. Being a power centre, Kathmandu is a status quo metropolis. The country's conflict has focussed the attention of the political parties,

Can elections be held by Chait as the king and prime minister want?



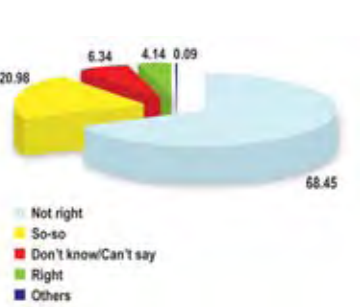
the insurgents, the king and his subjects on the capital. All of them think that Nepal's problems can be fixed if Kathmandu can be fixed.

The anti-'regression' protests are not just centred in Kathmandu, but in the centre of Kathmandu at Ratna Park. The Maoists may claim that they hold sway over three-quarters of the country, but they are reserving their 'decisive and final blow' for the Valley.

Kathmandu's centrality prompted Himalmedia to conduct its annual public opinion poll in the capital this year to gauge how its residents assess the country's situation. Who do they blame? Who do they think should be responsible for finding a solution?

They seem to have no doubt that things are a mess. More than three-quarters of the respondents feel the country's situation is either 'bad' or 'frightening'. And who do they blame for it? Eighteen percent blame the Maoists, 16 percent blame corruption, and 12.5 percent feel the king is responsible. The Nepali Congress is close behind, with

What do you think of the Maoist rebellion?



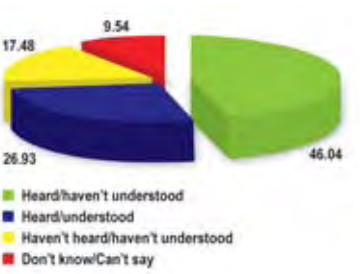
11.3 percent blaming it for the country's situation while only seven percent feel the UML is responsible.

Asked who they think is really in charge, nearly half the respondents are convinced the king is. Only 19 percent feel Sher Bahadur Deuba is in control, while nine percent think the country is actually leaderless.

More than half the respondents feel the king's October Fourth move to sack the prime minister was wrong or unconstitutional and a little over a quarter think it was right and timely. And nearly 75 percent of Kathmanduites think the insurgency has become worse since King Gyanendra took over, 18 percent think it is the same, and only 3.5 percent feel the situation has got better in the past two years.

Since most respondents feel the king has been responsible for the deepening crisis in the country, in response to another question nearly, 70 percent think the king can set things right if he wants to. Forty-five percent think the king should talk directly to the Maoists and

Have you heard about/understood the constituent assembly demand?



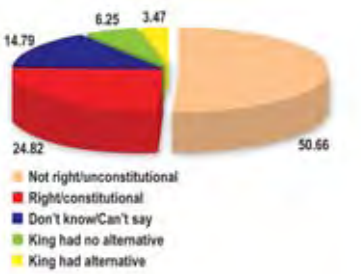
end the stalemate.

Eleven percent of Kathmanduites are convinced the king should rule directly, and this is the same segment that supported his October Fourth move. Nearly 41 percent think the crisis can be resolved if the political parties unite, and 32 percent see a role for the king.

Asked what they think about the Maoist insurgency, nearly 70 percent think it is wrong, while 25 percent have a positive attitude towards it. Asked how the crisis can be resolved, 36 percent answered that it must be through negotiations, 13 are in favour of a constituent assembly and 12 percent think it will only happen if the Maoists give up arms.

In comparison to Himalmedia polls in previous years, there has been a dramatic shift of blame away from the political parties towards the king and the Maoists, possibly because respondents now feel the parties are out of the picture. The people believe the palace and the rebels are trying to sideline the parties. Still, they don't yet see the insurgency as

The king's sacking of an elected prime minister on 4 October 2002 was:



more serious than, for instance, the water and pollution problems in the Valley. The blockade may have brought the war nearer, but for Kathmandu's inhabitants, everyday concerns still dominate.

Social scientists have long wondered why cities don't breed revolutions. Samuel Huntington in his 1968 book *Political Order in Changing Societies* asks: 'Why don't we get revolutionaries in cities? Why don't they revolt even though there are huge economic and social problems?' It is true: slum dwellers in Bombay, people living in shantytowns in Chile and the migrant colonies in Lima may wallow in squalour, but they don't revolt.

In fact, John Walton in his 1987 book *The Capitalist City* notes that cities have riots, not revolts. The street unrest in Kathmandu in the past few years proves the point: they had anarchistic traits rather than political ones. Despite infiltration, the riots never took on political character to escalate into mass urban uprisings.

Like all capitals, the

The racism race

Racists now have new genetic ammo

Sometime next year in the United States, a drug will be offered for sale on the market. This is a medicine for people with heart problems, but it is meant only for African-Americans, black people. Science has found that this particular chemical has little or no effect on

HERE AND THERE
Daniel Lak



whites, but it works for blacks

with bad hearts.

At first glance, this is a good thing. Helping the ill to live longer lives can only be positive. But there's deep unease among social scientists because the new drug is merely the tip of emerging phenomena that, in the past, has caused pain and suffering on a far, grander scale than heart disease.

For much of history, humans have sought ways to differentiate themselves from each other. Tribes, castes, clans, even racial groups, all of these seek to set us apart from each other. You are a Bahun, I am white, she is Native-American. Some notions of caste, for example, helped inspire the murderous evil of Adolf Hitler's Nazi movement, the concept of a pure Aryan race

somewhere that we must pay homage to.

The Holocaust, Hitler's systematic genocide aimed at Jews, Gypsies, Slavs and homosexuals, is history's most extreme example of racism run amok. Six million Jewish people were killed, countless others lost everything but their lives. It was evil incarnate and it was done by human beings like me or you.

Turkey tried to wipe out a race in 1915. Nearly two-million Armenians were killed by the Imperial government of Turkey, a genocide that the now Euro-aspirational Turks do not acknowledge. Few Canadians are aware that their country had a government in the 1920s that sterilised habitual criminals and people with Down's syndrome, a condition once described as 'mental retardation'.

America, infamously, had slavery and after its Civil War, segregation between the races that lasted until the 1960s and beyond. This helped inspire Apartheid in South Africa which held that blacks, whites and South Asians were all separate groups that could co-exist only in separate parts of the



same country.

And of course, there's caste. Many Hindus feel caste is different. It has, they feel, the imprimatur of religion, five thousand or more years of history, an ancient stamp of approval. The Indian government spent ridiculous sums of money several years ago trying

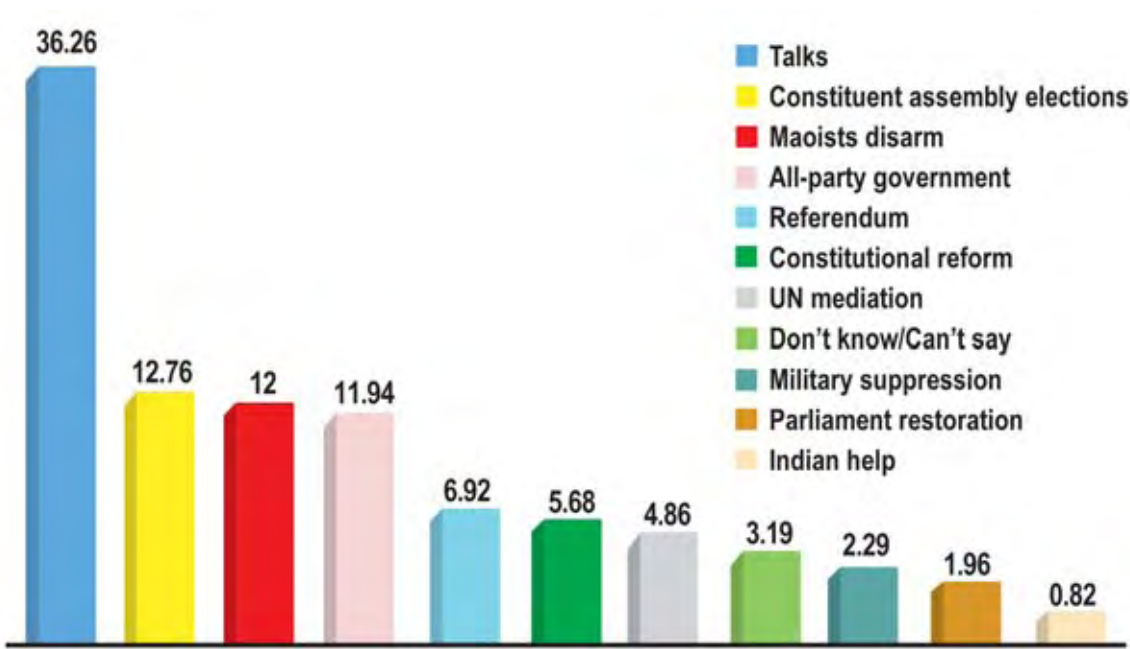
to stop Dalit groups from attending the UN racism summit in Durban, South Africa. No doubt, Nepal's Bahun-Chhetri establishment was a quiet cheerleader to all that.

Anyone whose caste is traditionally disadvantaged in either India or Nepal doesn't have to be told about discrimination, alienation and evil. It's yet another way that we humans, we naked apes, divide ourselves so we can lord it over others and enjoy the odd conflict.

Lately though, things had been improving. Social scientists had long argued that race, caste, tribe, these were cultural, not physical. We were all the same, even if we looked different. Science confirmed this when the Human Genome Project found that our DNA—black, white, Hindu, Muslim, Chinese, Inuit—was 99.999 percent similar person to person, 'race' to 'race'. Many of us breathed a huge sigh of relief. The racists were proven wrong.

Now we have medicine for black people. Again, not necessarily a bad thing in and of itself. But this means that the race industry is back in business, and I dare say, the caste industry. ●

What could be a meaningful solution to the Maoist insurgency?



Polling method and respondents

A random sample of 3,312 respondents was conducted by experienced enumerators from 26 September-1 October. Valley residents were selected in urban and suburban areas and weighted for socio-economic, gender and geographic balance. Of the total, nearly 60 percent were men, 40 percent were women and the sample was predominantly Hindu (85 percent). Only 10 percent were illiterate, four percent unemployed, 11 percent vegetarian. Nearly half those interviewed were from Kathmandu, 25 percent had moved here in the past five years and 20 percent in the past 15 years, providing some indication of the intense urbanisation of Kathmandu Valley since 1990. The foremost problem for Valley residents seems to be water, followed closely by pollution. Full details and analysis of the poll conducted by Rajendra Dahal and Navin Subedi for Himalmedia is posted at www.nepalihimal.com

geopolitical, cultural, economic and religio-historical character of this city makes it a conservative, status quo town. But now there is pressure for change. The traditional power centres may find security in historical rites and certainties, but these will not suffice in facing the challenges of modern Nepal. And this contradiction and bewilderment is reflected in this year's public opinion poll of the Valley. ●

Living frugally

Maria Straub worked for 20 years as a manager in a big Australian corporate house. She gradually came to realise that the biosphere just wouldn't be able to sustain continued energy and resource consumption at current levels, and the poorer countries would suffer first. Maria quit and in 1999 came to Nepal to help build a school in Gokarna. Here she saw frugality could be a virtue, and communities can leave smaller ecological footprints. But she also saw global consumerism pushing people to an ecologically unsustainable future in Kathmandu. Returning to Australia, Maria founded Green Purchasing, which teaches companies, towns and cities how to reduce consumption. But Nepal left a powerful impression on Maria, so she is returning to Nepal in November to start a sustainable-school program which will try to make Nepali children aware of each product they buy. How is it made? Is it long-lasting and recyclable? Are there alternatives? Who or what suffered as a consequence of producing the product? As Mahatma Gandhi wrote: 'The earth has enough for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed.' Says Maria: "An economy that benefits the minority while at the same time causes untold hardship to the vast majority is fundamentally flawed. Let this not be Nepal."



Killer Highways

Over 50 people have been killed in bus accidents along Nepal's highways between September and October. More than 100 passengers were injured and hospitalised. One of the worst incidents was on 13 September when a passenger bus skidded off into the river at Bhyaple Pokhara-Baglung Highway. According to an American research report, 'The Causes of Bus Accidents in Five Emerging Nations', Nepal has one of the world's highest rates of accidents, mainly caused by drunken driving, poor road and vehicle conditions and driver fatigue.



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Chyawanprash

Conversation piece

Goats bleat, but vegetarianism gives you something to talk about

The three basic carnivorous reactions to encounters with the Other Kind all begin with blank stares.

For some, this is followed by a mild flush of excitement, and then, "Oh really? My cousin is a vegetarian too!" And then a pregnant pause, as they wait for you to jump with joy, declare your eternal bond of solidarity with this unknown cousin, and/or demand immediate details of names, addresses and International Vegetarian Association membership numbers.

For others, the awkward blank moment lasts longer, until the person, obviously uncomfortable, mumbles, "Oh... I really admire you, but I don't think I could do that." And then you're regarded with immense suspicion, as if you're about to produce leaflets or the Vegetarian Bible or a sack of eggplants and start immediate emergency indoctrination.

The most honest reaction comes from devoted masu-eaters and small children, who follow the blank stare with some very obvious cerebral struggle and expressions of vague horror. And then a blunt, "But... why?"

Why indeed. It's easiest to murmur evasive explanations about animal cruelty, health concerns, family beliefs, the benefits of veggies or the terrors of tainted meat. But if your real aim is to cause the maximum sensation and disbelief possible, then try convincing someone who dreads meatless *ekadashis* that you are, in fact, vegetarian because you want to be. Because you don't like meat, and you'd rather eat carrot sticks than chicken wings and it has nothing to do with your arteries.

Most vegetarians agree that, no matter what your original reason for turning veggie, after a while it becomes a non-issue. Rather than remaining a statement on humane slaughter issues or bird-flu fears, you gradually just *are* vegetarian.

Still, there are constant reminders that you're in a social minority. Last week's Himalmedia poll of Valley residents revealed only 11.11 percent were vegetarians. Restaurants can prove a hurdle for *suddha sakaharis*, with suspicious nuggets often making guest appearances in your vegetable fried rice. Being vegan is even more of a challenge in Kathmandu, where dietary substitutes are rarely available and so food options are quickly narrowed down to *dal bhat tarkari*, fruit, french fries and iron tablets. In certain seasons and Valley blockades, the selection of fresh fruit and vegetables shrinks, and any diet variety with it.

Nutritionists and doctors are still debating the benefits or hazards of vegetarianism, but it definitely has the undisputed advantage as a conversational gambit, especially as Dasain approaches. As the air fills with the bleats of doomed goats, food tops the agenda in most households. While visiting friends or relatives, and confronted with the inevitable offer of something to eat, there will be that moment of blank, uneasy silence. Then someone will whisper in the tones of one talking of a terminal illness or terrible family scandal, "Vegetarian, remember? *Doesn't eat meat.*" ●

NEPALI PAN
Jemima Sherpa



A new abattoir in Thankot will modernise and systemise animal slaughter

TULASI GAUTAM

What would Dasain be without meat? Whether it is for sacrifice, eating or just as a ritual, goats are bought, weighed and beheaded in the backyard every year.

This weighing and buying process is already in full swing at the khasi bajars of Kalanki and Tukucha and the wholesale godown of Nepal Food Corporation in Thapathali. Khasis can even be sent by the Nepali diaspora to their relatives back home through

munchahouse.com. Yes, the carnivorous season is here and in full swing.

Kathmandu has the country's largest per capita consumption of meat. Each resident consumes 18kg of meat a year, whereas the average Nepali eats only 10kg—way below the worldwide average of 40kg per person per year. Five years ago, 1,037 tons of meat would be transported into Kathmandu every week. Today, that figure has nearly tripled. Ten years from now, per capita consumption of meat is expected to reach 26kg a year.

Dinesh Khadgi, member of the central committee of the Nepal Meat Traders Association says 140 truckloads of live buffalos are transported to the Valley from the tarai and India every week, and each truck is packed with up to 20 buffalos. A truck can carry up to 200 goats, and 42 tonnes of goat meat is consumed in Kathmandu every day. In the last fiscal year, Nepalis ate 20,399 metric tonnes of meat worth Rs 140 million, of which 64 percent was buffalo, 21

percent was goats meat and 15 percent came from poultry, pigs and wild boar.

Besides this, Rs 20 million worth of frozen and canned meat is imported from overseas each year. Customs records only show Rs 800,000 worth of meat coming in from Tibet, but there is obviously much more meat that hoofs it over the high passes of which there is no record. Kathmandu's main buffalo and goat market, Balambu, gets 150 buffalos every day, but this number quadruples during Dasain time. Up to 30,000 goats and 12,000 sheep and mountain goats are brought into the khasi bajar.

With fears of bird flu and foot-and-mouth disease, what about inspections? There is an Animal Slaughter and Meat Inspection Act, but as with much else, it has never been implemented. Dalram Pradhan, director of the Animal Service Department says, "We are slowly spreading our inspections to border points." The operative word here is "slowly".

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MIN BAJRACHARYA



The Nepal Meat Traders Association says it now pays special attention to hygiene, with guidelines on aprons, packaging and refrigeration. Animal slaughter is not centralised and it happens at every neighbourhood butcher shop. Now, eight businessmen from the Khadgi family are getting together to build an abattoir in Thankot called Quality Meat Products Limited to process up to 150 buffalos and 300 goats a day. But the Nepal Meat Traders Association says this would put the small butchers out of business, and say hygiene can easily be ensured by small shops as well.

But managing director at the Thankot abattoir, Balkrishna Khadgi, says centralising slaughterhouses will actually benefit everyone as the supply chain will be more hygienic, sales will be standardised, and international quality norms can be met. "It is an idea whose time has come," Khadgi adds. ●

Carnivorous nation

Projected per capita meat consumption in the capital in kg/year and Kathmandu's urban population

2004	18.18	1.05m
2005	18.68	1.09m
2010	21.79	1.26m
2015	25.95	1.44m

Herded like sheep

Nima Sherpa has been shuttling between the mountain meadows near Dudh Kunda in Solukhumbu and the tarai in Udaypur every year with 400 sheep, two sheep dogs and four other relatives and friends.

It is a three-week roundtrip every season, up in the spring and down in the autumn. One morning last week we caught up with Nima near Junbesi (see pic) as he got his sheep ready for the long march. Farmers welcome the sheep into their fallow fields so that the animals fertilise the soil overnight. "The sheep enrich the soil, so the farmers even feed us while we stay," says Nima, who is originally from Okhaldhunga.

It is his ancestral calling, and Nima is quite content doing what he does. There is a rhythm and predictability to his life. "Maybe in a year or so I'll get married," he says, "and then I'll do something else." Nima and his friends, Nara Bahadur and Som Pakhrin, go home only once a year after the sheep are sheared for wool in spring. The animals are also milked and in Dasain some are sold for sacrifices along the trails.

The salary for shepherds like Nima is six sheep a year, no cash changes hands. That is why when Maoists stop them from time to time demanding a 'tax', there is really no money to give. Usually they have to part with a sheep or two. The insurgency and the arrival of mountain highways has reduced the numbers of sheep herds. "There used to be five or six herds every season, now there are just one or two," says Hari Rajbhandari of Dorpu. ● (Ngima Pakhrin/Solukhumbu)



NGIMA PAKHRIN



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“We’re not whores”

NARESH NEWAR

Sharmila Chhetri was forced to chose between survival and self-esteem. After the Maoists killed her husband two years ago, Sharmila fled from Dhading with her son and her meagre savings to Kathmandu, where she had no friends or relatives. The only way to survive was to find work in a place that did not ask for any documents or identification. She has supported herself and her son, now aged five, by working as a waitress in a cabin restaurant in Gaushala, but she has to endure constant harassment.

“The saddest part is when my son sees the clients grabbing me. He always asks what they are doing,” says Sharmila, who is desperate to find another job but knows it will be impossible to quit now. “I am used to the harassment. They treat us like whores, but how can you change them?”

Cabin restaurants have a reputation for being prostitution fronts, and some women’s rights groups have begun campaigning against the harassment and exploitation of women. Save the Children (UK) and Saathi, a womens’ rights group, conducted the first-ever investigation inside cabin restaurants four years ago, which revealed that female



MIN BAJRACHARYA

migrants from nearby districts as young as 14 had to serve the clients as ‘pleasure waitresses’. They had to sit with the clients in the dingy partitioned rooms of the restaurants and do “almost everything” to make the clients pay huge bills. If they failed to do so, they faced the wrath of their employers.

Following the investigation, Saathi and Save the Children began efforts to create a safe

working environment inside restaurants. With help of Usha Lama, a womens’ rights activist, they invited waitresses for a meeting. The girls were sceptical at first, concerned that the activists were just using them. But when the girls met and shared their stories, they decided to form their own group to address the rights of the rest of the waitresses.

Most girls have been in police custody many times, arrested for sex work although they claim to have only been sitting close to clients. “There is no sex work inside the restaurants. There is no proof of our wrongdoing,” explains Rita Subba, who works in a cabin restaurant in Baneswor. While the raids have been a nuisance, the police have helped to some extent by ordering owners to remove curtains and reduce the height of the partition walls inside the restaurants, making the ‘cabins’ less private.

“But the clients don’t care. Only the worst sort of men come here,” says Gita Thapa in Naya Baneswor. A group of young men beat her severely when she refused to let them touch her. Her employer just watched as they slapped and punched her, then broke some beer bottles and left without paying. “Employers try to protect the girls, but we can’t fight the clients,” says restaurant owner Ramesh Giri.

“My employer is nice and the clients treat me well. I think it is all up to employer,” says Sarita Thapa, who comes from a middle class family in Narayanghat. She left home after finishing school, and has been working for a year at a cabin restaurant in Maitighar.

Saathi’s Pramoda Shah says there is false notion that all waitresses are sex workers, which is why the clients go to the cabin restaurants. “We have to change such social perception,” she told us. The waitresses have rented an

office in Patan and meet every week to share problems. They invite lawyers, human rights workers, police officers and counsellors to advise them on laws, rights, socialisation and legal aid. The Nepal Trade Union is now trying to help them lobby for safe and fair working conditions.

“The solution is not to raid restaurants or intimidate the owners, but to seek their cooperation. Closing down the restaurants only puts the girls into difficulty. The waitresses still need their jobs,” explains Shah. The group’s chairperson, who calls herself Sobha Lama to protect herself from stigma and harassment from neighbours and relatives, says: “We are not ashamed of our work. We work hard to make a living just as any other respectable Nepali citizen.” There are already signs that working conditions may improve, and membership has risen to 50 girls.

Usha Lama says: “It was a big challenge to win the girls’ trust. I really appreciate their patience. They understand that things won’t change overnight, but constantly hope for the best.” ●

(Some names have been changed)

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Branching out

Machhapuchhre Bank will soon be running a banking and corporate office in Kathmandu as well. Originally established in Pokhara five years ago, the bank recently introduced ATM services. Currently, Machhapuchhre Bank has six branches providing year-round services, as well as internet banking options.



On display

AVCO International is adding a special touch to regular Dasain shopping by displaying Hyundai vehicles in three major shopping complexes around the Valley. Namaste, Gemini and Bhatbhateni supermarkets will all have exhibits of Hyundai's most popular models: Santro Xing, Getz and Matrix CRDi.

Destination Nepal

Electrolux, the world's largest producer of household appliances, has announced plans to tie up with Paramount Electronics and market Electrolux products in Nepal. During its first phase in Nepal, the company will market several models of refrigerators and washing machines, and gradually expand its range to include other products such as air conditioners, microwaves and vacuum cleaners. Currently Electrolux operates in 150 countries, and India acts as the headquarters for handling business in the SAARC region.



Carlsberg goes golfing

Beer meets the greens with the Carlsberg Golf Tournament 2004. This six-day golfing event, from 12-17 October, is being held at Kathmandu's Royal Golf Club. The Carlsberg Nepal PGA Championship events, which conclude on 15 October, include 15 prizes with the winner receiving a cash prize of Rs 35,000. The Carlsberg Golf Classic events, for amateur golfers, will be held on 16 and 17 October, and the winner will get a chance to represent Nepal in the Carlsberg Malaysian Open Pro Am Event 2005 on an all expenses paid trip to Malaysia.

Making waves

One of the major attractions at the 10-day Kathmandu Utsav 2004 is proving to be the United Telecom Limited (UTL) stall demonstrating their Wave phone services. Customers were given a chance to make free local calls from the stall to test the Wave phone facilities. Many took advantage of the offered wavier for the Rs 2,200 activation fee and booked Wave phones at the stall.

Branded

If you can pay, the days of cheap knock-offs and South Asian local quality 'designer' duds are over. The newly opened United Brands store in Thamel is planning to offer a range and quality equal to any shop in Europe or the US, with the latest from brands including Tommy Hilfiger, Timberland, Guess?, Calvin Klein and Levi's.



NEW PRODUCTS

SUPER HEATER: The new Ariston Super Glass heater, available at Home Furnishers in Tripureshwor, has an extra internal layer of glass lined enamelling and a special magnesium anode against corrosion, which adds to its safety and durability. Available in 10, 15, 30 and 50 litre options.



HI-TECH: The three new Philips FlatTV sets being introduced this year come enhanced with two unique picture technology improvements. The Pixel Plus 2 technology takes image enhancement to new heights, with sharper, more detailed pictures than ever before. The Ambilight ambient lighting feature allows viewers to personalise the screen for colour choice and brightness, or select presets that automatically change the colour intensity based on screen content.



No wavering

Keeping reforms on track is necessary to build lasting peace

As the Maoist insurgency rages on and democratic processes remain disrupted, Nepal's future looks bleak. Evidence of human suffering, including human rights abuses, is compelling. Naturally, the government's

GUEST COLUMN
Ken Ohashi



attention is focussed on these issues. The cabinet, however, would be well advised not to forget the development and reform agenda.

In the second half of the 1990s, political instability led to a marked slowdown in reforms and increasing signs of stress on the economy and society. Recognising this, HMGN made an important beginning in 2000 by announcing a Priority Action Plan that focused on improving governance and reducing poverty. Unfortunately, it proved to be ahead of its time, as the wider political establishment continued to be preoccupied with internal power struggles.

As the severity of Rastriya Banijya Bank (RBB) and Nepal Bank Limited's (NBL) financial problems became apparent in 2001, HMGN became alarmed by the prospect of a financial sector crisis and began to see this issue as the rallying point for the reform process. The initial step was to place the two ailing banks under professional external management.

With the fiscal situation rapidly worsening in 2002 (when Nepal's domestic revenue fell shorter than 'regular' expenditures for the first time in living memory), HMGN started to use this fiscal reality as a driver for public expenditure reform. At the same time, to respond to the serious challenges caused by the insurgency, HMGN began to promote aggressive decentralisation to improve public service delivery.

By 2002, these somewhat disparate initiatives were pulled together. The Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) was introduced to rationalise the development budget. The CIAA started highly visible actions against senior civil servants and politicians on corruption charges. HMGN formulated a Foreign Aid Policy and built Nepal's Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) on



reforms thus far initiated, using a more integrated medium-term approach.

At the core of the MTEF is maximising the benefits of public spending that is subject to a 'hard budget constraint'. In the first year, 160 low priority projects were dropped. There are three important challenges:

- integrating regular expenditures into the prioritisation process
- sharpening the focus on outputs and outcomes
- integrating donor-funded projects into a harmonised prioritisation process

A conceptual counterpart to the MTEF, the Immediate Action Plan (IAP) recognises the limited institutional capacity of HMGN to implement reforms (an institutional 'hard budget constraint'), and selects a small number of highest priority actions that HMGN must focus all its implementation energies on. The IAP has now been adopted as an annual process to collectively think through priority reforms and hold line ministries and other agencies accountable for their implementation. An increasing emphasis in the IAP is on showing results on the ground.

An important pending issue is the delineation of roles between the cabinet ministers and the civil service. The current system—in which all authorities are vested with the ministers and where the decision to devolve is individual and arbitrary—has tended to stifle the growth of a professional civil service. Another important initiative that is off track is the decentralisation process, crucial to improving accountability and public services.

At this year's Nepal Development Forum HMGN proposed a significant 'harmonisation' process which

tries to incorporate all major aid decisions (ie, which projects to finance) into the annual MTEF cycle. If successfully implemented by the 2005-6 budget, this would move Nepal to the forefront of donor harmonisation internationally.

Nepal's Poverty Reduction Strategy for the first time explicitly identifies social exclusion as a fundamental development challenge. Donors have endorsed the basic robustness of the PRS, but noted that the real challenge is in implementation, especially in the context of the on-going conflict. To continue implementing the PRS in the conflict-affected areas, HMGN will have to diversify the modalities of public service delivery and even monitoring.

For Nepal to achieve faster economic growth and poverty reduction, it is absolutely necessary to resolve the conflict and restore political stability. This, however, will take time. In the meantime, what has given Nepal some credibility and earned continued donor support is the strength of the reforms.

These reforms are fundamental to building a lasting peace for Nepal. Though often overlooked, it is to the credit of a number of successive cabinets that a strong reform process has been built up since 2001. The present cabinet finds itself in a fortunate position of simply having to continue the on-going program.

A demonstrated willingness by the government to pursue the development agenda will no doubt win Nepal the support of many more friends in the international community. Any signs of wavering on the reforms front, however, could prove costly to Nepal. ●

Ken Ohashi is the World Bank Country director for Nepal

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MIN BAJRACHARYA

Global flavour

Nepal's oldest international school goes golden

MILAN WAGLE

The playground at Lincoln School in Rabi Bhawan is a microcosm of today's world. Students from Nepal to Canada, Israel to Eritrea mingle comfortably in one multi-lingual, ethnic, national and cultural mass. Diversity is now a key point at Lincoln, although when it first started in 1954 as Lincoln

Cooperative School it consisted of eight students, all the children of Americans working in Nepal. In the 50 years that followed, Lincoln has grown from its humble beginnings into a full-fledged international school, with about 30 teachers and a 240-strong student body that includes Nepalis and children of expatriates from all over the world. Typically, over 35 nationalities are represented, and currently 20 percent of the

students are Nepalis, 30 percent are North American, 28 percent are from across Europe and the remaining 22 percent from various other nations. Over the years, many Nepali parents have chosen this international school because of Lincoln's educational approach, which focusses on developing creative and critical thinking skills. Many claim that this move has helped their children gain an edge in life, especially within

Nepal. The parent of a former Nepali student explains, "In a traditional Nepali education, the teachers mould the student. At Lincoln, they unfold. The teachers guide the student in discovering his true self." Bhaskar Koirala, who graduated from Lincoln in 1994, says, "I really developed a more 'textured' view of people of different nationalities and cultures. I also met some truly remarkable people, including my wife, Juna Maya Pandey. I was fascinated by the ease with which students from different countries got along with one another." "The greatest thing about Lincoln is the individuality, attitude and diversity that each person, be they student, teacher, parent or custodian, brings to Lincoln," says Bhaju Shrestha, a library assistant who has been working in Lincoln for 26 years. Barbara Butterworth, the school's director, agrees. "Most of the teachers at Lincoln have been here for at least six or

seven years, while some have been here more than 20. Our caring atmosphere for the student, for each other and for Nepal makes people want to stay." This atmosphere obviously creates strong bonds, and when Lincoln School celebrated its 50th anniversary last weekend alumni and former staff flew in to Kathmandu from around the globe. Among the guests was John Ritter, who served as director at Lincoln from 1977 to 1980 and is currently the director of an international school in Laos. Many alumni and former staff were amazed by the changes in the school's infrastructure, especially those who remember most of today's compound as plain fields. In fact, a small wall is all that is left of the early Lincoln School building. "That old building has been torn down now," comments Ritter, "all that remains from it is the wooden floor, which was reused as the stage for the



COURTESY LINCOLN SCHOOL



THEN AND NOW: The entire student body of the 1960-61 academic year pose in the inner courtyard of the old school building (left). The first grade class of 1963 on the lawn at Rabi Bhawan (above). A typical primary school classroom today (facing page), and students take a break between morning classes (top).

theatre.”

A new building, completed in 2000, houses most of the classrooms and computer and science labs. The computer network of over a hundred workstations accessible to all staff and students came as a surprise for those who remembered the school's pre-PC days.

Other developments are less tangible, but evident nonetheless. Lincoln is a member of the South Asian International School Association (SAISA), and in the 15 years since joining, Lincoln students have participated in and hosted numerous sporting events, music competitions and choir competitions. Currently, volleyball and swimming are the hot topics as the school's teams recently returned from tournaments in India and Sri Lanka. “These events are just amazing,” says a 10th grader.

“Not only do we get to represent Nepal in other countries, but we get to travel and learn about other cultures too.”

“The main issues that the school faces are the same as the ones that any Nepali school faces,” says Suzie Burns, who has been a teacher at Lincoln School for the past 25 years. “Chakka jams, strikes and educational bandas affect us just like they affect any other school. We then have to worry about how to make up for lost time and, like everybody else, resort to classes on Saturdays and Sundays.”

Students however, have a different problem. “There is a notion that we are really pampered here,” says Nina Schick, a senior at Lincoln. “Students from other schools think that our courses are easy and that nobody cares if we don't study. Boy is that wrong! The subjects here are much

harder than in any other school that I've been in.” Nepali students say that other Nepali kids sometimes view them differently, and seem to think that they are forgetting or ignoring their country and heritage.

However, the school ensures that the students, no matter where they are from, learn about the country that they are living in. “Students learn about Nepal, and the children from kindergarten to grade five have Nepal studies,” explains Kabita Pande, who teaches the subject. The curriculum focusses on Nepali culture, language and the Nepali society in a global context. This, along with other school traditions like the Leopardstown project that the primary school children work on, creating a simulated community with its own laws, elected government, shops and even taxes, are intended to make the students socially



MIN BAJRACHARYA

aware global citizens.

Looking back at his time as a student, Bhaskar Koirala says, “One of the drawbacks of Lincoln School 10 years ago was the limited scope to make more sustained connections with the wider Nepali society. I imagine this has now changed for the better.” Among the other Nepalis who have benefited from a Lincoln education is

Ajay Jatia, who graduated in 1990 and has gone on to become the executive director of Jagdamba Cement Industry. He says the only drawback of having studied in a school with such diversity is that the alumni eventually end up scattered all over the world. Jatia has decided to make an effort to streamline the Lincoln alumni association, and says, “The golden jubilee is just the kick start we need.” ●

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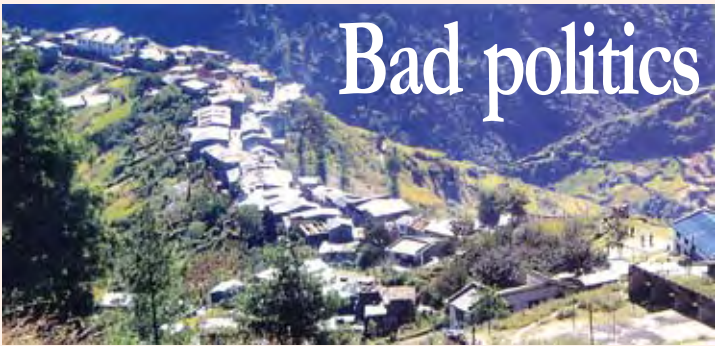
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Amidst all the merry-making, let's spare a thought for the humble Bee. Buzzing effortlessly from flower to flower. Ensnared in her busy little world collecting that which brings joy to the breakfast table... throughout the festive season, all year round.

Miracle of Mother Nature, boon from the Goddess!



Dabur



Nepal, 17 October

J PANDAY

नेपाल

At a time when everyone is returning to their villagers for Dasain, 65-year-old Cheuki Buda from Birat in Jumla left her home to protest against forced Maoist recruitment. She took a bold step in leaving the village, defying the Maoist rebels. Her courage has inspired fellow villagers to join her, walking uphill until they reach Gamgadi, the Mugu district headquarters at an altitude of 11,000 feet.

“Now we may never return to our village,” says 60-year-old Mankail Buda, who also protested against the Maoist call to join their party. Almost 400 villagers, including pregnant women, left their homes in Birat, Kankasundari and Dhapa of Jumla and walked for over two days to Gamgadi. Many walked on an empty stomach and some even broke their legs during the journey. Several suffered from pneumonia and dehydration. Many prefer to die of starvation and carry on the hard trek rather than work for the Maoists. “The Ranas met with their own end for forcing people against their wishes,” Gorakh Buda says, indicating that the Maoists would meet with a similar fate.

Many villagers were forced to abandon their homes because of the Maoists’ exorbitant demands for donations. The Maoists had threatened to prohibit celebrations or any Hindu rituals if they failed to pay. “They don’t allow the women to wear any golden ornaments and jewellery. Even the married women are prohibited from wearing bangles and necklaces,” says Bhim Buda, who fled his village with eight family members. “It is bad politics when you fight a cause with arms,” he adds.

The local militants leaders have devised a strategy to expose locals who flee to other districts. They take them to Maoist programs and take their pictures, falsely identifying them as their party workers. “The Maoists have written names of many villagers as their party members,” says 70-year-old Dhan Bahadur Malla of Mugu, who the Maoists have marked as a member of their agricultural unit. The Maoists are confident that the villagers would not leave once their names were made public.

Realising that the villages are emptying, the local Maoist representatives are calling upon the people to return home and have promised to take action against those harassing the villagers. But none of the villagers are willing to believe the Maoists.



समय Samaya, 15 October

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

“The Maoist violence will not end by using force.”

British Ambassador Keith Bloomfield in Kantipur, 11 October

Royal bother

Yubraj Ghimire in
Samaya, 7-14 October

समय

At the royal palace reception for Princess Himani’s birthday a small group of diplomats held a serious discussion with King Gyanendra. Despite complaints that often only the American, British, Chinese and Indian ambassadors are privy to such talks, this time the ambassadors from Bangladesh, Australia,

Russia, France and others discussed the Maoists and the 1 September riots with the king.

“In France, there is no dearth of ideologists propagating leftist and republican views,” the French ambassador told King Gyanendra, adding that although these groups supported Peru’s Shining Path and similar revolutions, there is no French support for the Maoists. The king smiled, but turned serious when the

Australian ambassador mentioned 1 september and said the mosque attacks were an act of communalism and religious intolerance. The king corrected the envoy, saying, “Religious tolerance has always been a part of our culture and history.” After a while, the French ambassador raised the issue of the Maoist demand for direct royal talks. The king said, “I have given full consent to the steps taken by the government on this matter.”

The diplomats evidently left

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ART DIRECTORS / VISUALISERS

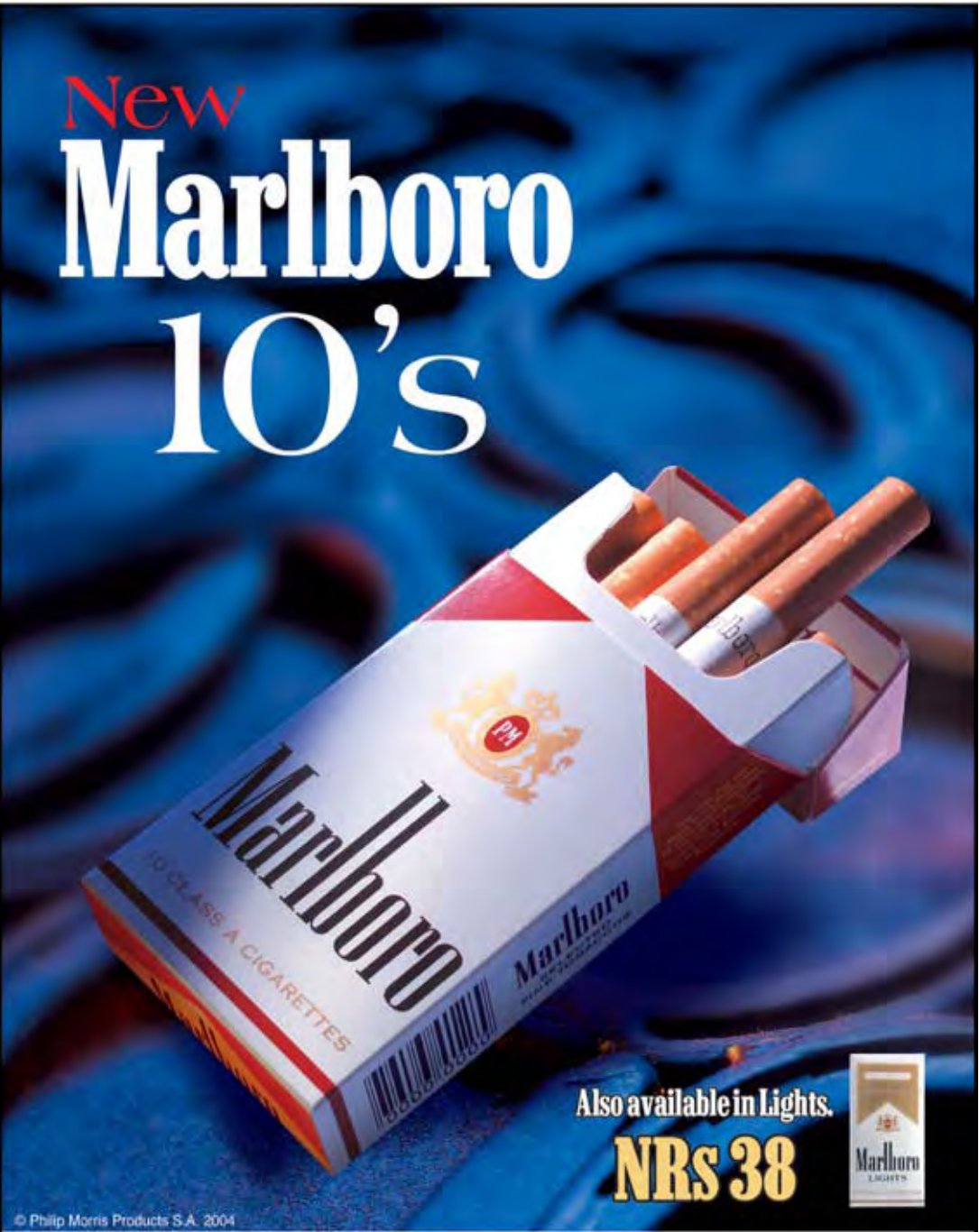
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स्वास्थ्यको लागि हानिकारक छ

the party feeling positive about the king's views, but may have been seriously concerned later in the evening hearing news of the terrible violence where Prince Paras was present. They have related the incident to the monarchy's future, probably wondering what kind of company the future king keeps. This provokes other questions: should the monarchy be above and detached from public concern? If so, then does this not signify the beginning of a republic? The royal palace secretariat favours keeping the king and his subjects apart. The king must overrule this and win the people's trust otherwise the monarchy will be even more unpopular.

Running on empty
.....
Annapurna Post, 13 October
अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट
Night bus entrepreneurs are concerned as the number of bookings and passengers

travelling out of Kathmandu for Dasain has plummeted. The night buses used to be packed with passengers and until last year, the bus station at Gongabu had to request police help to control the long queues and the mad rush at the ticket counters, but this time around the bus park is relatively quiet and uncrowded. The few people willing to travel are afraid to use night buses, and opt for the safer and more convenient minibuses, travelling by day even for long journeys. Many are also travelling by air to avoid the hassle of going through heavy security checks on the highway. More than 100 buses used to be crowded with people everyday, but this Dasain less than 30 are travelling all over the country. With Dasain only a few days away, there is no sign of more passengers booking seats. Last year, after running out of tickets, most of the counters had been closed by this time.



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Explosive growth



Prakash Rai in *Dristi*, 12 October

The Maoists are using bombs rather than guns to spread terror in the capital. The government's increased security has prevented the deaths of VIPs, but hasn't been able to control the blasts. Despite the security forces patrolling the city carrying the latest guns, bomb blasts are proving to be a headache that just won't go away.

"The Maoists are trying to threaten the army psychologically," says Brigadier General Rajendra Thapa. Bomb threats and blasts have increased in Kathmandu since the Pritna Headquarters were established. The Kathmandu district police headquarters says there have been 38 blasts in the Valley since 16 April. 62 people, civilians and security personnel, have been injured, and security forces estimate one to three Maoists are usually involved in a single incident.

The Maoists make bombs using household utensils and explosives imported from India. These can be made at minimum cost and wreck maximum damage. In the past Maoists have used pressure cooker bombs, petrol bombs, socket bombs and pipe bombs, but on 12 September in Kathmandu's Tinkune area the Maoists changed tactics and used a gas cylinder bomb. Sixteen people, including security personnel, were injured and a Tata mobile car and two motorcycles were destroyed.

Military analyst Indrajit Rai claims that the Maoists are using bombs to spread mental terror. He says, "Bombs wreck more mental and material damage, and cylinder bombs especially are very powerful and dangerous."

It is suspected the Maoists learn about bombs from the Indian Maoist Communist Centre, the People's Bar Association and former military personnel who have joined the movement. Information on making bombs also comes from the internet.

According to a Royal Nepali Army bomb specialist, the Maoists have given bomb warfare priority as it is cheap, creates a lot of damage and is hassle free for the perpetrators. It has also been suspected that the Maoists have different divisions for the people who make the bombs and the people who plant them.

The Royal Nepali Army has increased security, but Maoist activity has been increasing instead of decreasing. Brigadier General Dilip Karki, who is in charge of monitoring Maoist activity at the Pritna Headquarters, says that the army has a robotic 'bomb disposal' device but does not have the means to determine whether or not an object is a bomb. Brigadier General Deepak Gurung, spokesperson for the Royal Nepali Army, claims that Kathmandu has been an easy target due to its large population, but adds that the armed forces have been able to prevent Maoists from targeting prime locations.

The increasing number of blasts indicate the Maoists are making bombs within the Valley, but the army is still unable to gain intelligence to prevent the bombings. Despite the army's attempts at strategies, increased personnel, imported modern weapons and helicopters, the Maoists are still able to challenge the security forces. It is time for the government to change its strategy to fight the Maoists. The odd, rather immature tactics of the security forces who stand at crossroads checking bags has been futile in discouraging the Maoist efforts. This checking only hassles civilians. Hence, it is probably best that the armed forces resort to more scientific methods to solve their problems.

Doomsday for the dollar?

A selling stampede may trigger the first global financial crisis of the 21st century

The United States' current-account deficit reached 5.7 percent of GDP in the second quarter of 2004. Yet the dollar remains at a relative high:

ANALYSIS

J Bradford DeLong



less than 20 percent below its early 2001 highs and more than 10 percent higher in real terms than in the early to mid-1990s.

As the US current-account deficit rose over the past half-

decade, international economists have lined up to predict doom: returns on assets invested in the US are relatively low. Once portfolio investors start selling their dollar-denominated securities, a stampede will follow, causing the dollar's value to crash and triggering the first major global financial crisis of the 21st century.

Fred Bergsten of the Institute for International Economics calls this situation "a disaster in the making". How far will the dollar have to fall? The first historical

rule of thumb is 10 percent on the dollar for each percent of GDP's worth of unsustainable current-account deficit. The second historical rule of thumb is that currencies on the decline tend to overshoot: near the bottom.

So when will this promised dollar collapse and crisis come? Bergsten says: "Soon."

But Bergsten is probably wrong. The late Rudiger Dornbusch used to say that unsustainable situations lasted longer than economists who

believed in market rationality and equilibrium could imagine possible. They then tended to collapse more quickly than anyone could believe. In his view, currency overvaluations go through five stages:

- First, short-term speculators seeking higher returns, or investors overanxious for safety, drive a currency's value to unsustainable levels.
- Second, trend-chasers keep buying because the returns

have been so good in the recent past, thus pushing the overvaluation to a height and duration that orthodox economists cannot explain.

- Third, highly intelligent economists, evolve theories of why things are different this time, and why this time the overvaluation is perhaps sustainable after all.
- Fourth, market bulls, encouraged by theories of a "new economy" that justify the extraordinarily good returns seen in the recent past, keep buying and keep the currency suspended above economic fundamentals even longer.
- Fifth, the supply of eager purchasers and trend-chasing investors comes to an end, producing a crash that resembles the collapse of a Ponzi scheme.

In the past six months, the current round of the US dollar cycle entered stage three. Louis Uchitelle of *The New York Times* quotes Catherine Mann commenting on the 'co-dependent relationship between the US and its trading partners', which might 'last for quite some time because the US and its main trading partners have a vested interest in the status quo.'

Japan, China, and other export-oriented East Asian economies are indeed eager to keep the value of the dollar relatively high, and their central banks have piled up close to \$2 trillion in dollar-denominated assets. China's government regards the threat of capital losses on its dollar-denominated securities as less important than the need to maintain near-full employment in coastal manufacturing cities like Shanghai. After all, the ruling communist oligarchs have grown accustomed to a comfortable lifestyle. The last thing they want is mass unemployment and urban unrest to call their positions into question.

There may yet be a soft landing, whether slow or fast: during the last major dollar cycle, between 1985 and 1987, the dollar fell by 40 percent. But the historical rule of thumb is that the chances of a fast, hard landing have now surpassed 25 percent, and continue to climb.

• (© Project Syndicate)

J. Bradford DeLong is Professor of Economics at the University of California at Berkeley and was Assistant US Treasury Secretary during the Clinton Presidency.



INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR INTEGRATED MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT, KATHMANDU, NEPAL

Position Announcement

DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL/PROGRAMMES

ICIMOD was established in 1983 to promote an ecologically and environmentally sound mountain ecosystem and to improve the living standards of mountain populations of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan area, which includes all or part of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan. ICIMOD operates at the interface between research and development and its statutory activities include (i) documentation and information exchange, (ii) research, (iii) capacity building, and (iv) advisory services. The Centre is located in Kathmandu, Nepal. Programmes strategically address issues related to Natural Resources; Agriculture and Rural Income Diversification; Water, Hazards and Environment Management; Culture Equity and Governance; Policy and Programme Development; Application of GIS and Remote Sensing and Outreach and Communication as a part of Integrated Knowledge Management; and Administration and Finance. More information can be found on the ICIMOD Home Page: <http://www.icimod.org>

The Deputy Director General/Programme (DDGP) is an internationally recruited position that will be responsible for providing leadership and guidance for the Programmes of the Centre and ensuring that it continually addresses the important research and development issues for sustainable mountain development in the region.

Key responsibilities include:

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- supporting the Director General in developing and implementing a fund-raising strategy for supporting ICIMOD's research and development activities and in ensuring that Board and donor requirements, including reporting are met.
- as a member of the senior management team, acting as Director General in his/her absence, and supporting the Director General in promoting teamwork and collaboration, quality performance standards, professionalism and integrity, and a value for money culture across the organization.

For detail job description for the position of DDGP, please refer to the Job description posted in the website www.odcincorp.com under the category 'Recruitment'.

Requirements

A PhD in an appropriate discipline such as Development Economics, Natural Resources Management, Anthropology, Sociology or equivalent; should possess a strong track record in research evidenced by publications of international standards, international development and project management together with demonstrated knowledge of the region in which ICIMOD works. Candidates must also demonstrate capability in programme design, implementation and monitoring and must have previous management experiences in similar organizations. Ability and willingness to travel widely in the region, including remote and high altitude areas, are pre-requisite for the post holder. Computer and Internet literacy is essential.

The salary and allowances for this exceptionally challenging post will be commensurate with the high qualifications and experience required, comparable to equivalent top-ranking positions in international organizations. The Deputy Director General/Programme will be appointed for an initial four-year term. Extension for an additional four is possible, depending upon a successful review by the ICIMOD Board of Governors of programme accomplishments and management. It is anticipated that the successful candidate will assume the position of ICIMOD Deputy Director General/Programmes as early as possible in 2005 and not later than 1 July 2005.

Hard copies of the Job Description for DDGP are available at the offices of the Organisation Development Centre Incorporated (ODC Inc.) from October 15, 2004 onwards. Electronic copies can be found on ODC Inc. website at www.odcincorp.com under the category 'Recruitment'. Copies of the Job Description may be sent on request by email to candidates who may not have access to the website or are unable to pick a hard copy up at the ODC Inc. offices.



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Applications must include curriculum vitae and the names, address and phone/e-mail addresses of three referees. Applications must be received no later than November 8, 2004. The final interview will take place on December 2 - 4, 2004 at ICIMOD, Kathmandu, Nepal.

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Elections in a time of insurgency

Is there a lesson from El Salvador for Iraq, Afghanistan and Nepal?

Conditions were horrible when Salvadorans went to the polls on 28 March, 1982. The country was in the midst of a civil war that would take 75,000 lives. An insurgent army controlled about a third of the nation's territory. Just before election day, the insurgents stepped up their terror campaign. They attacked the National Palace, staged

Duarte. They gave the decent majority a chance to display their own courage and dignity. War, tyranny and occupation sap dignity, but voting restores it.

The elections achieved something else: they undermined the insurgency. El Salvador wasn't transformed overnight. But with each succeeding election into the early 1990s, the rebels on the left and the death squads on the right grew weaker. Finally, peace was achieved and the entire hemisphere felt the effects.

I mention this case study because of election day in Afghanistan on 9 October. Six days later, voter registration begins in Iraq. Conditions in both places will be tense and chaotic. And in Washington, a mood of bogus tough-mindedness has swept the political class. As William Raspberry wrote in *The Washington Post*, 'the new consensus seems to be that bringing American-style democracy to Iraq is no longer an achievable goal.'

The people who make this argument pat themselves on the back for being hard-headed, but the fact is they are naïve. The reason we should work for full democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan is not just because it's noble, but because it's practical. It is easier to defeat an insurgency and restore order with elections than without.

It's hard to beat an illegitimate insurgency with an illegitimate dictatorship. Strongmen have to whip up ethnic nationalism to lure soldiers to their side. They end up inciting blood feuds and reaping the whirlwind.

A democratically elected



leader, on the other hand, can do what Duarte did. He can negotiate with rebels, invite them into the political process and co-opt any legitimate grievances. He can rally people on all sides of the political spectrum, who are united by their attachment to the democratic idea. In Iraq, he can exploit the insurgents' greatest weakness: they have no positive agenda.

Of course the situation in El Salvador is not easily comparable to the situations in Afghanistan or Iraq. On the other hand, over the past 30-odd years, democracy has spread at the rate of one and a half nations per year. It has spread among violence-racked nations and to 18 that are desperately poor. And it has spread not only because it inspires, but also

because it works.

It's simply astounding that in the United States, the home of the greatest and most effective democratic revolution, so many people have come to regard democracy as a luxury-brand vehicle, suited only for the culturally upscale, when it's really a sturdy truck, effective in conditions both rough and smooth. ● (NYT)

COMMENT David Brooks



highway assaults that cut the nation in two and blew up schools that were to be polling places.

Yet voters came out in the hundreds of thousands. In some towns, they had to duck beneath sniper fire to get to the polls. In San Salvador, a bomb went off near a line of people waiting outside a polling station. The people scattered, then the line reformed. "This nation may be falling apart," one voter said, "but by voting we may help hold it together."

Conditions were scarcely better in 1984, when Salvadorans got to vote again. Nearly a fifth of the municipalities were not able to participate in the elections because they were under guerrilla control. The insurgents mined the roads to cut off bus service to 40 percent of the country. Twenty bombs were planted around the town of San Miguel. Once again, people voted with the sound of howitzers in the background.

Yet these elections proved how resilient democracy is, how even in the most chaotic circumstances, meaningful elections can be held. They produced a National Assembly, and a president, José Napoleón

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What drives combatants in wartime? What is the psychology of weapon-bearers in battlefield situations? The International Committee of the Red Cross, active in conflict zones around the world, launched a major study in 2001 to see if it was possible to influence combatants to respect international humanitarian law.

This was no small undertaking. The study sought answers to a range of questions: Are human beings in war, by definition, bound to commit atrocities? Is the lack of awareness of international law the cause of violations? What is it that decides whether a fighter violates or respects the rules of war? The study consisted of four

parts: a thorough analysis of the data gathered in the context of the 'People on War' study, interviews with several hundred fighters from both regular and irregular forces in Colombia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and Congo. Questionnaires were submitted and the results analysed. A significant mismatch emerged

Warlike behaviour

The study found that awareness about rules of war is not sufficient to ensure compliance by combatants

REVIEW
Jean-Jacque
Fresard

between the combatants' knowledge of humanitarian norms and their inclination to respect them. Awareness of the existence of a norm, it seemed, was not sufficient to ensure a favourable attitude towards it. This gulf between awareness and application of norms is the result of a series of mechanisms which lead to moral disengagement of the fighter and the violations. Moral disengagement is usually the product of the fighter's membership of a group and place within a hierarchy, where submission to authority and conformism play a

pivotal role. Those who commit reprehensible acts often perceive themselves not as torturers, but as victims. They feel and are told that they are victims, which gives them the right to kill or commit atrocities. This victim status and the real or imagined threat of becoming one again justifies the resort to any means to obtain justice. A people, ethnic group or country which is fighting for its survival, they think, can't afford the luxury of humanitarian considerations and roles that may weaken it. For such people, the end justifies the means. Beyond straightforward revenge, in which passion often comes into play, the argument of reciprocity is universally invoked. The vocabulary used is a constant ally, the use of euphemisms to refer to war crimes commonplace. One speaks of 'police operations', 'clean-up of a region' or 'surgical strikes'.

Modern methods of warfare, whereby you can kill by remote-control, facilitate such justifications, especially when the media is not present to show the realities of a conflict. The enemy is demonised and portrayed as vermin. Ergo, the vermin must be exterminated. In short, fighter's behaviour is mainly determined by three parameters: ● their membership of a group, which leads them to adopt the behaviour that conforms with the group's expectations ● their integration into a hierarchical structure, in which they must obey authority blindly ● the process of moral disengagement, favoured by a war situation, which permits the recourse to violence against the person defined as the enemy. The training of armed personnel, strict orders and effective sanctions therefore are the best ways of obtaining better respect for international humanitarian law. The rules must be translated into tangible mechanisms, and practical measures must be taken to ensure their respect and must be an integral part of military doctrine. If an order is not respected, punishment must follow. The priority lies in influencing those who wield power over the armed forces, starting with the instigators of war, who prepare the ground politically, ideologically and morally for the dehumanisation of the enemy.

Violations of the Geneva Convention and humanitarian laws are not a result of a problem with the law but of the arguments put forward to justify attacking the 'enemy'. Whether or not fighter's behaviour conforms to humanitarian rules depends on the political will of the leaders and thus requires an approach which integrates humanitarian law into the orders, discipline and training of armed groups. ●

'People on War' was commissioned by ICRC in 1999 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions. More than 20,000 civilians and combatants in 12 conflict regions around the world were interviewed. The results are posted on www.icrc.org

Jean-Jacques Fresard is an ICRC delegate.

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Nepal needs to learn from international examples

Across the border, the Indians are displaying an overwhelming interest in cricket. This is mainly due to their having some of the best players and one of the best teams in the world. When it comes to a sport growing and developing, excellence in performance and results is vital.

Though golf was first introduced in Nepal in 1917, progress has been rather slow compared to our neighbouring countries, both in terms of the numbers playing and the standards achieved. The reasons behind this slow growth are obvious.

A sport rarely develops on a national level when it is only supported by players and enthusiasts. This is very much the case for golf in Nepal.

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



Achieving a goal of having Nepali professional golfers playing on the world money tours is not going to happen overnight. Players here need to first get more exposure by

playing many more local tournaments and getting into that winning mindset before going international.

India provides a perfect example. Their professionals have been performing well on world circuits, and that has fuelled a tremendous increase in public interest for the sport. India's active golfing population has been multiplying (currently estimated at up to 95,000) and simultaneously the number of courses has climbed from 140 to almost 170 in just five years. Hand in hand, prize money on the Indian Professional Golf tour has passed Rs 48 million due to overwhelming support from local businesses.

Put simply, for the sport to have grown this popular, India and other countries have nurtured their own domestic professional tours. Those who have performed reasonably well domestically earn a very comfortable living. This has encouraged more players to join in, and thus standards improved fast.

More domestic tournaments for professionals will help improve skills and competitive abilities, causing standards to reach levels that would allow Nepali golf into the regional and then international arena.

Much has also been talked about golf tourism in the country. If just one Nepali golfer was to perform well internationally, the outlook for Nepal's sports tourism would change vibrantly overnight, and this popular international sport would benefit Nepal's tourism industry and the country.

Even the smallest development requires people who have not only foresight, but also the passion to see a vision through to implementation. A few years ago, Rabindra Man Shrestha, who was marketing director of Gorkha Brewery at the time, had the vision to market Carlsberg beer and improve the standard of Nepali professional golf at the same time. Carlsberg sponsored a professional tournament, thereby, hopefully, setting a trend for other corporations to follow.

Their support for professional sports continues, with the Carlsberg Nepal PGA Championship being played this week (12-15 October) at the Royal Nepal Golf Club, once again giving Nepali professionals a rare four-day opportunity to shine.

This is the kind of support needed from Nepali corporate houses if we want to one day see the likes of a Nepali Jeev Milka Singh, an Arjun Atwal or even a Vijay Singh.

Our Tourism Minister recently attended the International Conference on Sports and Tourism organised by the World Tourism Organisation in Kuala Lumpur. There he stated, "Sport is a one good medium for the overall development of the country."

Of course it is—when something is actually done about it. ●

Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and Golf Director at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu.
prodeepak@hotmail.com



STATUTORY DIRECTIVE : SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

A winning proposition

Private sector sponsorship for training and participation

Forty-four years after Nepal started taking part in the Olympics, Sangina Baidya became the first South Asian woman to qualify in taekwondo this year.

But even before leaving for Athens, Sangina had scored another first. She was the first Nepali athlete to generate corporate sponsorship that covered most of her expenses at the games. In an unprecedented show of solidarity towards an Olympics hopeful, six Nepali corporate houses came together to meet 85 percent of her expenses and launched interactive media campaigns to boost her morale.

"We wanted to encourage Sangina to do her best and keep the flag flying," says Suraj Vaidya of the Vaidya Group. But for others in the consortium, having their name associated with promoting Sangina was part of their own marketing strategy. Tarun Tuteja, senior product manager at Dabur Nepal told us: "We were largely driven by the huge marketing opportunity of Sangina's high-profile competition in Athens.

However, we also wanted to help promote sports in the country."

As it turned out, Sangina was beaten 4-0 by Hsin Chen Shih of Chinese Taipei in the prelims of the Women's Under 49kg in Athens. Even so, she has been appearing regularly as a model for various consumer and food products.

Sports sponsorship is relatively new in Nepal. As the cost of buying rights to broadcasting events like the Olympics and the football World Cup soars, media houses have sought local sponsorship to defray the expenses. Nepal Television had to pay the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union \$55,000 for broadcast rights for the Olympics this year. Of the

total, nearly half went to pay for the technical charges. Even so, Athens showed that corporate sponsorship for sports is available and can be channelled for promotion and raining in future. The challenge that sports bureaucrats face is finding ways to tap these funds.

Rajesh Lal Shrestha says his motive for sponsoring Sangina was not profit. "Sangina gave us something to cheer about at a time when most news was depressing, and even though she lost in Athens, there was reason enough to celebrate," he added. Ravin Lama of *The Himalayan Times* agrees: "The motive behind our support to Sangina was patriotic. She set an example for others to excel and our papers wanted to spread this positive message to the larger community with louder affirmation."



Sangina herself was overwhelmed by the support she got, and it wasn't just the money to pay for her expenses. "The letters of encouragement that the advertisements generated and the publicity was very encouraging," she says. "In the future, the sponsorship could pay for international exposure for Nepali athletes." Sangina denies that the extra media attention and the expectations of the sponsors put extra pressure on her, but sports psychologist Ramesh Khanal feels that in the future athletes should be provided professional counselling in order to deal with stressful competitions. "In Sangina's case I do feel the media was over-ambitious, and

this would have inevitably increased Sangina's psychological stress."

Will the trend towards sponsorship in Nepali sports make it more commercial, or will it actually help the development of sports? Kishor Bahadur Singh of the National Sports Council thinks the government is cash-strapped, so "private corporate sponsorship is a very welcome development".

Truly, sport is a medium that manages to bring forth national pride and distinctiveness. Hence it becomes more essential for sports management in Nepal to remain free from constant altercations and controversies. There is a need for all parties concerned to work in collaboration with non-government organisations and for private bodies to encourage

and uplift this sector.

But there are concerns that the sponsorship money may have been better spent on training, rather than on media ads and commercials. Also, the Nepal Olympic Committee often has been accused of sending more junketeering officials to Olympic venues than athletes. Rukma Shumshere Rana, president of the Nepal Olympic Committee, says Nepal did not have to incur any expenses for the officials. "The International Olympic Committee paid for them, and it was important for them to be there to network and be represented," he says. ●

(Stuty Maskey, Rena Shrestha and Bandana Gyawali wrote this article)

WOMEN IN CONCERT

PART II

in support of the

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ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Cycle of Creation** Paintings by Buddhi Thapa at Gallery Nine, Lazimpat. Until 18 October.
- ❖ **The Faces of Time and Colours of Sensibility** Paintings by Durga Baral at the Siddhartha Art Gallery. Until 31 October.
- ❖ **Hamro Prayas** Art exhibition by AVM School grades 6-10. Until 26 October at NAFA Gallery, Naxal.
- ❖ **Works Influenced by Tibet** Paintings by Tashi Tenzxy Raptan Tsang at Gallery Moksh, Jhamshikhel. Until November 5.

EVENTS

- ❖ **WCN Amateur Nature and Wildlife Photography Competition** for amateurs. Deadline 30 November. www.wcn.org.np 5524202.
- ❖ **WAVE Music Utsav** at Bhrikuti Mandap. The Blue Note—Kathmandu's finest blues on 15 October, 5-7PM. Entrance Rs 25
- ❖ **Changa Chait 2061** Kite flying at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot. 16 October. Rs 100. 4410432
- ❖ **Kathmandu Utsav** at Bhrikuti Mandap, Until 17 October
- ❖ **Movies** 2PM onwards at the Alliance Francaise: La Veuve de Saint-Pierre, 17 October. 4241163
- ❖ **Becoming Your Own Therapist** Buddhist psychology to transform your life. 16-17 October, 9.30 AM to 4.30 PM at HBMC. 4414843
- ❖ **Atanarjuat** (The Fast Runner) a film by Zacharias Kunuk on 17 October, 5.30 PM at Nepal Tourism Board, Bhrikuti Mandap.
- ❖ **Bluebird Festive Blast** Shopping specials for Dasain and Tihar at both Tripureswor and Lazimpat outlets.

MUSIC

- ❖ **Fusion Night** at the Rox Bar. Every Wednesday from 6PM onwards.
- ❖ **Deo** at Not Just The Jazz Bar Fridays at Hotel Shangri-la, Lazimpat.
- ❖ **Jatra Friday Nites** Live music by The Strings. 4256622
- ❖ **Live music** at Moksh. Full Circle on Fridays. 7PM onwards, free entry.

DRINKS

- ❖ **Drin...king Utsav '04** Drinks of all types at the BICC, 15-19 October.
- ❖ **Just Devine Dasain!** After office happy hour, 4-8PM, with free snacks and 20 percent off drinks. Also buy one JD Cocktail, get one free. All through October at 'Jack Lives Here' - 1905 Kantipath. 4225272
- ❖ **Island Bar** with DJ Raju and The Cloud Walkers. The Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency. 4491234

FOOD

- ❖ **Get Impulsive This Saturday @ Shangri-la** with dance troop To Tango. 7.30 PM onwards. Rs 750 (single) Rs 1200 (couple). 4412999
- ❖ **Sizzling Chimney Flambéed** at The Chimney, Hotel Yak & Yeti. Till 24 October. 4248999
- ❖ **Fresh Catch** Seafood every Saturday and Sunday at The Café, Hyatt Regency.
- ❖ **Genuine Thai** cuisine at Royal Lotus, Bakhundole. 5521231
- ❖ **Farm House Café** Unlimited nature with delicious meals at Park Village Hotel. 4375280
- ❖ **Splash Spring BBQ** Wednesday and Friday evenings, 6PM onwards. Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu.
- ❖ **Executive Lunch** at Toran Restaurant, Dwarika's. 4479488
- ❖ **The Beer Garden** at Vajrayantha, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Dream Holiday** package tour to Malaysia during Dasain and Tihar. Marco Polo Travels and Qatar Airways, 2012345, malaysiaholidays_marco@polo.com.np
- ❖ **Getaway package** nights stay at Godavari Village Resort, includes dinner and breakfast. 5560675
- ❖ **Summer in Shivapuri** Tranquil village, superb views and birdwatching. Shivapuri Heights Cottage, on the edge of Shivapuri National Park. Steve@escape2nepal.com
- ❖ **Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge** Pure relaxation and business as usual. 4361500
- ❖ **Golf** at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa. 4451212
- ❖ **Early Bird discounts** at Shangri-La Hotel & Resort. 4412999
- ❖ **Dasain Adventure Holiday** at the Borderlands Resorts. 16-23 October, two to eight days. 4701295, info@borderlandresorts.com, www.borderlandresorts.com



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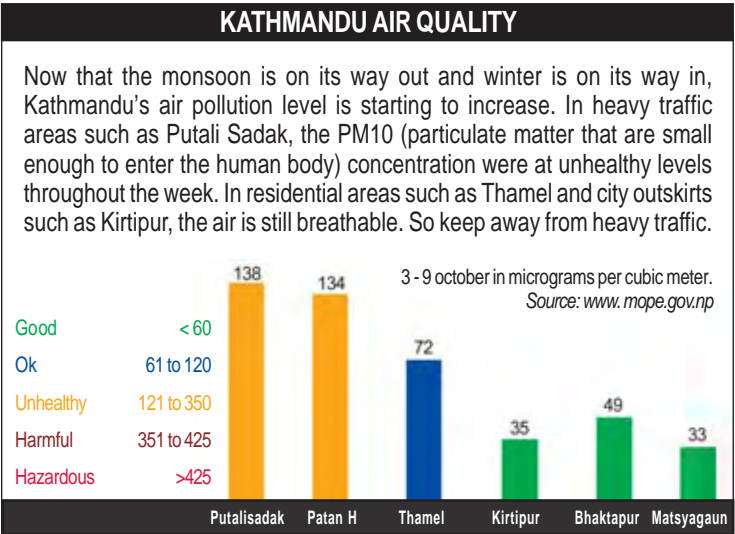
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NEPALI WEATHER



Kathmandu

by MAUSAM BEED


Tuesday's surprise rain was the second unusual burst this month, the first being the terrifying thundershowers on 6 October. However, the causes between these two unusual occurrences were very different—last Tuesday's rain was brought by the westerly cyclone from Tibet, whereas the 6 October storm was caused by the rival monsoon cyclone of the Bay. This latest satellite picture shows the dying stages of both cyclones paving way for clear skies this weekend. The dominant upper jet stream has already set over the Himalaya, driving the monsoon front further away. The effect of the last burst has brought average temperatures down by two degrees. The drop will continue less drastically, decreasing by about one-and-a-half degrees every two weeks.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

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दक्षिण एशियाकै पहिलो स्वतन्त्र प्रसारण सेवा रेडियो सगरमाथालाई दिगो बनाउन यसको साथी बनौं रेडियो सगरमाथाको साथी बनेर रेडियो सञ्चालनमा यहाँले ठूलो योगदान पुऱ्याउन सक्नुहुनेछ ।

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(थप जानकारीका लागि कार्यालय समयभित्र रेडियो सगरमाथामा सम्पर्क गर्नुहोस, फोन: ५५२८०८१, ५५४२२४५)



SURROUNDED: Nepali Congress president Girija Prasad Koirala talks to the press on Monday after submitting a written statement at the Supreme Court in response to the contempt of court charges against him.



FOR A CAUSE: Nepali rock icons Nepathya perform at their Harmony for Humanity concert for an audience of journalists and human rights activists at Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka on Tuesday.



PLEA: The parents of Gareth David Koch, a British trekker missing in Nepal since 8 March, at a press conference on Wednesday in Kathmandu requesting the Nepali people to report any sightings of their son.



MUSICAL FOLK: Local Nepali neo-folk group Kutumba performing on Sunday evening at Bhrikuti Mandap as part of the WAVE Music Utsav.



GROOVING: The packed dancefloor at the Rox Bar on Saturday evening's Big Night Out event, organised by Partynepal.com.

At 52, many years of struggle to support his family are etched on Chitra Bahadur Gurung's face. Every monsoon, he is in his highland village in Helambu collecting yak wool and spinning it to make traditional radi carpets with his family. The rest of the year, he carries his heavy rugs on his back and walks the streets of Kathmandu to sell them. Just like his father, and grandfather did before him.

Chitra Bahadur has to support his wife, two sons and two daughters. They all help make the rugs, which are not spun like carpets but beaten into a coarse fabric. After buying the wool from yak herders, it takes each family member four days to make a large rug, and Chitra Bahadur only makes about Rs 500 profit on each one he sells in Kathmandu. He has been peddling rugs in Kathmandu and Patan for 20 years now and finds Pulchowk with all the foreigners who work there the place where he makes the most sales.

Chitra Bahadur's work is hard, his expenses are high, and yet he has time for a quick smile. "If I sell them to a store, they will take all the profit and I'll get nothing," he says "It's much more worthwhile selling it on the streets. Besides, I get some exercise."

He brings about two dozen rugs on each trip and usually sells the whole lot in ten days. The Gurungs are subsistence farmers, so whatever they earn from selling rugs go to pay for festivals, weddings and other household necessities. "No, the Maoists don't bother me," says Chitra Bahadur. "Maybe if I was rich they would." ● (Aarti Basnyat)



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As the relentless march of technology rides roughshod over us, human beings inevitably yearn for the good old days when the world was young and there were only two flavours of ice cream.

Today, many of us are being forced by the consumer electronic industry to carry a plethora of gadgets on our person. Millions of years hence, when archaeologists dig up the perfectly preserved fossilised skeletal remains of a young adult urban-dwelling homo erectus male, they will know it is you because the specimen will be

found buried with a Sony Ericsson T610 cameraphone in the vicinity of your hip, an iPod on your rib cage with two wires still stuck to the sides of your skull, a palm pilot organiser clutched by the meta-tarsals, a 32 megabyte flashcard necklace and two socketbombs lodged in the pelvic area.

The good news is that there is no need to carry this confusing array of items anymore. Just get yourself the multi-purpose Palmrazorphone Superturbo LX-cum-Selforganiser, the one doodah that serves as an electric shaver and mobile phone with a built-in WAP-enabled palmbook and vacuum port to suck up dandruff, a portable iron for the travelling executive that can double up in Bluetooth vibrator mode, a laser pointer for your powerpoint presentation that can also be used to guide missiles to selected ground targets and a cattle prod feature when cruising on the wild side.

This is what Convergence is all about: the coming together of different types of technologies in one simple gizmo that bridges the digital divide between the haves and have mores. I have been



flipping through the 2,500 page manual for my new Palmrazorphone Superturbo LX and can't help but marvel at how it allows me to multitask.

For instance, while shaving in the Pivoted Head mode with the Long-hair Trimmer activated, I am alerted by a fire-engine siren if there is incoming voicemail. I can take this call by pressing 1 and moving the cursor to Settings and the Shave 'n' Talk toggle and press Select. The caller hears a loud buzzing sound and immediately hangs up thinking there is a large insect inside his head.

If you want to take a picture of yourself vacuuming up the dandruff from your coat collar while on a business trip and transmit it to your not-so-near and dear ones then this is the phone for you. Carefully lift the Palmrazorphone from its housing by pressing the Lift lever, scroll to Camera in the LCD monitor by going to the Function Menu Wizard, scroll

to Favourites and Create Now appears, press Yes, No, or Maybe and you'll get a Self-Portrait prompt, press Yes, New Account appears, press No, Are You Just About Finished appears, select yes, then pick an account type from a list of 286 options and make sure you are on a GSM connectivity compatible to the GPRS standard back home, and finally put the razor on the Self-timer Whisker Trim mode which makes the darn thing leap out of your hand as if it had a life of its own and proceed to mow down both your eye brows. Hard to explain.

The great thing is that the incredible Palmrazorphone can also be set to the Hair Transplant function which automatically plucks body hair from an unwanted region of your anatomy like the buttocks and plunks the seedlings over your newly-harvested eye brows. The beauty of it is that you can record all this for posterity by ensuring that the shaver is on Home Movie mode by pressing the Sideburn Trimmer Button all the way for 2 seconds until the razor starts shooting and recording sound. Should you get an incoming call while you are doing all this, go to Voice Control in Functions and say 'Bugger Off' and the call is automatically rejected. ●



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