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COVER STORY

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By John Narayan Parajuli

Peace first would be best, but peace or not, elections will happen, says the prime minister

Under the Spotlight

By Satish Jung Shahi

The Secretariat of the High-level Peace Committee is suddenly awash in media attention. The scrutiny reveals that the parties are internally divided and the government is still trying to get its house in order.

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INTERVIEW: Former Foreign Minister **Bhekh Bahadur Thapa**

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By Satish Jung Shahi

The British Government's gift to its loyal Gurkha soldiers came a bit early for Christmas, but it does give some former Gurkhas reason to celebrate Dashain in style

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By John Narayan Parajuli

Fourteen years of waiting for dignified repatriation has made the Bhutanese refugees fearful and insecure. As time has passed they feel that they are slowly being forgotten and forsaken.

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By Sushma Joshi

Civilians caught in the conflict are equally at risk from both the security forces and the Maoists

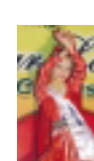
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By Pragyana Subedi

Pageants for children help improve their confidence and communication skills. That's why so many parents wanted their kids to participate in last week's Little Star Pageant.

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Letters



“ Women in the west are [more] comfortable about their sexuality ”

SUSHMA SHRESTHA

Army bashing

YOUR REPORTER JOHN NARAYAN Parajuli seems to take sadistic pleasure in Army-bashing (“The Art of Insurgency,” Oct 10). He mentions in his article that “the Army hasn’t learnt how to fathom the ways the Maoists think,” quoting an “analyst.” Who is this esteemed analyst and what exactly is his point? That the Army should lay down its arms and let the Maoists take over? Does this “analyst” realize that the Army has been providing security to Nepalis, without celebrating Dashain or Diwali, for the last couple of years? Mr. Analyst, can you provide me answers?

DR. AMRIT K.C.
BISHALNAGAR

Touching message

I AM AN AVID READER OF YOUR magazine which seems to be improving every week. I was very much touched by the Guest Column writer Ian Bairn who wrote “Don’t Drink the Water” (Oct 3). I whole-heartedly support his message. It is of course the lack of ethical thinking and the absence of social responsibility that gave rise to the current crisis in the country. As a responsible citizen let us start worrying about the bigger problems. Say no to corruption! Let there be better lives for children and women, let there be safe drinking water for all. Let us strive for a better Nepal.

RESHMA SHRESTHA
PROGRAM DIRECTOR
HOSTEHAINSE

Sexual naivete

I was particularly taken by Rajani Thapa’s “The Second Sex.” (Oct 10). Reading her article reminded me of my own freshman year in a U.S. college nearly 10 years ago. There were many situations that had to do with sexuality that I was completely unprepared to handle, as Thapa puts it aptly, the pressure to keep a woman’s honor while trying to adapt to a culture where sex is a part of the rite of passage to being an adult. Yes, I knew about sex from all the biology books I had read while in Nepal, but what I sorely had no knowledge of was the real-life situations, the human aspect of it all. How do you know when a guy is interested in you, for example? The laundry list is long. As a result, I found myself in many awkward situations, which luckily did not turn out to be disastrous. After 10 years in the United States, I have become a little wiser now.

NAME WITHHELD

Shaping moments

I ENJOYED YOUR LATEST cover story “America Beckons “ (Oct 10) very much, particularly the articles by two U.S.-educated Nepali ladies. I particularly noted two life-shaping moments in their lives. Sushma Joshi was pleasantly surprised when the director of admissions in a U.S. college responded to her letter when she was barely 13. To Rajani Thapa, her brother’s pre-departure advice turned out to be extremely handy in the United States. I haven’t attended a U.S. college, but having lived there for a number of years,

I know this for sure: I felt comfortable being a woman for the first time in the United States. Mind you, I was in my early 30s when I went to the United States for the first time. But that's not a uniquely American experience. Women in the west are generally comfortable about their sexuality.

SUSHMA SHRESTHA
NEWROAD

Incomplete coverage

THE COVER STORY ON AMERICAN education (Oct 10) came as a breath of fresh air.

Lured by the salability of American degrees, and fed up with the insurgency at home, large number of students find it worth their while to apply to US universities, and try out their luck— at any cost. The F1 visa is akin to the DV lottery for students, most of whom leave home, determined to find permanent abodes in the country of their choosing. This war-ravaged country, sans opportunities and peace, is a far cry from their idea of the land of dreams.

Interestingly, the number of Nepalese, and not only prospective students, applying for US visa is on the rise, against the worldwide trend. So, indications are, that the plight of an unstable and a jobless country has as much, if not more, to do with such unprecedented exodus of our youth and professionals, than merely the allure of the 'west-wind'. But this slant is never broached on with any seriousness in your coverage.

Your story puts much emphasis on the vibrancy of liberal education systems in US as the primary cause of our youths choosing American institutions. Granted. But, if our defection graph is shooting up defying all global trends, to assume it is so because we have only 'now' begun to understand the value of American education, is a tad naïve.

I would liked to have seen the cover story discuss at length, and justify, on the limited ground that you tread upon, the fondness Nepalese students seem to have developed of American education of late. The shrinking economy, limited opportunities, fast changing values, the men-

tal bearings of a protected warfare on young minds – are all vital factors directly impacting the emigration.

Nation's cover story has time and again been unnecessarily dispersed through pages with the help of multiple photographs, some occupying huge chunks of space, only because it is a 'cover story,' and should appear long, I presume. A few opinion pieces are embedded here and there to go along. I would like to see serious issues being discussed at length under 'cover stories,' and dissected with closer scrutiny. This is the only blemish I find in an otherwise a very comprehensive and erudite magazine.

And I agree with one of the letters (Oct. 10) that Samrat Updhayaj should stop being Kerry's mouth-piece. He writes beautifully when he sticks to his guns. For a literary figure, to continually harp about politics, doesn't quite suit him. Anyway, we know enough about his political inclinations. Let's move on.

BISWAS BARAL
RATOPUL, KATHMANDU

ADITYA ADHIKARI'S "REBORN IN THE USA" (Oct 10) makes an interesting read, including most other articles under the cover story "America Beckons." But the coverage would have been a lot better if you had also tried to document those stories of Nepali students in the United States, which aren't quite pleasant. With my limited interaction with students my age in the United States (not just from Nepal), I feel there are hundreds who never complete their studies, or struggle over it for years. Bad company, wayward lifestyle, pressures of handling both budgets and academic life, plain culture shock etc. are reasons why that happens. A combination of factors has undone some extremely talented students in the United States. You would have done well to warn Nepali parents and students that not all's rosy in the United States.

BHUSAN SHRESTHA
VIA EMAIL

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the nation
WEEKLY

The Notion of Nationhood

'Thinker'
by Auguste Rodin



PROFITABLE HOBBY: Sagar Rai kills wasps in Gongabu. As wasps are a threat to bees, Gandaki Bee company has been giving a rupee for every two wasps that a boy kills and brings in. Rai makes around Rs. 30-40 each day.

nation weekly/Sagar Shrestha

Education & The Social Order

South Asian higher education is a colonial system of education, meant to produce subjects suited for an autocratic social system, not citizens or knowledge makers for a democracy

BY PRAMOD MISHRA

Flexibility and training in critical thinking characterize the best in American higher education. As a Fulbright student, I had no clue what lay in store for me. One of the first batches of my village primary school in Morang, I had gone on to India for schooling after the village school collapsed. Even after a number of years teaching college in Nepal, I had neither written nor taught paper writing. So, when my professor assigned a paper, I went to his office in panic and asked, "Professor, what is a Paper?"

Surprised, he explained but it failed to register because nobody had told me that my thoughts mattered. In time, I would do well and teach but I always wondered: What if my Indian education had encouraged my thoughts and taught me how to think systematically? Rote had defined what I did to acquire my degrees and help others do so in India and Nepal. I have since concluded that South Asian higher education, inherited from the British and the native Pundits and sustained by the South Asian elite, is of the elite and for the elite—to pass on the received values and beliefs, whether indigenous or foreign, from one generation to another. Knee-jerk reactions against the west besides, Indian and Nepali colleges do not teach their wards to critically examine either their own values and beliefs or those of others. This is a colonial system of education, meant to produce subjects suited for an autocratic social system, not citizens or knowledge makers for a democracy.

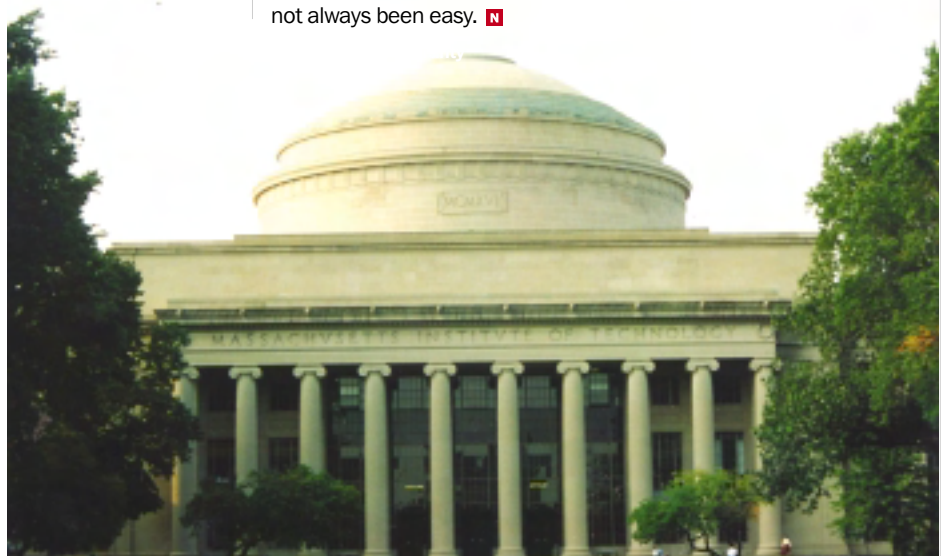
That's why, whenever I encountered students from Bombay, Lima or Lagos (and almost all international students from the Third World came from the wealthiest section of the third world metropolis), I had a challenging task teaching them critical thinking. But I understood why. It's not that they were not intelligent or lacked motivation but that they, like me, had never been taught to think for themselves. And I am talking about the private or elite English-medium schools here; products of vernacular schools have little chance of a U.S. college education. On the other hand, more than half in my classes came from U.S. government schools. Therefore, for every Benazir Bhutto who goes to Harvard, there must be an Ambedkar who could go there too.

Every year, the admissions officials at top US universities fret over the fact that their establishments help the privileged breed privilege because the majority admitted come from the affluent section of American society. In the ongoing process of reform and renovation, many have taken steps to amend this situation. Harvard announced last year that families of admitted students with incomes lower than about 45 thousand dollars a year wouldn't have to pay a penny to attend Harvard. Almost all US colleges and uni-

versities have enhanced the number of its international students by increased funding for qualified ones so that the new generation of American college graduates will have more international experience in order to face the challenges of a globalized world. Most such institutions have also revamped their curricula to emphasize diversity, global studies, and critical thinking skills through a broadening concept of writing. But despite a constant process of self-examination and renewal, American higher education has faced two major threats in recent years. While corporatization has emphasized technical and business education at the expense of the humanities and pressured universities to be business-minded and profit-oriented, at times influencing researchers to come up with profitable findings for funding corporations or shutting down programs that do not attract enough students to be economically viable, extreme ideologies have at times sought to stifle secular learning and free enquiry. But tenure, constant debate in the public sphere and endowments from alumni and philanthropists have guaranteed freedom of inquiry in the college classroom. Such a culture of secular philanthropy for educational enhancement hardly exists in many third world countries.

What attracts most parents to send their children to the U.S. for education is not critical thinking skills or building character through community service, but an all powerful American degree in some narrowly saleable subject so that the kid would suddenly begin to mint money, which is not an ignoble goal. What ends up happening in many cases, however, is the kid focuses more on making money than on studies and eventually derails his educational goal. In fact, work forms an important part of most American students' passage through college. But many of these students understand that education, whether in the classroom or the community, is more important than getting rich quick.

U.S. colleges, universities, and libraries form the bedrock of American democracy – constantly renewing its ideals, reinvigorating its population for the greater common good, reining in its capitalism and challenging the prejudices of its diverse people. History bears witness that the task has not always been easy. **N**



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Gunfire

Anod Shahi was killed when a soldier opened fire Monday night at Basantapur. Dipendra Bajracharya, who was severely injured in the incident, is undergoing treatment at Bir Hospital. Security forces say that the soldier opened fire when four young people tried to seize rifles from the security forces.



Dipendra Bajracharya

Court notice

On Monday the Supreme Court ordered British national Gordon William Robinson to be present before the court for revision of the April 23 verdict acquitting him of narcotic drug smuggling charges. The court sent mail to his home address and issued public notices. Robinson was controversially acquitted on April 24 by the Supreme court and released from 17 years imprisonment and a fine of one million rupees slapped on him by the Special Court two years ago for drug smuggling. Following the acquittal, the Office of the Attorney General had filed an application for revision of the verdict. Three months ago the court concluded that the April 23 verdict deserved a revision since it violated legal precedents.

King grants audience

His Majesty King Gyanendra granted audience to the peace committee members on Monday

evening. During the one-hour audience the King lauded the committee's initiative for the peace process and encouraged further efforts. The prime minister and committee chairman, Sher Bahadur Deuba, and CPN UML General Secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal; Rashtriya Prajatantra Party Chairman Pashupati Shumsher Rana; Nepal Sadbhavana Party chairman, Minister Badri Prasad Mandal; and the Communications Minister Dr. Mohammad Mohsin are the members of the committee. PM Deuba refused to give details of the matters discussed with the King.

Army refutes report

Royal Nepalese Army on Monday has refuted a report made public by a Nepali human rights organization, which said that security personnel had killed two pro-Maoist activists two months ago in Dhading af-

ter they were taken into custody. A statement by the Public Relations Directorate of the RNA said that a group of security personnel conducting search operations at Gumdi in Dhading on July 15 had taken into custody Bharat Dhungana and Baikuntha Pokhrel while the two were carrying socket bombs. When they tried to escape from custody, security personnel opened fire to take them into control and killed them. HURON said that security personnel killed Dhungana and Pokharel at a nearby stream about an hour after they were arrested. Dhungana was a central secretariat member of the Maoist-affiliated All Nepal Peasants Union while Pokharel was alternative member of the All Nepal National Independent Student Union-Revolutionary.

Nepali efforts

A Nepali delegation, led by Information and Communication Minister Mohammad

Mohsin, currently visiting Gulf countries has tried to assure senior officials of the United Arab Emirates that the September 1 incident in Kathmandu was an aberration and that there was full understanding among people belonging to different faiths in Nepal. A member of the delegation, State Minister for Labor and Transport Urba Dutta Pant, also called on the UAE labor minister, Mater Hamid al Taiyer, on Monday and urged him to give priority to skilled laborers from Nepal and to open an embassy in Kathmandu. Some 70,000 Nepalis are said to be working in the UAE now. The delegation, including State Foreign Minister Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, was also to visit Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to clarify the situation in Nepal in the aftermath of the September 1 incident and to ensure safety and security of Nepalis working in those countries. Qatar has responded positively to Nepal's pleas.



NO MEAN FEAT: 12 year old Sagun Khatri set a new world record for memorization on Thursday

NEA strike

Almost three thousand temporary employees at the Nepal Electricity Authority gheraoed the central office Monday, demanding permanent appointments. The NEA management committee has invited the agitating employees for talks. The struggle committee of the employees formed a negotiating team headed by Sanjaya Kumar Gupta. Reports say that talks between the management and agitating employees are scheduled for Tuesday.

Buddhist Summit

Second World Buddhist Summit will be held in Lumbini from November 30 to December 2 this year. The Lumbini Development Trust, a company that manages the development of the Buddha's birthplace, organizes the summit. Over 250 Buddhist religious leaders and special guests from 35 different countries are expected to participate in the summit. King Gyanendra will preside over the summit's opening session. South Asian heads of government and members of the royal families of Japan and Thailand are invited. The conference will adopt resolutions to set up a World Peace City at Lumbini. The first summit was in 1998. The second summit was scheduled for 2001 but was postponed after the royal massacre.

Phewa beach

The Phewa Beach and Environment Conservation Committee organized the first Phewa Beach Festival to help fund efforts to construct an artificial beachfront in the area. The festival took place at Basundhara Park in Baidam. The beach is to be constructed from Ambot Ghat to Kameri Ghat and will be 300 feet in length. A basketball court, two beach volleyball courts and a children's park are included in the plan. The construction of Phewa Beach is expected to attract tourists, both domestic and foreign. Phewa Tal

is one of the tourist attractions in Pokhara.

Relief packages

The government unveiled various relief and rehabilitation packages on Thursday. The packages made public by HM Purna Bahadur Khadka includes relief for women members of displaced families and dependent family members of deceased people. It will provide skill development, job training, concession on loans and a loan to one member of each conflict-affected family for foreign employment. Those injured would be given free education up to the secondary level and would be given a maximum of Rs. 25,000 for medical treatment. Elderly people will be given Rs. 500 per month. Rehabilitation centers will be set up in all five development regions.

Aid request

The government called on the international community to continue humanitarian assistance for the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal until a permanent solution to the crisis is found. The government's request comes at a time when the United Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees is holding its annual executive committee meeting in Geneva.

Illegal Tibetans

Security personnel in Solukhumbu arrested 23 Tibet-

ans on Thursday for entering into Nepal illegally. They were arrested immediately after they crossed the Namche transit point. They were handed over to the district administration for interrogation. The security personnel had also arrested 27 Tibetans including two women from the same area and dispatched them to Immigration Office in Kathmandu a few days earlier. Large numbers of Tibetans enter Nepal every year on their way to Dharmashala, India to meet the Dalai Lama.

Cleanup campaign

South Korean mountaineer, Wang-Yong, who had already led cleanup campaigns on Mt. Everest and K2 is all set to lead another on Manaslu starting October 8. A team of 11 other Koreans will accompany him. Wang-Yong said that as the beauty of the Himalayas has been deteriorating due to garbage discarded by mountaineers and trekkers, he has embarked on a cleanup campaign. The litter collected from Manaslu will be brought down to the base camp area and be disposed of afterwards.

Refugee stalemate

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Ruud Lubbers has called on the international community to find a durable solution for the Bhutanese refugees. Addressing the 55th

session of the executive committee of the UNHCR in Geneva on Monday, Lubbers said that despite their attempts to assist Bhutan and Nepal, less encouraging efforts were being made by the two countries. The UNHCR has shown interest in being a part of the process of verification of the refugees, but Bhutan's refusal to involve a third party in the process has caused the problem to drag on.

In the meantime, Bhutanese human rights activists Tek Nath Rizal and Ratan Gazmere are in Geneva to raise the issue of Bhutanese refugee and to urge the international community to intervene to finding a solution to the stalemated issue. The process of repatriation has come to a halt after refugees in the Khudunabari camp threw stones at Bhutanese verification officials when they announced rigid conditions on repatriation.

Bus mishap

At least four people were killed and 42 others injured when a passenger bus traveling from Salyan to Tulsipur, Dang in the midwestern region went off the road Monday afternoon. Injured persons are undergoing treatment at the health center at Tulsipur and Dang District Hospital in Ghorahi. Police said an investigation was underway to find out the reason behind the accident.



PULL FACTOR: Trekking Agents Association of Nepal's annual general meeting announced fresh programs for tourists

Shankar Pradhananga

INTERNATIONAL CALLS CHEAPER

United Telecom Ltd. (UTL) will be charging 50 percent less for international long distance calls from Friday, barring calls to India and other SAARC countries. It has also decided to waive a considerable amount for ISD calls being made to India and other SAARC nations during the mornings and evenings.



ARRIVAL DECLINE

Tourist arrival in September 2004 registered a decrease by 21 percent compared to the same month last year. The decrease by 43 percent of Indian tourists has been accompanied by a 13 percent decrease of tourists who come through India, the first negative growth in 2004.

Despite the negative growth in September, the total tourist arrival in the last nine months recorded a positive growth of 21 percent. The total tourist arrival by air in September 2004 was 18,785 with 3,415 from India as compared to the 38,435 tourist arrivals in September 1999.

Italy up 18% to 566 visitors
Netherlands up 18% to 562 visitors
India down 43% to 3,415 visitors
US down 21% to 1,269 visitors
Germany down 2% to 1,430 visitors
Japan down 22% to 1,158 visitors
China down 14% to 480 visitors
UK down 16% to 1,572 visitors

TOURIST EMERGENCY SERVICE

In an effort to expand its work, the Crisis Response Action Unit at Nepal Tourism Board formed almost a year ago, has started a 24-hour Service system to facilitate medical access to tourists in cases of emergency.

To carry out its operation smoothly and efficiently, a staff member of Nepal Tourism Board has been placed on duty for 24 hours each day to respond to queries and facilitate action round the clock (9851087744).

ISRAEL-NEPAL BUSINESS SEMINAR

The embassy of Israel is organizing a Nepal-Israel Business Seminar on

Agro Technology at the Regency Ballroom, Hotel Hyatt on Tuesday, 12 October 2004 at 9:30AM.

The seminar is being organized with the aim of promoting joint venture investments and bilateral trade between the countries in the field of agriculture development. Mr. Mouneer Agbariya, Commercial Attaché, Embassy of Israel at New Delhi will present an overview on "Israel's Agriculture and Agro Technologies" at the Seminar.

Israel's agricultural sector, characterized by an intensive production system and advancement in agro technology, has positioned Israel as one of the leading countries in agricultural production. Only 3 percent of the population is engaged in agriculture but exports US\$ 1 billion worth of fresh agricultural produce after meeting internal demand.

KUMARI BANK ANNIVERSARY

Kumari Bank Ltd. recently celebrated its 3rd anniversary on 1st October in a function held at the Hyatt Regency. In the past three years of its operation, Kumari Bank has introduced Internet banking, sms-banking and e-pay banking services to its customers. It has also opened new branches at Birgunj and Biratnagar. In the last fiscal year the bank's operating profit was Rupees 10.6 crore. There are plans to establish branches in Pokhara and New Road, Kathmandu.

RS. 70 MILLION LOSS

Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) loss, following the rise in the price of crude oil products in the international market to

over US\$50 per barrel by October 4, has gone up by Rs 70 million coming to a monthly loss at Rs 535.6 million from its earlier loss of Rs 460 million.

NOC continues to bear loss on diesel, kerosene (quota) and kerosene (open) by Rs.9.20, Rs.12.56 and Rs. 8.59 per liter respectively. It also bears the loss of Rs.222.90 per cylinder on gas. However, Rs.4.75 is profited on the selling price of Rs 51.25 per liter for petrol.

According to NOC, the outstanding dues to be paid to Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) have already crossed three billion rupees.

NEW BANKNOTES

The Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), Eastern Zone Regional Office at Biratnagar, has started distributing new notes on the eve of Dashain This is likely to continue till October 16. NRB will distribute Rs. 12.5 million worth of new notes including the remaining capital of previous years. The bank will bring out new prints of 10, 20, 25, 50, 100, 250, 500 and 1000 rupee notes. However, it has stopped distribution of new one and two rupee notes for the last three years.

NOKIA'S NEW DEALER

Nepal Overseas Marketing (NOM) has been appointed the authorized dealer for Nokia, the popular mobile set manufacturer, for the Kingdom of Nepal. It will be providing necessary quality repair services for all Nokia phones. Currently Nokia models 1100, 2100, 3315 and 3100 are available in the Nepali market.



Died

Professor Sardar Yadunath Khanal, renowned diplomat, educator and planner passed away at the age of 92. Born at Manung village in Tanahu in 1913, Khanal, who began his education at Durbar High School from grade eight, topped the 1936 SLC examinations. After he completed his Masters' degree in English from Calcutta University, he taught at Tri Chandra College for more than a decade before joining the civil service. Known for his directness, Khanal has served in various positions in the government since 1955. He was well versed in Nepali, Sanskrit and English. Often described as an intellectual giant, Khanal has left behind a legacy in the field of diplomacy and literature. He served as Royal Nepali Ambassador to United States of America and China. He worked as the member of the National Planning Commission several times and was foreign policy advisor to three prime ministers of two generations—Tanka Prasad Acharya in late 1950s and Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Girija Prasad Koirala in early 1990s. Often described as the chief architect of post-1950 foreign policy, he made significant contributions to the fields of foreign policy and diplomacy.

Late King Birendra decorated him with the Gorkha Dakshin Bahu Pratham and the title of Sardar. King Birendra also sketched Khanal's portrait. Writer, researcher and bibliophile, Khanal read till his last breath, his son Professor Udayraj Khanal said.



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HALFHEARTED WELCOME

The British Government's gift to its loyal Gurkha soldiers came a bit early for Christmas, but it does give some former Gurkhas reason to celebrate Dashain in style

BY SATISH JUNG SHAHI

EVERY YEAR SINCE CHRISTMAS 1999, it has been routine for the British Embassy in Kathmandu to issue a press statement announcing the cost-of-living increment in the pension of its former Gurkha soldiers. The increases come into effect almost every April.

But on September 30, a little ahead of Dashain, British Prime Minister Tony Blair announced a "new immigration policy" allowing Nepali Gurkhas to become British citizens. However the new policy is valid only for those Gurkhas who were discharged from service after July 1, 1997. The reason: that date is when Britain handed over Hong Kong to China and when about 6,500 Gurkhas posted in Hong Kong were forced to retire. The force, known world over for its bravery, has been consolidated to one regiment of about 3,400 soldiers, the Royal Gurkha Rifles, stationed since then in Britain. Under the new policy, British citizenship is also available to Gurkhas currently serving in Britain after they complete four years of service.

The British Government's gift to its loyal Gurkha soldiers came too early for Christmas this year, and it's received only a halfhearted welcome from former Gurkhas and their organizations that have been demanding equal pension rights for many years.

The Nepal Ex-Servicemen's Association (NESAs) headed by former Major Deepak Gurung was the first to welcome the decision back home, but he added that a similar provision should be provided to all former Gurkhas. In London, the BBC quoted Major

Tikendra Dewan of the Brigade of Gurkhas Welfare Society saying that the announcement was not a "100 percent celebration" because of the cut-off date.

Only a quarter of the more than 27,000 former Gurkhas will be eligible for citizenship under the new British government provision.

PARTIAL JUBILANCE:
GAESU's press conference on Monday



The Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen Organization, GAESO, went to the British High Court in May 2002 demanding equal pension, but lost the case two years and four months later. They have a different take on the British government's new offer.

"The British government decision is a boost to our movement against pension 'parity,' which they always cite as per the tripartite agreement," says GAESO's lawyer Gopal Shivakoti Chintan. Since pension levels for Gurkhas are calculated on the assumption that retirees will be living in Nepal, the change in British rules could give their case new legs. Now that many retired Gurkhas will be British citizens living in the U.K., there's a stronger argument for pension equality rather than "parity."

Britain time and again claims that the remuneration for the Gurkhas is determined by a tripartite agreement between Nepal, India and the U.K, made in 1947. But GAESO maintains Nepal wasn't a part of the agreement when Gurkha regiments were divided between Britain and India after the Indian Independence. "Now we have a strong case that Britain can do whatever it desires despite the tripartite agreement. We will head for the High Court again before Christmas demanding that citizenship be provided to all former Gurkhas."

The Nepal government's comments on the current development are still not available, perhaps because Assistant Foreign Minister Prakash Sharan Mahat is currently touring the Gulf countries. But

others outside the government have been speaking out.

"The British government needs young Gurkhas to fight for them in Afghanistan and Iraq, that is why they're allowing only younger former Gurkhas to take up British citizenship," says former lawmaker and rights activist Hiranyalal Shrestha. "And even if Britain decides to grant equal pension to the Gurkhas, it wants its money to remain with itself, as the former Gurkhas will have already become British citizens."

Citizenship had not been on GAESO's list of demands. The organization has been demanding equal pensions, proper education for children of former Gurkha soldiers, compensation to over 450,000 Nepalis who served as Gurkha soldiers for the British during the World Wars but were discharged without pensions, and readily available residential visas for former Gurkha soldiers traveling to Britain.

The September 30 decision was a step ahead of the GAESO demands: They believe it was taken with the intent to divide former Gurkhas in their movement against the British government. "Even when we were in London, the Gurkhas there were already divided over the decision," says GAESO's lawyer Chintan. According to Chintan, there are currently more than 500 former Gurkha soldiers residing in Britain; most of them are staying illegally. Not all retirees want to live there, but all can see advantages to it.

Former Gurkhas who Nation Weekly talked with said they might be too old to do anything in Britain even if they got British citizenship, but it would still help their children. "My children could get proper education and jobs in Britain," 58-year-old Ek Narayan Gurung said. He is also the founding president of the Gurkha Memorial Trust that manages the Gurkha museum in Pokhara. He says, "Many ex-Gurkhas might settle in Britain due to the current security situation and poverty."

GAESO is once again raising their issue in Britain and trying to gather support at the European Social Forum next week. Back home older retired Gurkhas and their families have their fingers crossed. **N**





Ravi Manandhar

POLLS AT

Peace first would be best. But peace or not, elections will happen, says the prime minister.

BY JOHN NARAYAN PARAJULI

It was a dramatic week: From revelations about the hoax Maoist announcement to the King's audience for the High Level Peace Committee, from Madhav Nepal's flip-flops on a unilateral ceasefire to the peace committee's response to the

Maoists. But above all, the prime minister's bold call for peace or polls stood out. When Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba offered this alternative to the Maoists and the country, he surely knew the gravity of his statement. He understands how difficult it will be to hold elections without peace. He has already once postponed elections; the move cost him dearly. This time around



ANY PRICE?

he seems to have given a lot more thought to the issue of elections.

It is likely that the prime minister's exhortations are aimed at threatening the Maoists that the government will call for elections if they do not show up for peace talks. The call may not be a statement of actual intent yet. But Deuba must also convince the Palace and the people that

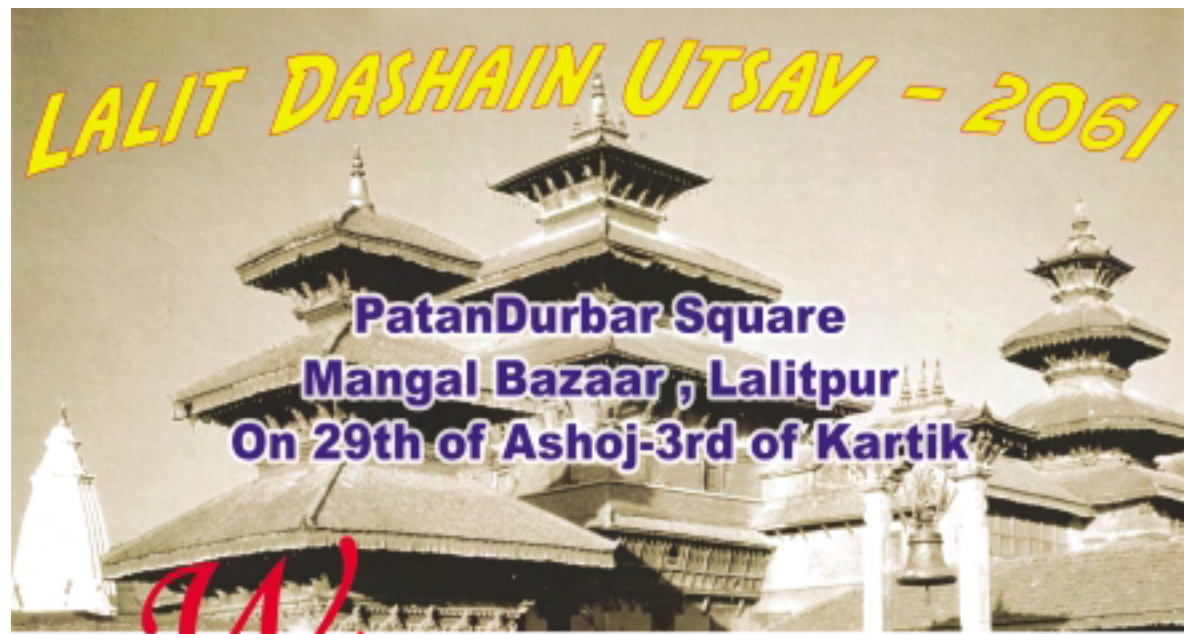
he is sincerely seeking both peace and elections.

Four months have already passed since his appointment, and he knows that time is short to fulfill the mandate the King entrusted him on June 2: Initiate the process for conducting polls before the end of the current Nepali year, April 2005. It is evident that Prime Minister Deuba's own party and the Rastriya

Prajantra Party have already discussed the possibility of holding elections if peace doesn't materialize before the royal deadline. When RPP Chairman Pashupati Shumshere Rana spoke at the Reporters Club, his tone and body language clearly reflected the essence of Prime Minister Deuba's speech: Peace first if possible; if not, elections. "Elec-

contd. on page 24

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OPINION

Breaking The Cycle

Reviving the 1999 parliament may be the only way to create a legitimate government

BY SUMAN PRADHAN

The Deuba coalition is on the verge of making a key decision: to begin the process of holding elections before April next year. But to the horror of many critics, the security environment is still not right for elections. Is this impending decision yet another example of government shortsightedness? There is no denying that free and fair elections are the essence of democratic governance. A parliament comprising the people's elected representatives, and a government formed from within such a parliament, will have the legitimacy and mandate denied to all Palace-appointed governments since October 2002. Such a government in theory would also be empowered to negotiate peace with the Maoists.

I have no arguments with this. My little bone of contention is based on the facts on the ground. Anyone who has traveled outside of Kathmandu over the past year will know just how bad the situation is. Large parts of the countryside are devoid of any state presence. Police posts have been withdrawn from villages and concentrated in urban areas, leaving the countryside open to Maoist influence. Whatever little security there is, it is concentrated in district headquarters or in the immediate vicinity of the few Unified Command bases. How practical, then, are elections?

Most villagers and political activists I have talked to in the past year shudder at the thought of elections. The cost of holding elections without a peace agreement would simply be too great. There are several reasons for this. First and foremost: Threat to disrupt elections is the Maoists' ultimate weapon. It was this threat that led to the postponement of the 2002 elections. Will the Maoists ever give up their ultimate weapon without first striking an agreement of some sort? Villagers very much doubt it. And if there's no peace, how many brave candidates will file nomination papers, campaign without fear in the countryside, stage rallies and give *bhashans*? I'm afraid not many. Life is precious for everyone, even aspiring politicians with rupee signs in their eyes. The

same logic holds for the electorate. How many of them will attend political rallies or stand in lines on polling day when bombs go off nearby?

These are not hypothetical questions but practical ones raised by voters and political activists themselves. We can all sit in Kathmandu and pontificate about the necessity of elections because, hey, Kathmandu is safe enough to allow for campaigning and voting. Yes, but not the countryside. And most of our 205 electoral constituencies are not in comfortable urban oases like Kathmandu but in tattered villages like Pipara, Sanfe and Manthali.

One argument I constantly hear from those in favor of elections is this: The Indians could hold elections in Kashmir during the height of the insurgency. Why can't we hold it here? Or, Sri Lanka could hold elections despite LTTE violence. Why can't we do the same?

The answer is simple: our conflict has no resemblance to the Kashmiri and Sri Lankan conflicts. Both those conflicts are based on the desire for independence. Ours is not. The Indians could hold elections in Kashmir because they did not withdraw police posts from villages. On the contrary, they increased and reinforced security measures, and backed it with strong civil administrations. About half a million security forces are stationed in Kashmir at any given time. Nepal neither has that kind of troops nor the political vision to strengthen civil administrations.

And in Sri Lanka, while elections in the contested territories were held even during the conflict, we all know how much legitimacy they had. The LTTE never participated in any of these elections, and in fact killed quite a number of candidates put up by other Tamil groups. Only after the 2002 ceasefire has relatively free elections in the northeast been possible. These two analogies, therefore, don't count.

This brings us to the central question: How do we break this vicious cycle where we can't have elections until peace, and we can't have peace until a representative government is formed to negotiate it? If you read Prachanda's six questions carefully, you will see that the Maoists have said they are not interested in talking to a government which doesn't have real authority. So the logical next step is to form a

government which has authority. How do we form such a government? Through free and fair elections, of course. But the security situation doesn't allow that. There's the vicious cycle.

The ideal situation would be if the Maoists came forth for a dialogue and the two sides strike a peace deal. But there is little possibility of that in the near future. Therefore, the pressing need to get some sort of a representative forum functioning again. A legitimate parliament, which allows the constitutional forces to hammer out their differences, serves this purpose the best. The peace committee too could have served the purpose, but the opposition Congress's bull-headedness has foreclosed this possibility. **N**



tions have to take place eventually," says Rana. "Though it is not the first priority, elections may take place before peace is restored, if things do not go as desired." Even if the prime minister has struck a chord with the RPP, the other main party in the government, the CPN-UML, is as divided as ever.

The party, known for its inconsistencies and double-takes on almost every issue, is, not surprisingly, divided over elections. Dissident groups in the UML are as active as ever in sending mixed signals to the public. UML, a key constituent in the Deuba coalition, is also the largest party represented in the dissolved house of parliament. The UML's stand could be important in providing a clear direction to the prime minister's own roadmap on elections.

While UML boss Madhav Kumar Nepal has criticized the prime minister for prioritizing parliamentary elections, another influential leader, K.P. Oli, cast his vote in its favor. "Both peace and elections are equally important," says Oli. "Elections can take place if the proper security arrangements are made." The government must take responsibility for security, he says. Inconsistency in Nepali politics is common: Stands once taken are broken and then taken again, out of political expediency. The careful language Deuba has chosen to begin the talks of elections by the end of the cur-

rent Nepali year gives him enough room to change his mind again later, if expediency demands it. To meet the King's mandate, the government need not actually hold elections but just initiate the process by the end of 2061; that can be interpreted liberally. If Deuba is serious, some sort of elections can take place. However the turnout and the participation of the political parties are key factors he has to take into consideration. If these democratic values are stretched, the resulting government risks being called illegitimate. For their part the parties in the street have already started to cry foul even before anything tangible for elections have taken place.

"There is no environment for the election to take place," says Narhari Acharya, Nepali Congress leader. "Moreover, this government doesn't have the legitimacy to conduct polls." That attitude represents a real danger to the prime minister's plan.

An election without the opposition parties would be a farce. It is entirely possible that the parties in the street could boycott the election altogether. The three smaller agitating parties have so far chosen to tow the Nepali Congress' line.



The Palace, at least, seems certain to support the election call. Prime Minister Deuba's latest statement came on the eve of the second anniversary of the royal takeover on October 4. Analysts believe that the King's desire to attain legitimacy through polls is pushing Deuba to the precipice. The King's public address in Pokhara in March set a time-frame for the elections, and the King wishes to be seen as someone who is consistent. "His Majesty has been very consistent in his commitment for restoration of peace and parliamentary elections," says former Foreign Minister Bhekh Bahadur Thapa. The King's joint audience for the members of the High



'Elections Can Be Possible'

Bhekh Bahadur Thapa has held various public offices over the years. The last one was foreign minister in Surya Bahadur Thapa's Cabinet. He told Nation Weekly that polls will not be easy but they are possible.



Elections were on your agenda when you were in government. Was it a practical idea then?

It's an anomalous situation. There is no representation at either the local or national level. The Constitution is partly functional, but unless there is an election and Parliament, it cannot become fully functional. Election was the way out, we thought.

But can elections take place before peace?

Conflict is not limited to Nepal. There are many examples of elections that have taken place in areas that have conflicts. It is not easy, but everyone must try to make it possible.

What about the security considerations?

When we were in the government the security situation had improved. We had planned to do it [elections] phase-wise.

The international community as well as our divided over the election...

There is division, but it is not non-negotiable. Everyone agrees elec-

tions must take place, but of course there is this disagreement which should come first, peace or polls.

An election without support from the international community might raise doubts about the legitimacy of the whole process...

On the question of legitimacy of elections, the key is to minimize the internal differences and to comply with constitutional requirements. People within the country are both clients and judges for legitimacy. The international community will not come tomorrow to Ratna Park to protest the elections.

Is the King pushing Prime Minister Deuba for elections?

His Majesty has been very consistent in his commitment. Restoration of peace and parliamentary elections have been his priority. **N**

Level Peace Committee is an effort on the part of the monarch to underscore the urgency and importance of peace.

Perhaps the King now realizes the shortfalls of his October 4 move. He perhaps believes that polls will earn legitimacy for the extra-constitutional steps he took to break the constitutional impasse. But critics say the King attempted to fish in the troubled water and present himself as an institution without alternative by applying "salami tactics" to target the political parties first and then hit the Maoists later.

"He probably thought he would receive help from the international community in ridiculing the parties," says Washington-based analyst Chitra Tiwari. "But lady luck didn't stand by his side." Whatever critics think of the King's move, the plain fact is that the present constitutional gridlock will drag on for years if no

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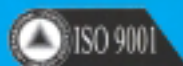
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elections take place. Despite the knee-jerk reaction of the concerned parties, there is a widespread realization that only elections can restore democracy. "The Constitution is only partly functional," says former Foreign Minister Thapa. "And unless there are polls and a [new] Parliament, it can never become fully functional." Absolutely right, but is the task manageable in a combat zone? That's a bigger question.

Conflict and the need to hold elections even under difficult circumstances are not unique to Nepal. There are examples elsewhere in the world where elections have taken place despite serious internal conflict. In South Asia, Sri Lanka continues to have elections. In the Caucasus, Russians have regularly conducted polls in Chechnya. Afghanistan and Iraq are going to be a major test for elections. While holding elections would be a colossal task, history will be the judge of success. A lot will depend on post-election stability. In Nepal the Maoists have the ability to influence elections in vast areas. It is likely that they will do everything possible to disrupt the polls. Analysts say the biggest lever-

age the Maoists have against the state is their ability to disrupt elections. And it is likely that they will try to hold on to that leverage. They know that a relatively successful poll would mean the renewal of the government's legitimacy. That would be a major blow to the insurrection that bashes government's "illegitimacy." There are more hurdles.

Any election will have to be held phase-wise. The Election Commission has said security will hold the key to holding elections. But the government's ability to guarantee security is in doubt, as much as it was in October 2002 when Deuba recommended to the King that elections be postponed by more than 19 months. If anything, the security situation has worsened, and there are no indications that they will get any better without an agreement with the Maoists.

The other challenge is to secure the backing of the international community for holding elections. As usual, they seem equally divided, much like the political parties. The EC emphasizes the importance of restoring peace before polls, but the United States and India are support-

ive of the government's move to call elections. Britain believes that elections are essential to fully functioning democracy. It also believes that the government must take political and security considerations into account in their decision making.

Deuba is unlikely to announce dates for polls without consulting the United States and India. "If the elections will ever be announced, it will certainly be with the full blessings of Washington," says analyst Chitra Tiwari. With support from the government's two firm backers in its war against the Maoists, Prime Minister Deuba just might succeed.

He will certainly try hard. Even if polls aren't possible, he is unlikely to acknowledge it. Last time he did, he lost his job. Peace and polls both are necessary; Deuba knows that the date for polls, once announced, can't be inched forward like last time. And it will be worth exhausting all options for peace first before calling for polls. "An election is not easy," says former Foreign Minister Thapa. "But there must be an attempt to make it possible." **N**

WITH INDRA ADHIKARI

UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

The Secretariat of the High-level Peace Committee is suddenly awash with media attention. The scrutiny reveals that the parties are internally divided and the government is still trying to get its house in order.

BY SATISH JUNG SHAHI

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES AND decisions made at the powerful ministries inside Singha Durbar have always made big headlines. Not anymore. With the Parliament defunct for two years and a buzz of rumors and news about a ceasefire or peace talks before Dashain, all the media attention is suddenly focused on one place, the Secretariat of the High-level Peace Committee.

The newly established secretariat is where Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and the chiefs of all parties in the government meet almost everyday to discuss the peace process. Last Tuesday evening, during the secretariat meeting to discuss the alleged Maoist statement in favor of a ceasefire—later declared a hoax—new office furniture was being carried into the building. Among the ongoing work on the unfinished interiors are plans to bring in a media desk. All this

is a clear sign that the government is struggling to get its house in order.

"The meeting is still continuing," is the regular comment from Prime Minister Deuba each time he comes out of a meeting. Brushing off inquisitive journalists before he drives off with his motorcade has become a habit. Deuba did answer questions, though, after meeting the King on October 4. But he came up with one of his routine, evasive answers: "His Majesty has granted us audience where he voiced whole hearted support and encouragement for the peace process."

Exactly two years after he sacked Deuba, the King granted audience to all of the Peace Committee members. Television footage aired King Gyanendra



opposite Prime Minister Deuba, CPN-UML's Madhav Kumar Nepal, RPP's Pashupati Shumshere Rana, Information Minister Mohammed Mohsin and Sadbhavana's Badri Mandal, sitting in a row. It was the best answer the government could give to the Maoist question of whether the government had authority to negotiate. The scene conveyed clearly that their peace efforts have the blessing of King Gyanendra.

"His Majesty conveyed his support and encouraged us in our efforts for the peace talks," said RPP President Pashupati Shumshere Rana as he came out of the Royal Palace and stood beside Deuba to answer queries from the media. The UML general secretary repeated the same line. He said he hadn't raised his much-publicized proposal for a unilateral ceasefire with King Gyanendra, as the committee itself hadn't reached a consensus. Much later the government spokesman, Information Minister Mohsin, revealed that Nepal had still not formally placed the proposal before the peace committee.

Many insiders admit the UML is in deep crisis over how to deal with the peace process. UML leaders outside government are already publicly calling on the government to declare a unilateral ceasefire and withdraw the red corner notices on Maoist leaders. They say this

will open doors for the peace talks. A delegation led by the UML's second man, K. P. Oli, met Prime Minister Deuba on Thursday and asked him to find those accused in the killing of former UML lawmaker Hem Narayan Yadav. The Maoists have denied responsibility; they point fingers at the Army. General Secretary Nepal is caught between the need to support the government he is part of and to deal with conflicting voices in his party.

Rana's Rastriya Prajatantra Party also hasn't fared well. The RPP president has been struggling with a rift among the party's senior leaders since the party joined the Deuba government. RPP's senior leader and former Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa says the Deuba government isn't serious about peace talks and is merely seeking publicity.

"The government can hold the meeting in Tundikhel and invite camerapersons if it needs publicity," he said while addressing his party cadres a day after he too was called for an audience with King Gyanendra. Thapa's line clearly shows his discontent with the government's lack of progress. For his part, Rana said that former prime ministers like Thapa were only looking for ways to head the government again after toppling Deuba.

Deuba and the other peace committee members, on the other hand, are busy meeting former government negotiators and peace brokers who were active during the last two rounds of the peace processes. They appear to be planning their new strategy. That strategy, as in the previous talks, is likely to reject calls for a constituent assembly, which has remained the key demand of the Maoists. The Maoists called off the last round of peace talks over the government's offer to amend the constitution through a parliamentary process rather than call a constituent assembly.

Whatever the government's strategy, there are demands to make it public. After a meeting with the RPP's Thapa on October 8, former prime minister and Nepali Congress President Girija Prasad Koirala, who has been leading the street protests against 'regression', said that King Gyanendra must make his intentions known.

That probably won't happen. Even if all the members of the Peace Secretariat agree on a peace strategy, the prime minister has said clearly that negotiations will be secret. But the government wish for secrecy will be pitted against the media's desire to uncover details. For now, the Secretariat of the High Level Peace Committee will keep on stealing headlines. **N**

Are the CIAA's Powers Unfettered?

Watching the watchdog is good, but the watchers must be objective and neutral

BY PHANINDRA GAUTAM

Jogendra Ghimire's Legal Eye column in last week's issue (Vol.1 No.25) raised some issues with regard to the investigation procedures of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA). The concept of self-incrimination vis-à-vis the procedures being followed by CIAA deserves a close look.

It is clear that the CIAA is the constitutional body charged with investigating the abuse of authority by public officials. Article 98 of the constitution provides, *inter alia*, that the Commission "may, in accordance with law, conduct, or cause to be conducted, inquiries into, and investigation of, improper conduct or corruption by a person holding any public office."

It is also clear under the constitutional scheme that "no person accused of any offence shall be compelled to be a witness against himself." I found that Mr. Ghimire is confused on the constitutional and legal roles of the CIAA and the right against self-incrimination. Citing the example of the former Prime Minister's defiance, the columnist argues that failure to appear at the CIAA could result in imprisonment; thereby the CIAA compels a public servant to prepare a case against him.

Firstly, the basic reason for issuing a summons is to give an opportunity to the accused to defend himself or herself and to identify the realities as to the matter of the complaint so that the innocent never suffer and the guilty never go unpunished. This legal provision and practice is based on one of the celebrated principles of natural *audi alteram partem*, which reminds us all the time to never decide after hearing only one side. The current law does not allow the CIAA to arrest and detain an accused merely on the ground that the accused failed to appear before it. Neither does the CIAA issue a summons to someone with the anticipation that failure to appear before it would be grounds for it to detain him or her. The CIAA's substantial interests lie not in defaming a person holding public office but in getting corrupt persons punished.

Secondly, the CIAA honors the fundamental right of a person to remain silent. Issuing a summons to an accused does not necessarily mean, as the columnist has argued, that one must make statements, or that one must give statements to the detriment of his interests and in support of the CIAA. Mr. Ghimire might have been persuaded by his own interpretation of the whole episode of a former minister who did not give a statement to the CIAA while he was under judicial custody. It would be wrong to believe that the minister was detained simply because of his remaining silent. The minister was imprisoned because there were adequate reasons to believe

that, if he were not detained, he may have caused adverse effect on the course of investigation. It does not make any difference to the CIAA whether or not an accused testifies as long as there is evidence suggesting that he is involved in improper acts or corruption. But it cannot be argued that the fundamental right to remain silent gives immunity from corruption charges. Mr. Ghimire can take the example of the case against the minister; silence did not provide the minister any shield.

Thirdly, the CIAA never forces or compels anyone to speak and assist the prosecution, as Mr. Ghimire claims. It seeks statements from accused persons to assist in the investigation into the issues raised in the complaint. Moreover the CIAA never prosecutes anyone on the ground of his statement. If it were the case, Mr. Hari Prasad Pandey, a former minister who has publicly confessed that he has given bribes to many bureaucrats, would have been prosecuted.

Fourthly, it must also be made clear that the CIAA's powers to detain an accused during investigation are not unguided or unfettered. The law allows the CIAA to detain an accused only when there are adequate reasons to believe that the person, if not detained, may conceal or destroy evidence or may cause adverse effects on the course of investigation. Moreover, all the people that the CIAA has detained were invariably produced before the court; only when the court found, on the basis of the evidences and arguments from both sides, it necessary to detain those persons, the court allowed the CIAA to detain them.

Greater public scrutiny over the functioning of CIAA would be welcome—the watchdog must be watched. However one must be objective and neutral while "watching." The increasing number of investigations, prosecutions and imprisonments in cases of corruption must not in themselves be regarded as a problem.

The rule of law demands accountability for one's actions, especially

from a person assuming public office. A sense of accountability demands one remain answerable to what he or she has done. It would be the first duty of a public person to remain sensitive to the issues questioning his integrity and to honor and adhere to the rule of law. His greater interest lies not in avoiding an appearance before the investigating agency but in appearing before it as soon as possible to get his case settled at the earliest so that his integrity will not be in limbo for a long time, with the effect of tarnishing his image.

Therefore I do not agree with the view of Mr. Ghimire, if he means that a public figure such as a former prime minister must not be summoned, questioned or detained, if necessary. I welcome him if he agrees with the famous saying that "Be you ever so high, the law is above you." **N**



Paying For Old Mistakes

Nepal would be less dependent on India if our leaders hadn't run to New Delhi for help every time we had a problem

BY TRAILOKYA ARYAL

Our relationship with India is one of the most hotly debated issues in Nepal. There's hardly a week when the print media, whether Nepali or English, doesn't carry an article on this topic; there's hardly a politician who doesn't mention Nepal-India relations every time he or she speaks. For the most part, these articles, speeches and comments have one theme: India is taking advantage of us and is meddling in Nepal. The frustration of the intellectuals and politicians of Nepal, who have a long history of dealing with India, seem to arise out of three issues: The treaty of 1950, river treaties and India's interference in Nepal's internal politics. All these are legitimate concerns, but it doesn't benefit Nepal to keep harping on the same themes. With India emerging as a major regional power, we now need to re-learn the fundamentals of diplomacy and find ways to stay on India's good side, while also seeking ways to limit Indian influence in Nepali internal politics and to deal with the unequal treaties of the past.

The first issue between Nepal and India is the treaty of 1950. Despite a provision for allowing either party to terminate the agreement after a one-year notice, we have never raised the issue. One reason is that, as Saubhagya Shah said in "Delhi Runs and Strong Men" (Vol 1. No. 24: October 3, 2004), all parties have their own foreign policy agendas. The political tug of war since the restoration of democracy has made it difficult for any government to run its full course and to pay attention to foreign policy. To take the first step towards changing the treaty, our politicians need to agree on a unified foreign policy agenda. We cannot blame India if we ourselves cannot unite for a national cause. That's just common sense.

We have to be reasonable about the river agreements—Koshi, Mahakali, Gandaki and the rest—too. Before we blame India for the inequality of these treaties, let us ask ourselves: Who is going to buy our expensive electricity? Whether we like it or not, India remains our only buyer. The Nepali tendency in negotiating is to impose unrealistic conditions at first and then, when pressure builds up during negotiations, to simply give up everything and accept whatever the other side is willing to give. By studying water-resources agreements between other countries, we can begin by im-

posing certain realistic restrictions and conditions based on internationally accepted terms. Letting India benefit from our water resources does not mean compromising our sovereignty and independence.

Through fair treaties, we will be generating revenue by leasing or developing dams with India. In the era of WTO and SAFTA it is in our best interest to be investor-friendly, even if those investors are Indian. Although there is no credible record of Indian interference in Nepali politics, the effect this idea has on the Nepali psyche makes this an important issue. World history shows that any ambitious, big country influences the internal politics of its smaller neighboring countries. But usually this interference begins by the acts of the leaders of the small nations.

Nepal would be less dependent on India if Prime Minister Mohan Shumsher Rana hadn't sought to extend his regime by signing the 1950 treaty, if King Tribhuvan and B. P. Koirala had started the revolution against the Rana regime from within Nepal rather than using India as a base, and if the Congress-Communist joint alliance hadn't invited Indian leaders to start the revolution in 1990. India now thinks it has the right to intervene in Nepali politics to preserve the political system that it helped to create.

We should be thankful to India that it lent its support to the democracy movement of 1990, but we have to learn to face our problems independently. Only in extreme cases should we seek the help of friendly

countries. If we stop displaying our dirty linen in public we will forestall interference from the south. But for this we have to set aside party and personal interests, outline our national interests and then build a national consensus among the parties and come up with policies to achieve those interests.

We do not have to be anti-Indian to be pro-Nepali. We have to find and fix our own flaws, which let others take undue advantage of us. An American saying goes, "fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me!" We have been fooled many times. Instead of blaming India for everything and using nationalism as a shield to hide our failings, we have to fix our problems and we have to do it ourselves, before we bear the "shame" of being fooled again. **N**

(Aryal is a student of International Relations at Peking University in Beijing)



BR



EMBASSY OF INDIA

50 GOLDEN JUBILEE SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME FOR UNDERGRADUATE COURSES 2004-05 FOR NEPALESE STUDENTS STUDYING IN NEPAL

Embassy of India, Kathmandu invites applications for scholarships on Data-Sheets (proforma is given at the end) for scholarships from Nepalese nationals enrolled in first year of undergraduate courses in a recognised educational institutions in Nepal during the academic year 2004-2005. A total of 50 scholarships shall be provided under the scheme as per the following distribution:

(i)	Medical	10 (5 years course)
(ii)	Engineering	10 (4 years course)
(iii)	Other disciplines	30 (3 years course)

B.Sc./ B.A./B.Com/BBA/LLB etc.

Qualification:

- Candidates must have secured minimum 70% marks in Intermediate (+2) level. Candidates parental income must be less than NRs 1,20,000/- per annum.
- The scholarship will be discontinued if the percentage of marks obtained by the awardee falls below 50% in previous year or due to any other reason the Embassy may deem fit. Grant of scholarship will not go beyond the duration of the course for each stream as mentioned above.

Age Limit:

- As on 01, July, 2004, applicants should be between 17 and 22 years of age for all undergraduate courses.

Scholarship Amount:

- Each student in medical/engineering discipline will get a scholarship of NRs.3,000/- per month The scholarship for students in other disciplines will be NRs. 2,000/- per month.

6. Selection Process:

- Selection will be based on merit as well as interview

of short-listed candidates. The interview shall be conducted in Kathmandu, Birgunj and other regional centres in Nepal during December, 2004.

- Candidates from outside the Kathmandu valley and those from outside Birgunj and other regional interview centres called for interview will be paid conveyance charges subject to a maximum of NRs. 500/-. They have to produce proof of having undertaken the journey i.e. bus/ air tickets.
- The short-listed candidates will be informed individually by the Embassy of India, Kathmandu/ Consulate General of India, Birgunj and are advised to interact solely with the Education Wing, Embassy of India, Kathmandu and CGI Birgunj for the scholarship scheme. The candidates should indicate their address and contact telephone numbers clearly on the Data-sheet. Any change in address / telephone number should also be intimated through letter.
- 25 scholarship will be reserved for students from educationally disadvantaged districts. These are Morang, Dhading, Sindhuli, Kavrepalanchok, Nawalparasi, Sindhupalchok, Rupendehi, Nuwakot, Kanchanpur, Dangdeukhuri, Sunsari, Banke, Makwanpur, Kapilbastu, Parsa, Saptari, Sarlahi, Rautahat, Mahottari, Dhanusha, Bara, Kailali, Bardiya, Siraha and Rasuwa.
- Candidates belonging to Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Rautahat, Bara, Prarsa, Makwanpur, Chitwan, Bardiya, Kailali and Kanchanpur may send their applications to Consulate General of India, Shreepur, Birgunj. However, candidates from above districts presently studying in Kathmandu may submit their applications to Education Wing, Embassy of India, Kathmandu. Similarly, students from Kathmandu and districts other than the aforementioned ones studying in the above mentioned districts may submit their applications at Consulate General of India, Shreepur, Birgunj.

7. Instructions for filling Data-Sheet:

- The Data-Sheet should be filled in legibly preferably typed and should be submitted in 2 copies. Candidates are required to submit application at only one place i.e. either at Embassy of India, Kathmandu or at Consulate General of India, Birgunj.
- Please attach 2 attested photographs, attested photocopies of citizenship certificate and mark sheet of Class XII / Transcript only. **Original copies need not be attached at this stage.** Data-sheet may be submitted personally to the office of Attache (Education), Embassy of India, Kathmandu or at Consulate General of India, Shreepur, Birgunj. Out station candidates may send the applications by registered post so as to reach Attache (Education), Embassy of India, P.O. Box 292, Kapurdhara Marg, Kathmandu or Consulate General of India, Shreepur, Birgunj, not later than **October 29, 2004**. Forms will be accepted on all working days between 1000 hrs to 1200 hrs.
- Data-sheet should be based on the following format (which is also available on the Indian Embassy website www.south-asia.com/Embassy-India):

INDIA, KATHMANDU



EMBASSY OF INDIA, KATHMANDU

(To be submitted in two copies along with required enclosures)

DATA-SHEET:

Data Sheet No.
(for office use)

COURSE ENROLLED IN:

Name of the Institute:

1. Name
First Name Middle Name Last Name

2. Father's Name/Occupation.....
.....

3. Mother's Name/Occupation.....
.....

4. Permanent Residential Address
.....
.....

5. Correspondence Address with Tel No./Email address
.....
.....

6. Date of birth

a) In Christian Era:
b) In Bikram Samwat:
c) Age as on 01 July 2004 :
Years Month

7. Nepalese citizenship certificate number, date and place of issue.

8. Annual family income (NRs) (Please attach certificate from CDO or College/University authorities where student is studying)

9. a) Educational qualification with name of institutes and year of passing

b) Subject Total Marks Marks Obtained

(i) Class: X/SLC

(ii) Class: XII/I.SC/I.A/I/Com
Class XII (class XI marks not to be included)

Affix
recent
Passport size
Photograph

c) Overall percentage

(Please attach copy of Class-XII mark sheet attested by College/ University where student is studying)

10. Name of the undergraduate course the candidate is pursuing in Nepal & the College/ University where studying:
(Please attach certificate from College/ University concerned)

11. Whether the student is receiving any scholarship from other organisation, if yes please specify details

12. Details of brothers/sisters who have studied in India stating institute attended, degree

a) Name:

b) Institute:

c) Degree:

d) Present employment:

Present employment Details:

a) Name:

b) Institute:

c) Degree:

d) Present employment:

(Attach additional sheet if necessary)

13. I certify that information/detail furnished in the above Data-sheets are correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I am also aware that my application will be rejected if any facts stated above are found to be incorrect.

Signature of the candidate

Date:

Place:

FORGOTTEN SOULS

Fourteen years of waiting for dignified repatriation has made the Bhutanese refugees fearful and insecure. As time has passed they feel that they are slowly being forgotten and forsaken.

BY JOHN NARAYAN PARAJULI

LAST WEEK BROUGHT ANOTHER reminder to the more than 100,000 Bhutanese refugees, languishing in seven camps in eastern Nepal, that they might not be able to continue to enjoy the UNHCR's humanitarian aid for much longer. United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees Rudd Lubbers reiterated the essence of his message last year to Bhutanese refugees during the 55th annual UNHCR executive committee meeting in Geneva on October 5: By the end of 2005, we will withdraw. The UNHCR maintains that the withdrawal doesn't mean the withdrawal of its protection

mandate. "Less encouraging is the situation of the Bhutanese people in camps in Nepal. At ExCom last year I said that we cannot accept that they remain there indefinitely," Lubbers said.

Lubbers last year had unveiled the Convention Plus initiative, intended, according to the UNHCR, to find equitable ways of sharing the burden of caring for the refugees. The UNHCR's hands are understandably full. With more than 20 million refugees worldwide and more continuing to pour in from escalating conflicts in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, the UNHCR has initiated the plan to minimize its own role to a legal protection level only. Lubbers' plan

could bring some relief to overstretched U.N. refugee agency, but it will surely take the relief away from the refugees.

The U.N. refugee agency is hoping that bilateral and multilateral donor agencies will chip in to substitute for the UNHCR. So far none of the bilateral donors seems to have committed to work in the Bhutanese refugee camps. Even UNHCR officials in Kathmandu haven't briefed the bigger donors about their plans.

Lubbers' reiteration of the message is likely to cause panic among refugees, as most of them were led to believe that UNHCR was just trying to pressure the Nepali and the Bhutanese governments to find a solution quickly. Now there is reason to believe that the UNHCR is serious. "The UNHCR's phase-out program could hinder repatriation," Ratan Gazmere, a Bhutanese leader accompanying Tek Nath Rijal to Geneva, told reporters before leaving to attend the UNHCR's executive committee meeting from September 28 to October 8. Refugees are worried about what would happen to them after the proposed withdrawal, says a journalist from Damak, Jhapa. "The UNHCR is like our parent. Who would look after us after the withdrawal?" asks Moti Bishwa, an inhabitant of Beldangi Camp II. Refugees are already feeling a sense of insecurity. UNHCR officials have been trying hard to explain that phase-out or withdrawal doesn't mean complete pullout; they are

also trying to explain that they won't leave unless a substitute comes in. "The phase down strategy will not have any impact on UNHCR's presence and protection role in Nepal," said Abraham Abraham, the resident representative of UNHCR in Nepal. The idea behind the UNHCR's phase-out plan is to make the refugees self-reliant through development projects and programs. The plan is ambitious and may be too good to be true. Many think that it simply won't work. Refugees aren't willing to believe that any other agency can substi-



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tute the UNHCR in terms of expertise. “Is the UNHCR trying to substitute its mandate?” asked SB Subba, chairman of Bhutanese Refugee Repatriation Representative Committee.

Any change of hands, some say, will be a failure. Even as the appointed time for completion of the phase down strategy draws closer, the UNHCR has made no visible preparations; there is no word on who’s going to step in. Initially it was expected GTZ, JICA and USAID would chip in, but American diplomats in Kathmandu have already rubbished the idea of USAID’s direct involvement. Even UNHCR officials in the field don’t believe that the 2005 deadline can be met, given the pace of progress. And the Nepali government has criticized the UN refugee agency. In October last year Foreign Minister Bhek Bahadur Thapa even raised the issue with U.N. Secretary General, Kofi Annan. “I understand that the UNHCR is having a resource crunch,” says Thapa. “But to paralyze the refugee committee when two countries are negotiating cannot be appreciated.” There are other refugee camps in the world with longer standing than the Bhutanese camps in eastern Nepal, he says. “I see the need to be fairer to the refugee community in Nepal.”

Despite calls for fairness and continuing support by the government and the refugee community, the Convention Plus initiative is likely to continue. The three-pronged approach—repatriation, local integration and third-country resettlement—if adopted by the UNHCR will cause a huge uproar among the refugee community in Nepal. The UNHCR has said that it won’t encourage repatriation to Bhutan unless Bhutan allows it to monitor the process. Bhutan is unlikely to concede to the demand. “The UNHCR’s signals are easy enough to understand,” says Rakesh Chettri, a Bhutanese refugee leader: “There won’t be any repatriation.” Without repatriation, the plan to phase down the UNHCR’s role to protection level will increase the sense of insecurity caused by fourteen years of stalemate. “The international community has ignored us,” says Chettri. That feeling resonates throughout all seven refugee camps in eastern Nepal. **N**



TM/SS

Tek Nath Rizal



Swayambhu Artist

BY SUSHMA JOSHI

Nepal is rife with myths of perfectly formed art being dug out of the ground, or appearing out of thin air. The exquisitely carved statue of Budhanilkantha is one, the massive architectural complex of Swayambhu is another. What are less common are myths about people who exhibit extraordinary skills without any apparent training or history. In a tribute to Durga Baral, cartoonist and artist, a novelist friend of his gave him the ultimate compliment: the *swayambhu* (self-born, self-realized) artist.

How did Pokhara's Durga Baral become Nepal's Durga Baral? Born in a village in the outskirts of Pokhara, Durga Baral did not grow up surrounded by artwork, unlike many of our privileged artists from Kathmandu. He did not come from a family of artisans whose

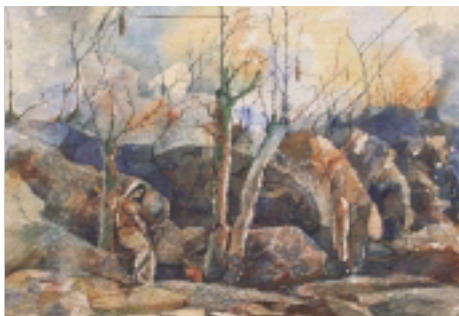
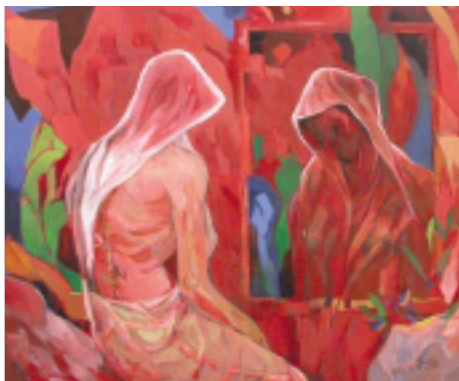
traditional work was painting. He struggled with day-jobs and finally managed to go to Delhi and attend an art school, after which he returned to Pokhara and ran his first art studio. Like many pioneers of Nepal who break new ground, Durga Baral struggled to perfect his innate artistic skills by himself, outside of institutional support.

Pokhara has now become a hub of artistic activity, thanks in large part to Durga Baral's presence and leadership. "Pokhara," says Kunda Dixit, who opened Durga Baral's "The Faces of Time and the Colors of Sensibility" exhibit at Siddhartha Art Gallery on October 1, "is the only place in Nepal where people actually pay to go and hear a poetry reading." It was appropriate that it was a journalist rather than the usual diplomat who opened the exhibit of one of our foremost social critics.



Durga Baral cartoons under the pen name “Batsayana,” informing his audience about the state of the nation with an incisive and deadpan truth, are regular features in Kantipur. His art is less known—his exhibit at the Siddhartha Art Gallery took place after a hiatus of 20 years. The love and affection people feel for a cartoonist is very different from the love and affection people feel for any other public intellectual. Unlike other public figures who acquire a halo around them after a few decades, cartoonists remain friendly and approachable, just like their daily work. Durga Baral is no exception—soft-spoken and modest, he exudes the energy of a man who could sit at a *chautari* and draw a cartoon without drawing a massive crowd towards him. Paradoxically, he is also one of the artists who draws the biggest crowd to attend an art exhibit at the Siddhartha Art Gallery.

Baral’s canvases document the state of Nepal at the contemporary moment. His paintings are covered with figures of people in pain—faceless, hooded with drapery, and stooped over in positions of classic despair. Blue predominates some of his canvases, and so does bits and pieces of newsprint which hint at his longstanding relationship with the world of newspapers. The paintings talk about unmentionable, unspeakable events—torture, extrajudicial killings, detentions, disappearances—with images. Recently married brides in red blossom change into desolate widows on a chilly blue landscape. Soldiers are upended in a canvas where a Victoria Cross is prominently framed, making us wonder about the sacrifices that Nepalis



have made for that particular prize. The image of a journalist who has been killed by the Maoists takes his place next to bodies and figures who have “disappeared.” Torture bursts out on the surface, as human bodies and skeletons hang upside down next to upright people. Images allow a viewer to see events and happenings that can often remain at an abstract level if left to words. Perhaps it is appropriate that it was a cartoonist who dissects the hypocrisy of the world who had the guts to make such an honest exhibit of our national shame and despair.

Baral’s paintings are raw. They do not speak of sophisticated artistic techniques or training. They are, in many ways, reminiscent of the work of a younger artist still in art school, someone who is willing to take artistic risks because the representation of emotions and truth, rather than the need to create clever and conceptual work, is the overriding motive. Like Picasso’s *Guernica*, these works document a civil war. These are not works that somebody will buy to put in their living room and admire for their aesthetic value. These are works that will stay around long after the artist and his contemporaries are gone, informing the world about a moment in history when humanity lost its mind to a deranged idea of power. These are testimonies of a place and time you gift to a future generation so they may learn from the mistakes that almost destroyed the people that begot them. **N**



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An Abuse Of Authority

The guardians of the state bear the greatest responsibility to behave morally and, hence, the greatest blame when they fail

BY DR. BHOGENDRA SHARMA

Although torture is not new to our history, the Maoist insurgency has worsened the extent, gravity and nature of torture in Nepal. Most of the Maoist leaders have been victims of torture at the hand of government forces. It is a well known fact that the Maoists also use torture on common people, politicians and security personnel: Their methods are the same as those of the government forces. Former detainees' hatred and desire for revenge produces more rebels than recruitment by the Maoists. The culture and cycle of violence will never stop unless there is a serious attempt by a powerful state agency like the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority to prevent government abuses.

Torture is not just a private issue of unfortunate individuals and cruel security forces. It is an act that mirrors unequal power relations in society, serves as a precondition for injustice and has crippling consequences on struggles for change. Politicians are as guilty and accountable as those who are committing or ordering torture everyday.

Until now not a single perpetrator of torture has been punished in Nepal. The CIAA has not touched on abuse of authority by security personnel—torture and killings while people are under detention. It is crucial to address the absolute impunity for torturers, especially when the CIAA is unfairly accused of being a pawn of the palace and of supporting regression. It has authority and obligations to address the issue of torture—the shame of our country. Torture by Maoists is also a serious problem, but government, civil and security agencies' failure to act morally is ultimately more dangerous to the nation.

Political suppression of opponents is not unusual in Nepal, where torture is used routinely. Although extracting information or confessions from Maoists is used as an excuse, Army and police torture is actually used commonly now to terrorize populations. Allegations of rape to take revenge or of sexual indulgence have been reported. Rapists in the security forces are never brought to justice.

People are tortured for minor infractions: walking near or entering an Army camp or allowing domestic animals to do so. Traditionally people in villages near a jungle survive on natural resources, but with new laws it has become illegal to collect wood, animals or fodder. The people have to do it anyway, to survive. This "law breaking" causes hardship, anger and sometimes results in arrests and torture. Even

the security forces can fall victim: Sometimes police are tortured by other police when they fail to obey illegal orders from superiors. Professional conflict and power politics also cause one security agency to torture another one.

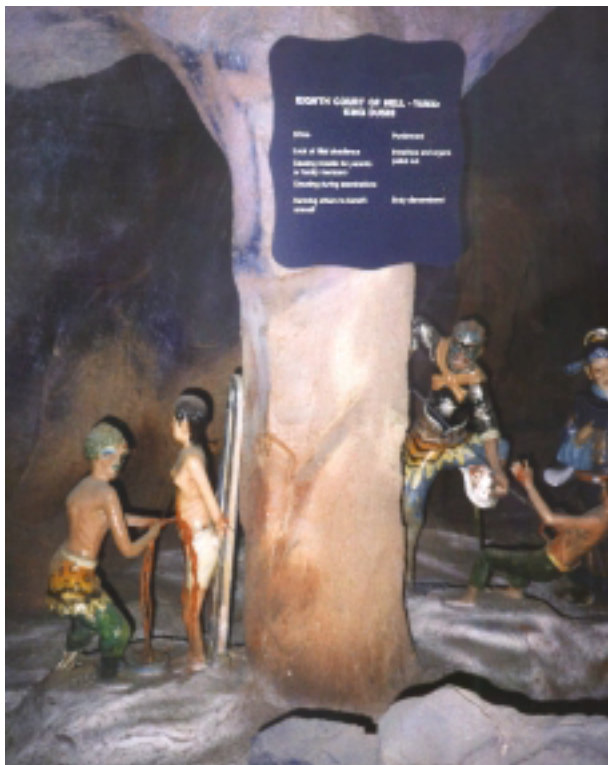
Authorities promote or tolerate torture as an investigative method, mostly in the genuine belief that it is in the public interest. Such an attitude among government officials seems almost to give license to the subordinate ranks to carry on regardless; they do not have to worry about the rule of law as long as the esprit de corps of the police sub-culture protects them. Use of illegal force purportedly for solving crimes is looked on with favor not only by the officers but also by the victims of crime. Victims expect the police to deliver quick justice and urge that the offender be given summary punishment. Others high up in the government of the day agree, if it is to their political advantage. Social pressure on the police creates an open playing field for the corrupt and the partisan in the relevant agencies. Illegal force can also be used for monetary benefit or to obtain promotions and other perquisites one would not have access to otherwise. Government forest guards, prison guards and jailors, *chowkidars*, *naikes*, Chief District Officers, land revenue and tax officers use torture for all of the reasons mentioned above and as a "punishment."

The National Human Rights Commission is working for the promotion and protection of human rights. The commission has attempted to punish perpetrators by ordering financial compensation to victims, but in the case of the Nepalgunj prison abuses, the government protected the perpetrators. The case alerted the Nepali human rights community and prompted calls for the National Human Rights Commission and the CIAA to work together to abolish the culture of impunity.

It is serious abuse of authority for law enforcement officials to inflict torture or give orders for it. Access to justice is a fundamental right. Even the U.S. Army, the most powerful in the world, is bringing to justice soldiers accused of torture in Iraq. Torture should never be tolerated.

The demand of the day is to combat abuse of authority by the authorities. The issue needs to be addressed seriously to promote human rights, restore human dignity and contribute to reducing violence. Human rights violations by the government are a more serious threat to the country's future than any other abuse: Torture by the state is the mother of all the evils. **N**

(Dr. Sharma is President of the International Rehabilitation Council and the Centre for Victims of Torture, Nepal.)



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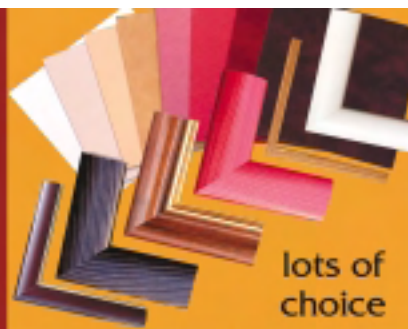
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As Time Goes By

Dashain may not be quite what it once was, but the child in us all comes out anyway

BY KUNAL LAMA

The sun glowing benignly, hazily through the wispy morning mist. Colourful kites swooping and duelling in a cotton-candy-flecked sky high above vast fields of golden paddy, the cool breeze gently sweetening the air with the scent of ripened rice. Marigolds garlanding gardens and just about everything else. The urgent twangings of an itinerant quilt-maker cutting through the mellifluous sounds of *malashri* escaping from a “2-in-1” radio-cum-cassette-player set to MW 792 kHz Radio Nepal. I could smell Dashain coming.

As a child, Dashain was all about a month-long holiday full of fun and games. Never mind that the final exams came almost immediately after, when we used to shiver in the cavernous classrooms, sitting on cold, wooden chairs, our fingers almost too frozen to wield the pens which refused to yield equally frozen ink, and only 90 minutes before we had to hand in the essay! A whole month off from school. No classes, no homework, no games, no uniforms, no teachers. What joy! What eternity! Even before the holidays began, the talk amongst friends would be of what new clothes and gifts were being bought by their parents and elders. Anything from abroad was advertised gleefully, with unbridled pride ad nauseam. (This being an era when a packet of instant noodles from Bangkok constituted a highly-prized present. A whole case? Aladdin’s cave and all the gold of the Incan kings could not compare!) If new clothes were yet to be purchased, parents were suddenly the focus of unashamed attention. They were buttered up, cajoled, coerced into buying the latest and the most fashionable outfits. Pleadings usually took form of sly, off-hand statements such as, “Roshan’s father has bought him jeans, a shirt AND a jacket from Bishal Bazaar, and shoes from Bhotahity already,” left hanging in the air to subliminally influence paren-

tal decisions. If the pleadings didn’t work, then tantrums were thrown, with threats, “I won’t do any homework, and if I don’t get first division in the finals, that’s because you didn’t buy me that Chinese bicycle as you said you would. And I don’t want to be your son!” Most of the time, I got ignored, sometimes slapped soundly for extra measure and, when the time came, was given blue polyester trousers, a checked flannel shirt, both stitched by the century-old local tailor, fashion be damned, and sensible Pathfinder shoes from Bata that teamed up smartly with the school uniform. I would bury my head in shame and curse silently, but not too loudly, lest I lose out on the *dakshina* takings, because the D-Day of Dashain was yet to come. My goal would be to cram the pockets of the dreadful trousers with at least a hundred rupees in notes of one, five or ten, sometimes coins of fifty and twenty-five paisa, feeling and counting them endlessly as if the constant handling would somehow magically increase the amount. Most of this abundance of riches went into buying kites, *titura*, “Chandamama” storybooks and firecrackers for Tihar.

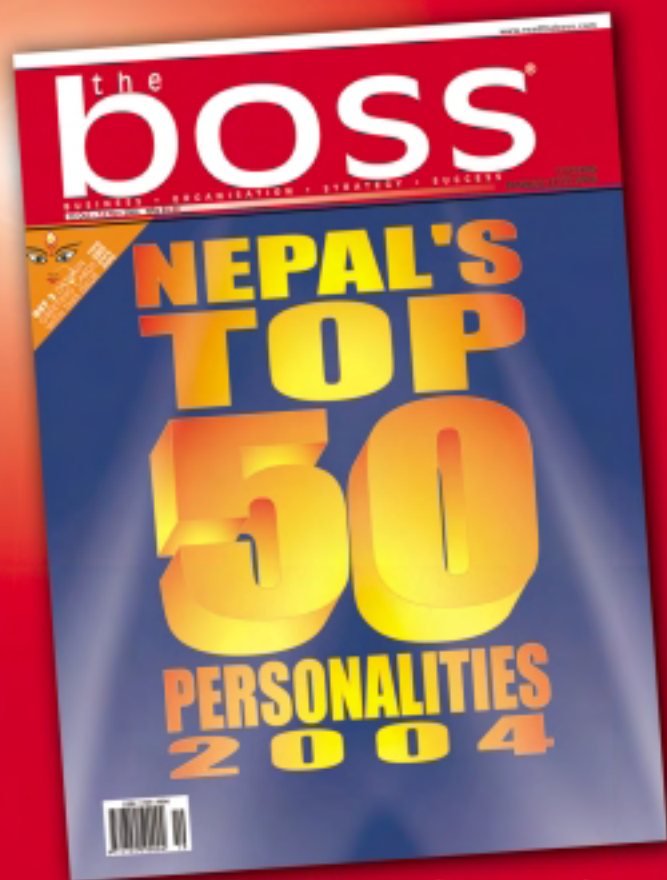
Fast forward. Boutiques and sports stores on Durbar Marg plastered with “SALE” stickers. Special car purchase offers with reduced prices and interest rates. Newspapers full of advertisements for dance parties, “dream holidays” to Thailand and Malaysia, shopping *utsavs* and beer brands. The whole country abuzz with talks and rumours of a ceasefire. Dashain is definitely coming.

How times have changed when this is how one tells now that the festival all Nepalis celebrate across caste, class, culture and even religious divides is on its way. (I know certain ethnic groups are eschewing Dashain, claiming it to be yet another example of the Hindu-Brahmanic domination, but I think it is sad that the only “national festival” should now be thrown aside unceremoniously, and the one chance for all of us

Nepalis to sit down, celebrate and get drunk in unison slowly be lost.) And what is the ceasefire going to achieve? If the fundamental wrongs of the present state of the nation are not addressed, the ceasefire will only be a quick fix: the situation will regress back to where it was, after the festival. All the hopes dashed, all the promises broken and all the differences intact and intractable.

But some things have not changed. The royal palace walls still get scrubbed and whitewashed. Mobs of shaggy-haired sheep from Tibet are still herded through the city; broods of chickens, rafts of ducks, herds of goats and gangs of buffaloes join them unknowingly in the inevitable slaughter. Ason bazaar still gets chock-a-block with canny vendors and panicky buyers. There is still a rush for bus and airline tickets, and the resulting exodus leaves Kathmandu suddenly quiet and eerily empty. In spite of my affected detachment from family gatherings and commercialized festivities, I still can’t help getting childishly excited. I know Dashain is soon coming. **N**





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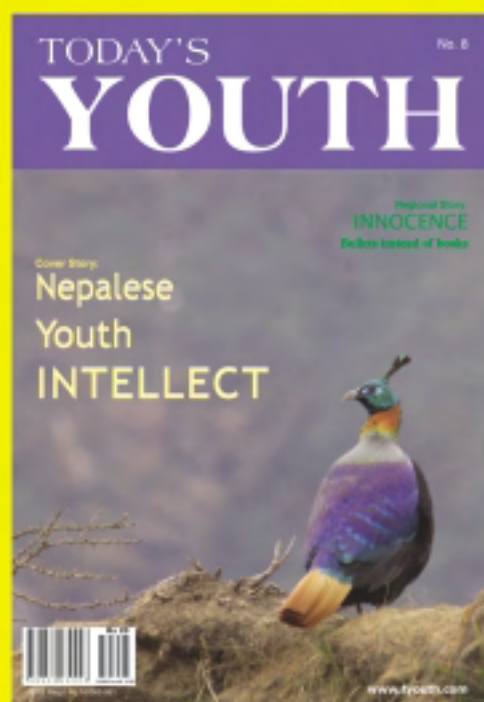
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Jumla Vision

BY PRAGYAN SUBEDI

It's a long way from World Vision's offices in Kathmandu to Jumla, much farther than the 371 kilometers that a map shows. The office in Nag Pokhari has all the trappings of the urban global office: padded walls, fluorescent lighting and small cubicles with employees working quietly on their computers.

The office in Khalanga, Jumla, where World Vision runs its Midwest Relief and Rehabilitation program, is a stone build-

ing in the traditional Midwestern style, with few modern amenities: a tap with cold water for showers, a *daura* stove for cooking.

Little wonder then that when Yuban Malla, who looks younger than his 35 years, returned to Nepal from the United States in 2001, where he had lived, studied and worked for 11 years, his friends told him that he was crazy. "You're going the opposite direction in life," they said. "Everyone heads from the east towards the west. What are you doing moving to one of the remotest parts of the east after spending so many years in the west?"

Malla, who has a Masters degree in environmental studies and community development from Tufts University in Boston, thought he knew what he was

doing. He had come back to Nepal partially because he felt a responsibility to his parents: He is the only son. But he also had high hopes for what he would accomplish in Nepal. Four months after his arrival from the U.S. he got a job with World Vision, an American-based NGO, and was sent to survey the midwestern districts of Jumla and Kalikot. What he saw shocked him so deeply that he decided to move there and work as coordinator for World Vision's program. "When I see people who can't even fulfill basic needs like clean water and food, it hurts me very much," he says. "After my first visit to Jumla my priorities in life changed completely. I am now more committed to my work than to my life."

Adjusting to life in Jumla wasn't easy. The harshness of the terrain and the lack of amenities, even simple things like having to walk 10 hours a day took its toll on Malla, who grew up in Kathmandu. But he adapted, and the work he does more than makes up for the hardship. "I know I can't change everything, but I can make a difference in people's lives," he says.

Malla's wife Swasti contributed in making his life in Jumla more comfortable. She did not show any surprise or resentment at Malla's decision and even agreed to move there with him. A colleague of Malla's at World Vision, says, "Life in Jumla without a spouse is very stressful." Malla agrees. "Both my wife and I developed a very close connection to Jumla," he says. Fondness for the place is evident even in the name they gave their child. Swasti Malla got pregnant in Jumla and when their son was born he was named Swayuj, a combination of the first syllables of the word Swasti, the word Yuban and the word Jumla.

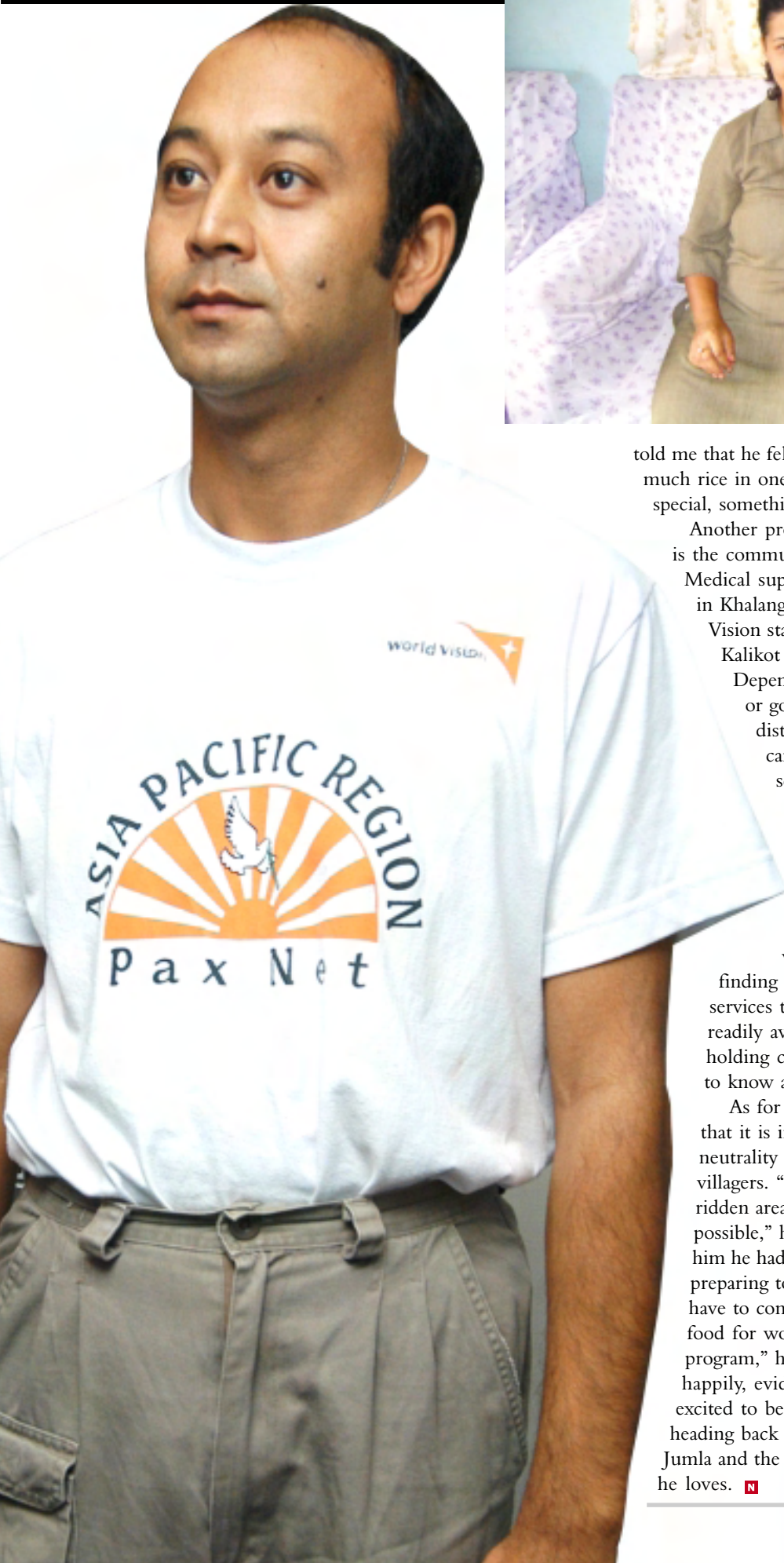
Of all the projects World Vision has implemented in Jumla and Kalikot, Malla has a special fondness for the Food for Work program. After prolonged consultation with villagers on what amenities they need, whether irrigation channels or mule tracks, raw materials are airlifted into the area. Villagers—usually one member from each household—contribute labor to the project. They are paid with rice rather than money, usually 4 kilograms for a household per day.

Malla is fond of this project because the villagers are actively involved in the improvement of the communities, not just passively receiving aid. This makes them see World Vision's projects as their own. Malla excitedly recalls a conversation with a young man who helped build irrigation channels in Kartiksami. "After the day's work was done," he says, "this young man got 10 bags of rice. He



DIRE NEED: World Vision's ENT camp in Khalanga





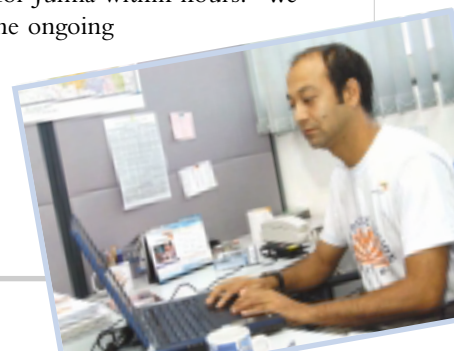
told me that he felt really rich, that he had never seen so much rice in one place before. For people there, rice is special, something one eats only during festivals.”

Another project that has worked exceptionally well is the community health development program.

Medical supplies are flown into World Vision’s base in Khalanga. Two doctors, two nurses and World Vision staff travel to different areas in Jumla and Kalikot with porters who carry the supplies.

Depending on the conditions, the group walks or goes on mules to places far from the district headquarters. They set up health camps in remote places, usually at the local school, and live on local hospitality for the few days that they spend in each village. “At some of these places the people tell us that there haven’t been any development projects since 2050 B.S.,” says Malla. “They tell us that it’s important that we continue our work there and not just leave.” Besides finding fulfillment in being able to provide services to those for whom medical help is not readily available, Malla also takes satisfaction in holding conversations with villagers and getting to know about their lives.

As for working in dangerous places, Malla says that it is important to preserve transparency, neutrality and a high level of respect for the villagers. “It is difficult to work in insurgency-ridden areas, but we have been doing it. It is possible,” he says proudly. On the day we spoke to him he had spent a month in Kathmandu, and was preparing to leave for Jumla within hours. “We have to complete the ongoing food for work program,” he said happily, evidently excited to be heading back to Jumla and the work he loves. **N**



CITY ThisWeek

EVENTS



Changa Chait 2061

We are winning and going strong. The Nation Weekly kite flying team has made it among the top 16 teams among Nepal's top corporate houses, financial institutions, trading companies and multinational companies, competing for the top slot at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. on October 16. According to the tie-sheet, Yeti Travels will complete against Specialized Tours & Travels; Seagull Travels & Tours against Marcopolo Travels; Nepal Investment Bank against NIC Bank; The Boss – Speciality Media against Amatya Enterprises; Natraj Tours & Travels against Saraogi Tours & Travels; Himalayan Bank (A) against Nation Weekly; Samsung Digital World against Himalayan Bank (B); and Himalayan Snacks & Noodles against Bhajuratna Agency. Hope to see you at the Windy Hills of Nagarkot. Cheer for Nation Weekly and win free copies! Entry fee is Rs. 100/- with one welcome drink. For information: 6680080, 6680083.

Batsayana In Town

"The Faces of Time and Colors of Sensibility," a painting exhibition of artist and famed cartoonist Durga Baral, popularly known as Batsayana, at the Siddhartha Art Gallery in Babermahal Revisited till October 31. The exhibition also marks the 19th anniversary of Siddhartha Art Gallery.

ART EXHIBITIONS



Graphic Prints

September Collections from Nepal, Finland, India and the U.S. at gallery Moksh, Cross Kitchen in Lazimpat till October 18.

Just Divine Nite

Undergo the JD Xperience at 1905, Kantipath on Friday, 15 October 8 p.m. onwards. Entry fee is Rs. 300/- with one free shot of JD.

Kathmandu Utsav 2061

A grand consumer fair is currently on at Bhrikutimandap Exhibition Hall till October 17. Organized by Everest Exhibitions, The Event Managers. Wave Music Utsav is also the highlight of the event. Entry fee is Rs. 25/-. For information: 4230294.

Cine Club

Movie: La Veuve (1999). Director: Patrice Leconte. Starring: Daniel Auteuil. At the Alliance Francaise, Tripureshwore. Date: October 17. Time 2 p.m. For information: 4241163.

Ghatasthapana

The festival of Dashain begins on October 15. Special shrines of Goddess Durga Bhavani are set up in houses and barley seeds are planted and nurtured for the next nine days. The official holiday for the festivities be-



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gins from October 20, the day of Phulpati where a special *feu-de-joy* is presented at the Tundikhel Grounds



Beat Contest 2004

Enjoy live music, cultural programs and a food festival all under one roof at the Beat Contest 2004 in the Birendra International Convention Center from 13-17 October. An exhibition of handicraft products made by women will also be put up for sale. The event will feature over 50 bands and individual musicians who will compete to get their names promoted as one of the top bands in the country. Three winners will get their music videos produced and an album released with their best songs. The event is organized by Voxpop Productions Pvt. Ltd. Entry fee is valid during the event. For information: 4445357.

ONGOING

All That Jazz

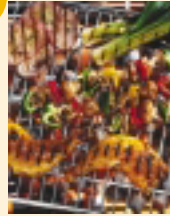
Presenting "JCS Trio" & The Best Of Jazz In Nepal at the Fusion Bar, Dwarika's Hotel 7 p.m. onwards, every Friday. Entry fee is Rs. 555/-, including BBQ dinner, and a can of beer/soft drinks. For information: 4479488.

Chiso Chiso Hawama

Package of 1 night and two days at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot for Rs. 1,700/- on a twin sharing basis for Nepalis and expats. Barbeque lunch served at Restaurant Kantipur for Rs. 500/-. For information: 6680080, 6680083.

Hyatt Treats

Fusion Night every Wednesday 6 p.m. onwards at the Rox Bar. Bharat Nepali performing on Sarangi, backed by The Cloud Walkers. For information: 4491234 Extn. 5245; The Fresh Catch every Saturdays



and Sundays at The Café with a tantalizing and diverse range of exotic seafood. For information: 4491234 Extn. 5223;

The Sizzling Stone Cooking Experience at the Rox Restaurant 6 p.m. onwards till October 15 with tender steaks, chicken and fresh seafood. For information: 4491234 Extn. 5241: Flavors Of the North West Frontier at the Café 6:30 p.m. onwards till October 15 with mouth-watering delicacies like *Dahi Ke Kebab*, *Jimikand Ke Shami* and *Murgh Kalmi Kebab*. For information: 4491234.

Sizzling Chimney

Till 24 October, 6:30 p.m. onwards at the Chimney, Hotel Yak and Yeti: eight scrumptious sizzlers, eight flaming flambes and eight mixes of mashed potatoes. Price: Rs. 499-1,199/- with complimentary

bottle of Carlsberg on every order. For information: 4248999 Extn. 2865.

Soaltee Oktoberfest

It is October and you don't have to be in Deutschland to celebrate it. The San Miguel Oktoberfest is on at The Garden Terrace Restaurant till October 15 at Soaltee Crowne Plaza. Entry is Rs. 799/- and includes lavish buffet and unlimited San Miguel with live music, dance floor, BBQ, games and much more. International buffet lunch during weekends at the Garden Terrace Restaurant for Rs. 550/- Also, great value lunch at China Garden and Al Fresco on weekdays for Rs. 299/- and on weekends for Rs. 399/-.

Rock@Belle Momo

Enjoy combo meals at Belle Momo every Friday 6:30 p.m. onwards as the rock 'n roll band Steel Wheels performs live. For information: 4230890.

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1. MINOR RELIEF: A widow of a deceased soldier completed a tailoring course given by the Sainik Adhikrit Shrimati Sangh
2. FESTIVITY: Inauguration of Kathmandu Utsav 2061
3. HIGH FLYERS: Nation Weekly's team at Changa Chait in Nagarkot
4. BUILDING BRIDGES: The Peace Committee met in the UML's parliamentary office
5. TOO YOUNG?: A child involved in the four-party protests against 'regression' at Ratna Park
6. CELEBRATION: Performance on the occasion of the Tharu annual festival, *Jiteeya*
7. OUTRAGE: Jana Morcha Nepal (PFN) protested against Maoist assault on fellow party members
8. CROSSOVER: 'Bride and Prejudice', featuring Aishwarya Rai and Martin Henderson, opened at Jai Nepal Hall

Cute And SPIRITED

Pageants for children help improve their confidence and communication skills. That's why so many parents wanted their kids to participate in last week's Little Star Pageant.

BY PRAGYAN SUBEDI

Anushka Rai charmed the spectators and the judges at the Little Star Pageant, Lalitpur last Saturday. "The current conflict cannot be solved by just the government and the Maoists," she said forcefully. "The general public has to take responsibility as well." The chief guest, Education and Sports Minister Balkrishna Khand, was so thrilled by her answer that he exclaimed: "It is time that we started making children ministers in our country!"

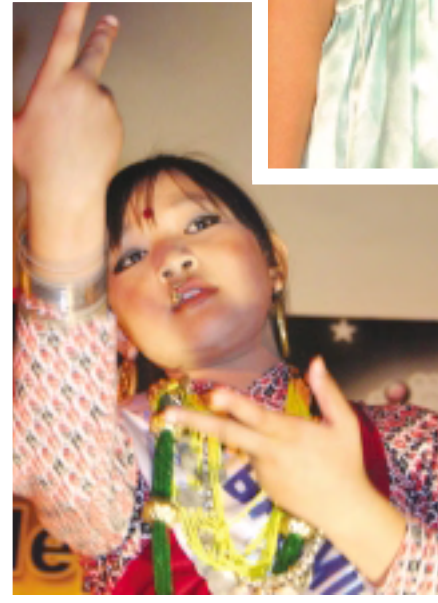
The event was organized by Nepalese Fashion Home. Since the beginning of 2003 they have held 12 pageants for girls 9-12 years of age in places like Pokhara, Biratnagar, Narayangarh and Kathmandu. "We felt a responsibility to take events of this kind outside of Kathmandu," says Hema Manandhar, one of the organizers. "I think we should give opportunities to children all over Nepal."

The seven members of Nepalese Fashion Home take children very seriously. Their mission is to groom children to increase their confidence and make them able to work as a team. During the training period children are taught how to address large groups of people and to listen and speak carefully to improve communication skills. The values of discipline and friendliness are stressed throughout the training period.

It is understandable then, why so many parents want their children to par-



Nepalese Fashion Home



All photos B Rai

ticipate in the pageant. Many parents are thrilled that their shy and reclusive children have become talkative and vivacious after undergoing the training program. There is also a demand by the media for ex-participants of pageants organized by Nepalese Fashion Home. Currently there are young girls working as hosts on the Annapurna and Machhapucharay FM stations. Soon they will also be seen

on Nepal TV and the Image Metro Channel.

The Little Star pageant last Saturday took place by the initiative of parents in Lalitpur. Some of them had witnessed the Kathmandu Kid Queen 2004 contest and had contacted Nepalese Fashion Home to request them to organize a similar event in Lalitpur. By the time the organizers got back to them they had already selected a number of girls to take part in the event. Children of 11 schools, including Little Angel's, Future Stars and DAV took part in the Little Star contest.

The children were even more enthusiastic about the pageant than their parents. At the DAV School, 58 children showed a desire to participate. Among them five were chosen. A girl who wasn't selected was so upset that she kept calling Hema Manandhar of Nepalese Fashion Home on her mobile. When she was told that the selection decision had al-

ready been made and that nothing could be done about it, the girl burst out in tears. She kept calling until Manandhar had to turn off her mobile. As soon as she turned it back on the next morning the phone rang. It was the same girl. Impressed by her persistence Manandhar contacted her school and asked them to let the girl participate. She appeared onstage last Saturday at the Little Star pageant in Lalitpur.

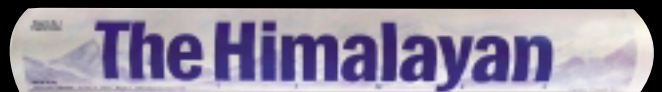
There are other things that the children learn during training. "We want to make traditional Nepali clothes fashionable again," says Fubu Tenzing Sherpa, another organizer. "One of the greatest thing about this show is that many of these children leave with a new respect and like for Nepali traditional wear, no matter to which ethnic community it belongs." Anushka Rai appeared in a Sherpa costume to collect her prize. Perhaps that will be an inspiration to other young girls as well. **N**



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A GREAT NEWSPAPER

BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

Civilians caught in the conflict are equally at risk from both the security forces and the Maoists

BY SUSHMA JOSHI

DEVI SUNWAR, 36, CRIES AS SHE tells her story. Her daughter Maina was 15. "She would have gone to class 9," she sobs. After witnessing an extra-judicial execution of a relative Reena Rasaili on February 17, 2004, Devi, who had also been sexually harassed by the police, went back to her village. The police arrived at her home at 6 a.m. the next day to search for her. They could not find her, so they took her daughter with them. After the disappearance of the girl, the parents launched a search, going to the army and police barracks and putting in an application with the National Human Rights Commission. The body was found yesterday. Devi worries about going to the police barracks by herself to get the body. "Can somebody come with me?" she asks the lawyers from Advocacy Forum who are present and who are providing legal aid to her.

The paradox of a woman who has been sexually harassed, whose daughter has been killed by the police and who is forced to go back to the same institution to get justice reflects the extraordinary state of the human rights situation in Nepal today. "Between a Rock and a Hard Place," Human Rights Watch report on Nepal, looks at the way civilians inside Nepal are caught in-between the conflict and are equally at risk from both the security forces and the Maoists. The 102-page public report, which was released in the Radisson Hotel on Thursday, documents cases of extra-judicial executions, disappearances, illegal detentions and arbitrary arrests. It also makes recommendations to the three conflicting parties—the government of

Nepal, the leadership of the CPN-Maoist and the King.

The civilians of Nepal are not the only ones caught in-between the conflict. Peter Bouckaert of Human Rights Watch admits the international community finds itself in the same difficult place. While the international community does not want to isolate Nepal and leave it to deal with a Maoist rebellion, it is also increasingly reluctant to support a militarized government that acts with impunity. "The international community cannot walk away from Nepal," Bouckaert says. "But increasingly governments around the world are finding it difficult to support it politically and economically."

Bouckaert pointed out that the new U.S. ambassador could do a lot to ameliorate the Nepali people's suspicions that the U.S. blindly supports the current regime by raising issues of human rights. The U.S. has, for the first time, signed the human rights memorandum. Unfortunately, the recent interview the ambassador gave in the Kathmandu Post made no reference of human rights abuses from the Army side.

Bouckaert says his organization will follow up with governments in Europe and America and pressure them to carefully consider their government's allocation of military funds to Nepal. In the U.S., the Leahy Amendment requires the U.S. government to review the performance of the military before they can receive funding. For the first time, one unit of the Royal Nepal Army has apparently been refused funding through this amendment, although details about which unit are still to be released.

MEEK VOICES: A human rights rally where activists were arrested by security forces



nw/ss

Bouckaert, who is a researcher in the conflict section in Human Rights Watch, has worked in conflict areas all over the world, including Rwanda and Bosnia. "Nepal," he says, "remains one of the most difficult countries to work in human rights today." A mountain village in Nepal can be as far as a four days walk off the main road, cutting off effective communication and accessibility and making it difficult for organizations to track down violations. Both Maoists and the Army take advantage of this inaccessibility and con-

tinue to perpetuate abuses with impunity. In most parts of the world, e.g. in Chechnya, a village is no farther than a three hours drive away. "Chechens dream of launching a rebellion in a country like this," he says.

No country in the world that has undergone a civil conflict has escaped

of people who should be prosecuted tomorrow."

The government of Nepal has signed a commitment paper allowing the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to visit detention centers and to allow habeas corpus cases. But so far the government has not followed up on its commitments.

Army official in the morning, observed that the general he met seemed to find the conduct of the troops indefensible. Heavy international pressure is needed to make sure officers at all levels act with accountability and are aware their actions will have consequences, he says. International pressure was one of the reasons for the court martial of the security officer involved in the Rammechhap massacre.

Although organizations like Human Rights Watch monitor and document human rights in Nepal, their work seems to have made little impact on the current government's policies. The conflict continues unabated, and human rights violations are on the rise. Families of detained people sit in Shanti Park near Ratna Park, telling their stories about their family members who vanished without a trace, taken by soldiers in plain-clothes.

As these atrocities become more visible and part of the mainstream, it becomes increasingly difficult for people working in conflict resolution and negotiations to bring their cases forward. Peace, says Bouckaert, is not the only issue to be raised. If peace issues are raised and human rights shoved to the background, the warring parties will often take the opportunity to brutalize the civilian population.

Devi Sunwar and her husband, tears streaming down their faces, tell their stories to whoever will listen. As busy



prosecutions for war crimes after the conflict is over, observes Bouckaert. The impunity in Nepal, the HRWatch team found, operated on an open level. "We execute them," soldiers in checkpoints responded when asked what they did when they came in contact with Maoists. "There are a lot of abusive armies in the world. Not all of them are being funded by Western countries," says Bouckaert. "The Security forces have to realize they have a price to pay. Nepali Army and security forces can be sure there will be prosecutions. We are looking for names

Organizations like Human Rights Watch are now building increased pressure and are working to build capacity that would make the government more sensitive to norms of human rights. Nepal's army, which transformed from a largely ceremonial guard to a fighting force, needs to strengthen its investigative capacity and its accountability.

"In Nepal, if you're a civilian and you kill somebody, you will go to jail for a long time. If you're a soldier and you kill fifty, you will get a promotion," Bouckaert remarks. Bouckaert, who met with an

professionals attending the meeting stream out, Devi Sunwar says, "At least they have said they will give compensation." The few hundred rupees that the Army gives to the families of victims is small solace to parents whose child has been murdered; yet it is an admission of guilt from an institution that should be serving, not killing, the people.

"I saw people being murdered. I will not keep silent, whatever happens," Devi says. It is that kind of personal commitment to justice from civil society, perhaps, that will finally end this conflict. **N**

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Snapshots

BY DHRITI BHATTA

Jazzy Affair

For a person turning 53, who got back into singing after a gap of 27 years, Bidya Shrestha does jazz really well. That is her passion, though she still doesn't call herself a professional singer. "I have had no formal education in music and I can't even read notation," says Shrestha who plays a "little" guitar and performs occasionally at the Jazz Upstairs Bar in Lazimpat. Shrestha learnt the art of singing at an early age when she heard her maternal grandfather's records in Assam where she spent most of her early days. It was in 2001 that she got back to singing jazz when she joined friend Chris Masands troupe to perform at the Rox in the Hyatt. Her actual profession is still running a cross-cultural exchange program called Passage Project for foreigners. Shrestha has joined eight other women to organize Women in Concert being held on October 31 at the Dechelin Restaurant. That sure is going to be all that jazz.



CLICKING AN AWARD



A picture Mukunda Bogati clicked of an old woman being carried to a hospital in a *doko* in Bichaur of Baglung district gave him an edge over 700 other photographers from 45 countries. He bagged the first prize in a competition organized by Asea Brown Boveri, an energy company in Switzerland. "Such a sight is just too regular to most of us in the villages," says Bogati, "but it was exactly what the international community noticed. It is Nepal's own story in a single picture." Bogati topped all three categories of "respect", "responsibility" and "determination", making him \$ 1,500 richer. Bogati will be spending most of his prize money on photography accessories to upgrade his Nikon D70 digital camera. We will be waiting for more of his quality work.

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- Knowledge/
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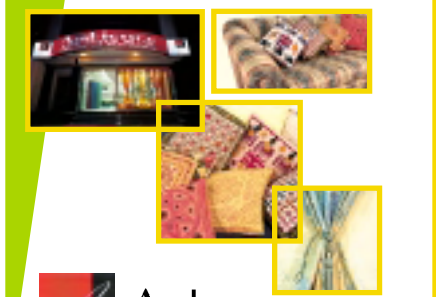


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Happily Bilingual

Kosmos Biswakarma is a rare breed. He is among the few who have worked for both English and Nepali press. Currently the Bureau Chief at The Himalayan Times, he started out with The Kathmandu Post and later became the assistant editor with Nepali-language Nepal newsmagazine. He has also tried his hand as a

publisher with Patrika, a Nepali-language weekly. Yashas Vaidya talked to Biswakarma about his decade in journalism and what his experiences have taught him.

What's good about being a bilingual journalist?

It provides me with a wide perspective. I am familiar with a broad spectrum [of opinions]. A lot of reading is a must for a journalist. [Reading] widens my base. Because I read materials in both Nepali and English, I gather issues required to be a good journalist. It helps me manage the newsroom well.

It's been a long ride for you. How did it all start?

It had something to do with my family background. My father was a journalist, so the environment was such that I was drawn into journalism. I was interested in writing and that helped as well. So after I graduated, I thought, well, why don't I try it out. When I look back now, I feel as if this is what I was meant to do. I wouldn't know how to do anything else.

How is journalism different now from the time you started out in the early 90s?

Journalism has really prospered in the last 15 or so years. For one thing, the way people look at journalists has changed. Once [journalists] just used to be people who took money to publish news. These days journalists get a lot of respect. After 1990, journalism became professional. Professional journalism started in Nepal after Kantipur. A lot of people in the media in good places are from those days in Kantipur. Just look at the number of broadsheets, both Nepali and English.

What about the journalists who are starting out now? How are they different?

Frankly speaking, they are better prepared than in our time. One, they are better educated, say, for example, in the English language. Then again, journalism is something to be learnt, you get better over time. The challenges now are pretty tough as well. When we started out in the Kathmandu Post, anything we did was new. We were the only ones around. Now there's the pressure of competing with so many others, getting and writing scoops.

Journalists are people who can't stay in one place

So journalists then, at least those in English publications, were at a disadvantage...

Take the example of education. The facilities and resources available now are so much better. Then people only learned the English language later, maybe only after they came out of school. So their command over the language might not have been like that of journalists today.

What about English language publications? How are they faring?

A lot has yet to be done. The language is all right. It is the professional manpower we lack. For example, we have a shortage of good copy editors. We have to use foreign copy editors. The lack of such manpower has something to do with the fact that everybody in journalism wants to become a reporter and grab bylines. They don't realize that there are so many fields within journalism.

You yourself tried your hand at quite a few things. You've been a publisher as well. Tell us about that...

No one should try to become the publisher and editor at the same time. I did that, and I regret it. There are always conflicting points between an editor and a publisher. I was one person trying to put my feet in two boats. Not only was I the chief editor and publisher of Patrika, but I also took care of marketing, revenue collection and the rest. Publishing is just not my field. So the venture folded after a while. I am a journalist, probably for life now, and I wanted to bring out a paper of good quality with Patrika. So if given the chance, yeah, I'd bring out Patrika again, but with someone else's money.

You've worked with quite a few publications. Do you ever think you're the proverbial rolling stone?

I don't look at it that way. Journalists, I think, are people who can't stay in one place. It becomes monotonous after a while. I am a person who wants new challenges. I think journalists should move on. It's hard to do new things and face new challenges staying at the same old place. If I were to become the editor of a Nepali broadsheet, it would not be too big a surprise.

You've worked with media other than print, for example, radio. What about television?

Yeah, I did do radio for a while. I worked on an English news program called "Breakfast Bites" at Radio Sagarmatha. Television, I think, is not my medium. In television, you are too dependent on others, the soundman and the technicians. You've got so many factors to take care of. It's not my cup of tea. **N**

Revolution and Discontent

The decline of a family mirrors the failings of the society around them in Narayan Dhakal's second novel

BY AJIT BARAL

Narayan Dhakal, versatile stalwart of Nepali literature has published eight books in different genres. With "Durvikshya" he has returned to the novel form. His first novel, "Peetsambad," was a disappointment to Dhakal, even though the media was full of praise for the book. At a discussion program on Sunday, October 3, devoted to his new novel, he said that he regretted rushing "Peetsambad" into publication without listening to his friends' suggestions to rework it.

Dhakal has apparently listened to his friends' advice this time around, judging by the credits and thanks he has given to his writer-friends for "providing constructive comments on his manuscript." The resulting book is a complex, non-linear political novel that uses the decline of a family to mirror the failings of society.

"Durvikshya"—the title means the crisis of everything—uses the disintegration of Nandaprasad's family to take a critical stand against the rapid erosion of moral values and political ideologies after the 1990 *Jana Andolan*. Nandaprasad is a teacher at a village school in eastern Nepal. He has a wife, a daughter and two sons. Another teacher of leftist persuasion, Muktinarayan, who has come from Kathmandu to build a leftist organization, influences Nandaprasad's youngest son, Alok. Alok gets involved with Muktinarayan, is caught putting up anti-Panchayat posters in the village and is sent to prison.

The *Pradhanpancha* then forces Nandaprasad to resign from the school, despite his having no part in his son's deeds. Worse, the *Pradhanpancha* and the security forces begin to make advances to his daughter. Nandaprasad fears his fate in the village will be no better than Krishnachandre's, who was found hanging from a tree after publicly confessing his love for a dalit girl. Nandaprasad sells his property cheaply to the *Pradhanpancha*, goes to Kathmandu and winds up living in a slum, joined by Alok who has been released from jail.

Nandaprasad and his wife die. Alok is martyred in the *Jana Andolan*, but his family is denied the compensation the government said it would give to families of martyrs. The elder son becomes jobless and takes to drink. His wife elopes; he dies in drunken stupor. The daughter, Supriya, is forced into prostitution. One day she



Durvikshya

By Narayan Dhakal
Bhundi Puran Prakashan, 2004
Pages: 218
Price: Rs. 100

is arrested on allegations of being a Maoist. When she is freed, she decides to go to the jungle to avenge the death of her lover, the son of a martyr, who was killed by the security forces.

It's a grand sweep of a story, spanning nearly three decades. But it takes some work on the reader's part to grasp it all. Characters tell their own parts of the story, often in flashbacks. There is no single protagonist, no focal character. Nandaprasad's family and Hari, Bothraj and Mukti Narayan—characters chosen to depict the vicissitudes of left politics—are all central to the story without being the center.

The story "Durvikshya" tells was long overdue. Sadly it hasn't been told as well

BOOKWORM

Are you one of those bibliophiles who fantasize about going to jail because in jail you could do nothing but read? That's what Ganga Prasad Chaudhary wanted, and he has turned his library into jail.

Chaudhary hails from Mahottari district and is an overseer by profession. Three years ago he chucked his job to attend to his first love, books. Now you can see him everyday from 8 in the morning to 6 in the evening poring over books in his den in the Nepal Section of the Tribhuvan University Library.

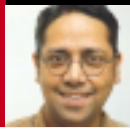
He was a Marxist activist when young and went from village to village, building the party organization. No wonder Chaudhary spouts Marxism glibly and says how prescient Marx was about the trajectory capitalism would take. This, he says, is all the more reason to be a Marxist.

Chaudhary was with the CPM-UML, but became disillusioned with its leadership. When a faction broke away to form the CPN-ML, he followed. He found the ML no different in essence from the UML and presented a 57-point agenda of disagreement before leaving the party for good. He has now come around to the idea that he could better service the country by writing books than through party activism. He has written about 500 pages on philosophy, but the project is on hold while he works on a book on the political economy of Nepal.

When I last met him he was jotting down dates from newspaper articles on the war in Iraq that he had photocopied from The New York Times and Asian Age. This, he said, was preparation for a future book, tentatively titled "An Ugly Face of American Imperialism." **N**

BY AJIT

as it could have been. Characters are inadequately developed. The first person narrators at times tell of events occurring in other places, which they could not know about. There are unnecessary passages, like the ones that tell about the royal massacre and the *Kanta Langa* song. The character Bothraj, a fallen ideologue, keeps chasing women and his sexual escapades seem unnecessarily and unconvincingly drawn-out. Having said that, the book is worth a second read: It is so unstructured and complex that it almost demands one. **N**



Leadership Vacuum

Frustrated at the lack of progress on the peace front, the prime minister last week gave the impression that he was upping the ante against the Maoists. And Maoists or no Maoists, he was going for elections, a mandate given to him by the King when he put him in office in June.

The prime minister's frustrations are understandable. The rebels have come up with a series of confusing statements in recent months, though they have been fairly consistent in their core call for constituent assembly. But people care as much about how they go about it and what they want to do once they get there. Maoistspeak is best evident, for example, in the way they treat the press. On facing an angry press corps after the killing of Dekendra Thapa, Radio Nepal's Dailekh reporter, the Maoist central leadership said last month that Thapa's death was a mistake. It then directed its cadres to keep their hands off the press. Last week, journalists in Parbat and Baglung received threats from a local rebel leader, Chhetra Bahadur Regmi, for reporting on abductions carried out by the rebels.



Given their extreme intolerance for dissent, it's not too difficult to tell that the Maoists will tolerate press freedom only as long as it suits them.

Neither is it too difficult to tell that they will go far to disrupt elections. No one knows that better than Deuba himself. The last time he tried to hold one—slated for November 2002—he had to go knocking on the Palace's door to say that the poor security situation just wouldn't allow free and fair elections. He was, of course, dismissed for "incompetence" for speaking the truth. The wheel has turned a full circle. Deuba has been restored as prime minister. Two years since his fateful dismissal on October 4, he faces yet another defining moment of his tumultuous political career. Indeed, it's a defining moment for the nation as a whole.

Deuba insists that he has learned his lesson. He told us as much on the day he was appointed, June 2: His first priority as prime minister would be to hold elections come what may. He was deeply remorseful of his call to postpone elections in 2002; he called it a "mistake." His argument: If India could hold elections in Kashmir despite the attendant violence, why can't Nepal? First, said the prime minister, he would go far to make peace with the Maoists.

Four months on, we would like to ask Prime Minister Deuba: Have you gone far enough? We would also ask the same question of the Maoist leadership that Deuba is trying to make peace with and of the Palace that appointed Deuba. In our June 13 editorial that followed Deuba's appointment, we noted that the long delay in appointing the new government was not just due to the deep distrust among the parties agitating against the October 4 move. It was also due to the Palace's realization that the Maoists were less likely to buy a ceasefire that had no backing from political parties.

Deuba's past two tenures stand witness against any claims that he has been an ideological prime minister. His biggest political asset has been his ability to work alongside disparate political forces. That, however, should not mean that he need not have any ideological underpinnings as a leader to steer a troubled democracy. Indeed, more than anytime before, any person who now harbors leadership ambitions must tell the Nepali people he hopes to rule by what he stands for, and then see if the people like what they hear. Without strong public opinion behind it, no government, no military might, can tame the Maoists.

Akhilesh Upadhyay, Editor



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