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#212

3 - 9 September 2004

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Police try to protect the mosques near Ghanta Ghar at 10:00 am on Wednesday. Ransacked religious books litter the street.

KIRAN PANDAY

1/11

Was this spontaneous combustion or planned conflagration?

See p8

Times nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll # 152

Q. Should the government announce a unilateral ceasefire ?

Yes 16.64%
No 81.03%
Don't know 2.05%

Total votes: 790

Weekly Internet Poll # 153. To vote go to: www.nepalimes.com

Q. Was Girija Prasad Koirala justified in calling for a Valley shutdown on Sunday?

NOTICE

Due to logistical dislocations caused by the curfews on 2-3 September, this issue of Nepali Times contains only eight pages. Inconvenience caused to readers is regretted. Our regular columns and content will be included in a special edition next week.

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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

OPPOSITE REACTION

When the lives of 12 young Nepalis in search of survival were brutally ended by Iraqi terrorists in rage against the United States, the response in Kathmandu should have been grief and introspection. Also, a search for ways to make Nepal a better place for its citizens, one in which desperation would not lead our youths to seek livelihoods in far-off places of war. Instead, on Wednesday our country descended into a state of uncontrolled violence as the monster of communalism for the first time stormed Kathmandu Valley and towns elsewhere. The abject absence of governmental authority served to compound the extreme confusion and chaos.



The violence against manpower agencies was widely covered by the media. Indeed, the destruction of property and the records of more than a hundred such agencies must in the end affect tens of thousand of Nepalis working overseas as well as those aspirants still in queue for visas. The absence of fire services, the pitiful condition of policemen without support from officers-on-duty, the vandalism carried out while the army looked on—all pointed to an absolute vacuum of political governance.

Nepal has become anarchic, ungoverned and ungovernable. Our sisters and brothers in the villages doubtless have known this fact for some time, but it took Wednesday's numbing events to confirm to city dwellers that chronic political skulduggery and the Maoist insurgency has today left us a shell of a government. It's all hollow inside.

Idealism vs realism

How do we find a way out of this zero-sum power game?

Nepal's conflict is a manifestation of competing ideologies, a particular form of which is inherent to nations in transition. In addition, the theoretical complexities of our internal conflict have their own distinctive dimensions.

Nepal's conflict can be

GUEST COLUMN
Dipta Shah



viewed as an offshoot of the inflexibility of extremist ideologies. The extremism of the Maoists coupled with the intransigence of the successive governments in Kathmandu, have served as perfect catalysts for protracted conflict. The result has been a direct challenge against the state's unyielding attitude and its monopoly over the use of legitimate force.

On another plane, Nepal's conflict is a clash of communism and pseudo-capitalism. The latter is clearly disadvantaged in terms of its duration and cronyism, while the extreme left is what has emerged from an evolutionary selection of the survival of the most-militant.

Ironically, the introduction of democracy in Nepal (or rather

the manner in which democracy has been abused) has minimally facilitated the emergence of a capitalist power-base - the urban middle class. At the same time it has strongly favored the radicalisation of a marginalised populace.

Another element in the conflict dynamics is the clash between American and European ideologies. Divergent views have emerged between these trans-Atlantic allies with the conclusion of the Cold War, the emergence of a single superpower and the formation of an attempted counter-balancing force, the European Union. The divergence is manifested in the fallout over Iraq and vis-à-vis policies directed towards developing nations.

The Europeans, having acknowledged that matching the American military might as impossible, have resorted to an ultra-idealist philosophy that dictates a strict interpretation of international law, a means with which to contain the perceived American hegemony. Washington continues its policy of pre-emption backed by unmatched military and economic might as a means to project its interest abroad.

This clash of ideologies and pragmatism is evident in the

policy prescriptions that the respective sides have put forth to the Nepal government on issues pertaining to the Maoist insurgency. The Europeans (with the exception of the United Kingdom), seemed till recently to advocate an immediate declaration of a unilateral ceasefire and the resumption of talks. The Americans (along with the Indians and the British), on the other hand, have advised a more cautious approach that recognises a military solution to the problem as unrealistic but focuses on persuading the Maoists to lay down their arms, agree to unconditional negotiations and ultimately enter mainstream politics.

Although the end-goal is the same, the prescribed processes by which to attain it are not. Interestingly, the Maoists have singled out the Americans for attack even though it is not the biggest supplier of military hardware to the army.

In this sense, Nepal's conflict is a classic competition between realism and idealism. The only twist is that both warring sides are firmly embedded in a zero-sum power game (and thus the tradition of realism), whereas the injection of idealism is mostly external

LETTERS

BARBAROUS

It is with much sadness and anger that I write expressing the outrage at the brutal killings of the 12 Nepalis in Iraq. Another war, the War on Iraq has hit close to home now on top of the existing People's War that has already been simmering in our land. Who is to blame is the question and will linger on for time to come... greedy Nepali manpower agencies, the two-faced Jordanian man power agency or the ill-fated men themselves with no knowledge of their own.

I attach blame at our leaders—Deuba, Girija, Nepal, Rana, Tripathi, Biju, Sherchan, Ananda Devi et al, the Maoists—Pushpa Dahal, Babu Ram, Ram Bahadur, the Nepali army generals and the king for making thousands of

Nepalis flee their country in search of a better life due to the political instability in Nepal. You all, not the Army of Ansar al-Sunna in Iraq were responsible. You sent them to the gallows, they just hung them. By creating a hostile civil war environment at home with no economic opportunities, you have forced your own citizens to bidshinu as Bahadurs, Kanchas without even any possibility of last rites.

Perhaps the greatest responsibility lies with me and every Nepali for not coming out to the streets to voice, scream, yell, howl, protest that enough is enough and forcing the three players in the political drama, the politicians, the Maoists and the palace to reconcile their agendas to restore peace and stability in our country.

Let's not pass the buck. Let's face it, we as citizens of this country have not demanded change. The blood of 12 Nepali brothers/sons/husbands/friends/neighbors and many other who have died mercilessly in our own backyard lie in our hands.

SN Singh, Kathmandu

● Ever thought of the value of one's life? In these difficult times in Nepal, it is not of the more emotional value, of support, love, and family bonds. All the sentimentalities have been removed by hard-core economics of value. They beg, borrow, and sell everything they own, except for the shirt on their backs. The destination doesn't matter to them...only the fortunate news that they are going abroad, away from the social exclusions in Nepal, away from the low paying jobs, away from the increasing conflict and being caught between two warring sides, to send money home for a better life for their families. They are prepared to face hardships, discrimination, harassment, leave their familiar surroundings and live in a foreign land, not speak or understand the foreign language with the only ray of hope being the cash they earn and send back to families left behind. What was the value of killing the 12 Nepali migrants to the terrorists. Nepal doesn't have security interests there, no suave diplomats, or quick thinking bureaucrats that seems to hold the key for release of hostages. The international media didn't care either. Who would have thought that the 12 Nepalis that had left to escape such inequalities that are

offered in life here would face inequality in death too

Charu Bist, email

● The shock for the barbarous killing of our countrymen in Iraq has left the nation stunned. Yet one cannot but remember all the times, in the past years, we have seen similar photos: of the lifeless bodies of our brothers and sisters in pools of blood, sometimes dressed in blue, sometimes in camouflage, sometimes dressed in poor rags. Ten thousand of them. Why protest the killing in Iraq, but allow the killing to go on at home? Is the anguish of those who are about to be killed in Nepal different to that of those who die abroad? Is the sorrow of the bereaved families inferior?

SK Aryal

● We Nepalis are known to be a tolerant lot and are often misinterpreted as 'simple' people. I dare say, this could have been the reason for such barbarity against the 12 killed by terrorists in Iraq. We have also always been aware that we belong to a land where there is no law and order. Every authority is immersed in their own world of importance rather than that of the people's. The end result being that people feel alienated and disconnected with the world. Wednesday's riots were unfortunate but understandable. How long can we tolerate the sins and negligence of the authorities? I'd say everything has a silver lining, the secret that was known only to our citizens is now known to a world. That we live in a land where the government or the law is incapable

of looking after the interests of the people. Shame on us, and those responsible. Let us wake up and raise our voices by feeling as one. We Nepalis are not weak and poor. We have power in our youth and we should nurture it. Let's shed our self interest and work as a force for a better Nepal.

Neeta Pradhan, email

● The Gulf has become the new Lahur for many desperate Nepalis, and Iraq is just the latest war zone that Nepalis are risking their lives to work in ('Open secret, #211). In his interview, Raghuj Pant says there are 450,000 registered Nepalis in the gulf, the actual number is probably much higher. The Iraq kidnapping is just the tip of the iceberg: Nepalis all across the region are exploited, they face abuse, especially if they are women domestics, there are no migrant worker's rights and the Nepali diplomatic missions in the region couldn't be bothered. Because of the lack of opportunities back home and the desperation created by the conflict, many Nepalis find the risks worth taking. The least the government can do is to take care of those who are in trouble, ensure that there is no exploitation by local and foreign recruitment agencies. The workers send back \$1 billion a year, and the government seems relieved that it doesn't have to find them jobs at home. When is all this going to change so that Nepalis can find worthwhile jobs at home so they can work in dignity?

There is no point for the government to pass the buck and blame the manpower agencies, ultimately it bears responsibility.

Naresh Rai, Hong Kong

THE TRUTH

I am not surprised that some of our readers find the picture in 10,000+ (#209) appalling. Because they don't want to know the truth. These are the very people who sit in the comfort of their home and talk about idealism. I, for one, thank Nepali Times for showing the result of war in such a graphic manner. That is what goes on in a war, and we must be informed about it. Does the picture remind us what's going on in Nepal? Yes. Does the picture remind us how wrong is war? Yes. Does the picture shake us from the bottom of our heart? Yes. Did Nepali Times do justice to the murdered mother and her child? Yes. Because her story was told and we do not want stories like that to occur anymore. Let's stop all wars.

Raja Shrestha, email

● I wanted to express my disappointment in the Nepali Times for what I believe was a distasteful and egregious error. I am referring to your very graphic and horrendous picture of a mother who brutally killed with her baby sitting next to her. Being from America, a country that seems to have seared its moral conscience and has a general disrespect for human life overall...I have come to expect to see such things here, despite my dislike for it. However, after being in Nepal for a few months, I thought I had been blessed with visiting and seeing country with much higher moral standards than mine. I have nothing but wish to return. Please don't tell me that the Nepali media has lowered its standards to match the debasement of America's? Please don't stoop to such

(although a vocal civil society has also emerged that champions essential, idealistic notions). The Maoists' capitalisation on idealistic values to propagate their notion of power-politics has proved to be a potent formula, one which has simultaneously extracted sympathy from, and instilled terror in the masses.

There has, however, been a misleading association of idealism strictly with Europeans and realism strictly with the United States. The fact that Amnesty International is based in London does not dictate that all of Europe unconditionally supports the idealistic notions used by the Maoists for their realist end-game. Nor does a Republican presidency in the Oval Office today guarantee another one in three months' time.

In a largely aid-dependent economy, the segregation of external competing ideologies has embedded itself in domestic politics. There are those whose convictions are compatible with the Americans and those who find common cause with the Europeans. The task is to find a set of goals and objectives that are in tune to both, a solution that is surely easier to put on paper, than to implement.

The difficult task of picking the best of all worlds is Nepal's responsibility alone. The challenge is to find a set of customised and balanced policies, that attain the stated end-goals without alienating any of our well-wishers. ●

This process of dehumanisation seems to have acquired a new dimension in the Fertile Crescent, the cradle of human civilisation. Whether it is the treatment of Iraqi prisoners by the forces of occupation or the brutality of insurgents in retaliation, events in Mesopotamia are barbaric by any historical yardstick. As long as victims were strangers, few of us cared about happenings in faraway Iraq. Our isolation ended on Tuesday evening.

STATE OF THE STATE
CK Lal



The gruesome images of 12 Nepalis murdered by a terrorist group made us all victims of the clash of civilisations. The Empire once again extracted its tribute as innocent Nepalis died in the line of duty while on their way to earn a living while protecting vital Western interests. No demands were made, neither was there a deadline for negotiating the release of the Nepalis by their terrorist captors. However, the havoc it unleashed back home was all of our own making.

In a naked display of impotent rage, mobs went about town on Wednesday pelting stones at the houses and shops of Muslim community and setting the offices of several manpower agencies afire. It was a disturbing repetition of the Rhitik Roshan episode: a collective display of mass

Shock and shame

Thursday was not just a day of national mourning, but one for national repentance as well

stupidity. Thursday should have been declared not just a day of mourning, but a day of repentance as well.

A well-coordinated and planned attack on almost all manpower agencies has put the future of labour export (with an annual Rs 125 billion in remittances) in serious jeopardy. By making a mosque the target of mob fury, our own fundos have succeeded in alienating all future Muslim employers in West Asia and Malaysia in one stroke. Vandalising of the Qatar Airways and Gulf Air offices has made things worse for the million Nepalis already working in Muslim countries.

The action of the vandals on Wednesday partly succeeded in shattering Nepal's communal harmony that had survived eight years of conflict. The grievous injury upon the kingdom's body politic due to this new polarisation of Hindu and Muslim communities will be difficult to cure. Religious tolerance has become a major casualty of the September One riots. Nepali Muslims and Christians have as much claim on this country as the Hindus do. If we don't hang together at least in times of crisis, we shall

be hanged separately.

The economic impact of mob fury this week could be even more devastating than the Maoist blockade last month. Planned and concerted physical attack on media houses like Kantipur and the Spacetime Network were reprehensible. The fact that security forces failed in their duty to protect these media houses despite repeated requests make the assaults look even more ominous.

Black Wednesday wasn't spontaneous. Despite the shock of grief the previous evening, everything was calm and quiet early in the morning. Suddenly, small groups of people began to appear in the streets. Most could easily be identified with local fundamentalist Hindu groups who seek to legitimise themselves by opposing 'corrupt' leaders and calling for 'appropriate action' directly from the king to set the country right. These rightwing activists vandalised former minister Chiranjibi Wagle's house and set the protest tent of the Nepali Congress at Ratna Park on fire. It was then that they proceeded to attack the mosque near Ghanta



FOUND STREWN IN THE ASHES AFTER WEDNESDAY'S RIOTS: A SCORCHED PAGE OF A HOLY BOOK, AND (OVERLEAF) THE BIO DATA OF A NEPALI WORKER GOING TO THE GULF.

Ghar. After that, anarchy reigned supreme until the curfew at 2:00pm.

The main lesson of the shameful riots this week is that we failed to learn our lesson from previous ones. Quick reaction, keeping the public fully informed, proactive and preemptive measures that anticipate the scope and extent of public anger are still missing. ●

levels, keep Nepal a notch above the rest.

Carisa Danch, US

TY BABY

Girija Prasad Koirala was turned away from the airport. How does he respond? He incites his foot soldiers to call for yet another banda—affecting general life and business in the Valley. This was just what Nepal needed: another banda and another blow to the already weakened economy. Being turned away from the airport is an every-day plight of many Nepalis, and if those of us started rioting and calling for banda every time we are turned away from the airport, what would this country come to? Why is this man still running amok after having

squandered the chance to do good for the country, not once or twice but four times when he was the prime minister? Why isn't anyone telling this egomaniac to own up to all those ills that happened under his watch? And what about the Grand Design he kept promising to unravel for us? The fact is he blew it when he had numerous chances. As undemocratic as he is in running the affairs in his own party, he sounds comical and pathetic trying to act statesmanlike and be the Guardian Angel of our shaky democracy. He has been waffling on every contentious issue, and no one now knows what he or the party he leads stands for. Girija, please give us a break, stop acting like a cry baby and go away.

M Pandey, via email

● Those of us who had hoped that the political party leadership has learnt its lesson and had changed its conduct were aghast to see the Nepali Congress forcing a shutdown on this people to get back at its rival in the government using the flimsy excuse that Girija Babu was mistreated at the airport. As far as I am concerned, the security official who stopped you deserves a medal for following orders and acting responsibly which is more than can be said for you. With Girija Koirala around, why do we need the Maoists?

Gopal KC, Kumaripati

CORRECTION

Ashutosh Tiwari's byline box icon was inadvertently dropped in his column 'A business alliance for peace' (Strictly Business, #210).



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CHRONOLOGY OF ANGER (clockwise from top, left):
 Before midnight trouble was already brewing as demonstrators made a bonfire of tyres in front of the mosque
 By Wednesday morning crowds cheered as a demonstrator climbed the mosque to tear down a signboard
 A recruitment agency in Pulchok next to the Egyptian Embassy is ransacked
 Throwing stones at the mosque and setting fire to the furniture and books from the mosque
 Demonstrators looting an office building in Tripureswor on Wednesday at noon
 Tyre pyres in Maitighar just before the curfew was announced
 Midnight demo outside the mosque on Tuesday

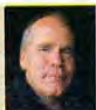
ALL PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

Too late

Victory in the war on terror won't help this weeks' victims

What a horrible, horrible week it has been. The Nepali hostages, brutally murdered by men who claim to be religious. They are not. They are evil. In Israel, another suicide bombing that took innocent lives. Russians killed in the dozens, in plane crashes and bomb explosions by so-called separatists.

HERE AND THERE
 Daniel Lak



In America, President Bush

told the truth. He said, in response to a question from a television interviewer, that the war on terror can't be won, in the sense that the enemy can never be completely defeated. But, Bush went on, we can make it tough for terrorists and those who support them, take away their sanctuary and funding and so on. This was a brave and sensible comment, long overdue. From just after September 11th, we kept hearing that America was going to "smoke 'em out" and "bring 'em back dead or alive". The war against the evil men—and occasionally, as in the attacks in Russia over the past seven days, women—who take innocent lives was

going to be won, US officials declared time and again. That's why the bombs rained from the sky on Afghanistan, 'bombing rubble into rubble', according to Britain's Daily Mirror. That's why the civil rights of Americans were curbed and thousands of Muslims rounded up on US soil. That's why Guantanamo Bay was made a prison for hundreds of farmers, young boys, misguided zealots and occasional evil men. Because the 'war on terror' was going to be won.

And now in a single week, we have evidence that the war is not being won—those tragic deaths in Iraq, Israel, Russia—and a candid admission from the warrior in chief that it can't be. Think about it. Your enemy is amorphous, there is no array of soldiers or battle tanks to bomb, very little communications to intercept, no great arsenals of weapons to take out.

Instead, you must make war on an idea and on shadowy forces that obey no rules, respect no Geneva conventions or laws of war. You must outfox your enemy, win hearts and minds in his backyard, send your spies into his secretive, vengeful organisation and make

friendships that outflank him. It is a war of the intellect. And President Bush's words seem to suggest that he is getting the point. Only for a day though, as the pressure of politics put paid to good sense. His rivals in the Democratic party leapt all over him. His opponents—if they were elected—would win the war. But the president was giving up, or so they said. That was all it took to derail candour and good sense. Bush had made his most intelligent observation about terrorism so far, that you can't beat it, but you must fight it creatively, subtly and untiringly. But his latest speeches, including at the Republican convention, were all about winning the war on terror. "In this different kind of war, we may never sit down at a peace table" he said in Iowa. "But make no mistake about it, we are winning and we will win."

Well, maybe. Who can say for sure? But not in time for those Nepalis who died horrific deaths in Iraq or the latest Israeli victims of Palestinian suicide bombs, or the Russians, or whomever is the latest to come into the evil cross hairs of terrorism. If we're going to win it Mr President, then can we hurry things up? ●

The killers

The reported killers of 12 Nepalis in Iraq, Ansar al-Sunna is an outgrowth of Ansar al-Islam (meaning, Defenders of Islam), a group said to be having ties to Iran and links with the al-Qaeda. It officially declared its existence in a September 20, 2003 internet statement. It introduces itself as a pan-Islamic movement. Although Ansar al-Sunna erupted onto the world stage with the Erbil suicide bombings, the group claims to have carried out a string of attacks since October 2003. Through its propaganda video it released in February, it claimed that it had made 285 attacks, killing 1,155 people and destroying dozens of tanks and armoured vehicles.





1 September, 2004

The day the national shock at the hostage murders in Iraq turned into anger and then mayhem

Here is a chronology of the Nepali hostage crisis in Iraq. Terrorists from the shadowy Ansa al-Sunnah group never made any demands, never gave a timetable for negotiations. The visuals of the brutal slayings that became public on Tuesday were as sudden as they were shocking.

19 August: The Ansa al-Sunna website says 12 Nepalis have been taken hostage in Iraq, Nepali media picks it up

20 August: The says it has video footage of the hostages, who pleaded for their lives and blamed an agent, Pralhad Giri of Moonlight Consultants, for their plight. All Nepali television channels air the footage

23 August: The government makes an appeal through the Al Jazeera television for the release of the hostages. Nepali diplomats in Riyadh and Doha say they are unable to establish contact with the kidnapers, nor ascertain what their demands are

26 August: The government writes to the Iraqi government requesting it play a role in releasing the hostages

31 August, 3 PM: International news agencies quote a website announcement that the 12 hostages have been killed, news spreads quickly through the Nepali media.

6 PM: Most television channels show what are said to be the dead bodies of the 12 Nepali workers.

6.30 PM: Ambassador Shyamananda Suman in Qatar says it is true. The government confirms the incident.

8 PM: A group of 20 protestors turn up on the street at Maitidevi and move on to other areas, pulling down and tearing off signs of labour recruitment agencies. At Ghanta Ghar, they pelt stones at a mosque and continue back to Kupondole. By then the number of protestors is more than 150 and they start searching for the office of Moonlight Consultants. Some mistake a private house for the office and start hurling stones. After midnight, protestors disperse.

1 September, 6 AM: Protestors appear in several clusters at intersections in Kathmandu and Patan burning tyres and obstructing vehicles. Some fan out looking for offices of recruitment agencies. Those

located at central areas like Putali Sadak, Bag Bajar and Baneshwor are the first to be ransacked.

7.30 AM: some 100 protestors reach Ghantaghar chanting slogans against 'Islamic terrorists'. There they pelt stones at the mosque, some enter the premises, and even climb to the roof. The mosque is damaged. Police appear on the scene and take control of the situation.

After 8AM: Protestors intensify their search for labour recruiters, take out all furniture and papers and set them on fire on the street.

9 AM: Police Headquarters says security agencies have been mobilised to bring the situation under control.

11AM: A group of protestors enter the Kantipur Publications, manhandle employees, pelt stones and go on a rampage for two hours. Police are nowhere to be seen. A dozen vehicles are set on fire.

12 Noon: The government announces a curfew within the Ring Road areas of Kathmandu and Patan from 2:00 pm.


1 PM: Protestors advance towards the Egyptian Embassy at Pulchok. Security personnel try to stop them and finally open fire. One protestor is killed and three injured.

1.30 PM: Protestors and security personnel clash near Ratna Park. One person is seriously injured and is rushed to the hospital, where he dies. At least one dozen other protestors are injured.

1.30 PM: Demonstrators ransack, loot and set fire to the Kathmandu office of Qatar Airways. The airline suspends its twice daily flights to Kathmandu. Other Middle East airline offices are vandalised in Hatisar.

1.45 PM: Spacetime Network is attacked. The news studio of Channel Nepal is destroyed and the company closes broadcasts. Officials charge the government with not providing security despite repeated requests.

2PM: The situation cools down as the curfew goes into effect.



ELD News
September 2004

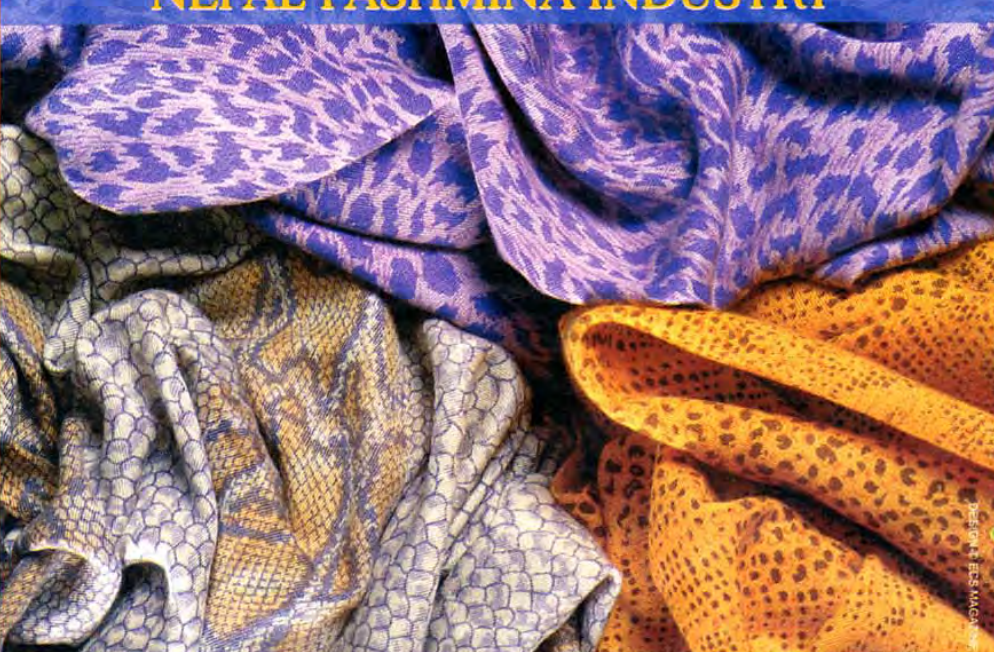
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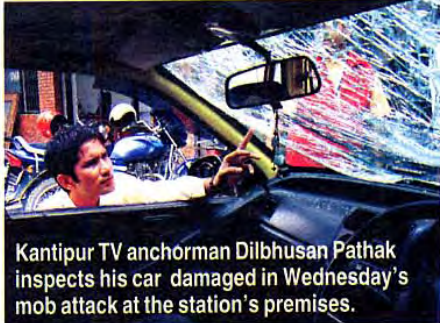
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Eyewitness account

Editor Narayan Wagle in *Kantipur*, 2 September

कान्तिपुर

It all started when a group of people came to the office seeking help to store the passports which they had found during the attacks on the manpower agencies. They said Kantipur was safer than the police station. We immediately offered our help. The crowd started to grow as they entered the premises one by one to offer passports they had found. In the middle of all this, someone shouted that there was a manpower agent in the crowd. The man was beaten mercilessly by the crowd, and when Kantipur tried to intervene, they started attacking the media house after they were provoked by a group of people whose only intention was to destroy Kantipur.



Kantipur TV anchorman Dilbhusan Pathak inspects his car damaged in Wednesday's mob attack at the station's premises.

I was hit by a brick and despite my injured state, climbed over the fence behind the office canteen to reach the ward police office. One policeman had seen everything and was just standing on the office roof with folded arms, while his colleague was watching the attack without much interest in doing anything. The

police were just watching the events right under their noses. It was clear that they had received orders from superiors not to get involved.

I tried in vain to get help from them to stop the attack. Some showed restraint and there were many young ones who were trying to calm things down but they were constantly being provoked by a small group of hired men. I went to the Kathmandu Post editor's house, and from there we contacted almost everyone in the security force for two hours and eventually gave up. Our only hope now was the curfew, which also took several hours and came too late.

For the first time, we felt that we were not able to defend ourselves in the media house that had been fearlessly reporting all the injustices around the country. We watched helplessly as the mob smashed office windows, vandalised vehicles and were on their way to Kantipur Television where the anchor was saying live that the station may have to stop broadcasting at any time.

Kantipur staff were forced to fight against the mob to defend their office before the army finally came to our rescue. We still have no answer from the government as to why they did not immediately mobilise the police force. No government in this country's history has ever been as indifferent as this one.



Paper: fugitive Wagle
Toilet paper: The Law

हिमाल Himal Khabarpatrika, 1-15 September

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



We wish that the political parties, civil society and intellectuals help efforts to restore peace in the country and not let the (killing of Nepali hostages in Iraq) weaken Nepal's traditional achievements in maintaining communal harmony, tolerance and unity. - King Gyanendra quoted in Annapurna Post

Impunity

Sushil Pyakurel of the National Human Rights Commission in *Sanghu*, 30 August

साँघु

The Maoist leadership must take responsibility for all contradictions in their party. Clearly, Prachanda should be answerable for all this. That is how the National Human Rights Commission sees things. The rebels' position is not like that of

the state. With the ship of state, the captain is in charge of operations and is held responsible for consequences. If a judiciary agency is set up to investigate, it can point fingers at a particular commander in any given operation. But this is not possible with the Maoists because they keep no records. That is why the Maoist leadership should be responsible for all that has been happening in the course of their operations. This is something Prachanda must be clear about.

There is no limitation of militarisation in the Maoist fold. What proves that is the authority to terminate class enemies that the Maoist leadership has given to its rank and file as low as district committees and those even below them. As a result, you get to see uncontrolled killings and terrorism. Is it not something the Maoist leadership should think about? By authorising their cadres to kill people, the Maoists have committed their most grievous mistake. For the Maoists, killing people is simple: just blame someone of being an informant. Without any proof, they have blamed the families of police and army personnel and have killed them.

The situation is similar in the army. They kill civilians and say it was an encounter with the rebels. There have been so many cases that the people have begun to understand what the euphemism 'encounter' really means. When it says the army recovered miscellaneous materials from the dead, people have begun to sense that it was unarmed people who were killed. Similarly, when it is said that someone was killed by the army when the person was trying to use socket bomb against them or that he tried to escape, people know what actually happened.

Had both the state and the rebels behaved responsibly,

there would not have been so many cases of rape in Sunsari and Morang districts. Obviously it is happening because there is no security in those places. The police do not go to those villages because they are afraid that they may get killed by the rebels. At the same time, the Maoists have been claiming that 70 percent of the country's area is under their control. If they mean what they say, should they not be responsible for the criminal acts in territory in their control? Either they should be able to take action against the rapists or they should stop saying that those areas are under their control.

But, the state must behave more responsibly than the rebels. It cannot afford to say that it is unable to be responsible. It should be able to hold talks with the rebels at the earliest and make necessary sacrifices for the security of the citizens.

Media attack

Front page editorial in *Kantipur*, 2 September

कान्तिपुर

The attack by an identified mob on Kantipur Publications and Kantipur Television during such a time is a dangerous message for the whole nation. This was a premeditated assault on an independent media house by a group that joined angry crowds protesting the brutal killing of Nepalis by the terrorist group in Iraq. Never had Kantipur faced such a fearsome attack through its 12 years of public service in the country. A mystery remains as to why the government failed to provide protection despite constant appeals to top government and security officials. The journalists and the rest of the Kantipur staff had to face the assault for over two hours when the state failed to provide security. No media house in any part of the world has had to face such a fearsome mob attack all alone with absolutely no state protection.

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Enter the monster

Nepal is now a land where communal hatred has reared its ugly head

If we had a government, the outpouring of grief and rage on the streets of Kathmandu on Wednesday would have been controlled. Historians will tell us whether the paralysis had links to impasse within the cabinet of Sher Bahadur Deuba or a tussle between the prime minister and the royal palace.

OPINION
Kanak Mani Dixit



Starting from the highest positions in the land, the power play of actors large and small has won the country a place in the hall of international infamy. Not only are we one of the poorest countries in the world which sends its proud young men to do the dirtiest jobs that the world has to offer, not only do innocents die here at the hands of brutal insurgents and badly-trained security forces, but this is now a land where communal hatred is suddenly a widely perceived reality.

Religious bigotry actively implemented has entered the national scene. In the absence of government and with civil society converted into a site of programmed reactions and a medium for organising workshops on conflict resolution, there was no one at the watchtower to forecast the doomsday scenario on Tuesday night when rage first began its mutation into violence.

It is probable that some of this wrath would have been diverted into peaceful demonstrations had rallies and prayers been organised immediately in order to mourn the deaths in Iraq, or if those who purport to command our collective conscience had earlier made vociferous calls for the government to be (and to be seen to be) more proactive in efforts to release the Twelve. In the absence of the most natural reactions of sensible society the streets were left in the command of hoodlums and goondas.

The mayhem born of Nepali political confusion has led straight to the release of the communal demon. The killings of the hostages by ungodly and brutal militants in Iraq resulted

in attacks on Nepali Muslims' places of worship, as well as on storefronts, shutters, airline offices, shacks and shanties—on anything bearing a signboard that implied ownership by someone of the Islamic faith.

Amidst the ethnic, dalit and tarai-based assertion that has gained strong voice since the advent of democracy in 1990, the Nepali Muslims—as possibly the most downtrodden community of all—have kept a low profile in keeping with their sense of vulnerability. It did not matter that Muslims make up more than four percent of Nepal's population. Nevertheless, Nepal's Muslims felt a sense of security within

Nepal. Despite the open border with India, communal violence had remained isolated on the other side.

The social education of our society has lagged behind in our rush to modernity, and today's hoodlums have perhaps never been sensitised to the fact that their country's Muslims are Nepalis from the hills and plains. The very people vandalising Muslim property in the name of predatory nationalism do not realise that religious harmony as well as our immense demographic diversity have long been part of Nepal's national treasure.

One can imagine that had there been certainty in

government and not the bewildering political confusion of today, the mayhem would never have erupted. In such times, the Central District Officer would have had the police act, the fire trucks would have arrived on the scenes of crime, and the army would not only have been called out but would have moved in to control the mob.

Instead, Muslim places of worship and airlines of Arab countries within a stone's throw of the royal palace main gate were attacked. Kathmandu's two mosques, barely a kilometer away, were vandalised in full view of everyone including a handful

of riot police. Mid-morning, soldiers stationed at King Mahendra's statue were evidently not instructed to protect the mosques down the street.

In addition to a communal disaster that is a humanitarian outrage and a stab at the very heart of Nepal's national self-worth, there exists the practical matter of how the attacks here on Muslim establishments are going to affect the fortunes of Nepalis overseas. Over the last decade, Nepal has been an attractive source country for menial manpower, and at present there are up to 700,000 of our citizens in the Gulf countries and another 150,000 in Malaysia.

How will the largely Muslim populations of these host countries react to what has happened in Nepal? Certainly the personal insecurity and economic vulnerability of Nepalis will increase. At a time when the Nepali economy is being propped up by massive cumulative remittances of ill-paid, hapless Nepali labourers toiling in the sands of Arabia and the sweatshops of Kuala Lumpur, will the actions of a misguided few hundred in Kathmandu and the blind certitude of those who would govern us destroy the precarious existence of our own abroad? What will happen when the jobs begin to dry up overseas, and the economic and demographic safety valve of migrant labour begins to close? Where will we have left to turn?

It is time to begin to wake up. The recruitment agencies exist because of pressures felt by Nepalis at home, and that they contribute significantly to the economy in these unstable economic times. But above all, let us put a balm on the lacerated consciousness of Nepali Muslims. Let us stop the monster of communalism in its tracks. Let us have a government, we deserve one. And let us have more democracy rather than less, for in the responsiveness of those in authority lies the humane approach to governance that we need more than ever before. ●



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COMMENTARY by KUNDA DIXIT

All that the terrorists of the Ansar al-Sunna group managed to do with the monstrously cold-blooded murders of 12 innocent Nepalis was earn themselves the curse of civilised people everywhere.

No injustice, no wrong can justify barbarism of this kind. And it is even more abhorrent when it is carried out against poor people who just wanted to earn a living, who had overcome tremendous odds to be able to go abroad in search of work. Such is the desperation of Nepalis today that they are willing to go to Iraq knowing full well what could await them there.

If the terrorists thought they hit back at the Americans for occupying their country by killing Nepalis, they are tragically mistaken. The international media was more obsessed by two French journalists held hostage by another group. It is hard to imagine a motive for such wanton cruelty other than to say it was perpetrated by psychopaths who crave violence for violence's sake.

Back in Nepal, anger started to boil over on Tuesday night itself. By morning, there were full-blown riots in Kathmandu and other tarai towns. Some of the rioting could have been spontaneous, but there couldn't have been simultaneous arson attacks with similar modus operandi all across the Valley without someone directing it. Besides the 110 or so recruitment companies, the targets were Nepali Muslims in the capital and tarai towns in the first serious outbreak of communal

Black Wednesday

violence in this country. In venting our rage, the riots ended up damaging the very sector that props up the national economy and provides jobs for hundreds of thousands of fellow Nepalis.

We did it again. Instead of expressing our anger at murderers in a desert faraway we chose to hurt fellow Nepalis. The culprits were in Iraq, but we punished Nepalis in Nepal. This is not the first time we have done this. The Hrithik Roshan riots of 2000, which made us the laughing stock of the world, spring to mind. The targets this time were Muslim places of worship, shops run by Nepali Muslims and organised attacks on media premises and on journalists covering the riots.

Terrorism has no religion. By unleashing anger against a minority at home, we have shown ourselves capable of the same irrationality that made the Nepalis in Iraq victims. Who was hurt by the destruction of the records at the recruitment agencies? The contract workers they sent abroad. Who benefited? The crooked middlemen who want to hide records of the money they have gouged from poor Nepalis.

All this has happened amidst a virulent Maoist insurgency. The rebels have just

blockaded the Valley, forcing major businesses to close, shutting down schools in large parts of the country and killing and threatening journalists. The Maoist aim is economic dislocation and to create chaos, which is why they have gone for the main revenue-earning sectors of the economy. The businesses that have been closed for the past three weeks include one of each segment: tourism, transportation, carpet, garment, manufacturing. There was one sector still intact, the one propping up the economy: Nepali migrant workers.

Last year, the estimated 1 million overseas Nepalis sent home \$1 billion. With the riots of 1/11, Nepal just lost this safety valve. Some of the anger against the recruitment agencies may have been spontaneous, but it looked too synchronised and coordinated to be random. The destruction of recruitment offices with their computers and records will have far-reaching consequences for the labour export sector. Besides the revenue loss, there is also the heightened frustration of young Nepalis who now have nowhere to go.

When the situation becomes less volatile there will have to be a post-mortem of the

entire crisis: from the government's miscalculation of the seriousness of the situation when news first came that the hostages were taken, the fact that the hostage takers never articulated their actual demands for their release, the government's unpreparedness for the backlash against the killings even though trouble was already brewing on Tuesday night and the appalling absence of state security on the streets while the vandals went on the rampage. On Wednesday, it took two hours for the first patrol to reach the Kantipur group after mobs ran amok in its premises. There is a lesson here in crisis management if the bodies of the 12 are found and brought home for last rites.

In the end we have to ask ourselves: had the murders not taken place in Iraq but in Nepal at the hands of other Nepalis would there have been this outrage? No sect or creed has a monopoly on brutality.

Let us remind ourselves that we have shown ourselves as capable of equally gruesome public beheadings, blood-curdling torture and slaughter of innocents right here in our homeland against our own people. ●

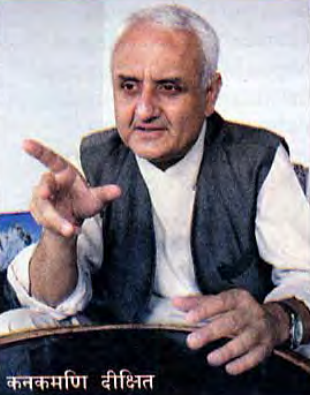
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शनिवार १९ भाद्र, ७ बजे
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