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MIN BAJRACHARYA

Times nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll # 154

Q. Did state security respond adequately during the riots of 1 September?

Yes 21.9%
No 74.3%
Don't know 3.8%

Total votes: 898

Weekly Internet Poll # 154. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. How would you characterise Prime Minister Deuba's India visit?

Open Sesame

As industries open in Kathmandu, India comes on strong against the rebels

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

What do the government and the Maoist rebels have in common? They both play the India card against each other.

One of the accomplishments of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's India visit was to get India to agree that the Maoist issue was a 'common security threat'. Deuba came back emboldened enough to declare that he wanted to resolve the issue through talks, but was willing to use force if necessary.

His new-found confidence to talk loudly as well as carry a big stick could have only come from assurances he got from Indian leaders.

The Maoists have responded by breaking their three-year moratorium on anti-Indianism. Every statement from Prachanda these days is a tirade against 'reactionary Indian expansionism', or berating New

Delhi's support for 'Nepal's fascist rulers'. Analysts see a Maoist ploy to create an anti-Indian wave to ride in order to bolster sagging support at home.

Indian media has suddenly raised the alarm about Nepali Maoists, and this week it was awash with news of Maoist threats in Uttaranchal and supposed plans to unleash human bombs if India supports Kathmandu. They bombed a missionary school in Gorkha this week and said it was to "teach India a lesson". They have also targeted Indian joint ventures.

But Indian military support for the Royal Nepali Army is not new, and New Delhi labelled the Maoists terrorists long before we did. So why are the rebels angry now?

Analysts say the Maoists may have decided that it is do-or-die time. There have been desertions, the cadre who were

promised a Kathmandu takeover are restless. The blockade and the closure of industries backfired, and the rebels also have to contend with accusations of fuelling the 1 September riots that destroyed the manpower industry.

Although Deuba came back with a promise of Indian support, some think Nepal is still not clear about what it wants to do. "This is the time both sides should be focusing on the operational level, not just about general policy issues," says political analyst Dhruva Kumar of Tribhuban University.

Given the heightened Indian role in tackling the rebels, it is interesting that even Indian analysts are not sure about where this is going. Writes Nepal-watcher SD Muni in *Hindustan Times*: 'India's

approach has so far been myopic and confusing. It chants the ideal of constitutional monarchy while lending almost total support to the king's authoritarian moves.' Muni has a prescription: India must work as a behind-the-scenes facilitator for peace in Nepal.

Skeptics here are convinced Indian support comes with strings attached, and say instead of more military hardware what Nepal needs is for India to arm-twist the Maoists into negotiating. But New Delhi is also in a fix, as it doesn't want to give the Maoists anti-Indian ammunition to whip up public support in Nepal.

Deuba may have begun the discussion in New Delhi, but the Indians have surely left the nitty gritty for King Gyanendra's upcoming visit. ●

Editorial p2
Never too late

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Jatra of arson

Three of our freedoms were attacked on September First

NEVER TOO LATE

There is conflict in every society. Some are better at resolving them through public debate in parliament or through the media. Others let grievances accumulate, let neglect pile up, until the disaffection of a desperate people can be channelled into violence by some for their own political ends.

The violence then becomes a vicious spiral that breeds more desperation and violence, until it goes out of control. The Maoists launched their revolution when democracy was still young and hadn't yet had the chance to iron out its kinks. Their credo was Mao's doctrine of a political shortcut through the physical elimination of class enemies. In this, our comrades consider themselves the vanguard of an international movement to showcase a successful revolution in the 21st century.

One of the roots of this conflict is that 1990 itself was an incomplete revolution and a squandered opportunity to set things right. The biggest disappointment was the venal fecklessness of many elected leaders who let the people down and never owned up.

How can we ensure accountability when tainted figures seem to have no problem returning to public office through the ballot? The resolution of the current conflict offers us the opportunity to address this defect in our polity. Not to go back to the absolutism of Panchayat or a Maoist dystopia, but to make the necessary changes so that rulers are accountable and democracy can deliver.

The extreme left and right both want to drastically rewrite the constitution, and the centrists are going along with it because they are competing to sound more radical. Rather than throw the book out, our politicians would do well to analyse what made them so unaccountable when they were in power, and fix that first.

Instead of launching another even more decisive agitation against 'regression', agitated leaders should be thinking about how they can help forge a multipartisan consensus on peace building. And for that peace to last, how to create 500,000 new jobs a year so that young Nepalis don't have to go to Iraq out of sheer desperation and end up as economic martyrs. How to collectively ensure governance so that the people have affordable health care and education.

It is this country's tragedy that for far too long, we have had the wrong people at the right places. Conflict resolution is about compromise and sharing power, and it is never too late to start doing that.

On 1 September, marauding mobs attacked three of the most fundamental freedoms of people in a democratic society: the freedom to practice religion (and have a different religious identity), the freedom to express and transmit opinion (however radical or

GUEST COLUMN
Rajendra Pradhan



regressive they may be) and the freedom to earn a livelihood and own property. In targeting these freedoms, the rule of law was also attacked.

These freedoms were literally and figuratively burnt in public rituals. They burnt mosques, airlines owned by 'Muslim' countries and even a beauty parlour with a Muslim name. They burnt and vandalised the office buildings, equipment and vehicles of two media houses and journalists. They destroyed the offices and documents of recruitment

agencies ostensibly to protest the treachery of these companies, but really against the right to practice one's business. They burnt cars on the road and stopped traffic.

These and other freedoms, such as rights to education and to life, have been assaulted for many years by different groups and by different means. But September First was probably the first time in Nepali history that they have been simultaneously targeted.

Why were these materials symbols of freedoms burnt? Someone in one of the furious mobs was heard shouting that anyone who was against the vandalism were anti-nationalists. In burning, were they performing nationalistic rituals, which in Nepal's case (the only Hindu kingdom in the world) were Hindu ones?

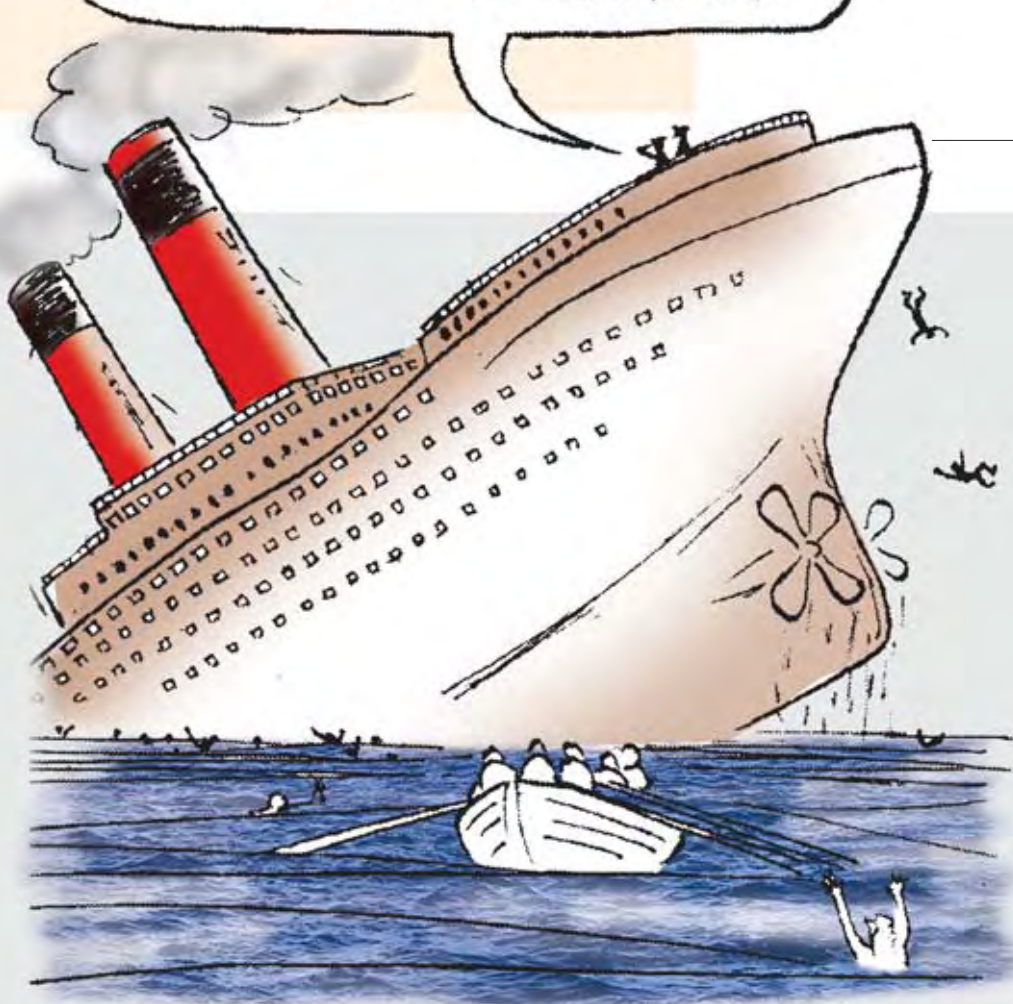
Fire is an important medium in Hinduism, used for purification and the central element of the fire sacrifice (*hom* or *yagya*), where offerings of food grains and other items are made to the fire god, Agni, to be transmitted to all deities and

in which *ghru* is used to stoke the fire and purify the offerings. Burning is a form of violence often practiced in their rituals and transferred to secular purposes.

There is another more violent form of sacrifice, known as *bali*, where animals are slaughtered as offerings to fierce deities, to appease them and ask for boons. Such sacrifices are practiced by many Hindus but also by practitioners of other religions, such as Muslims and animists. The victims are true scapegoats, representing all anger and evil forces in society and thus are to be ritually killed to vanquish them.

Extremists in Iraq and elsewhere seem to have transferred this form of sacrifice to human beings, by slicing off the heads of enemies. Back at home, our own Maoists have been doing the same. These actions parody and inverse the meaning of ritual sacrifices. In burning the symbols of citizen's freedoms, it seemed as if the mobs were combining elements and

DECK CHAIRS REARRANGED, SIR!



ENTER THE MONSTER

I agree with Kanak Mani Dixit ('Enter the monster', #212) that it was a total failure of the Nepali government to protect the nation from mayhem and to save the lives of innocent hostages.

I was in Jhapa on 1 September and it was very clear that the government, including the police and army, were incapable of providing security to the people. The riots in Birtamod lasted hours and security would not have taken more than 15 minutes to reach the site from the Charali Barracks or the police office in Chandragadi and Birtamod itself. There is no government in eastern Nepal. People are more scared of the security forces than the Maoists. Security forces are neck-deep in

corruption at the border. The Royal Nepali Army checks each and every vehicle crossing the Charali Barracks throughout the day, but as soon as it is dark they are back in their barracks. What, the Maoists don't move at night? They are only trying to create the impression that they are fighting a war. Actually they are not even able to protect themselves. Now, even Lord Pashupatinath can't protect this nation.

Name withheld, email

● We must remember that security forces are fighting the common enemy so you and I can enjoy our freedoms. There is a lot of apprehension among the foot soldiers that they are not appreciated for their sacrifices. So we have to be careful about

blaming the security forces for the riots getting out of control last week. What the riots exposed was a total lack of leadership and vision among those in office. And politicians in the opposition were buying for blood even while the capital was burning, which just goes to show all they are after is power. And the Maoists, who used last week as a rehearsal for an attack on the capital, shut down all businesses in the country at the snap of their fingers. Something's got to give.

A Simha, email

● I was appalled reading your articles in #212 and #213 on the aftermath of the riots and communal vandalism. I was shocked that the government didn't see it coming and send

LETTERS

security personnel to protect the mosques and other buildings. I come from Chhetrapati and I have a lot of Nepali Muslim Friends, I have always admired their tolerance and generosity. I sympathise with them in their hour of loss at the hands of a few thugs. Wonder whose payroll they were under.

Tirtha Mali, Florida, USA

● There has been a sort of media war against Hindus since the killing of the 12 Nepalis in Iraq. This may ignite a backlash and should be stopped. The media must not take sides in such a volatile issue. Whenever the question of Islam and violence—specifically terror—is raised, we are repeatedly told by a section of media in Nepal that the vast majority of Muslims in the world are peaceful people who never engage in terror. This is entirely accurate, and entirely irrelevant. I agree that all Muslims are not terrorists, but it pains me to note that almost all terrorists are Muslims. The point here is that the threat to civilisation emanating from within Islam is not obviated by the fact that the great majority of Muslims are not violent. That is why it is meaningless at best, and dishonest at worst, to deny the threat to civilization coming from various Muslim terrorist groups. Then there are the questions of the illegal madrassas and what is being preached there.

Vinay Kumar, Kathmandu

● Your last issue (#213) was excellent. Thank you for giving us the immediate update on Deuba's Delhi visit as well as a flavour of

the international press on Nepal's plight. Your sensitive coverage of the pogrom against Kathmandu's Muslim minority had the perspective of the small people that has not appeared in any other media. However, your incisive editorial 'Post Mortem' ended on an incongruous note. You ask only of the Maoists and the palace if Nepalis have not suffered enough. You did not question the political parties, implying to the reader that only these two were responsible for the pogroms and the overall ills in the country. What is it that you think the king can or should do? As the protector of this constitution, he cannot ask for its abolition: that is what those who clamour for a constituent assembly are asking for despite previously claiming that it was 'the best constitution in the world' and despite not making any attempts to reform it when they enjoyed a majority in parliament. The king cannot resurrect a dead parliament, killed by the united party in power in parliament, especially after the supreme court has upheld that decision. He has asked the parties to submit themselves to a popular vote for a fresh mandate, and is he wrong in doing that?

The people do not vote for the king or the army, even less for armed bandits and extortionists in the jungle. They can only vote for parties that accept the right of dissent, multiparty democracy, free press and human rights. These values are all guaranteed under this constitution. If there are provisions missing, and they are, such as better minority representation in all wings of the government or local self government units (which

signifiers from these two major forms of sacrifices. And they parodied *mahayagya* (the great fire sacrifice), which are usually performed for cosmic and social good.

Mahayagyas are performed in various places to collect donations to construct hospitals, schools and a women's university. But the high priests and patrons (*yajamanas*) of the forces of darkness made offerings of the symbols of freedom in their profane fire, stoked with petrol. Or were they cremating our freedoms and rights?

Were these participants of the secular fire sacrifice implying that the freedoms in a democratic society are evil and hence the material symbols were to be burnt in profane *homs* to purify the country just as the heads scapegoats are sliced to rid the community of evil forces? This was a macabre jatra of arson, celebrating the destruction of people's freedoms and thus of democracy.

It is worth reflecting that the central ritual of Buddhism is the gift (*dan*) and not sacrifice. If we are proud to be called the land of Buddha, we should speak the language of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and gift each other freedoms and rights instead of burning them in symbolic fires. There should be a new jatra celebrating our freedoms and rights that stress *dan* and *ahimsa*. ●

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba was so determined to go to India despite riots and economic shutdown at home that he got loyalists like Pradeep Giri and Bimalendra Nidhi to conjure up an invitation. That is how Deuba ended up being in New Delhi



STATE OF THE STATE
CK Lal

with his wife, son, in-laws and other hangers-on last week.

Details of premier Deuba's 45-minute tête-à-tête with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh haven't been made public, but there was nothing that he did in New Delhi that couldn't have been done by his deputies. There is nothing in the 25-point joint press statement that justified a five-day trip of a 68-member entourage at the tax-payer's expense.

But even if it afforded a chance for Deuba to pay personal respects to almost every politician in the Indian capital, then perhaps the expenses incurred by the exchequer was worth it. Pradeep

The Delhi belly

Deuba would do well to rejoin his parent party

Giri, the man behind Deuba's New Delhi jaunt, must be complimented for correctly reading the secularity of political pantheon in India and fixing his boss's appointments with Roman Catholic super-premier Sonia Gandhi, Muslim President APJ Abdul Kalam, Sikh Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, and atheist leftist parties dominating the ruling coalition. Just as well Deuba's visit was not cloaked as a pilgrimage as previous visits by Nepali leaders used to be.

Vacations are known to relieve stress, refresh the body, revive the mind and rejuvenate the spirits. In these difficult times, Nepal could do with a revitalised leadership. Unfortunately, Deuba seems to have derived no such benefits from his vacation. Other than describing his New Delhi trip as a 'huge success' (if he may say so himself) he was as clueless about handling the Maoist insurgency as he has been before leaving Kathmandu. Now that Comrade Prachanda doesn't even want to talk to his government, Deuba's *raison d'être* is vanishing.

Back from Beijing, Madhab

Nepal, on the other hand appears to be in a better political health. As soon as he arrived, he began by asking his own government to admit to the failure to get the 12 Nepalis in Iraq released and the inability to quell the violent fallout in Kathmandu on 9/1. Nepal fell short of asking Deuba to resign. Even he seems to know that post-October Fourth, premiers can't even resign on their own. They need Narayanhiti's clearance to even pack up their bags. Comrade Nepal is gently nudging the king to do the needful.

The palace will soon realise that the dowry Deuba brought from New Delhi, rifles, helicopters, guns and training for the police, will be of better use if a royal communist were to fight those bent upon establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat in the only Hindu kingdom of the world. In such circumstances, Comrade Nepal would be a much better bet for the palace than the person who once called Prachanda a 'courageous leader'. The moment talks are off the government agenda, Deuba needs to begin planning for his retirement.

Deuba still has the option of

flexing political muscles by rejoining his parent party. That will fundamentally change his position vis-à-vis the monarchy as well as the Maoists. That must have been the secret formula Manmohan Singh offered his Nepali counterpart during their one-on-one meeting.

India's foreign minister K Natwar Singh's parting shot to another visiting entourage from Pakistan was that "diplomacy offers hope, not salvation". From New Delhi, Deuba brought neither. What he got was a terse note to find his own feet. Deuba should take that advice and learn to stand up and be counted for the values that made him what he is: democracy, socialism and pluralism.

Expediency in politics and subservience in diplomacy can take a leader only so far and no further. That is a lesson Madhab Nepal too would do well to remember if his life's ambition of becoming the prime minister is fulfilled, even by default, mainly because Deuba failed to learn any lessons from his repeated failures at Singha Darbar. ●

incidentally where there in the discarded Panchayat constitution!) they can easily be incorporated through amendments. But how will we vote for parties that prevent the democratic infusion of fresh leadership faces and insist on a feudocratic hold on their party machinery by those indicted of corruption? Should they not reform, give up the politics of chakka jams and street violence and go to the people? The national press, by not challenging the parties on these issues and being complicit in defining 'regression' not as the return of the kleptocrats to power but the use of a constitutional provision such as Article 127, has encouraged the parties not to reform.

Name withheld, Kathmandu

● After the killing of 12 Nepali hostages in Iraq, Maoist supremo Pushpa Kamal Dahal released a press statement condemning the deaths of fellow Nepalis. He also blamed the present government for the deaths by not creating jobs at home. I would like to bring to the attention of Comrade Prachanda that his guerrillas are killing more than 12 fellow Nepalis within Nepal everyday. For how long does he intend to keep killing so many unarmed civilians? Apart from the killings, the insurgency has resulted in greater unemployment. Nepalis are venturing far and wide for only one reason: if they go back, the Maoists will force them to join them or kill them. The closure of more than 46 industries has wiped out more than 100,000 jobs. It may be an opportune time for Mr Awesome to look at himself in the mirror. We totally support your

ideas to develop the nation by decentralising democracy and liberating Nepal from the hands of corrupt leaders, but we totally disagree with your methods. It is foolish to destroy the country you are liberating. Stop killing unarmed civilians now, stop destroying infrastructure now, and stop closing down industries and forcing young Nepalis to flee abroad. If you have a shred of patriotism and responsibility left stop your atrocities and help rebuild Nepal. One last thing: given your conduct so far, what guarantee is there that once you assume power you will not be as corrupt as the people you replace?

Pravesh Saria, email

● Why is it that it takes a foreigner to call a spade a spade in Nepal? I read Gwynne Dyer's column in *The Guardian* that you reprinted ('Nepal stares into the abyss', #213) and he accurately describes the Maoists as apologists for the Khmer Rouge. How can anyone think of ever compromising with such a fanatical group? Nepal is in a Pol Pot scenario and no one here is willing to admit it. There was outrage about the beheading of a Nepali man in Iraq. Well, the Maoists have been torturing, beheading, gouging out eyes, lynching fellow-Nepalis now for eight years. Why isn't anyone saying anything? Dyer concludes his piece with these haunting words; 'Nepal is heading straight for hell, and nobody in the country seems remotely capable of stopping it.' May Pashupatinath protect us all.

Gyan Awal, Kathmandu

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No recruitment problem in Bardiya



BOTH PICS: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA

KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA in BARDIYA

Here on the fertile plains of the Karnali, the maize fields are ripe. The comrades have guns slung over their shoulders as they help villagers pluck the cobs. Most young men and women have fled the villages and there aren't enough people to work the fields.

The Maoists wipe the sweat from their faces and adjust the straps on their captured SLRs and INSAS assault rifles. A young female Maoist carries a 303, and expertly breaks the maize from the stalks.

Resting, the talk turns to the brutal killing of 12 Nepalis in Iraq. It is the party line: "The Nepalis died because the remote control of Nepali politics is in the hands of the imperialist Americans," explains Biswajit, who handles communications for the Maoists in the Banke-Bardiya region.

It is a hot and quiet afternoon. There are only the

sounds of handpumps and children playing in the village, some 20km off the main highway. It seems everyone who doesn't support the Maoist movement migrated elsewhere long ago. Everyone who stayed behind is with the rebels, there isn't any other way.

An army helicopter flies overhead, but the Maoists don't even try to hide. As the sun sets over the jungles to the west, we head back to the village. A yellow light spills out of the shops into the dusty street. The children are playing since it is a holiday tomorrow. The Maoists run the schools, but the government still pays the teachers.

A few men huddle outside a medicine shops that also sells cigarettes, chewing tobacco, biscuits and instant noodles. The new Maoist monthly *Tarai Voice* is out and the locals read it avidly. Every now and then, the local commander calls out a

name in the crowd, whispers something and sends the person off on a bicycle to carry messages for the planned Banke-Bardia banda.

The Maoists have started their own customs check points along the Indian border and the leaders keep tabs on things by riding around the outback on motorcycles. The last time the security forces came this way was four months ago. They asked questions and never came back. Even if they did, who would they arrest? Almost every young and able-bodied villager remaining here is a militia member.

But some youngsters are confused about what it is they are fighting for. "I have done the WT (whole time) training for the militia, but I don't know which army to join," says a 19-year-old. "I like what the people's army stands for, but if I join the royal army I can earn more money for my family. My family would

Many support the Maoists out of fear, but here there is no choice

have to move away if I joined the royal army, though."

The village wakes up at five, there is lots to do on the farms. Every day is a struggle for survival and working in the fields is hard because there are so few people left. Children in tattered clothes, their mothers and elderly farmers give Biswajit a *lal salaam* as we pass. In many parts of Nepal, the people may support the Maoists out of fear, but here there is no choice. There is no government to support, and even if there was, the people are disillusioned with the way they have been abandoned—a fact that the rebels have been quick to exploit.

Past excesses by the security forces have also pushed the villagers to the Maoist fold. Villages here have been renamed after 'martyrs'. "This is Jivangaun," a young boy told us. He doesn't even know the original name of his village. The security forces used to come through in sweeps and take away anyone they thought was a Maoist sympathiser.

"They used to come at night. Once they took away the husband and wife from one of the houses and shot them in the jungle," one villager told us. A widow and mother of three, says she won't die without avenging her husband's death. "The security forces arrested him and later took him to the Gulariya jail. They had no evidence he was a Maoist but they never told us what they did to him," she said. "Since then the party has given me support and strength."

Villagers now speak about the 'new regime' as if it is a

foregone conclusion, and it is clear where they get this line of reasoning from. Asked why the Maoists are destroying government buildings and infrastructure, Biswajit tells us: "We must destroy everything that sustains the old regime and build the new one from the roots up."

The Maoists remain good at turning things their way. Even Biswajit admits it is easy to convince the locals that the government is useless and the security forces are monsters. Their line is: government offices are destroyed because they are corrupt and harass local people, Narayanhiti is using donor funds to quell the people's uprising which is why the NGOs should register and work with the Maoists at the grassroots, the army has tortured people so we must fight them.

At least in these villages of Bardiya, it seems recruitment into the Maoist fold is not a problem. ●



Rifles slung from shoulders, the 'people's militia' help with the harvest. Comrade Biswajit (above) enjoys morning tea.

Wednesday

Diary for a day

9AM

The television screen is a blur. I press 'mute'. A reporter was asking: "Why didn't anyone try to get them released? Why wasn't anything done?" A lot has happened in the past hour. I was supposed to go to school for my exam. At the bus stop, they said there is no school, no test, at least not today. "Call

again tomorrow morning," they said. Back home, Bua wanted to bicycle to work and the rest of the house

pounced on him, calling him insane. He walked instead. My brothers change out of their uniforms and immediately, simultaneously, grab the computer game CD. Ama tells them to hold it, and makes them study. They sulk, why should they work, there is no school.

11AM

I turn on the radio. A bus has fallen into the Trisuli in Kurintar, over 40 missing. I switch it off, remembered hearing something similar less than a week ago. I turn on the tv: BBC reporting two suicide bombers in Israel killing at least 16 people. The telephone rings. It's my cousin calling from work to tell my grandmother not to let us go out of the house, they've burnt the mosques near Ghanta Ghar, the Qatar Airways office. I go



BADRI POU DYEL

to roof. Black smoke is rising in nine different places, one of them opposite the corner store.

1.50 PM

Bua just got back, he walked home with a cousin. We'd spent 20 minutes trying to call him and tell him to hurry home, they've declared an indefinite curfew. The tv blinks off as the lights go out. I think of June, some years back. Just mournful music on tv and radio all day, street violence, demanding answers for something that defied explanation. Dread seeping in. Only dogs roaming the road. I glance at my brothers, who've finished their work for the day and are jumping in front a noisy computer screen. They are innocent, oblivious.

I'll be honest now. I'm afraid.

5.30 PM

I'm on the roof again. The damage has been extensive: Kantipur, Spacetime, ironic and annoying that the media is

being targeted. My brothers are helping my father out in the garden. The lane I live in suddenly seems full of parents mingling with their children, yelling at them, playing with them. It's an unfamiliar sight for a midweek afternoon. Above, the sky has a strange pinkness, lighter than usual, a shade you would expect to find on a little girl's party dress. There aren't any stars, there haven't been for the past few days. The setting sunlight stings the eyes in melting heat. Far away, I see a plane take off and wonder how the passengers reached the airport. Wonder where they are going.

7.45 PM

It's quiet. The night always is, as if telepathically. The helicopters have stopped hovering. I light yellow and red candles in my room, a daily thing, and start Abida Parveen on my player. I should be re-revising, I know, but just can't. Today, 12 Nepali homes are mourning and the nation mourns with them. Some women will wear white, some children will only have a memory, brothers and sisters will have pain and anger, parents only tears. This storm like many others in the past will eventually subside. Families will remain broken.

In psychology, they teach you about bystander apathy and mob behaviour. You learn which neurotransmitters cause which emotions, the possible outcomes of severe stress, the therapies that help you cope. Science shows what you can do with chemicals, with society, with knowledge, life makes you wonder why these potentials never seemed to be fulfilled for the better.

We so easily blame our politicians and the freedom fighters. What do we have to say for ourselves on this day of shame? The novel I was supposed to have an exam on today is the first of a series called the 'Children of Violence'. There will probably be no school tomorrow, it is a day of national mourning. The curfew is still on. And the television still doesn't work.



Grade 10 students at the Tribhuban Secondary School in Palpa

Forced indoctrination

Students in Palpa mistook visiting journalists for Maoists and fled, fearing abduction

JB PUN MAGAR in PALPA

Aside from closing down most schools, the Maoists have intensified the forced indoctrination of children in west Nepal as part of a recruitment campaign. Thousands of students had fled Gulmi after rebels made it mandatory for one person from each family to join their force so they could make a brigade. Most fled to Bhairawa, Butwal or to India to find work, giving up their studies altogether.

Now, it is Palpa's turn. Last month, local Maoists forced over 300 students from western Palpa to attend the second district level meeting of their student wing and listen to political indoctrination.

Journalist Khimraj Adhikari in Gulmi says the only students left in schools in his district are the physically handicapped, or those below 14. Worried that the exodus will further deprive them of recruits, the rebels recently issued an order banning anyone from leaving the district, but many children are still fleeing under the cover of darkness and through less-used forest paths. It looks like the Maoist 'strategic offensive' phase is running into the problem of lack of manpower, since many activists have deserted, been captured or killed in action.

Maoist leader Netra Pandey in Palpa denies the students are being forced. "They have

voluntarily offered to join the militia some students will commit suicide if they are not allowed to join the war," he told us. But the students tell a different story. They are supposed to get 'people's education', but in most cases they are made to drill instead. Students abducted a month ago in Argeli say they were forced to listen to political speeches and shout slogans.

Selected students from each class were taken for closed door sessions, where they were urged to take an active part in the 'people's war'. Netra Pandey and Sita Baudel, members of the local Maoist student wing, urged the 300 students to throw away their books and pencils and take up arms instead. "What is the use of an education that doesn't get you a job?" students quoted Pandey as saying. "This is the time to carry guns, you have your whole life ahead of you to study."

The Maoists' strategy seems to be to brainwash the children and prepare them psychologically to take up arms. This goes hand-in-hand with the policy of destabilising the educational environment and spreading disenchantment with the school system. The children are young and impressionable and the slogans do have an effect on some. Teacher Sridhar Bhattarai in Argeli recalls that

after re-education, some students have demanded that English be scrapped from the curriculum.

On 20 September, a group of journalists went to visit Adarsha Higher Secondary School, where students from half a dozen schools in Palpa were celebrating Children's Day with the slogan 'Children are zone of peace'. The students began to run away, mistaking the journalists for Maoists coming to take them away. Teacher Gyanendra Bastakoti told the journalists his pupils are terrified of being abducted.

Last month, when the Maoists were forcing Om Prasad Pandey of Grade 10 from Saraswati High School in Palpa into a jeep his mother Binda Pandey managed to rescue him. "They tried to take my son away, now I'll send him to Butwal to study," Priti Maharjan stopped going to school after hearing about the abduction of students in other schools, but that didn't save her. The rebels came to know about her and as punishment, declared her the unit chairman of their ANFSU (Revolutionary) student wing. It is doubtful Priti will go back to school. She is just too scared.

The local administration is helpless and clueless. CDO Ramji Gyawali says resignedly: "The rebels have convinced the students to join them and the education sector has been hit badly." But teachers say even this is not true, out of 300 students abducted last month all have returned and none of them want to take up arms. In the whole of Palpa, they say, there are only two high school students who have joined the Maoists. Still, the young students are apprehensive. "If they come again and force us to join their army, I don't think we will be in a position to say no," says Puja Pandey of Grade 12 in Tribhuban High School.

When we asked what her message would be to the government and the Maoists, Puja says without hesitation: "We don't need guns, we just want to study. Leave us alone." ●

Peace Corps pull out

This week's announcement of the withdrawal of the American Peace Corps volunteers has dismayed many ordinary Nepalis who have benefitted from the work of this unique organisation for the past 42 years.

The announcement came in a statement from the US Embassy reacting to the blast at the American Information Centre in Gyaneswor on the eve of the 9/11 anniversary on Friday. No one was injured, the damage was minor and the Maoists haven't taken responsibility. So far, the Maoists are only on the US 'terrorist watchlist', and one official hinted that if they had taken responsibility for Friday's blast they would certainly have been "upgraded" to the terrorist list.

'The attack at the American Center on Friday not only endangered lives but clearly violated all international norms and laws,' the US Embassy said in a statement on Monday.

The decision to give family members of embassy staff the option to leave and to withdraw Peace Corps volunteers was "the last straw" another official said and denied that it was prompted by the need to reduce the US government's legal liability in case a citizen came to harm at the hands of the rebels.

The Peace Corps suspension is said initially to be for six months, and sources said if the situation returns to normal after that, operations are likely to be resumed. Volunteers have been recalled to Kathmandu and will be sent home to the United States over the weekend. The Peace Corps office itself will remain open.

Nepal was one of the first countries to have Peace Corps volunteers with 62 in the first batch in 1962 and 4,000 have served here since then. Alumni of the Nepali volunteers have frequent get-togethers and many keep in touch by email. "It is Nepal that draws us together. Nepal did a lot for us. It showed us you didn't need two cars in the garage to be considered successful in life," Mac Odell, who came to Nepal in the first batch in 1962, told us in an interview last year. Many volunteers are still working in Nepal in the education and development fields while others have served here as diplomats. David O'Connor, the current director of the Peace Corps in Nepal was himself a volunteer in Ilam in 1967-69.

Peace Corps volunteers currently serving in Nepal say they have never faced any threats or intimidation, and spoke to us of being overwhelmed with the fortitude and generosity shown by the Nepalis they work amongst. "It is just very very sad that they have to leave," said a Peace Corps official.

Helping Rosy

Nine-year-old Rosy Silwal dropped out of Grade three in her native Dhading village because she was diagnosed with blood cancer and had to come to Kathmandu for treatment at the Kanti Children's Hospital. But her parents could not afford the treatment, and were getting desperate.

Film actor and airline captain, Vijay Lama, was reading the *Gorkhapatra* in the cockpit before a long flight to Kathmandu from Nepalganj recently when he spotted a news item about Rosy. Lama was due to start shooting director Narayan Puri's film on the Maoist insurgency, *Alpabiram*, and he decided to donate what he would earn from the film for Rosy's treatment.

This week, Lama took an advance of Rs 25,000 from his actor's fee and handed it over to Rosy's mother, Nanu Silwal. "It is the least I could do," Lama told Rosy's mother after visiting the hospital, "She is like a tiny flower, we must make it difficult for her to be plucked by fate."

Rosy is an only child and her parents are grateful to donors like Lama for helping out. "This is the only way I can afford the treatment," Nanu Silwal says. "She is in her fifth phase of treatment and is feeling much better."



Rosy with actor Vijay Lama in hospital

Walking against cancer

Rotary Clubs of Nepal are getting together to raise money for cancer treatment for Nepalis who can't afford it by organising a walkathon on Saturday, 25 September. The walks will be from Basantapur and Dhulikhel to Bhaktapur. Walkers will need to get sponsors for every kilometre that they walk. Proceeds will go to the Cancer Upachar Dan Fund and help treat the estimated 40,000 destitute cancer patients nationwide. For details: RotaryWalkathon Secretariat, 01-4437544 www.rotarymidtown.org.np/walkathon

Maoists open school, then bomb it

The day the Maoists lifted their six-week forced closure of schools in 17 central Nepal districts this week, they bombed the non-profit St Joseph's School in Gorkha on Sunday night.

The attackers forced the principal, Fr Dennis D'souza, to open the classrooms, looted the best computers and then exploded a pressure cooker bomb, destroying computers and damaging the school building. The rebels left saying the attack was to "teach India a lesson". The school denies it has any Indian connection, and says it is 100 percent Nepali.

The attack on a model school that charged minimal fees and provided scholarships to minorities and indigenous groups has cast doubts over the rebels' sincerity about making schooling more egalitarian and, more importantly, has raised suspicions that local cadre are out of the party leadership's control.

On Tuesday, UNICEF welcomed the lifting the schools closure, asking all parties in the conflict to work actively to stop Nepali children from suffering further. UNICEF's Nepal representative, Suomi Sakai, said: "One out of five children in Nepal is not in school. This means even without closures, more than 500,000 children are getting no education at all."

हिंसा विरोध

शान्ति अभियान

अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय शान्ति दिवस मेला, ५ असोज

५ गते, ८ बजे

बसन्तपुर जाऔं

हिंसाको विरोध गरौं

जनताको आवाज सुनाऔं

हिंसा विरोध अभियान

Aiding AIDS

Squabbling and apathy jeopardise Nepal's AIDS fund

Last August when Nepal was granted \$11 million by the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and malaria, there was considerable euphoria.

But since then, the government has been unable to find a Nepali organisation capable of managing such a large project and the money looked like it would never reach Nepal. The government advertised twice, but failed to find a partner to administer the funds to go to the National AIDS Centre and other non-profits working to combat AIDS.

"It's a messy job, which is why many INGOs did not apply," says a development agency representative, requesting anonymity.

As the deadline approached this month, the government decided at a Country Coordinating Mechanism meeting in Kathmandu, to hand over management responsibilities to the UN system in Nepal. Donor, multilateral agencies, INGOs, NGOs and activists are members of the Mechanism that endorses proposals to the Global Fund for approval. One member told us the group had no option but to get the UN to help out. "It was the next best thing to returning the money to the Global Fund, but it won't be an easy project to manage, even for the UN," says activist Rishi Ojha, a CCM member.

Some activists and NGOs are fuming over the decision and suspect the UN will only fund NGOs that are its cronies, a fear dispelled by Pramod Kafle of the charity, ActionAid Nepal: "The UN will



NARESH NEWAR

Shila Tamang in Makwanpur insisted her photo be taken and published so that other Nepali AIDS patients like her receive treatment.

not have control over the money, organisations that had already been selected years back for funding will benefit."

At least 19 NGOs, INGOs and government agencies have already qualified for the Global Fund grants and the first tranche of about \$4 million is expected soon. "There is more than enough money, and I don't think the fund

will be limited to a select few. More organisations can apply," says Ojha. The \$4 million will have to be used within the first two years of the grant period and if the UN and development agencies fail to disburse it, the chances of getting the rest of the \$11 million for the remaining three years will diminish.

The Global Fund has already approved grants for four rounds across the

world. Each round consists of five-year grants. Nepal's \$11 million is from the second round and we missed funding opportunities during the third round as the government and CCM failed to send any proposals. For the fourth round, a group of agencies like Action Aid Nepal, Harm Reduction Council and Family Planning Association of Nepal decided to take their own initiative and sent in proposals bypassing the government-dominated CCM.

The Global Fund recently complimented proposals sent from Nepal by non-CCM organisations as among the best in the world. There is a strong chance that proposals worth \$45 million will be approved in the fourth round. "I think the government should realise that it can't bear all responsibilities. Civil society is also capable of working in the national interest," says Kafle.

Nepal's CCM has come under heavy criticism for lack of urgency in addressing the country's AIDS threat. Most of the members selected by the government have little knowledge of HIV/AIDS issues. AIDS activist Rajiv Kafle is one of the most vociferous critics, saying more HIV-infected activists should be included in the body.

The representation by the donor and multilateral agencies in CCM is also minimal and there are fears Nepal may lose opportunities for future resources for the anti-AIDS campaign from the Global Fund. ● (Naresh Newar)

Death rays

A regional meeting in Kathmandu this week assesses Nepal's efforts to control ozone-depleting substances



Sita Ram Joshi of the Nepal Bureau of Standards inspecting contraband ozone depleting chemicals

Representatives from 23 Asian countries met in Kathmandu on Thursday to mark the First Regional Celebration of International Ozone Day and to take stock of what needs to be done in the region to further reduce the production and use of chemicals that destroy the ozone layer.

"Countries in the region have made tremendous efforts to meet their targets under the Montreal

Protocol," says Surendra Shrestha, the Bangkok-based Asia-Pacific director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Even so, illegal trade of CFCs has proved to be the biggest obstacle to the achievement of the goals of the Montreal Protocol in Asia, which uses up to 66 percent of the global consumption of ozone-depleting chemicals and produces 90 percent of CFCs.

Eighteen years after signing the Montreal Protocol to phase out ozone depleting substances, 188 countries are members. Since many of these countries are developing nations, they are being helped by the UNEP and other agencies to phase out the use of CFCs and other ozone-depleting chemicals.

By 1996 developed countries had stopped producing and using the most damaging CFCs, except for a few with medical uses. They are now working to phase out methyl bromide and HCFCs, which are being used as temporary substitutes for CFCs. Global consumption of CFCs have dropped from 1.1 million tons in 1986 to 156,000 tons in 1998.

Still, ozone depletion which is occurring at an alarming rate, is expected to peak, and then gradually decline by the end of this decade. If all member countries continue to abide by the Montreal Protocol, the ozone layer should fully recover by the middle of this century. The thinning of the ozone layer allows harmful ultraviolet rays through atmospheric filters, causing cancers in humans and harming livestock and crops. High altitude regions like the Nepal Himalaya are more at risk of UV exposure caused by ozone depletion.

With the approach of the Montreal Protocol deadlines to phase out ozone-depleting substances (ODS), shortages of

legitimate CFCs have pushed up market prices up and encouraged smuggling. Illegal trade has been growing alarmingly all over the world. In 1997, an estimated 20,000 tons of illegal chemicals were traded worldwide, and the situation has grown worse since then.

Situated between China and India, Nepal has been a conduit for ODS. In 2001, 74 tons of smuggled CFC 12 and HCFCs were seized at Birganj customs. The contraband remains in warehouses while the government has given assurances to the UN that it will use parts of the chemical as per Nepal's Montreal Protocol quota for CFC phase-out.

"Nepal has committed to not allow further CFC imports, and releases only enough CFCs from its stock of seized chemicals every year for its domestic use, which does not exceed our Montreal Protocol annual phase-out quota," says Sita Ram Joshi at the Nepal Bureau of Standards and Metrology.

The bureau monitors annual consumption quotas and has established annual phase-out schedules of CFCs, HCFCs, halons, and other ODS. Nepali law requires all importers to obtain a license and it doesn't allow re-export of imported substances. Since Nepal does not produce any CFCs, it tries to keep track of the amount of ozone-depleting chemicals consumed and hopes to phase

out CFCs 11 and 12 by 2010.

In 2003, UNEP held the 'Nepal Dialogue' among Nepal, China, and India in Kathmandu where the three countries agreed to share information on smuggling and production. They also agreed to hold regular meetings between customs officers working at Nepal's borders with China and India.

Consumption of ODS in Nepal is small, even when compared to the other developing countries—only 30 tons of CFCs and 23 tons of HCFCs in 1999. India's consumption is over 40,000 tons. But the rapid growth of agriculture and tourism means that the use of CFCs is growing, especially in commercial and domestic refrigeration, air conditioning and fumigation.

Phase-out of CFCs in Nepal are related to those in India. The availability of ozone-depleting chemicals in India and the production of ozone friendly technologies in India affect choices made by consumers in Nepal.

Incidentally, the open border also means that it becomes difficult for customs officials to keep track of appliances entering Nepal. Says Dinesh Chandra Pyakural, secretary at the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies: "Nepal's consumption of ODS is very low. As a signatory to the Montreal Protocol, Nepal has already started implementing the ODS phase-out program." ●

Mobile tower row heats up

Boudha residents up in arms about phone towers on residential buildings

NARESH NEWAR

The good news is: mobile telephones are now everywhere. The bad news is: so are the transmitter towers.

Wireless technology is convenient because it uses microwave transmissions from the caller's phone to reach a transmitter tower near the recipient to make the connection. But these are the same rays of the electromagnetic spectrum used to heat yesterday's leftovers in your household microwave oven. The phone transmissions are not as powerful, but the jury is still out on the harm that cell phones can cause to human health—especially if they are used for frequent and long conversations.

But how about the cell phone towers themselves? No one knows for certain, but as a precaution European and American regulations prohibit base station towers to be located within 100m of residential buildings.

Boudha residents are objecting to a new cell phone tower that has been put up right on top of a family house. Not only does this destroy what little is left of the traditional skyline of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, they say, but it is also a serious health hazard.

"We are just guests in this country but we are concerned that people here are not aware of how dangerous it is living so close to the towers," says an expat who has been living in Boudha for the past 30 years. Neighbours have got together to set up an action committee to get the tower relocated to a non-residential area. They organised two public meetings at Boudha last week which ended up as a slinging match between the expats and the Indian partners of the joint venture United Telecom (UTL).

UTL has already installed 14 transmission towers in residential areas around the city and is planning to add 10 more to service 25,000 clients through its wireless local loop technology.

"We will not stop protesting until the tower is removed," says Gyan B Shakya, a Boudha resident. Shakya admits he and his friends used to be unaware of the potential health hazards of cell phone towers and being exposed to radio waves 24 hours a day.

The situation could turn nasty, and UTL asked for protection from the government after locals threatened to cut cables leading up to the tower. "If there is proof that the tower can cause serious health problems then I am willing to remove it," says Raju Shakya, who permitted UTL to install the tower on top of his five-story house in Boudha, "But it has to be proven scientifically."

The uncertainty about long exposures to radio frequencies

transmitted by base stations or cell phones have polarised debate internationally. Media reporting on the subject is scant because mobile phone companies contribute so much ad revenue that newspapers and television stations prefer to play down the issue.

One report suggests that exposure to radiation causes immune disorders, nausea, memory loss, lack of concentration, high blood pressure, eye infection, asthma, pneumonia, body pains, hearing disability and even brain tumours. Another report claims there is no conclusive medical proof of any of this.

The anti-cellular phone campaign has been actively led by the Cellular Phone Taskforce (http://www.laleva.cc/environment/taskforce_eng.html) which believes that governments around the world are trying to suppress real scientific findings. Scientists in Australia and elsewhere have alleged that they have been forced to quit jobs in universities and government departments because of their findings showing that GSM phones increase the risk of cancer.

"We don't want to start a row with anyone. All we want is to sit down together and talk about this issue for the sake of people's health, especially the children," says Noah Gordon, a frequent visitor to Nepal. "There must be a reason why there is so much uncertainty. Can we afford to take the risk?"

The cell phone companies call them scaremongers and dismiss the findings. "Wireless and mobile services have been used for decades and there is really no proof at all that radio frequency signals affect anyone's health," says an Indian staffer from UTL, requesting anonymity and hinting that his company may be targeted because it is partly Indian-owned. "How come

other radio transmitters like Nepal Telecom, Nepal Television and Radio Nepal have never been targeted?" he asks.

However serious or negligible the danger, Boudha residents say that by the time the truth comes out it may be too late for many people. They say there are plenty of offices, warehouses and factory buildings in the neighbourhood that could host towers—there was no reason to choose a residential building.

"We really need to start a public debate on this matter and we will also investigate" says UTL's Rajendra Aryal.

Boudha residents want the Royal Nepal Academy of Science and Technology to measure the radiation levels from the towers and investigate possible health impacts. But such research is

expensive and would require a large number of lab animals.

For the time being, the activists say their only course of action is to mobilise families to pressurise the government into moving towers to safer areas.

Cell phone base station tower installations have met with stiff opposition in Europe and elsewhere from families concerned about their children's health. A few years ago a judge in Spain ordered 49 phone towers be removed from rooftops in the town of Valladolid after an active campaign by parents.

A Nepal Telecom official who requested anonymity said a 100m rule was proposed when cell phones were first allowed into Nepal five years ago, but it was never implemented. ●



MANI LAMA

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FOR THE BEST PHOTOS IN TOWN

Another oil price hike?

NOC must increase prices if it is to survive, but that is easier said than done

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

Nepal Oil Corporation owes India Rs 3 billion, it is losing Rs 580 million a month, and bankers are getting reluctant to lend it any more money.

But this week, the state-owned oil monopoly got a rare piece of good news: a government task force has recommended that the costs of petroleum products reflect international prices. New Delhi also told Prime Minister Deuba during his recent visit that it is not happy with having fuel it exports cheap and duty-free to Nepal being smuggled back into North India.

Which means NOC now has enough reasons to raise prices. All it needs is the green light from the politicians. "Our recommendation is to allow market forces to determine prices with the rise and fall in the international market," says National Planning Commission member and task force co-ordinator, Yuba Raj Khatiwada. "We do not want this issue to become a political football because both the corporation and the country will suffer in the long run."

But given the political sensitivity of the issue,



petroleum prices are unlikely to be raised sharply. The task force has recommended an independent non-governmental monitoring body enforce legislation, even though a similar body for electricity pricing has been a fiasco. The

tariff commission to fix power prices has not been able to function independently and all it does is endorse government decisions, often under donor pressure.

But petroleum is different. In the past 15 months,

international fuel prices have gone up by 75 percent, but remained nearly the same in Nepal. NOC borrowed Rs 2 billion from Rastriya Banijya Bank and Standard Chartered Bank last month to tide over its Rs 580 million monthly deficit and is still looking for other lenders to pay this month's bills. Some banks, including Nabil, were willing, but NOC wanted to borrow Rs 3 billion but the bank could only lend Rs 600 million.

Last month's fuel price hike hasn't helped much. After the rise, losses have come down from Rs 580 million to Rs 406 million a month. "The hike was too little," said Hariom Dhoj Joshi, Officiating Managing Director of NOC. "Things will not change until we can take prices to international levels, or at least put it on par with

India."

With the four-party anti-'regression' alliance looking for any excuse to resume its street agitation, it would be suicidal for the shaky Deuba coalition to raise fuel prices again. But under intense pressure from India, and forced to rescue NOC from bankruptcy, the government seems ready to bite the bullet and at least raise prices to the same level as India and prevent cross-border smuggling.

NOC officials admit that a significant quantity of Nepal's subsidised kerosene and diesel goes back into India because prices are higher across the open border. Even with the recent price hike in Nepal, there is a Rs 6 price differential for a litre of petrol, Rs 9.5 for diesel and Rs 7 for kerosene.

The Indian government is worried about loss of revenue along its border with Nepal. "India's notice to the NOC on the eve of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's visit to New Delhi seems to have been a reminder to Nepal to get its act together," one senior source told us. "It was a pointed warning if you don't raise prices in Nepal we will slap a tax to make it more expensive for you to import oil."

An Indian Embassy statement did immediately follow the notice saying that the duty-free export of oil to Nepal would continue, and Indian officials said the news was "an ill-timed misunderstanding caused by lack of coordination between various departments in Delhi". Even so, the letter seems to have done the trick by sending the message to the prime minister's delegation as it was about to leave for India. ●



Pipeline in the pipeline

One of the main accomplishments of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's visit to New Delhi last week was the agreement between the state-owned oil corporations of the two countries to fix a pipeline from the border to the depot in Nepalganj.

The 35km pipeline will cost Rs 500 million and be a 50-50 India-Nepal partnership which bypasses the current leaky tanker route from Indian refineries to Birganj. Much of the adulteration and leakage of diesel, kerosene and petrol in Nepal is said to occur in the Raxaul-Amlekhganj stretch.

"The project will help us reduce leakage and pilferage significantly and address the problem of adulteration," says Commerce Secretary Dinesh Chandra Pyakurel (pictured). "We will be able to recover the cost of the project within the first five years, and after that consumers will also feel the relief of having to pay less for petroleum products."

The construction of the project is expected to begin soon and it will take two years for completion. Officials say the pipeline will pay for itself within four years because of saved transportation cost, and even quicker if leakage and adulteration is taken into account.

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Nabil is bank of year

The *Banker*, a publication of the *Financial Times* Group in London, has chosen Nabil Bank as the bank of the year country award for Nepal. There were 133 banks from around the world that had participated in the initial round of the competition.

The *Banker*, which has been published since 1926, shortlists the number of participants from each country every year. HSBC won the global award and in India, ICICI was voted the Indian bank of the year.

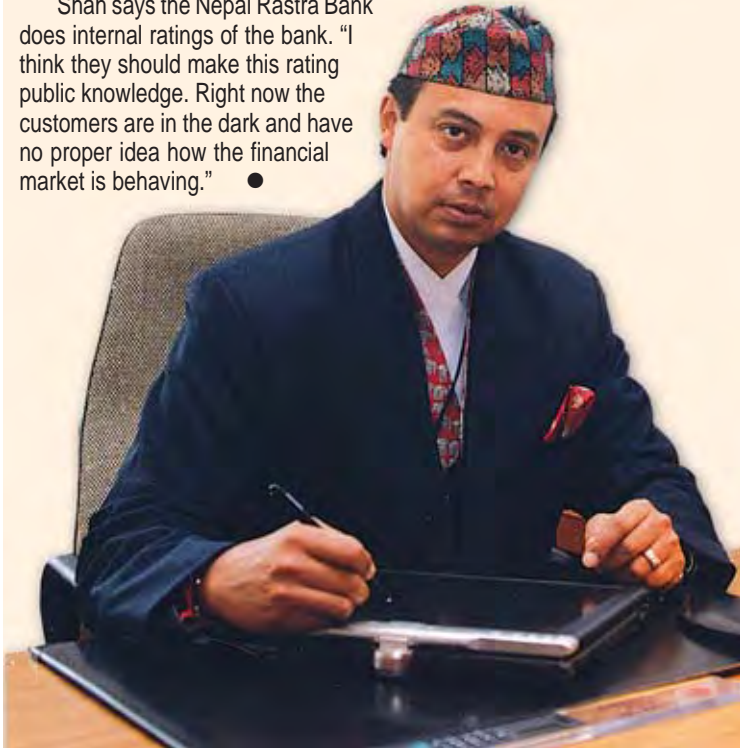
Nabil's ecstatic general manager, Anil Shah (pictured below) thinks the main reason his bank was conferred the honour could have been its balance sheet. "The other reasons that may have impressed the panel of judges was our investment in new technology, which shows our commitment to Nepal and our human resource management," explains Shah.

There were five banks from Nepal that had been asked to apply for the final selection process for the award. This is the third year since the Nepal award was introduced. In 2002, Standard Chartered Bank won the award and last year it was Nepal Investment Bank. Nabil got it this year, as it celebrates its 20th anniversary.

Nabil pioneered the first joint venture bank in Nepal, and two decades down the line there are 16 other banks in the country. Shah says competition is all right, as long as it does not trigger an unhealthy trend. "At a time when the economy is stagnant, if not shrinking, we have more and more banks and financial institutions," he says. "We are beginning to see sparks of unhealthy competition that could affect the entire industry."

So, why doesn't the Bankers' Association regulate itself? "The Nepal Bankers' Association is not a cartel," explains Shah. "If there is a cartel, the customers will be the first to lose and in the long run the banking industry will lose."

Shah says the Nepal Rastra Bank does internal ratings of the bank. "I think they should make this rating public knowledge. Right now the customers are in the dark and have no proper idea how the financial market is behaving." ●



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Rising from the ashes

It wasn't a religious riot, it was looting, pure and simple

In 1995, Tulsi Ratna Tuladhar started a one-shutter shop on Kantipath selling Chinese motorcycle parts and accessories. By August 2004, he had three people to help manage an inventory worth about Rs 13 million. On Wednesday, 1 September, his shop, along with the neighbouring offices of Air Sahara and Qatar Airways, was destroyed by rioters. As Tulsi watched, it took only a few hours for a decade of hard work to turn into rubble and ashes.

"From 10 in the morning, people were hurling stones at the windows of Qatar Airways," said Tuladhar. "I locked up my shop, and started calling the police. They did not come. The crowd started getting bigger and restless. I was scared. Then around 11, one person showed up with a steel crowbar. He forced open the Qatar office, shattered the glass doors and went inside. Others followed and started throwing out furniture and computers. I heard them shouting when they found a box of money. After that, with crowbars in hand, they moved to adjoining offices and shops, smashing each open. The looting went on for some time before the crowd started lighting fires. The whole building was ablaze in no time. The fire brigade only arrived after the curfew was imposed at two o'clock."

Civil society pundits have written much about Hindu fervour and misplaced nationalism of the riots that took place on Black Wednesday. But a different picture emerges when



MIN BAJRACHARYA

you talk to business owners like Tulsi. What they witnessed were not riots imbued with religious hatred and Nepali nationalism, but people who, once they figured out that police would not come, seized an opportunity to loot.

By not intervening early and swiftly, Kathmandu's law enforcement officials provided a context for those in protesting julus to turn into looters and arsonists who damaged manpower agencies, media houses and hundreds of private-sector businesses. Any expectations that last spring's political rallies, not to mention the Hrithik Roshan riots of 2000, had made Kathmandu's police force skillful in the logistics of mob management was dashed. True, the police now claim that they have arrested more than 50 alleged looters. But don't be surprised if they remain unprepared to handle another round of riots in future.

Meanwhile, just as there is no way to seek justice through legal channels for family

members whose loved ones have been killed by the Maoists or the army, there remains no recourse for business owners such as Tulsi to even think about cobbling together a path to justice. They have loans to worry about, suppliers to pay, employees to soothe and emotional trauma to deal with.

Given the gravity of Black Wednesday, FNCCI and the CNI could have, without making promises and strictly in a show of solidarity, accorded a temporary sanctuary to these victimised business owners. But mired as they are in their own diffidence and inaction, they stood by as businesses were attacked.

To keep hope alive, the only consolation for Tulsi is in Min Bahadur Gurung's story. Just as Min Bahadur created Bhatbhateni Supermarket from the ashes of his one-room cold-storage in 1994, here's hoping that Tulsi and other Nepali business owners will find the strength to rise from the ashes. ●

"We lost Rs 1.5 billion in one month"

Chandi Raj Dhakal, the first vice president of the FNCCI spoke to *Nepali Times* on Wednesday night after the Maoist labour union called off the forced closure of industries and a compromise was reached. He is glad, but says the nation paid a heavy price for the month-long closures.

Nepali Times: Was this a stopgap compromise, are industries going to be bombed and closed again?

Chandi Raj Dhakal: I think it is a lasting agreement. For the past few days we have been in touch with the Maoist-affiliated ANFTU through human rights activists. We also held direct talks with them. We had to wait for the government's response to the Maoist demands. There was also pressure from workers and industrialists who had given a deadline to open the industries by Friday, even if the ANFTU did not called off the closure.

So there won't be any more closures?

There is no guarantee as such. The student wing of the Maoist rebels had called off the strike in schools and yet schools in some areas continue to be affected. But we must be restrained and take the Maoist move positively. We have no choice but to trust that they will never obstruct industries again. On the top of that, this time we have received the Maoist leaders' commitment in black and white. We convinced them that in an age of globalisation if we close down industries we will always lag behind.

What are the accumulated losses of the past month of closures?

Everyday the government was losing around Rs 120 million in revenue. The industries have seen damages of around Rs 1.5 billion. We have yet to estimate the indirect losses to production, transportation, distribution and so many other sectors. Once the industries resume operations, perhaps the figures will be made public. More than 150,000 workers had been directly affected and many more indirectly.

Has the business community agreed to the Maoists' labour demands?

We have made commitments to discuss issues ANFTU has raised once industries reopen. Some of their demands related to the rights of workers may have been reasonable. But, given the circumstances we are living in and the trouble the economy is facing, we may not be in a position to fulfill all the demands even if we wish to. Other trade unionists have understood these problems and they have been cooperating. We believe that ANFTU will also understand the problems our industries are facing and cooperate.

Have you agreed to raise the minimum wage to Rs 5,000?

There have been no talks about wages, so far. We will continue our discussion with them as we did in the past.

But how will you talk to them if the government calls them terrorists?

We will request the government withdraw the red corner notice on the ANFTU leaders who will be sitting for talks with us. When we sit for talks, we will also involve other trade unions.

The government has blamed industrialists for helping boost the morale of the Maoists by closing down industries despite security assurances.

Nepalis today live with uncertainty. We are not safe even in our homes. Under such circumstances, how can we open our industries even if the government gives security assurances? It is not just about opening industries. We need to transport raw materials to our factories for manufacturing and later for distribution. It is impossible to work when there is the threat of violence.



Momo mania

AARTI BASNYAT

It's the classic image of monsoon—a plate of steaming, tender momos against a backdrop of the rain dripping off the eaves of your neighbourhood momo pasal. On a damp rainy day, Nepal's favourite snack takes the prize as the best warming device, no contest.

Still, although Kathmandu residents can probably claim the most momos eaten per capita or the most momo joints per square kilometre, the humble dumpling travelled a long way before arriving in the Valley.

Xi'an, the ancient Chinese city that served as the seat of 12 imperial Chinese capitals, is regarded as the home and birthplace of the great dumpling tradition. Dumplings were included in arrays of delicacies called dim sums, literally translating as 'to touch your heart'. Approximately 600 years ago, during the Ming dynasty, ear-shaped dumplings resembling the silver and gold ingots used as money began to appear. Called jiaozi, these became part of the traditional Chinese New Year celebrations.

Dumplings began their southward march across the Himalaya when traditional Chinese dishes were passed on to Tibet. There, they changed shape and were usually paired with a hot soup to ward off the cold. These hardy treats crossed the mountain passes into Nepal, and then down into Sikkim and beyond. The jiaozi also travelled north to Japan, where they are called gyoza. Momos today are

generally bite sized, although varieties range from kothey, which are the same shape as the ancient Chinese jiaozi, to open, palm-sized momos with a variety of fillings.

Everyone has their own favourite little momo spot, and debates can rage for hours on which size, shape, dough and filling is the best. The best, or worst, thing about momos in Kathmandu is that everyone has a different place where they claim the most delectable and juicy momos are served. It is impossible to list all these, but here we have tried to put together a comprehensive guide to the momo haunts of Kathmandu.

Nanglo Bakery

In Kathmandu's largest chain of restaurants, momos are the most popular dish. Nanglo even hosts an annual momo festival every February. This year, there were 18 different varieties to choose from. Nanglo's momos are remarkably consistent, being the same size and served with the same sauce in each of their outlets. The ingredients and sauce are prepared at the central

Darbar Marg kitchen and then distributed to the other branches to ensure that the customers receive the same product everywhere. Multiple locations and strict quality control have made Nanglo a household name.

Momo King and Jamal Junction

These two restaurants are managed by the same group but cater to very



ALL PICS: MIN BAJRACHARYA

different stratas of society. Momo King, despite its royal name, is aimed at the working class and students with affordable prices, combo meals and special offers. Momo King's momos are made at a centralised kitchen in Lazimpat, frozen and then distributed to the other outlets. US-trained restaurateur Mahendra Shakya explains that this is more hygienic and efficient and was inspired by McDonalds frozen fries and burgers. Jamal Junction at Kantipath caters more to the upper middle class, with freshly made momos, milder spices and higher prices. Between Jamal Junction and Momo King, you will definitely find momos to suit your palate and pocket.

Sui Mai Restaurant

Teku's Sui Mai restaurant gets its name from its renowned Sui Mai momos, which are different from everyday momos as they are open from the four corners on the top, making them square rather than your average everyday round dumpling. Sui Mai serves special momo sauces: peanut, tomato and green chilli. Take your pick, or take all three. Sui Mai momos are bestsellers and there is a special momo section in the kitchen just to keep up with the demand.

Divi's Delight

Divi's Delight is synonymous with 'C' momos, or chilli momos. Chef Narendra Thapaliya first invented these in 1985 while working at the Malla Hotel, where he noticed Chinese cooks using hot Sichuan sauce. Originally called Sichuan

momos, 'C' momos got their present name from voracious customers. Special Chinese spices (sorry, it's a secret) make Divi's Delight a hot favourite with people who love to have their taste buds tingling.

Momos and More

Momos and More in Battis Putali is the place to go if you have a discerning palate. As proprietor Niti Rana says, "Others cater to the mass, we cater to class." The speciality is the thinness of the blanket of dough, which makes the taste of the filling more prominent. Their two sauces—coriander with sesame paste, and a garlic chilli paste—are also a class apart.

Belle Momos

Belle Momos on Darbar Marg has a growing reputation for exquisite momos. The house speciality is the offer of 'Mongolian' and 'Aryan' versions of each filling. This is probably the only place where you can get garlic cheese, peanut paneer or special low-cholesterol momos, all part of Belle Momo's proud total of 25 varieties.

Dechenling Restaurant

Though popular for its Bhutani dishes, Dechenling offers a variety of momos including the dhapoo, a palm-sized dumpling with a very thick skin that has more yeast than average momo dough. In Dechenling, the dhapoo size has been reduced, though you can request for the original jumbo version. Dechenling also serves pan

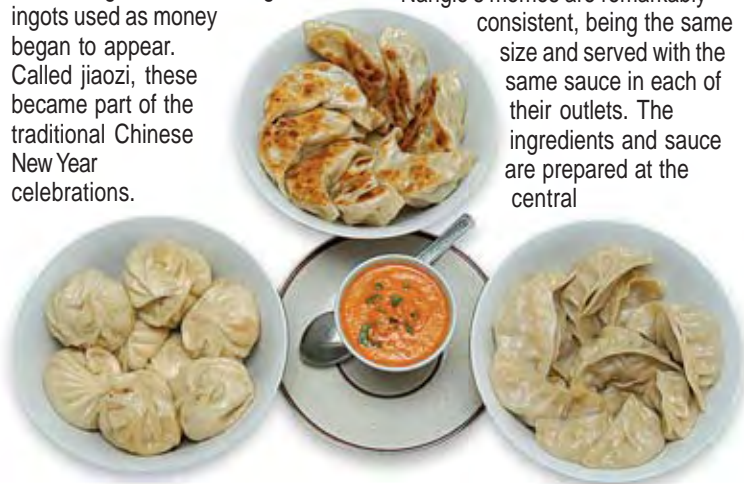
fried kothey and the traditional Newari momocha.

Jawalakhel Kitchen

Ever since Jawalakhel Kitchen opened two years ago, it has campaigned relentlessly—and deliciously—to take pork cuisine mainstream. Udhyan and Babita Rai's hole-in-the-wall establishment owes much of its success to its succulent pork momos, which tempt even the wariest of customers. Their reputation has spread, and often people hunt down the restaurant only to find they have to wait for a table—but one juicy momo later, all that is forgotten.

Everest Momo

Everest Momo is the original local galli momo. It caters to everybody: from taxi-drivers to schoolchildren to businessmen, and epitomises the momocha culture in Kathmandu. It started as a small local momo shop and now is a mega momo mall with a huge turnover. Very affordable, very accessible and taste that takes you to the top of the world.



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Girija

Decisive party

Editorial in *Rajdhani*, 14 September

राजधानी

The Maoists and the Nepali Congress are beginning to speak the same language. Both seem intent on pushing the country into darkness. The rebel leaders have refused to hold peace talks with the government led by the four parties, which Prachanda terms 'servants of the king'. To make matters worse, the Nepali Congress is now planning another 'decisive movement'. It looks like the country's oldest democratic party is supporting an undemocratic force. This is not the first time that Girija has called for a decisive movement. The political demonstrations led by NC have been going on for the last two years and the party has never stopped uttering the same phrase. So far, we have not seen any impact of the many phases of the so-called decisive movement. All it has done is get wide and sensational media coverage. The Nepali people have lost all interest in what the NC has to say, especially the man who has been leading the movement with a bogus and outdated agenda. Initially, the main focus of the people's movement was to restore the multi-party government and this has already taken place. The situation in the country has become so grave that neither Girija's decisive movement nor his old agenda can help solve it. It is high time the NC realises that such attitude and behaviour does not suit the largest national party. These games only suit small parties who come to the streets with opportunism. The NC still has a chance to take over the government in the future and run the country responsibly. This is their opportunity to gain mass support by doing something for the people instead of traumatising them further. But the direction the NC is heading, it is gradually losing its credibility and true identity and seems to be leaning towards the Maoist camp. How secure would people feel if this unarmed party aligned with the militarised party of the Maoists? Instead, if it can convince the Maoists to come out and join mainstream politics, the NC can restore its good faith and credibility. The NC should now wake up to the reality that the decisive movement won't help decide anything but its own ruin. For its own sake it better realise this sooner than later.



Find justice, not power

Kantipur, 16 September

कान्तिपुर

It was an unfortunate move on Girija Prasad Koirala's part to suggest relocating the Supreme Court inside the palace. He is definitely a respectable political leader and former prime minister, but it will never do him any good to think that he is above the system. He has made a deplorable display of himself by refusing to testify before the Commission for Investigation on Abuse of Authority (CIAA). Koirala publicly announced he would rather go to jail than answer to the CIAA. Whether he knows it or not, such a statement is both political and morally suicidal. If Koirala tries to prove his innocence by demonstrating his own power rather than taking the legal route, it will be the biggest mistake of his political career. The credibility he has gained as a politician over the past half-century will be lost. To reject and distrust the judicial body would only reflect his own moral defeat. This issue is a test of Koirala's democratic values and commitments. Democracy means everyone is equal, and nobody is above the system. This is something that Koirala is very aware of, as someone who has spent over five decades struggling for democracy. If he denies the court or the CIAA, it would clearly indicate that he has no respect for democracy. Koirala should trust the citizens. If the legal suit is purely an attempt to frame him because he is leading the movement, then the whole country will come to the streets in his defence. But first, Koirala has to face the judiciary body and show it respect. Citizens have a lot of faith in the CIAA for its fair justice system. If it acts with political intentions and lacks transparency instead of dispensing justice, then it will become subject to public wrath.

Escape

Drishti, 31 August – 6 September

दृष्टि

Three young girls from Dhankuta escaped from Maoist captivity and returned to their families. Sixteen-year-old Bina Rai, Phul Maya Rai and Asmita Biswakarma were kidnapped by Maoists in July from their houses in Aankhisalla village of Dhankuta. The rebels came to settle some disputes between villagers, and when they saw the three teenagers they asked them to come along. When the girls refused, the rebels threatened to behead them. The girls say the Maoists forced them to walk day and night, without anything to eat. They were guarded by sentries and when one of them said she was sick she was thrashed. If they refused to walk, the rebels would threaten to chop their legs off. Bina, Phulmaya and Asmita were then asked to perform sentry duty at a mountain camp. When everyone else was asleep, they ran off to the nearest road and boarded a bus to Dharan, where they went to the police. The girls say that many other young girls and boys are being kept in the rebel camps at gunpoint. Waiting for a chance to escape. A brother and sister escaped from the camp the same day they did.

Shiva's army

Samaya, 10 September

समय

After 'Nepal Shiva Sena', the Nepali edition of India's Hindu fundamentalist party took responsibility for all the mayhem and violence in Kathmandu on 1 September in reaction to the killing of 12 Nepali hostages in Iraq by a Muslim terrorist outfit, curiosity about this group has greatly increased. Kiran Singh Budathoki, the head of this outfit, has already admitted

that his organisation carried out attacks on the Muslim mosques and madrasas in the capital and other parts of the country. Subsequently, Budathoki went underground. A similarly named parallel organisation called Shiv Sena Nepal also exists headed by Arun Subedi. Subedi is considered to be the founder of Shiva Sena in Nepal. After the issue of religious secularism was raised while writing the 1990 constitution, Subedi formed a religious organisation called the Shiva Sena by putting yogi Narharinath, founding leader of Praja Parishad Ramhari Sharma and former prime minister Lokendra Bahadur Chanda in its honorary advisory board. But Subedi then registered this religious organisation as a party in the Election Commission in the year 1998. Initially, he had the support and blessing of India's Shiva Sena chieftain Bal Thakre, but after a rift between Budathoki and Subedi started growing inside the organisation, Thakre appointed Budathoki as a chairman of his party's Nepal branch. "Thakre sahib has recognised us as his true representative in Nepal, this is why we are the real Shiva Sena," Budathoki says. (*Nepalnews.com Translation Service*)

AIDS fund

Nepal Samacharpatra, 9 September

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

What does the government do when it gets a large amount of money from a donor? It pays another donor to help spend the money. The Ministry of Health is selecting a donor agency to implement projects funded by the Global Fund to fight AIDS. After Global Fund instructed the selection of a separate donor agency to look into the management of the AIDS program, and warned that the government wouldn't

get the millions if it didn't do so, the latter has given the responsibility to the United Nations office in Kathmandu. The Global Fund's deadline for selection of a Management Support Agency will lapse this month. After a long debate, the ministry finally selected the UN. (*Nepalnews.com Translation Service*)

Food supply

Kantipur, 15 September

कान्तिपुर

BAJURA – Impoverished farmer Dhan Singh had joined the 'Food for Work' program to feed his family. He worked several months and, on completion of his assignment, went down to Sanfe. On the way home, Maoists looted the food he was carrying for his wife and children. "What am I going to do now?" Dhan weeps out of frustration. "My family has not eaten for days." More than 95 poor labourers like Dhan lost 67 quintals of rice after the Maoists looted them as they carried their loads back home. "My family is waiting desperately for me to bring food home," says Khale Chadra, wiping away his tears, "I don't know how to face them. I'd rather hang myself."

Survival is difficult here at the best of times, but with the insurgency food supplies from the Food Supply Corporation are being looted by Maoists. The government allocates about 60,000-65,000 quintals for this district. Besides looting, regular strikes and road blockades also prevent the food from reaching food-deficit villagers. Large stocks of food grains are stuck in the godowns while the villagers in remote areas are left to starve. Last year, the Maoists raided the godown and looted more than 6,000 quintals of rice. Due to the Maoist conflict, agricultural production has dropped by almost 30 percent. Bajura needs at least 170,000 tons of rice annually for its 70,000 population.



Prime minister returns from India

जन भावना *Jana Bhawana*, 13 September

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



"The Maoists are worse than terrorists."

CPN-UML leader KP Sharma Oli in *Kantipur*, 15 September

No reason to fight anymore

Pradip Nepal in *Rajdhani*, 12 September

राजधानी

This is the first time India has so openly admitted the need to suppress the Maoists. If the agreement between the prime ministers of India and Nepal on resolving the Maoist issue is accurate, then the rebels will finally have to admit that their rationale for revolution is no longer valid.

The Maoists used to roam freely in India. At one time they used to meet Nepali political leaders pretty openly in India. Now, Comrade Kiran is in jail in Silguri, a dozen comrades are behind bars in Patna, CP Gajurel is in detention in Madras with the Indian government showing no interest in releasing him and the Indians are tightening the border—all these developments must be worrying for the Maoists. They have only themselves to blame for destroying their international support base and they will have to pay a heavy price to rebuild that support.

In Nepal, they have made enemies of all the political parties, but they had parties with which they had strategic alliances. But they have been alienating themselves even from these allies. If the Nepali Congress stalwarts are right, then the Maoists are now intent on finding a safe landing through Girija Prasad Koirala.

Koirala is the fountainhead of the Maoist revolution in Nepal. After all, it was he who squandered the country's democratic gains and gave the Maoists the chance to grow between 1992-1994. How can someone

who was responsible for the Maoist problem be entrusted with finding a solution to it? More so, at a time when they have nothing to give him?

One of the political characteristics of the Maoist party is opportunism. True, this is not necessarily bad in politics. It is difficult to fault the politically bankrupt Maoists to use others as they have before. But the question is: are the Maoists using Koirala or is he using them? If the Maoist intellectuals analyse the situation honestly, it is clear that the Maoists are being used. They used King Birendra against Girija Koirala, and actually began the process of regression. In order to use India, they refused to criticise it for a long time, but later when they had no use for it



MIN. BAJRACHARYA

so they began abusing India.

Now, the Maoists are saying they will not negotiate with the "servants" of the king. In fact, they'd rather talk to Koirala! Pure opportunism. By using Koirala against Deuba, the Maoists are shooting themselves in the foot. There is no basis to negotiate with Koirala now, and negotiating with the king would be suicidal for them.

This is the best time the Maoists have ever had to start negotiations. Such an opportunity will not return. The present government is willing to consider all three demands: constituent assembly, roundtable conference and interim government. The maximum flexibility comes from agreeing to discuss constituent assembly.

The journey of politics is never endless. It has to have a destination, a goal. The Maoists must honestly ask themselves: what is their goal? Is it their 'new democracy'? Then they might as well accept that it is impossible. If it is genuine democracy, then that is achievable by peaceful means. There is no point fighting about it.

The government is dragging its feet on peace. It can't use Maoist stonewalling as an excuse. The ministers must realise that unless they take the peace process forward, they will cease to exist because this government's sole mandate is peace. If this government falls, the king is not about to talk to the Maoists either.

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- Close your eyes and think, "Am I a part of the problem or a part of the solution?"

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Povertycrats, population and the poor

Economic growth and good governance are the best contraceptives

Remember those warnings about how unbridled population growth was a bomb ticking away? Well, the dire scenario did not materialise. The current world population of 6.4 billion scarcely burdens the earth's carrying capacity and technological advances ensure that even with the world adding 100 million people each year, "overpopulation" isn't going to result in Malthusian famines and related catastrophes.

OPINION
Pranay Gupte



But try telling this to the United Nations and its clueless financial supporters in the Europe who continue hammering on the theme and have, however unintentionally, assisted in generating one of the biggest

scams to hit the international community—one that has cost taxpayers billions of dollars to sustain bureaucracies and NGOs supposedly dedicated to population control and reproductive health.

Between UN expenditures and those of individual governments and NGOs, some \$11 billion is spent each year on population-related matters. That is more than a fourth of what all 135 countries of the Third World receive annually in foreign aid, and almost a tenth of what they get each year in foreign direct investment and foreign institutional investment in their equity markets. And the great population scam is all set to enter a new stage.

Last week, thousands of politicians, diplomats and academicians gathered in London for a three-day conference to lament the world's allegedly rapid population growth. They are flying first class or business class, they are being put up in luxurious lodgings, they are being feted at restaurants—and international taxpayers are footing the bill. Without doubt, the participants will authorise the creation of yet another mechanism for lucrative jobs for favoured Third Worlders to attend to the twin "problems" of population and development.

The en vogue nomenclature is no longer 'population control' after objections that it suggested neo-colonialism. Today's favoured phrase is 'reproductive health'. It was popularised at the UN's population conference in Cairo in 1994. The London meeting marks the 10th anniversary of the Cairo talkfest. The argument, in essence, is: A poor nation cannot progress unless its population size is commensurate with the country's ability to provide adequate education, employment and municipal services. The solution? Distribution of more condoms and the pill, sex education at schools, better public awareness of infectious sexual malignancies.

At the London conference, there were calls to create an international super-agency to coordinate global efforts concerning social development. There's plenty of money available for this new bureaucracy: the Nordics, the Dutch and the Japanese have informally pledged millions of dollars. Indonesia, Bangladesh, Egypt and the Philippines may chip in. Even conservative Saudi Arabia is likely to cough up cash.

Is it really necessary to create yet another bureaucracy? Third World countries don't need the altruism of foreign bodies and their highly compensated consultants. It's culturally insulting—and historically erroneous—to say that poor people everywhere will keep producing children because of unrestrained libidos.

Four critical elements are necessary to accelerate sustainable development in poor nations:

- The mobilisation of domestic resources by the private sector
- The inflow of more FDI for strengthening infrastructure and expanding agrobusiness
- More foreign and local investment in securities markets
- Widening education, particularly of female children

Anthropology suggests that people will always respond positively to economic and educational opportunities—and adjust family size accordingly. Few parents wish to have children whom they cannot feed.

For three decades I have known the leading *dramatis personae* of the population and development business. Some of them became friends. But, in the end, many of them turned out to be frauds, however clever, however charming. For them, social development has meant self-aggrandisement. This international class of povertycrats, regrettably, has only a promising future to look forward to.

● (The Straits Times)



The population

The threat of a population explosion is regional rather than global

DONALD G MCNEIL in NEW YORK

Remember the population bomb, the fertility explosion set to devour the world's food and suck up or pollute all its air and water? Its fuse has by no means been plucked, but over the last three decades, much of its Malthusian detonation power has leaked out.

Birthrates in developed countries have sunk below the levels needed for their populations to replace themselves, the typical age of marriage and pregnancy has risen and the use of birth control has soared. The threat is now more regional than global, explosive only in places like India and Pakistan. Ever since 1968, when the UN Population Division predicted that the world population would grow to at least 12 billion by 2050, the agency has regularly revised its estimates downward. Now it expects population to plateau at nine billion.

Where did those billions go? Millions of babies have died, some from AIDS, far more from malaria, diarrhoea, pneumonia or measles. More millions have been aborted, either to avoid birth or, as in China and India, to avoid giving birth to a girl. But even AIDS and abortion are drops in the demographic bucket. The real missing billions are the babies who were simply never conceived.

They weren't conceived because their would-be elder brothers and sisters survived, or because women's lives improved. In the rich West, Mom went to college and decided that putting three children through graduate school would be unaffordable. In the poor parts of the globe, Mom found a sweatshop job and didn't need a fifth child to fetch firewood.

"On a farm, children help with the pigs or chickens," explained Joseph Chamie, director of the UN Population Division. Nearly half the world's people live in cities now, he said, "and when you move to a city, children are not as helpful."

Beyond that, simple public health measures like dams for clean water, vitamins for pregnant women, hand-washing for midwives, oral rehydration salts for babies, vaccines for youngsters and antibiotics helped double world life expectancy in the 20th century, to 60 years from 30. More surviving children means less incentive to give birth as often. As late as 1970, the world's median fertility level was 5.4 births per woman. In 2000, it was 2.9. Barring war, famine, epidemic or disaster, a country needs a birthrate of 2.1 children per woman to hold steady.

The best-known example of shrinkage is Italy, whose women were once symbols of

Population growth is still an issue

Global population, now 6.4 billion, is still growing by 76 million persons per year. By 2050, the United Nations projects the world will add some 2.5 billion people, an amount equal to the world's total population in 1950.

Growth has slowed since it peaked in the mid-1990s at around 82 million annually. The average family size worldwide has declined from six children per woman in 1960 to around three today, as family planning has become more accessible and widely used. Projections suggest total population will start to level off by the middle of this century, as fertility drops to replacement level or lower.

But some countries will reach that point much later than others. Those with young populations (due to high fertility in the recent past) will continue to grow for decades even with smaller families as the norm. The number of adolescents, aged 10-19, is at an all-time high of 1.2 billion.

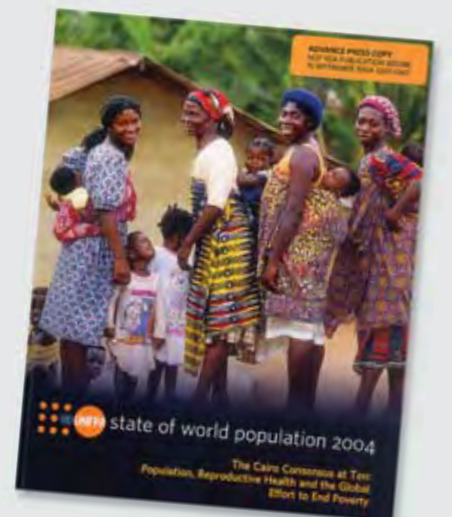
And in the poorest countries, where fertility and mortality remain high and access to family planning is limited, the transition to smaller families is only just beginning. The 50 least-developed countries are expected to grow by 228 percent, to 1.7 billion by 2050.

Countries where fertility has fallen sharply will see a dramatic ageing of their populations in the decades ahead, a trend already well under way in developed countries and a major policy concern.

Ninety-six percent of the projected growth will be in developing countries. The populations of Europe and Japan are now declining, and the pace of

decline is projected to double by 2010-2015. North America continues to grow at about 1 percent annually, mostly because of immigration.

Today's population estimates and growth projections are lower than those made a decade ago, largely because the impact of HIV/AIDS in Africa have been worse than previously projected and growth in the developed countries has declined faster. The 38 African countries most affected by HIV/AIDS are projected to have 823 million people in 2015, 91 million fewer than if no AIDS deaths had occurred.



The United Nations' projections of slower population growth assume that more couples will be able to choose to have smaller families. This will require greater investments to ensure wider access to reproductive health information and services, including family planning. ●

Excerpt from UNFPA State of World Population 2004

bomb is a dud

fecundity because of the country's peasant traditions and its Roman Catholicism, which rejects birth control. By 2000, Italy's fertility rate was Western Europe's lowest, at 1.2 births per woman. Its population is expected to drop 20 percent by mid-century. Italy plummeted right past wealthy, liberal, Protestant Denmark, where women got birth control early.

Denmark was below population replacement level in 1970, at 2.0 births per woman, and slid to 1.7 by 2001. In Europe's poorest country, Albania, the 1970 rate of 5.1 births per woman fell to 2.1 in 1999. Even in North Africa, regarded as the great exception to the shrinking population trend, birthrates have dropped somewhat.

Chamie says the numbers refute the "myth of Muslim fertility"—an unfair characterisation, he says, that will disappear as the lives of Muslim women ease. Jordanians had eight children per woman in the 1960s—now the rate is 3.5. In Tunisia and Iran, the number may be close to two children. Old notions of Asian fertility are similarly false. China has pushed its fertility rate below that of France, Japan's population is withering with age and after South Korea, a mostly rural country with six births per woman during the 1950s, now has 1.17 births per woman.

Alarmed by the trends, many countries are paying citizens to get pregnant. Australia introduced \$2,000-per-baby subsidies in that country's 2004 budget, with treasurer Peter Costello telling fellow citizens to "go home and do your patriotic duty tonight." Japanese prefectures arrange singles' cruises. Unique among developed countries, the United States has little need to finance romance because its birthrate has held steady at 2.13 per woman. Its growth, about three million people a year, is mostly fuelled by immigration.

Half the world's population growth is in six countries: India, Pakistan, Nigeria,



Indonesia, Bangladesh and China. That makes forecasting trickier than it was in 1968, when Paul Ehrlich frightened everyone with his book *The Population Bomb*. Fertility shifts in individual countries are notoriously unpredictable and local changes can be even harder to predict.

Ehrlich, a professor of population studies and biology at Stanford, says he was "pleasantly surprised" by global changes that have undermined the book's gloomiest projections. They include China's one-child policy and the rapid adoption of better seeds and fertilisers by Third World farmers, meaning that more mouths can be fed. But Ehrlich still argues that the earth's "optimal population size" is two billion. That's different from the maximum supportable size, which depends on the consumption of resources.

"I have severe doubts that we can support even two billion if they all live like citizens of the US," he said. "The world can support a lot more vegetarian saints than Hummer-driving idiots." ● (NYT)

Anwar's comeback in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR — Although Malaysia's top dissident politician Anwar Ibrahim failed this week to make an immediate political comeback after the Federal Court rejected his application to review and overturn his conviction on corruption, the former deputy prime minister will likely remain a force in the country's pro-democracy movement.

Malaysia's highest court, which two weeks ago quashed a sodomy conviction against Anwar and freed him from almost six years in jail, denied a request to re-hear his appeal against his final charge of corruption. The former deputy premier said both convictions were trumped up by his former boss, then prime minister Mahathir Mohamad, to ruin his political career.

As a convicted felon, Anwar, 57, is barred by election laws from contesting or holding political office for five years from date of release or until April 2008 but he can be a political adviser, organiser, inspirer and mover—in short the power that pushes the government to democratise and liberalise society from the strong-arm tactics of Mahathir's long 22-year rule.

Anwar is ideally suited to head the opposition Alternative Front coalition that is now led by the Parti Islam se Malaysia or PAS, whose hardline Islamic policies had divided opposition ranks and frightened voters during the March election into backing the government of new Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

But unlike PAS leaders, the former deputy premier is against an Islamic theocracy in a multi ethnic society like Malaysia. (IPS)



EU has new aid chief

Belgian foreign minister Louis Michel says his country's commitment to international cooperation and a wide network of contacts would ensure success in his new job as the EU commissioner for development and humanitarian aid.

Michel, deputy prime minister and foreign minister of Belgium since 1999, was nominated last month to take over from Poul Nielson for the new commission term beginning November. But like other commissioners, Michel has to answer a series of questions about his suitability for the job from members of the European Parliament (MEPs).

In the run-up to the parliamentary hearings at the end of the month, each commissioner designate has completed a written questionnaire drawn up by the concerned parliamentary committee saying what they hope to achieve during their five-year term.

In the first part of the two-part questionnaire, Michel says his recent experience as foreign minister 'will be used to maximum effect' in his new development cooperation portfolio.

"As Belgium's foreign minister I advocated 'preventive diplomacy' and conflict prevention, backed up by the budgets necessary for credible diplomatic action," he writes.

Throughout the questionnaire, Michel points to Belgium's dedication to development policy and says Belgium has led the way in the development field with pledges to increase official development assistance to 0.7 percent of GNP by 2010.

His country also pioneered the establishment of a European frame of reference for combating terrorism and launched a debate on the root causes of terrorism during the Belgian Presidency of the EU in 2001 and the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States.

"I am particularly keen to obtain recognition in the South for civil society, including national parliaments, and its role in a democratic society. My country has invested heavily in this area in recent years and built up a body of know-how that I will not hesitate to share with the Commission," Michel writes. (IPS)

(www.europarl.eu.int/hearings/commission/2004_comm/questionnaires_en.htm)

सोशल साइन्स बहा
SOCIAL SCIENCE BHA

CALL FOR PAPERS

Nepal Tarai: Context and Possibilities
March 2005

Among the many neglected arenas of national discourse in Nepal have been issues related to the Tarai, encompassing a vast range of subjects from development to environment, from identity and rights to infrastructure and economic advancement. The Tarai has also been neglected for much too long as a subject of social-scientific inquiry, and this has ultimately affected the population living in this region.

Acknowledging this reality, the Social Science Baha is holding a two-day conference entitled 'Nepal Tarai: Context and Possibilities' to deal with overarching issues with required depth, bringing together experienced scholars even while trying to generate interest among young academics to the study of this dynamic region.

Themes to be covered
Identity-language politics, Political economy of the Nepal Tarai, Pahade-Madhese (hills-plains) interface, Religion and Cross-border issues.

Substantive issues to be covered
The peopling of the Nepal Tarai, modern demographic trends, the politics of citizenship, 'open border', interface with Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh, economy, industrialisation, hill-plain interaction, evolving inter-community relations, Terai development issues, and other related subjects.

In particular, the Baha also calls for papers that will deal with the core issue to be addressed by the conference, viz: how to go about 'including' the Nepal Tarai and its population within the Nepali state.

Abstracts (1 page, 12-pt font size) are requested by October 18, 2004.

For the detailed Call for Papers and other information, contact Ajaya Mali at baha@himalassociation.org or call 5542544/5548142.

The Call for Papers as well as background on the Social Science Baha can also be downloaded at www.himalassociation.org/baha

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), an independent humanitarian organization whose mandate is to provide protection and assistance for victims of armed conflict and internal disturbances has regularly vacancies for:

INTERPRETERS/TRANSLATORS (NEPALI SPEAKING FOREIGNER ONLY)

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- Oral interpretation: from Nepali to English, and English to Nepali during confidential interviews with persons detained in prisons, ICRC institutional dissemination and visits to families of detainees
- Written translation: translation of written Nepali (newspaper articles, correspondence, etc.) into written English
- Analysis and reporting: analysis of conditions of detention, general situation and other matters relating to the ICRC's mandate

Selection requirements

- Ideal age: 25 to 35
- Either single or prepared to accept an unaccompanied posting of at least one year
- University education or 5 years of professional experience
- Excellent command of English, French an asset
- Familiarity with word processing and spreadsheet software
- Driving license (a license for automatic-transmission vehicles only is not sufficient)

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- Strongly motivated by humanitarian work
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Interested candidates are invited to send their CV with a cover letter, a recent photograph, copy of certificates, a contact telephone number and the ICRC application form (available on the website www.icrc.org) to the following address:

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Deputy Head of Delegation
International Committee of the Red Cross
Meen Bhawan, Naya Baneshwor
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Phone: 4482 285/4492 679
e-mail: katmandu.kat@icrc.org; www.icrc.org

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Thinking big

Big muscles are the power center

Stand on any practice driving range and you will be witness to an oddly recurring event: golfers weighing over 2400 ounces (150 pounds) lurching and lunging in an attempt to crush a small ball that doesn't weigh more than 1.62 ounces (45.93 gm).

All golfers I know dream of hitting the ball yards longer. While trying to accomplish generating more power, the lesser-skilled golfers often try to manipulate the club in order to make it move faster, and simply due to a lack of technique, they never achieve what they want and get frustrated.

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



As a prerequisite to straight and long ball striking, one must have adequate knowledge on how the swing can be empowered to generate maximum club head speed and hit the ball with the square club face, all done while maintaining balance. A higher club head speed increases distance, whereas the square club face and balance promotes accuracy.



Here is what needs to be done. To generate more club head speed, full use must be made of the bigger muscles of the shoulders and hips. You really don't have to be tall and strong, just use those bigger muscles properly. Don't fall into the trap of using your hands to whip at the ball in the belief that it can increase distance. All this usually results in is a lack of distance with weak contact.

On the back swing, your shoulders should turn 90 degrees or more to the target line, and the hips should simultaneously turn back about 45 degrees. While doing this, your spine angle should not vary, it should remain the same as in the address position. This is what helps create centrifugal force on the downswing, and promotes maximum club head speed to generate more distance in your shots.

I am not trying to minimize the importance of the downswing to hit the ball. The down swing is equally if not more important to proper shot making. However it is a good back swing that paves the way for a proper downswing. Once you have a solid shoulder and hip turn on the backswing, you're on the right track.

You are strongly recommended to start the downswing dropping the right shoulder and simultaneously rotating the hips. This helps the club to come down on the right plane (from inside) to hit the ball with a square club face.

You should remember one more thing. Keep your head behind the ball till impact, and then finish your swing on the left foot.

Work on the proper use of the big muscles with your favourite professional instructor and you can be sure your ball is going to pitch yards longer than ever before. ●

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

Beautiful game of politics

In football, you can threaten the ref and change his decision

ROB HUGHES

In London last weekend, a referee admitted to being bullied by the protests of Arsenal defenders to change his mind and reverse a decision he had already made.

When the referee Mark Halsey instantly indicated a penalty at Fulham's revamped ancient Craven Cottage stadium, nine out of 10 of us at the grounds agreed with the judgment. Arsenal's Ashley Cole had tackled high and late, and Fulham's Andy Cole was brought to ground.

By the letter of FIFA's law, it looked a clear penalty, and an automatic red card for the offender preventing a goalscoring opportunity.

But as the Arsenal players gathered around him, the arbiter was swayed by their vehemence. He walked 40 yards to his linesman, turned away, called the two captains to him, and then simply dropped the ball down for Arsenal to boot it away.

The alarming thing here was that a paid arbiter admits his judgment was swayed by players. A century of rule, during which it was considered unethical to argue with the referee, and a waste of breathe because referee's never change

their mind in the face protest, is undone.

Meanwhile, in Tel Aviv, wider principles are at stake. The Israeli soccer federation has worked hard to earn a place on soccer's global playing field. Arab opposition, and security fears, prevented Israel from participating in Asia, but Europe opened its tournaments to the Jewish nation.



Wednesday heralded the Israeli staging of a Champions League group on home territory. Maccabi Tel Aviv anticipated a 40,000 audience against Bayern Munich. The Bayern Munich coach, Felix Magath, said Sunday he would select striker Vahid Hashemian for the squad. Mohammad Derakhshan, representing Iran's

Physical Training Organization, was quoted Monday as saying, "The presence of an Iranian athlete as an individual or as part of a team" going to Israel "is forbidden according to the policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

Later that day, Hashemian suddenly developed back pain and, for medical reasons alone insisted Bayern, he was ruled out. Israel last week prevented a Palestinian team from traveling with a full team to play Uzbekistan in World Cup qualification. The match, a 'home' tie for the Palestinians, but played in Qatar because of security, was lost 0-3, by the Palestinians. Their soccer federation complained that "every day, five of our players would come to the border only to be sent back". Israel reportedly said the reason was "general security alert" and when the Palestinians asked FIFA to "stop Israel mixing politics with sports," the Palestinian federation claims that FIFA requested it to "cooperate and play the game".

Fair Play is FIFA's slogan. Fair and free playing pitches are not available in the Middle East. ● (IHT)

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"A story becomes important only after the worst is over. In this case the death of the 12 captured Nepalis." Charisma K Lepcha

May Day M_AydAy

POETIC LICENSE
Wayne Amtzis

Homeless, in a land no longer anyone's; as if banished at birth, parted from lives yet to be lived
Abused...by those closing in by those closest to them, those who flee...flee as fast as, as far as. Half a world away, a stamp on a passport mistaken for a quadrant of light, a bellyful of time. These hands (on a clock) invariably a stump that twitches

Heart-fused to sunder ties, rage readies itself with sermons
Yoked beneath rage-raised hands phalanx-ed cries rise in demon supplication
The ones with jagged breath have us. With sap to sweeten the wounds (*Cruelty has no excuse, is no excuse*) the tall-tellers, their centipede tongues numbed, the tale-tellers, in public rites of disavowal make their excuses, nonetheless
As the land breaks open from below, each charge rooted in stone, usurps its source. Down through the bone marrow, fever feeds and thrives. In the onslaught, in the roiling tide as it turns, we... with enough vision to wrestle bones free of flesh, enough voice to rung-clamor higher, to unknot the knots that nail us, we flail and scratch... anticipating our loss, each helping hand skinned as it reaches. In the morning of mourning everyone sees what is lost

Headlines torn from the wound
In the newspaper morgues there's no way to raise the dead. How suspicious!
Grief gags on the *Ka! Kha! Ga!* of Xplanation
At the base camp for oddities and omens, the heart's half-life woozes away
Brute lack pervades. At least humanity's tent (sic) is no mirage. You will be able, as before, to be as before. Off on your own Odyssey
Like the clumsiest of cocks
been there done that, your swamped enigmas surface in the fish-bowls of the poets
Teeth jiggling in your pocket the choice is yours, coal-eyed tooth gatherers
It's a saw-toothed sleepwalk or nothing. There's no end to dead ends
Escape never lasts. Cause of death: being there (necessary) being Nepali (sufficient).

Bone-jagged scrawls, gutted, incandescent screams, graffiti-like entrails... There are no guides here
This is no dark wood for parables

THE HOUR

Battered down, bunkered heart, stone in a fist: how can words drain the wounds?
Some names can no longer be spoken
Some bodies can no more be named
Scavengers too late, dogs and crows already gone, the sentry's seared eyes name you
Anyone could be done in —randomly —deliberately
Gone wrong/ can't be put right. Day, burden; night, burden. It sinks in. Orphaned, this unwanted now never stops. Brute incomprehension buries all. With a ready harvest of moon-dimmed eyes, we play deaf and dumb. Leveling the field, we play lord of the mountain, king of the hill. In this sullen shifting twilight, only doe-like beauties, hawking soap & lotion, appease weary wakeful Kathmandu
Beggars know the hour. As leaders reissue manifestos of blame & praise, the bottom bottoms out, the bottomless takes hold. Fretful, yet above it all
Addicted to, yet dismissive of all and any news, are you sure neither Manjushri's sword nor a tectonic shift...
So sure? The capital...the citadel... can't be taken?
Sandbagged. Dug in. *Are you sure?*

Two books

One that shows us why Nepalis have been legally shackled for so long, another that shows us how to break free

There are many historical reasons why Nepal is presently stuck in its under-developed state, and the Muluki Ain is one of them. The recent re-publication Andrés Höfer's *The Caste Hierarchy and the State in Nepal: A Study of the Muluki Ain of 1854* underscores this point.

REVIEW
Shanta Dixit



As a legal document, the Muluki Ain helped preserve the socio-cultural status quo as defined by the Hindu elite rulers in Kathmandu. Put in place by Jang Bahadur, it legitimised the culture which differentially conferred rights and privileges on Nepalis. As Höfer's commentary makes clear, the inter-mixing of communities was seen with alarm, which is why so much of the Muluki Ain deals with punishment for contact (especially sexual, but also otherwise) across caste-ethnic barriers.

The Muluki Ain legally validated the caste system as perhaps nowhere else in the world, to suit 'the terrain, time, customs... practices' without questioning these customs and practices. Some say the Muluki Ain helped unify Nepal by categorising and bringing all communities of this diverse land under one law, but it froze the time for over a century. It alienated large sections of society, without even giving them the vocabulary to articulate such alienation.

The Muluki Ain preserved the privileges of the Court of Councillors which signed the document into existence and consisted of nobles, high ranking officers, the royal preceptor and priests. Jang Bahadur may have wanted to bring Nepal under one legal framework, but he ended up entrenching the hierarchy.

What is also interesting is that the Muluki Ain existed for over 100 years (1854-1963)

without any changes while the British Raj came and went in India. The formal Hinduisation of Nepal under the Muluki Ain created two categories of citizens: the 'tagadharis' of the upper-most rungs who monopolised privilege, and the 'matwali' (today's 'janajati') and the 'lower' castes. A majority of Nepalis were kept from realising their own self-worth or potential. Meanwhile, the privileged were indulged, with punishment that did not match the crime, with concessions that did not fit their behaviour. The Muluki Ain was a centralising document with a myopic vision of Nepali society.

Contrast this with the American Constitution, drafted only 67 years before the Muluki Ain. It, too, was drafted by a few people, but it was designed to build the foundations of a democratic and egalitarian society, based on the philosophical underpinnings of European political thought. In Nepal, the Muluki Ain gave us a country that Nepal has come to be socially, culturally and economically. Human potential has been squandered, and the country is still grappling with even a basic concept such as equality of its citizens.

Kumar Pradhan, the historian from Siliguri, in delivering the Mahesh Chandra Regmi Lecture last month made the point that the cultural leadership in the Darjeeling hills is shared between Nepalis of all backgrounds: hill janajati, dalit, Newar and parbate. This is in stark contrast to the home country where power remains the monopoly of the tagadharis. This is what the Muluki Ain did: Nepalis could seek inclusive, egalitarian society only by leaving Nepal.

The same week that Pradhan spoke, another book was launched in Kathmandu, *Ropeways in Nepal*. The hall was packed, the language was Nepali even though the book was English. Contributors to the book explained the value of various kinds of ropeways for

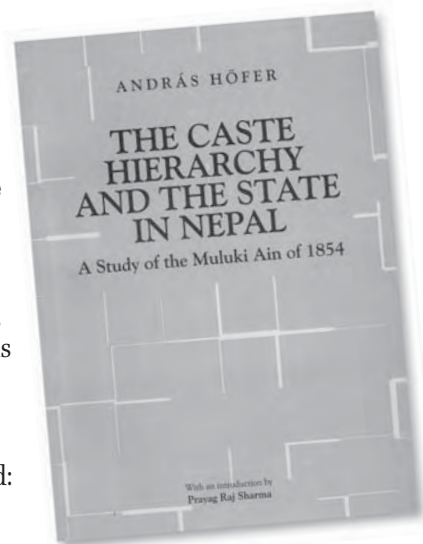
Nepal and how we missed opportunities of the past by failing to see the obvious: using cable cars to transport goods in Nepal's rugged terrain.

The ropeways hold out the possibility of reversing hill poverty, giving marginalised hill farmers a break. A ropeway-based transport economy would reduce dependency on petroleum and provide the opportunity to develop indigenous hydropower. No wonder the Kathmandu-centric government and the development industry are not talking about ropeways.

Nepal's senior planner also spoke on the occasion, and his words took the audience right back 150 years. He said there was no demand for ropeways, whereas there was a huge demand for trucks and cars. Ropeways were expensive to build, while we could build roads with food for work.

Enough said. Nothing has changed since the Muluki Ain was passed. Even Jang Bahadur, as an astute man of the times, would have despaired. ●

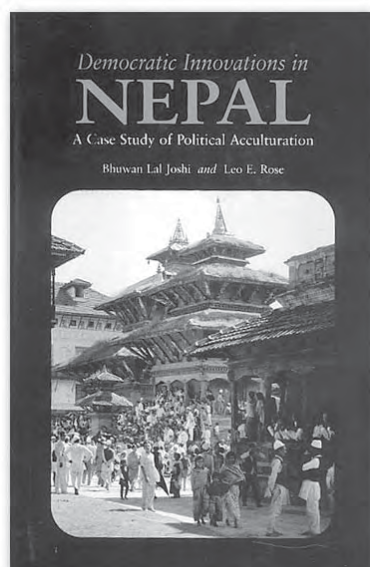
Shanta Dixit is an educationist.



Andrés Höfer
The Caste Hierarchy and the State in Nepal
A Study of the Muluki Ain of 1854

With introduction by Prayag Raj Sharma
Himal Books Classics 2004
Pp 238+xxiii
Rs 650

BOOKWORM



Democratic Innovations in Nepal
Bhuwan Lal Joshi and Leo E. Rose
Mandala Publications, 2004
Rs 890

What happens when a highly segmented, traditional society begins to experiment with modern, basically alien political concepts in order to accelerate national development? This is the question that Joshi and Rose attempt to answer in *Democratic Innovations in Nepal*. This is a detailed, objective examination of the political process, during the first fourteen years following the 1950 revolution. Though the empirical focus of the book is restricted to Nepal's political acculturation to a democratic form of government, it also serves as a prototype for the study of politics in many Afro-Asian countries.

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



KIRAN PANDAY

SMALL TALK: Crown Prince Paras and Princess Himani at an award-giving function for noted sports personalities at the Dasarath Stadium on Monday.



KIRAN PANDAY

LET US PRAY: Devotees at the pray at the Jama Masjid mosque in Kathmandu last Friday



MIN BAJRACHARYA

TALKING TOUGH: Information Minister Mohamad Mohsin addressed a press conference on Wednesday at Singha Darbar, but gave no hint of a breakthrough in opening the industries forced to close by the Maoists. The announcement came later that evening.



KIRAN PANDAY

HISPANIOLA: Musicians belt out Mexican music at the Tapas and Margaritas extravaganza at the Yak & Yeti last weekend.



KIRAN PANDAY

PANCHA KANYA: One of five girls wait nervously to welcome royal guests at a funtion at Dasarath Stadium on Monday.

Tij with Bandana

No woman should be tested to prove her loyalty to her husband, and that is the only thing journalist Bandana Rana has against the Tij festival that falls on Friday. After feasting on Thursday, many women will fast the whole of the next day to show their devotion to their husbands.

Bandana says Tij is about celebrating womanhood, the coming together of sisters and friends to be free to sing, dance and celebrate. "Fasting is up to the individual, though no one should be coerced into it," she adds.

Bandana is a well-known face because of her job as a news anchor on Nepal Television, but few know about her pioneering role in encouraging women to join the media by training them and upgrading their professional skills. She got together with other women journalists to set up Sancharika Samuha in 1996, which has now grown to over 100 members all over the country. The idea is to train men and women journalists to be more gender sensitive—not an easy job in a patriarchal society like Nepal. For example, how does a reporter cover violence against women while ensuring that the publicity does not further stigmatise the victim?

She too modest to take all the credit for it, but Bandana thinks there has been a huge improvement in the way Nepali media covers gender issues today. Bandana describes herself as a feminist, but admits it is very different from the radical feminism in the west. "It doesn't mean being anti-men, for instance, it just means working towards equality between the sexes," she explains.

Bandana's ideal would be a Tij festival that celebrates womanhood without having to making it an excuse for doing it for the menfolk. She adds: "This Tij, how about husbands also fasting on Friday for the well-being of their wives?" ● (Aarti Basnyat)



MIN BAJRACHARYA



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"Lata ko desh ma gaando tanderi." (In a land of fools, even a man with a bad goatee can be a hero.)



The Adventures of HEROJIG
HELLO. NAMASSTHAY!
by jiggy gaton
Wuz up?

On arrival home, our Hero visits the little known Wailing Masked Wall of Sunakothi and begs the question:
"What can we do better?"



"Be kind."
"Be Generous."
"Help others."
"Meditate."



and bring back more original Levis?

KE GARNE? WHATEVER.
But be a Heroji - Pay homage.
"Nothing is so fatal to religion as indifference."
-- Edmund Burke (1729-1797)
British statesman and political thinker
Next change:
Herojig and the "mutt" survey the damage.

HeroJig's Adventures can also be seen at www.extreme-nepal.com

#37 © 2061 by jiggy gaton - read. love. write.

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Historic Pillar Stones** Photographs by Tim Harward. 16-24 September, Siddhartha Art Gallery. 4218048
- ❖ **Insignificant Details of Life** Paintings by Mark Jordans. 16-24 September, Siddhartha Art Gallery. 4218048
- ❖ **Images of the Terai** Paintings by SC Suman at Indigo Gallery, 18 September-3 October, 8AM-6PM daily. 4413580, www.asianart.com/indigo



EVENTS

- ❖ **Moments of Bliss** Concert by Ani Choying Dolma. 6.30 PM on 18 September, at Garden of Dreams, Keshar Mahal. Rs 750.
- ❖ **Movies** 2PM onwards at the Alliance Francaise: Les nuits fauves, 19 September
- ❖ **Discussions at Martin Chautari:** Current Polictics. 19 September, 3PM
How to improve quality of air service. 21 September, 5PM
Film@Chautari—Michael Curtiz's *Casablanca*. 23 September, 3PM
- ❖ **Rotary walkathon 2004** Starting 7AM from Kathmandu through Patan and Thimi to Bhaktapur and starting 7AM from Dhulikhel through Banepa to Bhaktapur. 25 September, to aid Bhaktapur Cancer Hospital.
- ❖ **Changa Chait 2061** Kite flying at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot. 25 September, 2 and 16 October. Rs 100. 4410432
- ❖ **Pippin** the Stephen Schwartz musical at Lincoln School, 7PM on 28 September. Rs 150, reservations at 4270482
- ❖ **Kick-off celebration** for adults at Lincoln School, Ravi Bhawan. 4.30-10.30 PM, 9 October. Rs 700, 4270482

MUSIC

- ❖ **Trikaal Exclusive** Everything from the tabala and sarangi to the bass guitar and digeridoo in the fusion of east and west at Moksh, Club Hardic, Pulchowk. 18 September, 7PM. Rs 300, 5528703
- ❖ **Tri Groove** Live at Via Via Café, Paknajok, followed by party with DJ Anomalous. 17 September, 7.30 PM, Rs 50.
- ❖ **Rusty Nails unplugged** 17 September at the Celebrations Restaurant and Bar, Darbar Marg. 2004388
- ❖ **Deo** at Not Just The Jazz Bar Fridays at Hotel Shangri-la, Lazimpat.
- ❖ **Jatra Friday Nites** Live music by The Strings. 4256622
- ❖ **Live music** at Moksh. JCS Trio on Tuesdays and Full Circle on Fridays. 7PM onwards, free entry.

DRINKS

- ❖ **Island Bar** with DJ Raju and The Cloud Walkers. The Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Free drink deals** at Red Onion Bar, Lazimpat
- ❖ **Lychee Martinis** and latest club hits at Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, 4491234

FOOD

- ❖ **Genuine Thai** cuisine at Royal Lotus, Bakhundole. 5521231
- ❖ **Gourmet seafood experience** at Rox Resturant. 15-25 September, 4491234
- ❖ **Delicious barbecue dinner** Fridays at Summit Hotel. 5521810
- ❖ **Friday Nights** at Subterranea Club Kilroy. 4412821
- ❖ **Farm House Café** Unlimited nature with delicious meals at Park Village Hotel. 4375280
- ❖ **Café Bahal** Newari and continental cuisine under the giant Cinnamon tree at Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel. 4700632
- ❖ **Vegetarian Creations** at Stupa View Restaurant. 4480262
- ❖ **Executive Lunch** at Toran Restaurant, Dwarika's. 4479488
- ❖ **Sunny Side Up Weekend BBQ** at Soaltee Crowne Plaza Kathmandu. 4273999
- ❖ **The Beer Garden** at Vaijayantha, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **Dwarika's Thali** Lunch at the Heritage courtyard. 4479488

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge** Pure relaxation and business as usual. 4361500
- ❖ **Dream Holiday** package tour to Malaysia during Dashain and Tihar. Marco Polo Travels and Qatar Airways, 2012345, malsiaholidays_marco@polo.com.np
- ❖ **Pure relaxation** at Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge. 01 4361500
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- ❖ **Early Bird discounts** at Shangri-La Hotel & Resort. 4412999

Max (Jamie Fox) has lived the mundane life of a cabdriver for 12 years. Vincent (Tom Cruise), a contract killer, is on a mission to kill five key witnesses due to testify in an offshore narco-trafficking cartel's trial. Both their lives change when Vincent hijacks Max's cab and Max becomes collateral—an expendable person in the wrong place at the wrong time. As the FBI and LAPD race to intercept them, Max and Vincent's survival becomes dependent on each other in ways neither of them ever imagined.

JAI NEPAL CINEMA

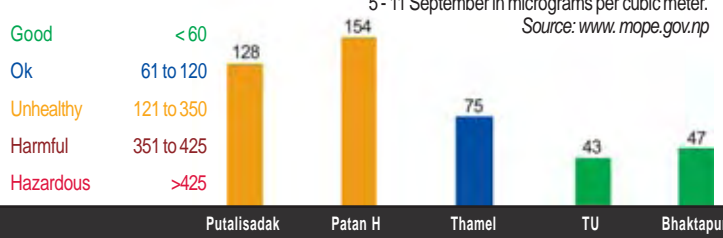


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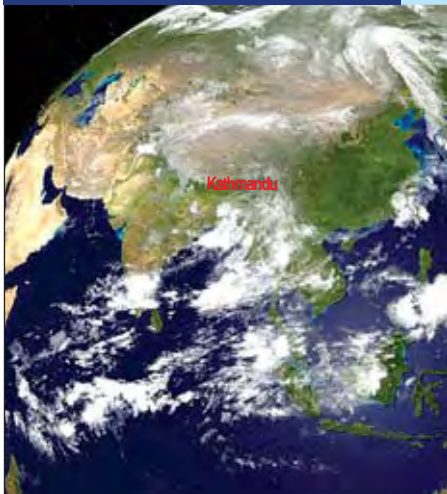
KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

Take a deep breath, and you'll be able to tell that business is truly back to normal in Kathmandu. The fresh air that came—at great cost—with the curfews two weeks ago quickly returned to its usual pollution levels last week. The PM10 (particle matter less than 10 microns) concentrations in Putali Sadak and around Patan Hospital increased by 52 and 85 percent respectively, both falling in the 'unhealthy' range. The monitoring stations in Thamel, Kirtipur and Bhaktapur also recorded pollution increases, but the air quality was still tolerable.



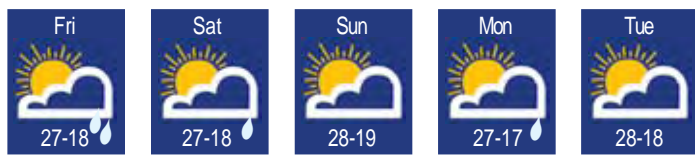
NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



That was the last wave of a waning monsoon, caused by two pulses that moved in from the Bay dumping 91mm of rain in Dipayal, for instance, which is half their monthly average for September. The above-normal rainfall and circulation system bringing winds from the northwest have brought down maximum and minimum temperatures considerably. This satellite image taken on Thursday at noon shows remnants of the trough still lingering over central Nepal which means Kathmandu Valley will still get some precipitation from this system. After this, it should be the beginning of a glorious autumn.

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Updating proverbs to suit the Times

Let me first say by way of preamble that I am neither pro-verb nor anti-verb. As journalists we are not supposed to take sides and are neutral on this and all other issues, which means we never have to make up our minds about anything, ever.

In fact, waffling is a professional requirement in this field. That is the beauty of being a member of the press corps: our neutrality doesn't allow us to choose between right and wrong, so we never bother.

But I digress. The problem with proverbs is that they are getting fast outdated. For example, take the saying: 'Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise'. So, what about women during the holy festival of

Tij? Does that mean they can go to bed late and get up at noon? No fair.

Personally, I have been going to bed with the cows (let me quickly clarify what I mean is that I go to bed concurrently and at approximately the same GMT as the inmates of the neighbourhood dairy) and waking up with the cocks (don't you dare laugh) ever since I was born. Yet I am not yet wise, and my health and wealth still leave a lot to be desired. Whoever made that prehistoric proverb, and I am sure it was a woman, please see me during the break.

Just to show you how obsolete some other prevalent proverbs are, let us now turn our attention to a few examples and collectively suggest amendments to them so that they are relevant to the interesting times that we live in:



'To find oneself between Scylla and Charybdis'

Now, I have done a Google search and I can find no one named either Scylla or Charybdis. Who on earth are they, and why should anyone be ensconced between these two ladies, if indeed they are ladies? That is why we need to update this proverb by altering it to: 'To find oneself between India and China' which means, basically, that we are, for all intents and purposes, squeezed between a rock and the deep blue sea.

'Beggars can't be choosers'

Oh yeah? Since when? Ever since this country overthrew the Rana Yoke and replaced it with other governances, we have been beggars and we never gave up our fundamental human right to beg to make our ends meet. We could have chosen to make this country great, but being beggars, we chose to ride horses instead. This proverb should therefore be altered to read: 'Too many beggars spoil the broth'.

'Barking dogs seldom bite'

I know from past experience at the Great Chakupat Garbage Stockpile that this is hundred percent not true, and I have a gash in my shin to prove it. The really dangerous street dingos these days are the ones who are in the payroll of the agitated parties and don't just bark but also burn tyres which are still attached to their vehicles. Therefore, unless I hear a voice of dissent, this proverb has henceforth been amended to read as follows: 'Let sleeping dogs remain in their respective mangers refrain from telling the truth'.

'Every ass loves to hear himself bray'

Present company excluded, I have met a lot of asses in my life, but not one has been what you might call garrulous. In Upper Mustang I once came across a herd of rare and endangered Tibetan Wild Ass, but they were all quietly munching the grass or chewing the cud or whatever it is they do to while away the time up there on the plateau. But nary a syllable escaped their lips. This proverb is completely erroneous, it is misleading, and an insult to assdom. It should, without any hemming and hawing, be changed to: 'An empty vessel is the devil's workshop for a horse who can be lead to the water but still doesn't want to be prime minister under Article 127'.

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