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ANALYSIS
by RAJENDRA DAHAL

The government and the Maoists are busy accusing each other of not being serious about peace. They are both right. Each is using talk of a truce for tactical gain.

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's terms of reference from the king four months ago was to bring Maoists in for negotiations. He is also under pressure from his UML partners to do just that.

The UML is even more desperate. If it can't get a ceasefire and talks with the Maoists, Madhab Nepal will be hounded by his cadre to recall his party's nominees from the

Incommunicado

Both sides are desperate for a truce, but don't know where to begin

government. Nepal raised his unilateral ceasefire demand during the High Level Peace Committee on Wednesday for precisely this reason. But even if it doesn't work, he will at least have been seen as having done something.

The Maoists are talking tough. Being insurgents, and not accountable to anyone, they can afford to do this. But they, too, need a truce to regroup, reorganise, rearm and chalk out a new strategy after their plenum, which decided to treat the Indian government as a future enemy.

So despite all the rhetoric and posturing, both sides desperately need a breather. They both want a truce, although not necessarily negotiations right away.

The government spokesman, Mohamad Mohsin, shot down Nepal's unilateral truce proposals. That proves a ceasefire isn't something the government can decide on its own—the Unified Command also has a say.

But even though the Maoists know about the pressures on the government and the UML for a truce, it's not easy for the insurgents to go back on their previous refusal to talk to the king's 'servants'. They are now trapped by their own rhetoric.

The Maoists may use a Dasain and Tihar ceasefire to

force the government to respond. If that happens, it will have done the UML a great favour. The government, too, will get a timely reprieve through no effort on its part.

The people's desire for peace is overwhelming. And both

sides need to at least pay lip service to it, especially in the run-up to Dasain. The government can't be proactive because it knows its limitations vis-à-vis the security forces only too well. The Maoists don't want

to be seen to be bending over backwards, so they are shooting rhetorical questions that have no answers.

Both parties want to talk, but they do not know how to begin. So instead of talking to each other, they are talking at each other. ●

Times nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll # 156

Q. Should the petroleum distribution and sales in Nepal be privatised?

Yes 77.4%
No 21.2%
Don't know 1.4%

Total votes: 702

Weekly Internet Poll # 157. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. Should the government announce a unilateral ceasefire before Dasain?

ARISTON

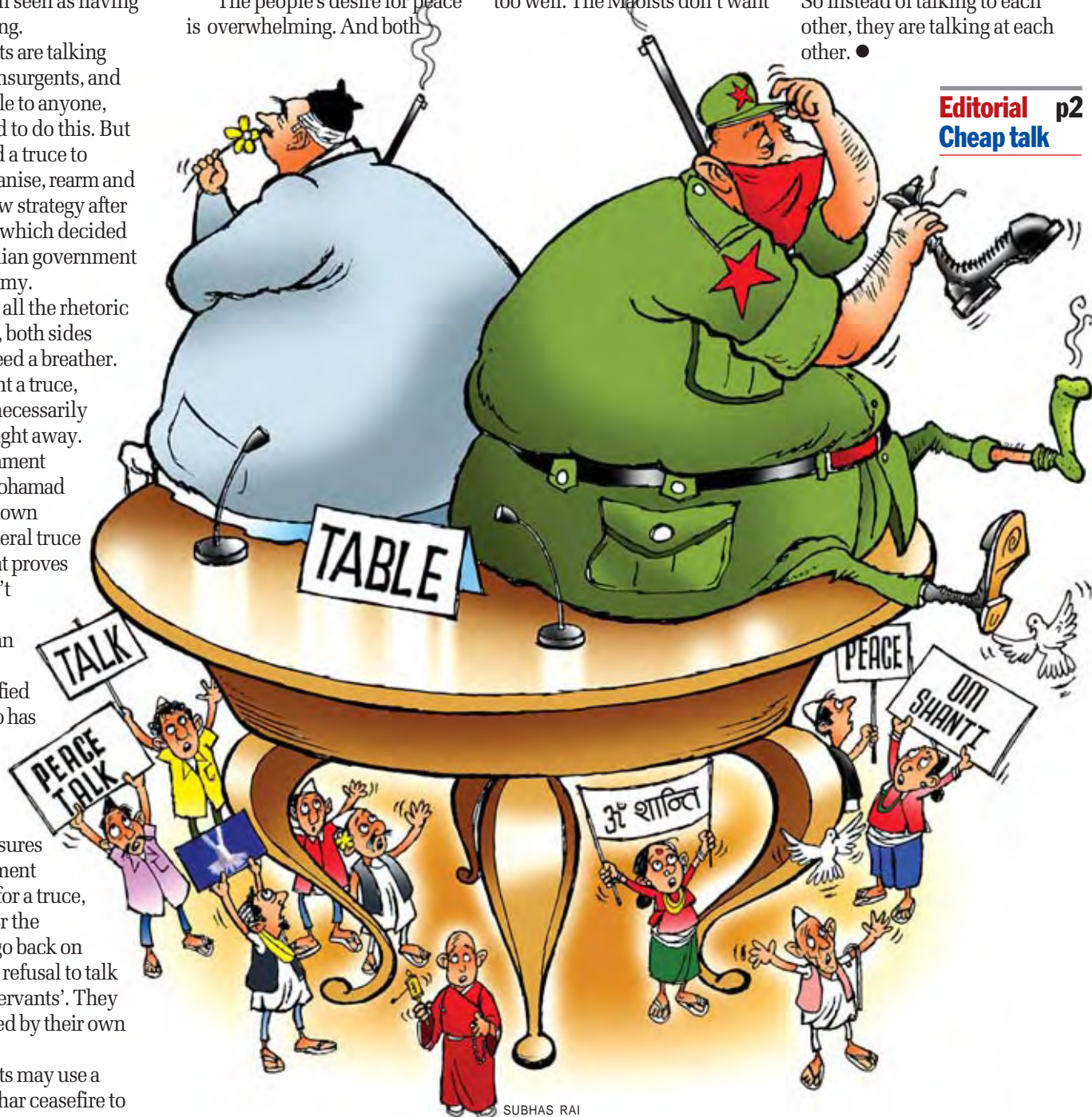
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Editorial p2
Cheap talk

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Authoritarians at the gate

Free speech and a free press are proven indicators of democracy

ON 16 September, judges at Indonesia's Central Jakarta Court sentenced me to one year in prison. As the editor-in-chief of *Tempo weekly newsmagazine*, I am guilty, according to the court, of defaming a business tycoon named Tomy Winata by implying his possible involvement in a fire at Jakarta's South-East Asia Textile Market, and of fomenting riots by disseminating lies. Does my case, and others like it, portend the end of yet another short-lived experiment with democracy in Indonesia?

The 'riot' that I allegedly fomented occurred in March last year, when almost two hundred thugs claiming to be Winata's followers attacked *Tempo's* office, threatened to burn down the building, harassed staff, and injured one reporter. Trying to help resolve the situation peacefully, I was persuaded to negotiate at the Central Jakarta Police Station, but found to my horror that the mob leaders controlled the station. I was punched and kicked as the police looked the other way.

COMMENT
Bambang Harymurti



Fortunately, many journalists came to our rescue with tape recorders and cameras rolling. Their broadcasts caused a public outcry, which forced our parliament to organise a public hearing. The police chiefs were called and, under massive public pressure, the leaders of the mob were criminally charged. But Winata himself eluded police investigation, merely by claiming publicly that his followers acted without his prior knowledge and consent.

He then filed criminal charges of his own, against Ahmad Taufik, who wrote the article, Teuku Iskandar Ali, who edited it, and me. The yearlong court proceedings were marked by a series of suspicious developments, all favoring Winata.

First, the case built by the police and state prosecutor contained documents that were so blatantly falsified that the police indicted two officers. But the court rejected our request that proceedings be delayed until the legality of the state's case could be clarified. A judge who had previously ruled against *Tempo* in Winata's civil suit was brought in. When Winata testified, he perjured himself by denying that *Tempo* had interviewed him.

Given such flawed proceedings, my conviction and prison sentence come as no surprise. But I remain hopeful that we will prevail in the end, when higher courts hear *Tempo's* appeal. Indonesia's courts are cleaner at the top, and the Head of the Supreme Court is a staunch advocate of democracy and press

freedom. No country knows better than Indonesia that free speech and a free press are proven indicators of democratic development, and that criminalising journalists is an early symptom of authoritarianism. Indonesia was a liberal democracy in the 1950's, before President Sukarno, supported by the military, began a crackdown on the press in 1956. With critical voices silenced, consolidating unchecked power became easier and, in July 1959, Sukarno decreed the beginning of 'Guided Democracy'.

For the first few years after Sukarno's fall in 1966, all the benefits of genuine democracy, including freedom of the press, were restored (except for the communists). But President Suharto's regime began another press crackdown in the early 1970's, ultimately banning various media and jailing many journalists. With the press under control, other political rights were quickly curtailed and Indonesian democracy failed again.

Since Suharto's fall in 1998, Indonesia has become the third largest democratic country in the world and the largest democratic Muslim community in history. Two parliamentary elections and two direct presidential elections – including the latest presidential run-off – have been free, fair, and peaceful, proving that Islam and democracy can coexist.

Democracy's enemies, however, never rest. Radical Islamic groups have engaged in indiscriminate bombings, while groups with strong authoritarian tendencies have made inroads into President Megawati's inner circle.

But Megawati has just been defeated in her bid for reelection. Will newly elected President Susilo continue to prosecute journalists? Will my conviction, and the trials and convictions of other journalists, mark the beginning of the end of Indonesia's hard-won third democracy? The answer lies in the support that Indonesian pro-democracy activists can generate domestically and internationally. To lose Indonesia—a potential beacon of hope to all pro-democracy activists in the world Muslim community—would be a terrible defeat. ● (© Project Syndicate)

Bambang Harymurti is the editor-in-chief of *Tempo*.

My pain is greater

America uses its victimhood to demand a monopoly to

Victimhood is a powerful, yet contradictory, force. Powerful because, once claimed, it can provide the moral basis for redress, retaliation and even revenge in order to right any given wrong, real or imagined. The defence of everything from the death

ESSAY
Gary Younge



penalty to affirmative action, Serbian nationalism to equality legislation, are all underpinned, to some degree, by the notion of victimhood. Contradictory because, in order to harness that power, one must first admit weakness.

Victims, by their very nature, have less power than their persecutors: victimhood is a passive state, the result of bad things happening to people who are unable to prevent it. In the past, the right has exploited this tension to render victimhood a dirty word a label synonymous with whingers, whiners, failures and fantasists. Revealing no empathy with the powerless nor any grasp of historical context, they wilfully ignore the potential for victimhood to morph into resistance, preferring instead to lampoon it as a loser's charter.

If you are looking for someone making political hay out of victimhood nowadays,

look no further than the right. The ones most ready, willing and able to turn the manipulation of pain into an art form have found their home among the world's most powerful.

Read the *Daily Mail* and you would believe that Britain is under threat from the most impoverished and vulnerable people in the land. Asylum seekers, immigrants, 'welfare cheats' and single mothers are bringing the nation to its knees. While the country is going to the dogs, the Christians are, apparently, heading for the lions.

Across the Atlantic, the right's new role as victims is even more prevalent and pronounced. Straight relationships are threatened by the prospect of gay marriage, white workers are threatened by affirmative action, American workers are threatened by third world labourers, America is threatened by everybody.

At times, this means the powerful appropriating the icons, tropes and rhetoric of the powerless in their entirety, to hilarious (if disturbing) effect. Victimhood serves merely as a pretext for a backlash to reassert, extend or expand the dominance of the powerful. If these people are victims of anything, it is of the threat to their entitlement and privilege.

In others, however, genuine suffering acts as a precursor to genuine vindictiveness. The threat of suicide bombings in Israel serves as the rationale for building the wall to protect Israelis from terrorist attack. In the current intifada, the Israelis have lost more citizens than during the six-day war, no one should belittle their pain. Palestinians, on the other hand, have lost about three times as many people due to Israeli military aggression. Who, one wonders, needs protecting from whom, or is some people's pain more valuable than others'?

But nowhere is the abuse of victimhood more blatant than in the US presidential election, where September 11 remains the central plank of the Republicans' strategy for re-election. The fact that their campaign begins with the terror attacks is not only understandable but also, arguably, right this is the most significant thing to happen in the US since Bush assumed office.

The trouble is that the campaign's message ends with that day also. September 11 has served not as a starting point from which to better understand the world but as an excuse not to understand it at all. It is a reference point that brooks no argument and needs no logic. No weapons of mass destruction in Iraq?

"Even the Buddha would

The Norwegians have hit a road block in the Sri Lankan peace process

AMANTHA PERERA in NORTHERN SRI LANKA

There are slim hopes that the Sri Lankan government and rebel Tamil Tigers would restart peace talks soon after four people, including a top renegade Tiger fighter, were shot dead in growing factional fighting. The killings last week came days after Norwegian special envoy Erik Solheim

expressed frustration at the on-the-ground reality.

"Even Jesus Christ or the Buddha would find it difficult," Solheim said last weekend after meeting the Tigers' political head, SP Tamilselvan, at the rebels' Peace Secretariat in the town of Kilinochchi, adding that the Norwegians did not expect

any breakthrough in the near future. "Some people think that the Norwegian facilitators are some kind of demi-gods or magicians. I can tell you it will not happen. It will not be finished in one visit," he said.

About 64,000 people have died in the Sri Lankan separatist war that flared in 1984. Fighting



High airfares hurt tourism



would make the sectors uneconomical. Austrian Airlines is the only operator flying a direct eight-hour flight to Vienna with Airbus 340s, but to do so it can't sell all its seats.

"There are three things that have to be factored in: altitude, temperature and length of runway, and on all three Kathmandu airport has limitations," says VK Shrestha, former chief instructor at Royal Nepal Airlines.

Unfortunately, there isn't much that can be done about this problem since the runway can't be extended without making an already steep approach path more difficult, says Shrestha. What all this means is that airlines have to charge more because their aircraft can't fly at optimum loads from Kathmandu.

With airfares going up worldwide in response to a 70 percent increase in aviation fuel prices, this is also sure to hit flights to Kathmandu.

Then there are the very high landing fees at Kathmandu airport, which are among the highest in the world. When Lufthansa stopped its Frankfurt flight in 1998, one of the reasons it cited was high landing fees which made it difficult for the airline to break even. Lufthansa was the only airline that has used Boeing 747s on regular flights to Kathmandu. "Although some of the fees were reduced earlier this year, they are still high for the level of service provided," said one airline operator. The landing fee for a Boeing 757 in Kathmandu is \$300, parking fee for three hours is \$75, and then there is a \$305 navigation fee. In contrast, landing in Bangkok is only \$219 and parking is \$15 per day. The fees are inevitably all passed down to passengers, and added to the airfares.

One way to reduce fares and boost tourism is by encouraging charter operators and new budget airlines like Singapore's Silkair or Tiger Air or Malaysian Air Asia to fly to Kathmandu. Says Pokhrel: "Encouraging competition and allowing more charter flights is the only way to reduce fares." ●

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

Nepal has got a reputation for being a cheap tourist destination.

Yeah, but only after you get there.

Airfares to and from Nepal are keeping tourists away even if they are willing to brave the negative publicity and come for a trekking holiday. For the price of a roundtrip ticket from Osaka to Kathmandu, a Japanese tourist can fly to Europe and back. Fares from Hong Kong to Nepal are more expensive than from there to Los Angeles.

"It is getting increasingly difficult to sell Nepal," says one Japanese trekking operator who is in Kathmandu this week with a Tibet-bound group. "More than the security situation, it is the high cost that deters many Japanese." She says her trekking clients compare costs, and find it much cheaper to fly to Peru or New Zealand.

The prices are abnormally high even on the Kathmandu-Delhi route, which costs \$150

for a one-hour flight on economy class, although Nepalis and Indians only pay Rs 6,825. In comparison, the fare for a four-hour flight to the Gulf is \$250. The reason: prices were kept artificially high by a bilateral state-owned cartel of Indian Airlines and Royal Nepal Airlines. But travel trade executives say now that Air Sahara and Jet Airways have started flights, fares are bound to come down.

Prices have dropped dramatically on sectors which have seen competition. Until six years ago, Kathmandu-London used to cost \$1,200 roundtrip on coach on Royal Nepal Airlines' 'hopping flight' via Dubai and Frankfurt. Today, with Gulf Air, Qatar Airways, Austrian Airlines and Martinair all competing, prices have come down to \$790.

"Our clients do complain that flights are expensive," admits Ashok Pokhrel of the Nepal Association of Tour Operators, who also runs

Shangrila Tours, adding, "it is true that fares to Hong Kong and Japan are expensive." But other tour operators say there are special fares available, passengers just have to be smart and shop around.

For example, tickets are cheaper if they are bought in advance or in groups. Joy Dewan of Zenith Travels says: "Airlines operating to and from Nepal provide around 25 percent discount for tourists travelling in groups." But not all tourists travel in groups and many decide to go to take a spur-of-the-moment trip. As a result, they end up paying more.

Bhola Thapa of President Travels (*see interview, pg9*) says the main reason for high fares is because of monopoly or cartel pricing. "The Europe flights are the best example of competition between airlines bringing down prices. Shanghai, Lhasa and Hong Kong flights are examples of

prices being high because there is only one airline flying," he adds. Thapa cites the example of deregulation in India's domestic travel which has slashed airfares to below railfares, with Deccan Airways, for instance, offering Delhi-Bombay for as little as IRs 900.

But there are also technical reasons why airfares out of Kathmandu are higher than elsewhere. There are takeoff load limitations at Kathmandu airport because of its altitude and short runway. A Boeing 777 departing for Bangkok must have at least 50 out of its 310 seats empty because it can't carry full payload on the three-hour flight. The load penalty is even higher when ground temperature rises to above 30 degrees on certain afternoons, reducing engine performance.

This is also the reason there are few direct long-haul flights from Kathmandu, as aircraft taking off with full fuel tanks would have load penalties that

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Delayed reaction

Every day that construction is halted on the Mid-Marsyangdi project, Nepal loses millions

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

Construction work on the Middle Marsyangdi hydropower project that began three years ago has ground to a halt after the contractor unilaterally stopped the work, citing Maoist threats.

The Rs 14 billion project in Lamjung is being built with a German grant covering 85 percent of the cost and the government is paying for the rest. But the contract stipulates that Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) will have to bear any cost overruns due to delays.

Now, the contractor, consultant and donor have all brought the project to a standstill, citing the insurgency. The only people who benefit from this are the foreign parties involved. Nepali taxpayers will have to pay Rs 2 million for every day that the project is delayed.

The contract NEA signed with the civil contractor, Diwidag Dragados-CWE JV (DDC JV) has no provisions for contingency in case the project was affected by the insurgency. "The problem was not foreseen then," says an

NEA official, defending the lapse. "We did not know that it would have reached this scale." By the time construction on the 70MW scheme began in June 2001, Lamjung was already a Maoist stronghold.

Independent analysts, some NEA insiders and ex-project managers smell a rat, and say this was a deliberate lapse to make money on cost overruns. "This is Kali Gandaki all over again, only it is going to cost us much more," says one official. DDC JV has been claiming between Rs 1.5-2

million for every day that the project is delayed under the open-ended FIDIC contract which allows the contractor to claim 'variation'. NEA should have learnt its lesson from the FIDIC contract on Kali Gandaki, for which Nepali taxpayers ended up paying the Italian contractor up to \$50 million in overruns, which is technically illegal.

"We have already told the contractor that they stopped the work unilaterally and so they will have to bear the consequences," said one NEA official. But the same official did not rule out the Authority ultimately having no legal recourse.

DDC JV has made it a habit to claim overruns citing security conditions. Last year, it revoked the contract unilaterally and stopped work after it did not receive the claimed amount. A compromise was finally struck between NEA officials, DDC JV and the German development bank, KfW, at a meeting in Frankfurt and work resumed in February.

But the dispute was far from settled. DDC JV's original bid for civil works was E 77 million, but extra claims have already topped E 60 million. Now, the contractor is sure to claim for the past month that the project has been at a standstill.

NEA says the claims are not justified by the contract, and it is up to the consultant to approve or reject the claim. Eyebrows have also been raised at the time the consultant, Fischtner Joint Venture, is taking to give its verdict. Minister of State for Water Resources, Thakur Prasad Sharma is livid. He told us: "The delay is because the consultant is incompetent."

While the confusion continues, every day that the project is delayed it will benefit the contractor and will

mean additional losses for the country. A top NEA official told us on condition of anonymity that in late 2002, NEA intercepted a message that was passing between the foreign parties involved, which indicated that their strategy was to prolong the project as long as possible.

Both the contractor's representative and the consultant refused to answer our queries despite numerous attempts to reach them. An official of the KfW in Germany said his office was not based in the project site, and so they would refrain from making public statements. Officials at the German Embassy in Kathmandu said they did not want to make any comment at present.

One former manager of the project told us that the Maoists had assured that they would not disrupt the project. "The construction was not affected even when 24 security people were killed in a Maoist attack near Besi Sahar two years ago. German officials made an inspection said the security situation was under control at the project site." He says there are grounds to believe that the contractor is playing the insurgency card to jack up costs. "Having seen the Italians getting away with it on Kali Gandaki, they feel they can do the same in Mid-Marsyangdi," the official added.

The Public Accounts Committee of the dissolved parliament had investigated the cost overrun claims on Kali Gandaki and said a similar FIDIC contract would allow contractors to illicitly raise costs to make up for a low initial bid. It had recommended the government set up a committee to monitor the Middle Marsyangdi contract. No such committee was ever formed. ●

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Winning the peace

In the absence of electoral representation, civil society is the key

CHEAP TALK

At a time when the need for peace in this country has never been greater, the word's worth has been devalued by empty lip service paid to it by insincere people.

Coalition partners in government are falling over each other pretending to be peaceniks. The UML which has staked all on crafting a truce is goading its ministers in the cabinet to call for a unilateral ceasefire. It knows fully well it won't happen, and repeating it is a fig leaf. The prime minister has made clucking noises, but he knows his decision-making powers are severely limited on security matters. (That was the pound of flesh he paid to get himself appointed chief executive in June.) The NC-led opposition alliance is trying ever so hard to re-align its street mischief to pressure the government to get serious about peace, but everyone knows the only peace process it will support is one in which it is involved.

The Maoists are bombarding the government with statements, online interviews, and rapid-fire rhetorical questions. But how can they be taken seriously when they ambush vehicles carrying international activists campaigning for peasants' rights, or kidnapping UNICEF workers and bombing hospitals while calling for UN mediation?

One could say that even if the calls for peace are hollow, at least it proves the powers-that-be respect public opinion that totally rejects a prolongation of the conflict. But they should stop playing games and get down to real peace-building. The Nepali people hear the sound of knives being sharpened, and will not tolerate warmongers.

The only one who is not saying anything at all is King Gyanendra. He has maintained an enigmatic silence and seems happy enough to let the prime minister stew in his own juice. But two years after he sacked Deuba and four months after he reluctantly brought him back, the king is in a dilemma. If he acts, he will be accused again of having absolutist ambitions. If he doesn't, the country will slide further.

In October 2002, after he used Article 127 to take over, we gave King Gyanendra's move the benefit of doubt in this space, but cautioned: 'The king has gambled his throne on this one. And the act, by its very nature, has dragged the monarchy into the political muck. A constitutional monarchy needs to be above it all, untainted by partisanship and upheld as a symbol of national unity. It is now in danger of being just another political force jostling for power.'

Two years later, this is still true. Under pressure from rebels who want to talk to him and not his 'servants' about a constituent assembly, and from a dogged street agitation to roll back October Fourth, the king is fighting on two fronts too many. But it is clear which side he should be on. However unpalatable and discomfiting, he has to come terms with the people's representatives. And the parties must show they have turned a new leaf by discarding divisiveness and focussing on the nation's real challenge of building peace, and not just talking about it.



Pace is not just the absence of war. Enduring peace will not come just with the cessation of hostilities, it has to touch the mind and spirit of the people with means to ensure social and economic justice. This may be the reason why peace in

GUEST COLUMN
Keshab B Mathema



Nepal has remained so elusive, and with each day that passes the culture of violence takes root in a hitherto peaceful society.

The first prerequisite is to build a climate of trust. The government and the rebels both seem to be weary of prolonged conflict, and the talk of talks is in the air. The challenge is to

replace the uncompromising stance with a single-point agenda of peace, and agree to address the contentious issues at the negotiating table. It won't be easy: winning the peace will be even more difficult than trying to win the war.

One fundamental prerequisite that has so far been sidelined is the engagement of the stakeholders in peace building and conflict management and resolution. The people who have the highest stakes, the most to lose, are the Nepali people. It is they who have suffered most from the insurgency and the failures of successive governments since the insurgency began.

Given our excruciating experiment with democracy in the last 14 years, many are averse to involving some of the tarnished political figures in the peace process. Any future negotiation must involve participation of people of high moral stature, which is not the case with some of the senior stalwarts of the democracy movement. It is difficult to entrust the very people who contributed to the birth of the Maoist insurgency by tampering with the democratic process with the present challenge of restoring peace.

Civil society therefore has to take a leading role in peace-building. However, since parliament does not exist, they must turn to elected leaders in the

interim government and other political parties in order to give the process legitimacy. Such leaders must have no vested interest in the process, not expect to reap any political rewards and be able to negotiate with moral integrity and skill.

The tragedy is that no one involved in the present political process seem to have learnt from past mistakes, and are bent on repeating them. The street demonstrations of the past year seem to be largely stage-managed events that have little or no popular support. The people have seen through the slogans, and know that it is not about restoring democracy but more about bringing back some of the leaders to power. The reason for the people's apathy and disillusionment is clear, but if they are unwilling to be represented by the people they elected five years ago who can they turn to?

We should not underestimate the evolving role of the people and civil society in nation-building and in the peace processes that we have seen in many other countries in our region, in Africa and Latin America. That conflict management and resolution



LETTERS

KILLED IN ACTION

If I was a poor, jobless Nepali my best bet would be to go to Iraq. I can earn three times more than in Kuwait, and if I am killed by terrorists, I will get Rs 1 million from my government, one of my family members will get job with the Khethan group and my dependants will get charity from funds created by FM stations. I may have been born unlucky, but I die lucky. At least I will die with dignity and my family would be taken care of. If there is anyone to blame for the 12 Nepalis killed in action in Iraq it was a succession of incompetent governments in Nepal. They denied us good education, jobs, social welfare, health care. They denied us dignity of work in our own country and pushed us out. And even when the Nepali hostages were pleading for their safety, the government dismissed them as law breakers. As Kunda Dixit says in his poignant 'Black Wednesday' (#212) what about compensation for the 10,000 Nepalis who have been killed in their own country at the hands of fellow-Nepalis? Many

were tortured and butchered just like the Nepalis in Iraq—and their blood soaked the soil of their own motherland. Unless more is done for peace and development in our own country by our own government more Nepalis will continue to die in Nepal and abroad. That is what governments are supposed to do: protect citizens from harm's way.

Anup Raj Upreti, Kathmandu

CK LAL

CK Lal has grossly misinterpreted the notion of civil society ('Proxy by peace', #211). For him, 'the hodge podge of retirees and out of job politicians, ex-bureaucrats, ex-Panchayati's cannot be considered as civil society member, merely because of their past activities'. If that is the case, could Lal enlighten us on who actually are to be included in civil society, or what actually civil society is. In fact, what constitutes civil society, and who belongs and who doesn't is the most contested point in the study of civil society. Nevertheless, the term 'civil society' has strong moral

overtones, which effectively exclude negative and destructive associations by default. Perhaps, this could be the reason why civil society has been seen as the last resort within the context of conflict management, though this is an uncritical assumption, and it is unmilitary. Therefore, the notion of civil society does not stop anyone from claiming to be a member of civil society irrespective of their past as long as they are involved for good cause that is, civil in the present.

Chandra Bhatta,
London School of Economics

● CK Lal deserves appreciation for offering points to prove why a conspiracy is being hatched to keep the UN at bay when it could be approached to help resolve the insurgency problem ('Praying for a saviour', #215). I agree with this perception: '...the real reason is perhaps the fear that an UN-brokered peace may break the domination of the ruling elite'. Lal's efforts to expose India, world's largest democracy, for its overt and

covert support to an absolute monarchy in Nepal, have succeeded in imparting a resounding message.

Ananta Neupane, Jawalakhel

ELECTRIC CITY

Thank you for Aarti Basnyat's article on electric vehicles ('Against the current', #215). Hydropower is Nepal's only indigenous energy source and therefore electric vehicles should be our preferred choice of transportation. However our planners and policy makers are reluctant to make a commitment to an industry that has the potential for being an economic driver for the country. Your effort to bring this story is appreciated by all who understand why Nepal should promote electric vehicles. The credit for the



should only be a state-driven exercise is a fallacy.

Given its moral confusion, political parties must interface with civil society. Not the politicised front organisations and affiliated unions, but genuine grassroots groups, community bodies, professional organisations and truly independent rights groups. With the involvement of civil society in the peace process, it will be easier to comprehensively address the political, social and economic roots of the conflict.

Finding the mechanism to give the people a say in starting a peace process and supporting it is the formula that will make any future agreement more sustainable. We must give up the notion that peace initiatives are the exclusive territory of the belligerent parties to conflict. From experience, we know that such negotiation usually agrees to a cessation of hostilities for political expediency or for breathing space rather than winning genuine, long-term peace.

If the government of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba is truly sincere about working towards a peaceful resolution of this conflict, to be followed by other moves to restoring democracy on a firmer footing regardless of ongoing party internecine conflicts and the past actions, he should be given a chance to prove his worth. Any success arising from his efforts can be shared by the country and the people.

History will judge us harshly if we forsake action. We are at a defining moment where a resolution of the conflict also provides the chance to address the deep-seated social and economic inequities in our society. ●

Keshab B Mathema has served as UNICEF representative in China, Sri Lanka and the Philippines.

Collective memory is a contested terrain. Political actors play games to create premeditated forgetfulness and remembrance. King Gyanendra would like us to remember the necessity of the royal takeover but forget the unconstitutionality of his action. Prime Minister Sher

STATE OF THE STATE
CK Lal



Bahadur Deuba would like to forget the royal proclamation of that fateful Friday as a nightmare, but remember its implications for the premier of a constructive monarch.

Now that he has got it, Madhab Nepal would like to



SUBHAS RAI

Blind alley

Two years after October Fourth, we are still in a cul-de-sac

forget what he wanted two years ago: a coalition government dominated by his party. But he would like us to remember that the UML was the first to launch street protests against the royal takeover. By lobbing his Six Queries bomb at Singh Darbar, Prachanda has succeeded in raking up memories of October Fourth.

Two years later, the royal nominees in Singha Darbar have faded into insignificance. The Maoists' assessment is to a certain extent correct: we are indeed living under a rule of the reign, not the rule of law.

The rule of law has three facets: rule of law, rule in law, and rule under the law. The royal proclamation violated each one of these tenets of constitutionality. Rule of law ended the moment King Gyanendra referred to traditional royal powers and repeated the myth that the monarchy in Nepal has always been run according to

the will of the people. Well.

The royal address quoted three articles, but based its operative part upon the 'spirit and intention' of the 1990 constitution. We have it from almost every living framer of that constitution that the spirit and intention interpreted by the king bear no resemblance to what they had intended to establish in this country: a constitutional monarchy that reigns and a parliamentary government that rules in law.

Admittedly, nobody from the government has even made the claim that rule under the law exists in Nepal. Parliament remains unformed, hence the royal proclamation has failed to get its endorsement. Since the courts in Nepal aren't empowered to examine royal activities, the legality of October Fourth is open to question. That leaves the media and civil society, the fourth and fifth pillars of democracy. The press and intelligentsia may differ upon options to disentangle the mess, but they agree in seeing the futility of royal rule by proxy.

Different political players have interpreted October Fourth in their own ways. "One makes mistakes, human beings make mistakes," Sher Bahadur Deuba had told *The New York Times* a day after his dismissal, adding forlornly, "I will do things differently in future." Deuba is certainly doing things differently this time. He has mastered the art of getting along by dancing to the palace's tune.

Madhab Nepal has learned to be a royal communist and scramble for the political crumbs from ruler's table. Prachanda has been the biggest beneficiary of the royal takeover—it has given his

violent methods a certain legitimacy. As long as there was a democratic government in the country, his claims of fighting for the rights of the people sounded hollow. Now his political agenda of constitutional assembly has gained unprecedented currency.

The only person who has refused to budge an inch from his initial position is Girija Prasad Koirala. Right after the royal takeover, he had suggested that the king resurrect parliament, which could then form a government from within itself. It could have been a constitutional revolution to counter the Maoist revolution. King Gyanendra chose to go down the cul-de-sac of counter-revolution instead.

The consequences are for all to see: bandas, blockades, predators of press freedom, a world record holder in the number of disappeareds. No wonder, Koirala is being hounded by everyone in power. Wherever prostration is common, any attempt to stand tall becomes a crime.

But no matter what one thinks about Koirala the person or the politics of the Nepali Congress, a restoration of the lower house of the parliament is now the only exit route from the post-October Fourth quicksand. The other alternative is to risk sinking further into it and the unforeseeable consequences of an unconditional constituent assembly.

Two years after the royal takeover, King Gyanendra appears to be as unsure as he was then. Meanwhile, his kingdom is heading irrevocably down yet another uncertain path: the utter confusion of a constituent assembly. ●

vehicles. However, the government has to do more to help expand the electric vehicle industry.

If the government is serious about promoting electric vehicles then it has to look into what policy measures are needed to create more demand for them. We have been providing policy recommendations to the government in the past and we will continue to do so in future. The people of Kathmandu should also demand clean air to improve the quality of life because the Valley's air quality is having a negative health impact on all of us.

Bibek Chapagain,
Kathmandu Electric Vehicle
Alliance (KEVA)

ROYAL UNECONOMIC CLASS

Kunda Dixit is being too kind to domestic airlines when he pokes fun at them in his hilarious *Under My Hat* ('Royal uneconomic class', #215). Passengers are treated shabbily, made to pay exorbitant fares, and the less said about in-flight service the better. And that is on normal days. When flights are

delayed, cancelled or something goes wrong no one thinks it is important to tell passengers anything. Also, there is an apartheid in fares: we foreigners have to pay one of the highest fares anywhere in the world for this kind of abuse.

Name withheld, Pokhara

● This is in response to Kunda Dixit's 'Royal Uneconomic Class'. I was recently on a flight from Bhadrapur and experienced first hand what he is talking about. The time of departure came and went, but there was no one at the check-in counter. When the man did saunter in, there was no apology, no information on flight times, and he treated everyone rudely as if he was doing us a great favour by checking us in.

An overseas worker from Malaysia was not allowed to take excess baggage on board even though he was willing to pay for it. There was no announcement about the delay while we waited. The customer is obviously not king in Royal Economic Class.

Pravesh Saria, email

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We came, we saw,

KISHORE NEPAL
in BAJURA

By the time we reached the powerhouse at Ghat Khola it was already 7PM. It was getting dark and there was a curfew at eight at our destination: the Bajura district headquarter at Martadi.

So we sent colleague Bhojraj Badu ahead to tell officials there we were on our way. But when he was halfway to Martadi, Bhojraj was accosted by a bunch of soldiers on patrol. They were drunk and abusive, when we caught up with him, the soldiers were asking Bhojraj to tell them about the Maoists they were sure we had met on the trail from the airfield at Sanfe that day.

When the soldiers saw us, they became even more aggressive towards poor Bhojraj. "When we ask you something, you are supposed to answer, don't you know we have the authority to do anything to you," they snarled, "we tell you to sit, you sit, we tell you to stand you stand. We can kill you, we can pulverise you, understand?" Other travellers on the trail to Martadi hurried past us nervously.

Bhojraj was terrified, and so were we. A few more minutes of terror and the commander of the group waved us on. By the time we reached the town, news of the intimidation we had been subjected to had already spread and residents were surprised we were not limping or bruised like most locals who have had similar run-ins with security patrols here. News of our ill-treatment at the hands of the patrol also reached the army major in Martadi. The next day, he sent the head of the patrol that abused Bhojraj to see us and apologise. But he was still drunk, and after delivering his perfunctory apology, emboldened by booze, he couldn't resist a parting shot: "We have orders to stop even the king. I only came to

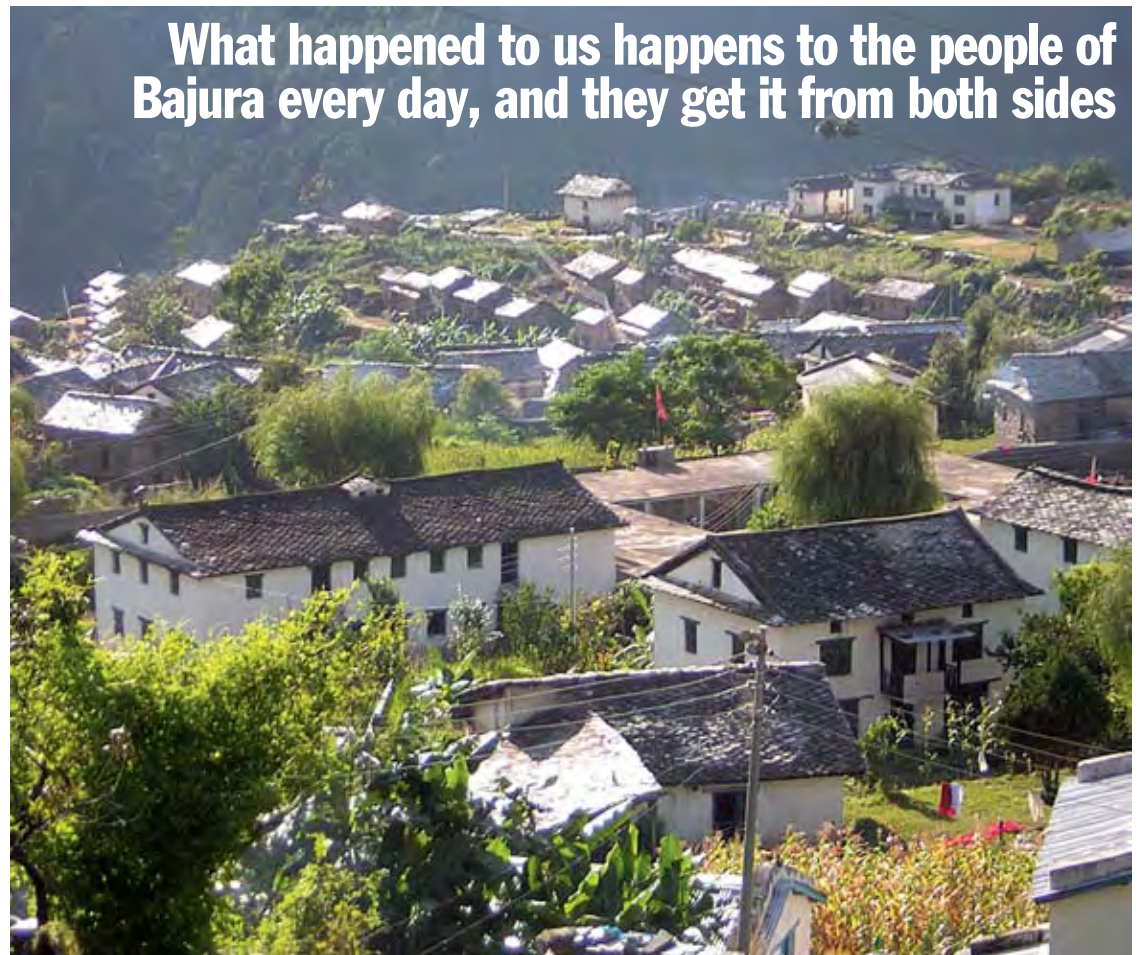
apologise because the major sent me here."

As visiting journalists, we had come face to face with the daily terror that the people of this remote and war-torn region face every day from the military and the militants. They are trapped in the middle, desperate and fed up with a conflict without end. The neglected and abandoned far-west of Nepal used to be known for its chronic food shortage, but now it is better known for terror. Terror from the state forces and terror from the rebels.

The simple and straightforward people of Bajura listen to news from the 21st century on their radios every evening and then confront the reality of a medieval war the next day, and the next and next. They shed tears silently because no one is there to hear their despair. They walk two days to come to Martadi to collect their 5kg ration of rotten rice, braving Maoist restrictions on travel and allegations of being government spies only to be accused of being Maoist sympathisers when they get here. Government officials taunt them at the godown: "You join Maoist marches and you still presume we will give you rice?"

It must be said once and for all, for the record, that there is no starvation in Bajura. There never was. This was an artificial food scarcity created by local administrators to keep the district dependant so they could exercise control over the citizens. Most of the grain sent here ended up in the home distilleries around Kolti where they were turned into raxi. Food is scarce at certain times of the year when the harvest runs out. This year, 400,000kg of grain was earmarked for Bajura, but only 90,000kg arrived. To be sure, outmigration has reduced Bajura's population by 30 percent compared to normal peacetime totals, but no one here has died of starvation.

One thing that would make a



RAVI TULADHAR

What happened to us happens to the people of Bajura every day, and they get it from both sides

big difference would be the completion of the 62km road from Sanfe to Martadi, but construction on the World Bank-funded project has been suspended because of the Maoists. So Bajura's only link to the outside world is the little airfield in Kolti and the irregular flights that connect it to Nepalganj.

Walking along the Budiganga River, the terraces on either bank are deep green with swaying stalks of ripening paddy. Seeing these lush fields, it is hard to believe that there is ever a food scarcity here. Hira Thapa from the village of Shera works as a chowkidar in New Delhi, and is returning home for Dasain. "If there was peace, I wouldn't have to go to India to work, I could farm my fields. But life is uncertain. I may return and tomorrow they may chase me out of my house."

In the hinterland, the Maoist writ runs everywhere, especially since the recent massacre at

Bajureli voices

Village-level political workers of erstwhile parliamentary parties are all in Martadi, or have fled. "Frankly speaking, we are restricted to Martadi. We can't go back to our villages," says Deb Bahadur Rokaya of the Nepali Congress. His colleague Lali Khati nods in agreement, adding that if a truce was announced they were willing to go back and begin from scratch.

At the moment, no one can contemplate political activism, and party workers are squeezed by both the Maoists and the military. "Human rights violations are a daily occurrence and both the government and the rebels are equally responsible," says Bhanubhakta Upadhya, a local activist. But it is difficult to monitor violations, since people are reluctant to talk or report incidents. "People are just too scared," explains another rights activist, Lal Bahadur Oli.

The worst rights abuse case was the massacre of 23 people in army action near Kolti last year. Although initial reports said the dead were Maoists, it later turned out that they were mostly innocent villagers forced marched to attend a Maoist rally.

The rebels, meanwhile, have forced all NGOs to register with them. Janak Bahadur Rokaya of the NGO Federation says: "What this means is they don't want us here, because we could never register with them as that would put us in trouble with the government."

Gagan Rawal of the Association of Commerce and Industries says the Maoists have taken over the valuable herbs trade from Bajura's mountain forests. Trade and business is down 60 percent. "We are just sitting around waiting for things to get better. There isn't much else we can do," he says.

Traditionally, Bajurelis have migrated seasonally to Nainital and Kala Pahad in India in the lean season. In the last four years, several hundred of them haven't returned and there are few able-bodied men left in the villages. (Kishore Nepal)

Changa Chait 2061 2nd Knock-Out Game

Saturday 16th Ashwin 2061 (02 October 2004)

1 C & K Nepal Travels & Tours	VS	Mero Travel
2 Natraj Tours & Travels	VS	Nepal Kamaz Tours & Travels
3 Saraogi Tours & Travels	VS	Shangri-la Tours
4 Premier Insurance	VS	United Insurance
5 Development & Credit Bank	VS	Himalayan Bank (A)
6 Nabil Bank	VS	Nepal Credit & Commerce Bank
7 World Link Communication	VS	Hitechvalley iNet
8 Nation Weekly	VS	The Himalayan Times
9 Himal Media	VS	Samsung Digital World
10 Shikhar Himalayan Security	VS	Himalayan Bank (B)
11 Himalayan Snacks & Noodles	VS	Nanglo International
12 Arun Intercontinental Trades	VS	Bhajuratna Agency

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and we fled



Martadi's idyllic setting belies the tensions there (left), villagers from outlying parts of Bajura wait for rations of rotten rice (above)

RAVI TULADHAR

Antichaur. The rebels have been busy setting up local units of their 'people's government' with elections, and boast that one independent won. Local commander, Raktim, says the independent candidate is a capitalist but has promised to "reform" himself. It is clear that whoever is elected will have to toe the party line. There is no other way.

And there is no sign of the 'old regime' anywhere in these hills. The permits from the 'new regime' are useful only to walk the trails. Citizenship papers and other documents are still needed from the 'old regime'. Nara Bahadur Raut of Krishnapur is at his wits end: "We don't know what is ok and what's not, which

paper we can show whom and which ones we can't. My younger son has just returned from being force-marched, the older one has stopped going to school and then there are all these grandchildren. What is going to happen to them?"

Bajura's schools are either closed, or classes are disturbed because the teachers are taken away regularly for indoctrination and the students are forced to take part in mass meetings every time a new village 'people's government' is being installed. Earlier, the Maoists used to have to threaten villagers with dire consequences if they didn't do their bidding. They don't have to anymore. The people obey, not out of their own

free will, but out of acquiescence. They know that if they want to live in their village, they have to conform to the Maoists.

Once in a while, the sound of gunfire from army patrols rents the air and the villagers cower in fear. They know that if the army comes there will be a skirmish, and they may be caught in the crossfire. They'd prefer it if the military and the district administration stayed away from their village so they will be left alone by the Maoists.

What an irony that it is the presence of the security forces that spreads insecurity among people in the 'people's war' in these remote villages of western Nepal. ●

Sita Air mishap in Lukla

One passenger suffered a broken hand, but no one else among the 16 on board were hurt when a Sita Air Dornier suffered a nose-wheel collapse on the threshold of Lukla's inclined runway while landing.

The disabled plane blocked the runway and all flights, except helicopters, were cancelled. Civil aviation officials have flown to Lukla to examine the aircraft and interview the pilot and air traffic control. The aircraft will be moved and flights are expected to resume on Friday. Among those stranded in Lukla is Miss Nepal, Payal Shakya, who has been trekking in the Everest region as a roving ambassador for the World Wildlife Fund. (Naresh Newar in Lukla)

Mystery flight

It is the stuff of spy novels: a Bulgarian plane bringing American anti-terrorist equipment to Nepal is detained in India. The reported detention of the An-24 aircraft for five days in Ahmedabad has created a flutter in Kathmandu. Indian media reported the plane was detained for inspection, even through the Indian External Affairs Ministry in New Delhi said it landed, was inspected and took off for Kathmandu on 25 September itself.

American officials in Kathmandu said the Bulgarian plane was carrying training equipment for anti-terrorist activities. "This is a regular training and the State Department has been helping in such training in different parts of the world," US Embassy spokesperson Constance Colding Jones told us. "The cargo was not military assistance."

Indian Embassy officials in Kathmandu said they were not aware about the contents but confirmed that the cargo was inspected in Ahmedabad. "The inspection was in accordance to the bilateral arrangement between Nepal and India," the official said. Nepal's own Home Ministry was clueless, although sources said another Russian-made Il-76 aircraft had brought a Mi-17 transport helicopter for the army's air wing this week.

Going that extra mile

Nepalis abroad are walking extra miles to collect funds from the diaspora for underprivileged compatriots in their homeland. Navin Dhakal walked 14 hours and 20 minutes in the 56km Great Lake walk in Canada and raised \$2,700 from Nepalis living in different parts of the world. "I had aimed to finish it within eight hours," said Dhakal. "But the sense of satisfaction and accomplishment is so strong that the temporary sores and aches are all forgotten." This satisfaction has to do with the money collected for Help Nepal Network (HeNN), a global charity of Nepalis living in different parts of the world.

Around 80 Nepalis from different parts of the world contributed to generate the fund. Equally satisfied is another Nepali, Anil Thapa, who also ran 42km marathon in Iceland on 21 August. It is not yet clear how much he raised. Last year, Thapa had raised £700 by running the 10km London Marathon. HeNN says non-Nepalis also joined the walk campaign to collect fund for the network.

Alas, history did not end

Doomed attempts in Iraq and Afghanistan to establish Fukuyama's double whammy of democracy and capitalism

Does anyone remember the end of history? Or perhaps I should say *The End of History*? The essay by the American scholar, Frances Fukuyama in 1989 was expanded into a book three years later.

Famously, he argued that all countries and societies were marching, inevitably, towards a form of liberal democracy, propelled by free market capitalism both local and global. His article came as Communist governments of eastern Europe were collapsing and democracy was spreading across Africa

HERE AND THERE

Daniel Lak

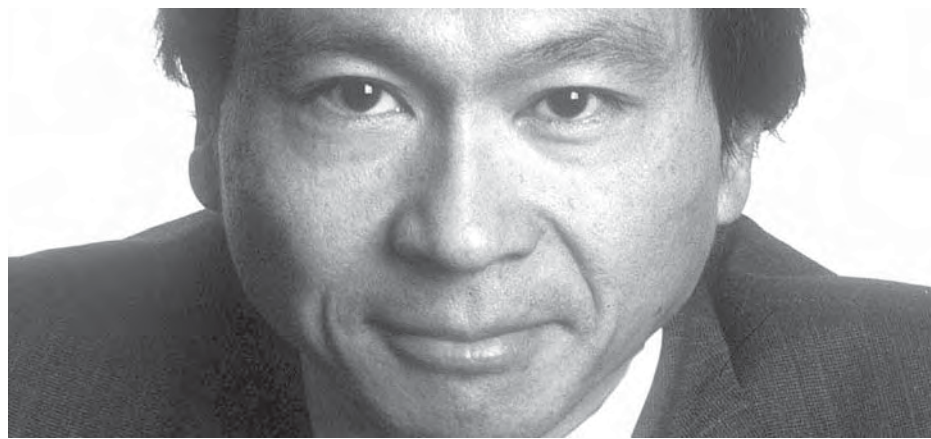


and Asia, not least

Nepal, in 1990-91.

His arguments, dense and over-scholarly at times, were compelling because it was what most of us wanted to read. After all, we wealthy, liberal-minded westerners raised in an atmosphere of privilege wanted to look outwards at the world and see mirror images everywhere. And why not? We were well educated, healthy and had the means to realise our potential. We could make money in business or trade, and use democratic politics to put our ideas in the political agenda. Why shouldn't everyone else in the world have the same privileges?

Alas, history was not over. Events



soon proved that Fukuyama was a trifle premature, if not downright wrong. Militant Islam—harnessed to American capitalism in the fight against communism in Afghanistan when the Fukuyama thesis first appeared—soon surged forth from the slums and seminaries of the Muslim world to express righteous wrath at the state of things. Corruption and endemic poverty persisted even as democratic faces were inducted around the elite in former authoritarian states. Environmental degradation continued unchecked, even though the minister of environment was now accountable. Arms trading boomed and wars broke out—for the first time—

between ostensibly democratic countries.

Now where do we stand? In Iraq and Afghanistan, valiant and perhaps doomed attempts are being made to establish Fukuyama's double whammy of democracy and capitalism. Both places resisted the tide of democratic revolution fifteen years ago and it took American bombs and soldiers to crush that resistance.

China is much, much richer and more economically open than ever. But it continues to oppress opposition movements, dissidents, minority groups and any other barrier to Communist Party-lead capitalism. Africa is in a dreadful state, wracked by civil war, HIV/AIDS and

a creeping return to authoritarian rule. Africans are poorer and less healthy now than they were when history was supposed to have 'ended'. Latin America remains largely democratic but troubled by the slow pace of economic change. The rich remain so, the poor too.

And what about the liberal democratic west, the beacons of hope for all the rest? Voter apathy is the biggest problem in those countries that allow their citizens to vote. Only the Australians, with their mandatory ballot, have this problem licked. America's next president will be chosen by around 50 million of its 280 million people! Tony Blair will be re-elected next year in Britain by what is certain to be a record low turnout.

Nepal, sadly, limps and wallows along, neither democratic nor authoritarian enough to matter. It's people are poorer, the elite prosper or flee and once proud political parties are discredited by their own failings and ravaged by militant Maoism and a royalist elite that never wanted democracy in the first place.

History hasn't ended, Mr Fukuyama. It's here, and in our faces.

If only you'd been right... ●

End of an era

For 42 years, the Peace Corps had a mutually-beneficial volunteer program, it will be sorely missed

As a small child, I remember watching with fascination a black-and-white documentary in which President John F Kennedy bid the first batch of US Peace Corps volunteers goodbye from the White House lawns in 1962.

The agency remained in my fuzzed memory, until in late 1984 when Sivajee Upadhaya of US Peace Corps Nepal offered me a short-term assignment to train three volunteer engineers on the drinking water supply and irrigation needs in the hills of Nepal.

NEPALI PAN
Ajaya Dixit



I agreed nervously. Colleagues warned me that Americans like to ask lots of questions and challenge teachers, something my

engineering students didn't often do. I completed a productive and thoroughly enjoyable three weeks of training in Pokhara. And thus began my decade-long but intermittent association with the agency, its staff, Nepali trainers and the many young Americans who served as volunteers from 1984-94. We built water systems, constructed rain water-harvesting tanks, conducted bilingual training workshops on hygiene education, training of trainers and designed and managed small projects. Together, we also learned the importance of listening, respectfully disagreeing and breaking down the barriers of communication.

Watching a fresh graduate volunteer coming to live in a new cultural milieu and depart two years later as a confident, sensitive and mature person was fascinating. Fresh volunteers would initially be culture shocked, but six months later they would be conversing fluently in Nepali about the culinary skills of their *ama* or *baini*, or how hard it was to negotiate a village trail with a *bhainsi* coming from the opposite direction. The program ended up creating a whole generation of Americans who fell in love with Nepalis and became familiar with this country.

The volunteers have made important contributions to all the sectors they were involved in, but I find it worthwhile to specifically mention the rural drinking water supply sector. In the early 1970s, when Nepal was expanding its drinking water supply program in the rural hills and tarai, no technical guidelines existed to help design a drinking water supply system. The local expertise was just beginning to grow. In 1975, volunteer Carl Johnson compiled the *Village Water Systems Technical Manual*, which was later improved upon by another volunteer, Thomas D Jordan in 1980. This second handbook is used as a source material to this today.

Subsequently, many other expatriate and Nepali professionals refined the guidelines and have contributed to the better understanding needed to maintain completed drinking water systems, involve local beneficiaries in the decision-making processes and integrate hygiene education and sanitation with drinking water supply programs while addressing the concerns of women and marginalised groups.

There were others too: the British, the Dutch, the Germans and the Japanese who placed their citizens as volunteers working in forestry, education, health, with marginalised groups and in many other critical areas that needed, and continue to need, support.

The decision to suspend US Peace Corps activities in Nepal for six months brings the era to an end. The fate of a mode of engagement that brought people (not the governments) of the two countries together now hangs in the balance, at least until peace is restored.

The Peace Corps began in an era with very different complexities than the present. The volunteer program should not have closed, but it has and this juncture is perhaps a time to take of stock of its input to the development of Nepal, including its unintended consequences. It would also be timely to reflect on and conceive of new ways to increase the cross-cultural encounters that the Peace Corps fostered.

Such engagements are more important now than ever before, when we need many leaders around the world who are willing to think outside the box, and beyond their immediate partisan constituencies. ●

Ajaya Dixit is a water management analyst and editor of the journal *Water Nepal*.

Ex-POWs get £10,000

This week some Gurkhas won the right to be British citizens, while others have finally been compensated

RAMESH POUDEL in POKHARA

Dhana Lal Gurung was captured by the Japanese in 1941 while he was fighting for the British in Malaya. Taken to a prisoner of war camp in Singapore, he spent four years breaking rocks, carrying sacks of salt and enduring immense hardship.

After the war, Dhana Lal and 3,000 other Nepali Gurkhas were released, emaciated and sick. Some returned home to their families in Nepal, while others rejoined the British or Indian armies to keep fighting in other wars.

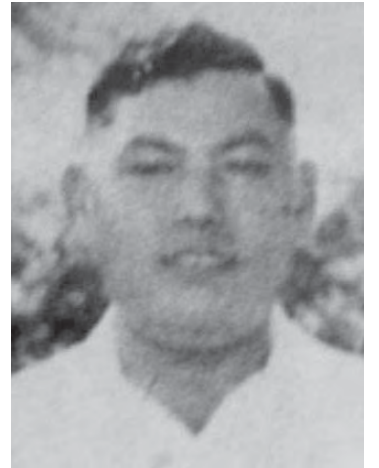
"It was bad enough to have suffered in the POW camps," says a still-sprightly 86-year-old Dhana Lal, "but when we found that that the white prisoners received much more compensation than us, that really hurt."

After a protracted legal battle, the British government agreed last November to provide ex-gratia payment of £10,000 for the 100 or so surviving ex-Gurkha servicemen who were imprisoned by the Japanese. The defence had argued that the exclusion of the Gurkhas in the reparation with the Japanese after the war was racist. A team at the Far East Prisoner of War (FEPOW) office in Kathmandu had started processing applications from ex-prisoners in April and travelled across Nepal interviewing Dhana Lal and others to verify their claims. So far, a few city-based prisoners like Dhana Lal have received their money, which amounts to nearly Rs 1,400,000.

"I am old now, the money will make it easier for me to die in peace. I have been paid for shedding my blood," says Dhana Lal, who had been depending on his daughter's salary to buy medicine. Dhana Lal has used his money to pay debts and buy a house for his daughter in Lamachaur in Pokhara.

84-year-old Pahalman Gurung was also imprisoned in Singapore and he is all praise for the Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen's Organisation (GAESO) for getting the compensation. "We never imagined it would happen. The British government was forced to agree," says Pahalman, went to London to testify at the hearings and has now distributed the money equally among his sons. Now he is hoping that the ex-British Gurkhas will also get a pension on par with their white colleagues. Equal pension has been one of the other demands from the Gurkhas and it is in the British courts.

Both Pahalman and Dhana Lal have memories of ill-treatment in the camps, of



Pahalman Gurung (left) in Pokhara this week, and just before his capture by the Japanese in Malaya in 1941. Gurkhas retreat from Kota Bahru ahead of a Japanese advance (below).



severe beatings and double work as punishment. There were some 13,000 prisoners in Singapore, Ipo and Kuala Lumpur, most of them British, Sikhs, Pathans and Nepalis. Rations were meagre and many prisoners didn't make it. There were three battalions of nearly 3,500 Gurkhas in Malaya at that time. Some were killed in the Japanese advance, but severely outnumbered, most surrendered.

At the end of the war in August 1945, the Japanese released the prisoners and the British just sent them home. Most of the white British soldiers were given compensation as far back as 1952. The Gurkhas were regarded as Indians and weren't given money. After pressure from activists and ex-Gurkhas, the British Government announced in November 2003 that, following on from the 2000 Ex-Gratia Payment Scheme for Far East Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees, Gurkhas who were soldiers with the old Indian Army during the Second World War, would, if they were Nepali citizens in 1951, qualify for the £10,000 compensation.

The scheme was then formally extended to include those who were held captive by the Japanese in the Second World War and who, were citizens of Nepal in 1951 when the Peace Treaty was signed between the Allied Powers,

including the United Kingdom and Japan.

It is not yet clear what will happen to the compensation for those ex-prisoners who have died since their release, although GAESO says it is trying to get the compensation amount to the families of the deceased. "We are collecting data. They are scattered across Sikkim, Dehradun, Darjeeling, and we have about 1,000 ex-prisoners still living," says Padam Bahadur Gurung of GAESO.

Some 50,000 Nepali soldiers fought and died for the allies in both world wars. The death toll represents a shocking 10 percent of Nepal's able-bodied male population in the early and mid-20th century. More died fighting Maoists in Malaya and Indonesians in Borneo in the late 1950s. More than 100,000 came back invalid and spent the rest of their lives unable to work in their villages across the mountains of Nepal.

Dambar Ghale remembers his father, Dallu, coming home in 1945. "He fought for six years for the British. He came back wounded, and we have taken care of him all our lives," he says. For people like Pahalman and Dhana Lal, justice has been served very late in their lives. But for others, all that remains are memories of bravery for a cause most can't remember, or even if they do, doubt if it was worth dying for. ●

The Compassionate Heart

The great 19th century Tibetan master Paltrul Rinpoche composed a short text of meditation practices based on Shantideva's **The Way of the Bodhisattva**. This text presents a perfect method for applying his instructions on compassionate conduct in our daily lives. Khenpo Sherab Dorje will teach a one month course on this text, four evenings a week from October 4th to the 28th at the Rangjung Yeshe Institute. He will teach in Tibetan with English translation.

NOC can't raise money for oil import

The Nepal Oil Corporation is having difficulties convincing creditors to lend it Rs 3 billion to pay Indian Oil. Worse yet, if it does not get the money, it may not be able to import petroleum.

Last month, the cabinet pledged to help it raise the money. Such a guarantee would have made it easy for NOC to convince banks to lend the required cash. But the government revoked the decision this week after learning that such a move would be a violation of its own policy.

Multilateral creditors are also against the idea of a government guarantee to help public enterprises get loans from banks. That was the reason the government never helped Royal Nepal Airlines despite repeated requests for credit guarantees so it could buy new aircraft.

In case of the NOC, the government has instead decided to look into alternatives like pledging collateral for loans. But NOC officials said they already used their assets as collateral to obtain Rs 2 billion from Rastriya Baniya Bank and Standard Chartered last July. Before the latest rises in fuel prices, the corporation was incurring losses of Rs 580 million every month. The two-phased fuel price hike would have lowered the deficit, but since then world crude prices have surged ahead and crossed the \$50/barrel mark this week.

A task force recently recommended that fuel prices should be made on par with international rates and the government is committed to doing this, but gradually. But for now, the question is: will anyone lend NOC the money to pay off Indian Oil?

China Town Shopping

Kathmandu's China Town Shopping Centre is holding a Dasain shopping festival, attracting tens of thousands of customers. "According to our estimate, there have been 20,000 to 35,000 customers visiting China Town in the last four days," said Kirpa Acharya, a member of the China Town Shopping Centre Business Association, at the end of the four-day shopping festival. "We have added 60 more stalls here during the festival, and they sold various goods valued at about Rs 10 million." A wide range of China-made items were sold during the festival including tv sets, household appliances, computer parts, porcelain, textile, shoes, cosmetics and dolls. Among them, readymade clothes sold best. (Xinhuanet)

Bell 407 trials

AVCO, the Nepal representative for Bell Helicopter Textron, has been awarded a citation in appreciation of AVCO's contribution to the recently concluded high altitude trials for the Bell 407 helicopter in Mustang. The 407 carried out flight trials at 20,000ft and higher out of Jomsom in May. Bell and AVCO hope to sell the helicopters here for adventure tourism as well as search and rescue and say the aircraft is comparatively cheaper to operate and easy to maintain. The Royal Flight already operates two Bell Jetrangers.



Research ideas

Everything you wanted to know about business, but never figured out

The last few years have seen a rise in the number of privately-financed management colleges in Kathmandu. On the mile-long road that starts from Baneswor

STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari



Chowk and ends at the BICC, four such institutions have sprung up since 2000, offering courses to thousands of full and part-time students on everything from finance to entrepreneurship to microeconomics.

As administrators at any one of these colleges can tell you, demand is up because there is a severe shortage of competent full-time management teachers and Nepal-specific business case studies for them to teach. All colleges dutifully say that they would like to make their name through research, but they admit that they just do not have the money to pay for research activities.

When talking to both full-time and part-time faculty members, one gets the sense that more than the money (which can be raised with a little bit of imagination and hustle) it is the shortage of questions—based on events around us in Nepal—that seems to be stalling the research agenda. None of these research questions need to be grand in scope or even application-oriented in aim. They can be intellectually playful, trying to explain one or two intriguing aspects of our business life with

evidence, rigour and clarity. In other words, instead of explaining everything, each question just attempts to shed some light on what our businesses do and why, and, the resulting work invites others to build up on the findings, and so it goes.

Here are some research ideas that have been playing in the back of my mind for some time. I do not have the answers, but business academics may be able to find them:

- Despite there being 15 broadsheet national dailies and four tv stations in the private sector, why is Nepali media limited to primarily reporting as opposed to breaking news about, say, the Maoists?
- In Thamel, some restaurants appear to be around for a long time, while others fold not long after they set up shop. With the location holds constant, what explains the difference?
- Why is it that Nepali private banks appear to have more women in lower-level clerical posts and hardly any in senior management?
- Why did Ratna Pustak Bhandar not think of opening up branches in urban towns to cash in on its long-respected brand value, while latecomers such as Pilgrims have opened up branches and diversified their product lines to cater to a wider range of customers?
- Why does a plate of plain dosa cost anywhere from Rs 40 to Rs 60 in most vegetarian eateries in Kathmandu while it costs far less at similar establishments in India?



- In recent times, the state-run Dairy Development Corporation has come up with a range of milk-based products. What is driving DDC's product innovation strategy?
 - Most top businessmen's visiting cards list their various responsibilities at FNCCI or CNI. How do they manage time and delegate authority?
 - With two billion people and growing markets next doors, should Nepal just concentrate on making money off the tourism, hydropower, herb and education industries and buy everything else from India and China?
- These questions obviously need further refinement. But the point is that if management colleges start encouraging their teachers to come up with questions for research, they may find that funding problems are not as great as they imagine them to be. ●



Bhola Thapa of President Travels and Tours is the agent in Nepal for Gulf Air, Qantas and, starting 1 September, of United Airlines too. He spoke to Nepali Times about the outbound market and prospects for growth.

KIRAN PANDYA

“We are all waiting for a truce.”

Nepali Times: How is the traffic situation looking post-September First?

Bhola Thapa: You have to understand that air travel to and from Nepal is not as dependent on tourist traffic as before. There are up to 5,000 Nepalis who win the immigration lottery to the United States, they all travel out to America. Many go back and forth several times during the year. Then there is the big market for overseas contract workers in the Gulf region, which is picking up again after the riots here. There is also business travel.

But obviously you would benefit if tourism showed a rebound?

Of course. Adverse international publicity of the situation in Nepal has affected tourism. But I can tell you that if there is a ceasefire tomorrow, there will definitely be a big increase in inbound traffic. We are all waiting for a truce.

You have been appointed passenger sales agent for United Airlines, how much business do you hope to generate?

Last year, United generated \$400,000 worth of business in Nepal. These would be passengers who connect on United flights via London, Bangkok or Hong Kong. United is a member of Star Alliance, so there is plenty of opportunity for growth with special fares with other airlines. We hope to hit \$600,000 this year and may reach \$1 million in 2005. So we hope to work as a feeder for United. For example, there could be a very good connection if you fly Kathmandu-Shanghai on Royal Nepal Airlines and onwards on United to the US west coast. Royal Nepal gets a certain amount of business, it is more convenient for passengers and United gets business too.

Any plans for expansion of Gulf Air's services, or Qantas?

Gulf is looking at adding three more flights a week to and from Bahrain in addition to the current daily flight to Abu Dhabi by

Gulf Traveller. We also want to introduce Airbus 330s on this route so there will be First and Business Class sections as well. The Gulf market is made up of two kinds of passengers: the Nepali contract workers flying to and from the region, and then there are the high-end passengers connecting onwards to Europe or the US through the Gulf. We were also working with Qantas to bring in its charter subsidiary from Singapore, making it more convenient for travellers to and from Australia. But that is taking time because the airline is facing an aircraft shortage. For Qantas passengers we also help with visas from the Australian High Commission in New Delhi, and we sell packages on Qantas Holidays worldwide. At President Travels we also handle discounted five-country tickets for Eurail and Eurostar.

If tourism isn't such a big factor, what are the obstacles to growth in passenger volume?

You see, you have to distinguish between inbound traffic and outbound traffic. For those of us who are in the business of selling tickets in Nepal for outbound passengers, tourism is not such a big factor. Because most tourists who come in already have onward bookings anyway. But inbound traffic is still heavily dependent on tourism. And because of this, traffic is affected by peace and stability in Nepal. If you have a ceasefire, every airline flying in will see a big increase in volume. Inbound traffic is also affected by accessibility, which means cost. The good thing is that costs have gone down because there are more carriers in the market.

How optimistic are you about tourism bouncing back?

I see a silver lining in every cloud. Even all this bad publicity about massacres and riots in the past five years or so have actually helped the world know about Nepal. People around the world now know where it is, and once things get back to normal they will flock here.

Giving their art and soul

The Chitrakars have dominated Nepal's art scene for three centuries

NARESH NEWAR



Nepali painting has come a long way, transforming itself from two-dimensional religious icons to western-style oil-on-canvas perspective realism. The man who did more than anyone else to bring about this renaissance was Tej Bahadur Chitrakar, a member of the clan whose surname has become synonymous with Nepali paintings.

Ever since King Jaysthiti Malla designated the Chitrakar clan to painting in the 18th century, the family has been in the business of art not just as a profession, but also to fulfil their social and religious obligations.

Their skills and paintings have been passed down from one generation to the next, and along the way famous Chitrakar painters have added new styles and techniques. The Chitrakars have a strong sense of preserving their ancestral profession. They may have drifted into business, but most still paint. And if they gave up painting, they turn to photography and photojournalism.

Three hundred years ago, Chitrakars were given the job of painting religious paubas, the antecedents of Tibetan thangkas. Today, paubas adorn temples, puja rooms and museums across the world. And when the chariot festival of Machhendranath came along, it was the Chitrakars who were called out to paint the wheels with the all-important eyes, just as they painted the masks of the dancers and the eaves of temple struts.

It was not until Jang Bahadur took Bhaju Ratna Chitrakar to England and France on his 1850 Europe visit that the clan was exposed to new styles and vogues. Jang Bahadur wanted Nepali painters to learn the art of doing oil portraits like the ones of the British viceroys he had seen in Calcutta. Legend has it that Bhaju Ratna employed some of his newly-learned brush techniques on the long journey back from England to make practice portraits of Jang Bahadur himself. One of these Jang Bahadur is said to have, rather immodestly, presented to Queen Victoria and it hung for a long time in the office of the foreign secretary in Whitehall until Robin Cook had it removed in 2000.

All new

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Then, during the reign of Chandra Shumshere, when palace-building was at its zenith in Kathmandu Valley, Tej Bahadur Chitrakar took the bold step of focusing on representational real-life figures on canvas. It was neither socially acceptable nor economically viable at the time to paint real-life portraits, landscapes or depict social life.

Tej Bahadur didn't want to restrict himself to paubas. He wanted to explore what he could do with modern techniques. The construction of Singha Durbar was near completion, making it the largest private residence in the world of the period. Young Tej Bahadur was working as an apprentice, painting the huge backdrop curtain for Chandra Shumshere's personal theatre in what is now the parliament building. One day, during a tour, Chandra Shumshere noticed Tej Bahadur and asked him to show him his work. The Sri Tin was impressed and promptly sponsored his training at the Government Art School in Calcutta.

It wasn't all altruism. As with Jang Bahadur and Bhaju Ratna, Chandra Shumshere wanted Tej Bahadur to return to paint large portraits of the Rana family. At the time, Kathmandu was closed to the world and the only way to reach Calcutta was by walking all the way to the Indian border and then by steamboat down the Ganga to Calcutta. With help of Chandra Shumshere's trusted official, Ram Mani Acharya Dixit, Tej Bahadur was admitted into Pioneer Art School where he learnt the craft and honed his skills.

After four years of learning to paint, Tej Bahadur returned to Kathmandu but Chandra Shumshere died before he could get a commission. Bhim Shumshere, who succeeded Chandra, was not an art aficionado and reformer. But the commander-in-chief Rudra Shumshere was so impressed with a portrait of his father, Bir Shumshere, that Tej Bahadur had done, that he commissioned a series of family portraits. But even before Tej Bahadur completed the work, Rudra Shumshere fell victim to intrigue and was banished to Palpa. Tej Bahadur was considered guilty by association and was victimised. He then lost all his property in the 1934 earthquake and his wife died a short while later.

Juddha Shumshere was the great 'reconstruction' prime minister who commissioned Tej Bahadur to paint heroic life-size panoramas of his hunting exploits in the tarai for the meeting hall in Singha Darbar to impress foreign dignitaries. So impressed was Juddha Shumshere with Tej Bahadur's painting of him hunting tigers from atop elephants that he rewarded him well and gave him a permanent studio in the Naksa Adda, the map room inside Singha Durbar.

Tej Bahadur was busy passing on what he learnt in Calcutta to a new generation of Chitrakar painters at Durbar High School, where he was an art teacher. His



Paintings by Tej Bahadur Chitrakar, clockwise from bottom left on preceding page: A musical interlude (1964), Wedding rituals of Prince Siddhartha (1956), Trisuli River (1946) and Hunting scene commissioned by Juddha Shumshere in 1937. Tej Bahadur Chitrakar in 1938 (right).



students include legendary artists like Manoharman Pun, Amir B Chitrakar, Gautam Ratna Tuladhar, DB Chitrakar, Kulman Singh Bhandari and others.

Other Chitrakars have also made their contribution to the arts. Dirgha Man Chitrakar was taken by Chandra Shumshere for his official visit to England in 1905, where he learnt photography and film processing. This knowledge was passed down to his son, Ganesh, who set up Ganesh Photo Lab, which has a treasure house of period photographs of early 20th century Kathmandu. In a fine case of historical symmetry, Dirgha Man's grandson, Kiran Chitrakar, accompanied another Nepali prime minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, in 1996 on an official visit to London as a cameraman for Nepal Television.

Tej Bahadur passed away in 1971, and his friends and family feel the state has not given his life's work due recognition. After the Rana regime fell, his significance was minimised and he was not even chosen to be a member of the Royal Nepal Academy when it was established in 1957 by King Mahendra. Madan

Chitrakar, Tej Bahadur's painter son, has brought out a book to pay tribute to his father. Says Madan: "My father's name has already faded from history despite his enormous contribution to the development of art in Nepal. The book is to preserve the heritage." ●



Tej Bahadur Chitrakar: Icon of Transition Madan Chitrakar Rs 500, 114 pages

Conditional

Kantipur, 26 September

काठमाडौं

The Maoists have said they will be ready to hold peace talks if the government gives clear answers to the six questions put forth by Maoist chief Prachanda. "If the government is able to answer all the questions, it will be able to prove that it is indeed in control," said spokesman of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), Krishna Bahadur Mahara. His comment has come one day after Prachanda made his questions public through a press release on Friday. Prachanda's questions include:

- Can the government reverse the 4 October, 2002 move of King Gyanendra?
- Can it make a trustworthy environment for talks, taking parliamentary parties into confidence against the wishes of the army generals?
- Can it take action against the killer of former UML parliamentarian Hem Narayan Yadab?
- Can it do something concrete to demonstrate that the army is under its control?

Mahara warned if the government tried to give twisted answers to these questions, it would be double-crossing, adding, "When the government has not been able to solve the problem of the parties agitating in the streets, how will it be able to address the problem we have caused for the restoration of the entire state?"

The rebels have also dismissed the government's proposal for secret talks. "We are not for peace talks," said Mahara. "When we are, we will inform the people and act in a transparent manner." Will the rebels declare a ceasefire before Dasai? "Our wish for a ceasefire alone will not bring any result. We did not begin the war because we wish to do so. Even if the Buddha was alive today, he would also ask us to take up arms," said Mahara.

Mahara insisted that the government should make a public commitment on a constituent assembly and give power to the people.

He is against a restoration of parliament. "This is the idea of reactionary forces to dupe the people," Mahara said. "The restoration of the parliament may solve the problems of the parliamentary parties but the national problem will remain unsolved. That is why we have been saying that the solution of the present problem is the constituent assembly and not the restoration of the parliament."

Mahara, however, said his party did not see any possibility of peace talks in the near future. "More than prospects of talks, we foresee the possibility of war." Reasoning his party's belief, he said, "There has been unprecedented rise in the movement of foreign powers in Nepal and that means we have the added responsibility of keeping the country's integrity intact."

Keep off

Nepal Samacharpatra, 25 September

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

The eastern headquarters of the Royal Nepali Army has requested that civilians not attend Maoist mass meetings and rallies because it claims to have begun a massive aerial and ground operation against the rebels. "We want no civilian casualties," said Major Bindu Gautam. "We are alerting the people because we have intensified our operation against the rebels in the eastern region." The army officer said as a result of the intensified operation, 14 rebels had been killed in the past week. During that time, one rebel was arrested and four others surrendered. The rebels who were killed were from Siraha, Okhaldhunga and Sunsari districts. The arrested Maoist is said to be 77-year-old Panchalal Rai, who worked as a vice-chief of the 'people's government' and advisor for the rebels in Dhankuta. Army officials said Rai was released in the presence of human rights activists and journalists.

Asylum

Krishna Jwala Devkota in Brussels, Nepal, 26 September

नेपाल

Two Nepalis from Chitwan and Baglung who entered Belgium after paying Rs 600,000 to middlemen are in refugee camps in Antwerp. There are 20 other Nepalis like them in various Belgian refugee camps. People seeking refugee status in Belgium have to first file an application at the home ministry, then wait in refugee camps until they are interviewed. But only few can satisfy the asylum criteria. "The ministry rejects most of the applications," says Navin Sapkota, former chairman of the

Nepali People's Progressive Forum, Belgium. The Commiserate General's office interviews the applicants, and if they find the applicant's answers and documents satisfactory, they are provided with 595 euro a month for food, lodging and petty expenses. This is just the first step to getting refugee status, but until the process is completed, the applicant has to stay in the camp. Besides food and lodging, the refugees also get 28 euros pocket money a week. Living conditions are comfortable, with television, computers and telephones. The inmates are also allowed to visit the city, but strict refugee camp rules have them return before midnight. The camp officials are always alert for the security and protection of the refugees. Taking photos inside the camps is prohibited, and outsiders are not allowed in. The identity of those living in this camp or details of their cases are never disclosed. Most Nepalis who came in the 90s had asked for 'political asylum', claiming they were Panchas and their lives were in danger. Then in 1995 the trend of fake Bhutani refugees started. Some 92 Nepalis already received residency cards by claiming to be Bhutani refugees. Lately, however, Nepalis have been seeking refugee status claiming that their lives are under grave threat from either the Maoists or the state. (Nepalnews.com Translation Service)

forwarded at a time when most NGOs have halted their activities due to threats from the Maoists, who say their permission is needed before initiating programs in Maoist 'base areas'. The NGOs in the district are now in a dilemma. In an interaction program in Kailali, Maoist leaders proposed the NGOs work in unity. Gambhir, a member of the Maoists' Kailali district committee, said: "The work that NGOs are doing for the general public is not enough. NGOs should move forward and go for united work efforts. Our party is ready for that." Gambhir said financial assistance is not a main issue, adding, "Unity is the main thing, we will discuss the details later." (Nepalnews.com Translation Service)

Outrage

Janaastha, 29 September

आस्था

On Tuesday night, about 15 armed youths attacked the convoy of cars of the Food Caravan at Jungedhara near Dhading. Ex-MP Bhojraj Joshi was entreating the militants: "We are also fighting imperialism, we are also comrades. These are all foreign anti-imperialist fighters. Leave them alone." One of the gunmen barked, "Stop giving speeches. Shut up." Then he pointed a revolver at Joshi's head and forced everyone out of the



RAVI MANANDHAR

'Working unity'

Nepal Samacharpatra, 26 September

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

DHANGADI-Maoists in Kailali have proposed a 'working unity' with local NGOs. The rebel proposal says NGOs support is a must in resolving the ongoing conflict. The proposal has been



Headline in Kantipur, 25 September: 'Maoists willing for conditional talks'

Headline in Annapurna Post, 25 September: 'Maoists reject talks offer'

Unconditional

Editorial in Annapurna Post, 27 September

अन्वपूर्ण पोष्ट

Chairman Prachanda's six questions to the government appear to be aimed at clearing the issues before potential future talks. To treat the six questions as obstacles to talks would be tantamount to a needlessly hurried conclusion. The six questions do not amount to pre-conditions for talks. In fact, they display an openness and provide an opportunity for the government to come to the negotiating table. Both sides now have the responsibility of creating the condition for talks so a compromise can be reached. The Maoists don't accept the current governance structure. They are determined to have their own kind of political and social revolution. The government can't agree to these demands overnight, but it appears ready to carry out necessary reforms. It is not possible to fulfill these demands under armed pressure. Since the two sides are so polarised, there is a lot of truth in civil society's view that the only solution is political. Since both sides also seem to reject a military solution, there needs to be confidence building measures for unconditional talks. The demand for a constituent assembly is something that has to be sorted out at the table. If the current constitution needs to be changed, there has to be a national consensus on these changes. The government is limited by the constitution. Pranchada's limits are not clear. Not all demands or proposals should be taken negatively. Let's talk openly about all proposals. Let's not play games, because all Nepalis are serious about their desire for peace.



Meaningful peace talks
Talks have started.
Talks are taking place in secret.
Wait! Here comes an SMS. There is a good chance talks can take place.

काठमाडौं Kantipur, 27 September

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"If the government doesn't listen to our demands, we will stand naked outside Singha Darbar."

-A Badi woman at a press conference on Wednesday to demand education and jobs, Annapurna Post, 29 September

vehicle as another gunman sprinkled the cars with petrol. Soon, the cars were ablaze. The cars were part of a convoy of the International People's March for Food Sovereignty, which had already travelled through Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Japan, Korea and Mongolia. Three days ago, it had entered Nepal, heading for Kathmandu. Three of the group's four Indian-registered cars were destroyed. The attackers then fired several rounds into the cars and detonated six socket bombs before melting into the night. The group packed themselves into the remaining car and drove up to Khanikhola, where local lodges refused to let them in, so they spent the night at the police station. The group included a BBC correspondent, a Hong Kong-based journalist and Filipino peasants-rights activist, Imelda. "We have Maoists in the Philippines, but they never do things against the people and are popular. These Nepali Maoists are counter-revolutionaries," Imelda said. The incident was very embarrassing for Nepal and the local UML hosts. UML leader Bam Deb Gautam said: "The activists were here to spread the struggle for peasants' rights. The Maoists must apologise."

Dolpa goes solar

Annappurna Post, 22 September

Daba Gurung of Tinje VDC used to walk six days from Dunai carrying kerosene that cost Rs 250 per litre, just to light his lantern, but now enjoys solar electricity at home. Hundreds of households in Dolpa are benefitting from photovoltaic systems. Most of the solar sets distributed in the district are of 11, 14, and 21 watts—sufficient to power three lamps and a radio. The government is providing subsidies of Rs 12,000 for each set. Yarsagumba is the major source of income among Dolpalis and the first priority after they earn money is installing a solar system. Children are now able to study at night and the tourism industry has also benefitting.

Deepak B Shahi, director of Bionic Energy, says a lack of trained installers and transportation problems mean he is not able to keep up with demand. (CENews translation)

NEA ripped off

Bikas Thapa in Kantipur, 27 September 2004

Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) pays more than Rs 10 per unit for the electricity it buys from the privately-owned Khimti and Bhote Kosi power plants, while it sells electricity at Rs 6.81 per unit. Furthermore, the expensive electricity generated by the 60MW Khimti and 36MW Bhote Kosi plants is being wasted in the monsoon season because of low demand and excess supply. NEA is therefore losing Rs 2.07 billion per year, while 42 percent of its income goes straight to these two companies. The cost of Bhote Kosi electricity will go up to Rs 11.63 next year. NEA has

agreed to buy all the electricity generated by Bhote Kosi for 20 years and pay in US dollars. In the final year of the contract (2020) the price of Bhote Kosi's electricity is expected to go up to Rs. 60.40 per unit. NEA's electricity tariff, however, will only be a maximum of Rs. 16.37 per unit. The Khimti case is similar. NEA's own power plants, which can generate electricity at less than Rs 3 per unit, remain idle. NEA could generate Rs 5 billion in revenue if it were to sell all the 600MW of power that is available, but almost 140MW of this power remains unused. (CENews translation)

Rethinking

Hridyesh Tripathi in Kantipur, 27 September

After the royal move in 2002, Nepali Congress proposed the restoration of the House of Representatives. The centrist party defines this as the only way out of the current political crisis. The UML also adhered to that proposal for quite some time. The other parties of the dissolved parliament had reluctantly agreed to the idea because they also wanted to take part in the street struggle. However, from day one, Nepal Sadhabana Party (Anandi Devi) and People's Front Nepal had been stressing the need for a constituent assembly. The so-called big parties in parliament did not entertain our idea and that is why the slogan for the restoration of democracy gained currency. After the UML joined the government claiming that regression had been corrected, the demand of the remaining four parties had to be revised. The demand for an all-party government was no longer relevant, and so our demands had to be revised and fine tuned. But even after the four-party meeting three weeks ago, the demand continues to be for the restoration of parliament. The meeting had also decided that the country should be given an outlet through restoration and by using the present constitution as a stepping stone for a constituent assembly. The question that naturally pops up is if the restoration of the house is constitutionally legal. Even if the parliament is restored, does it have the mandate to go for a constituent assembly or any other progressive move for the restructuring of the state? Will such a move establish the state power and sovereignty in the people or in other power centres? Will the move be able to end the present conflict?

The king dissolved the third parliament on the recommendation of the prime minister. The dissolution was done through Clause 53 (4) of the constitution. It wasn't a result of the king's wish. By now it has been established that the person who had recommended the dissolution did so with ill intent and lacked long-term vision. The move paved the way for the formation of a third front in this conflict-ridden country.

"We will crush India"

Prachanda's interview in Krishna Sen Online, reproduced in Gatibidi, 25 September

गतिविधि

After the royal palace massacre, the party toned down its rhetoric against Indian expansionism and focused against American imperialism instead. What was the reason for this?

From the strategic point of view, we never toned down our struggle against Indian expansionism. With the correct analysis of Nepal's history, and its economic, political and cultural characteristics, our party has determined that the Nepali peoples' differences with domestic reactionary state power has been protected by Indian expansionism. That analysis was done 13 years ago and our party has not changed its position. The second thing is: despite increasing political and military interference of American imperialism against the Nepali people, we have never devalued the fact that the Indian ruling class was also interfering. However, Indian expansionism used to be a step behind American imperialism, and our party took aim accordingly. But now, since America is entangled in Iraq and is facing a so-called presidential election, the Bush gang has stepped back and has deployed Indian expansionism instead, which has become its main broker with a longterm strategic interest to interfere in Nepal. This has been made clear through their activities over the last 6-8 months. Considering this change, our party has given top priority to the struggle against Indian expansionism. This is not just from the strategic point of view, but also from the immediate working policy standpoint. The old regime in Nepal, which is a broker of yet another broker, has kowtowed to Indian expansionists for its existence. By showing a despicable willingness to surrender national sovereignty, the old regime is

busy pleasing New Delhi.

Considering India's past direct and indirect interference in Nepali politics, what are the chances of direct Indian military interference against Nepal's people's war? If it happens, what will be the future of the people's war?

Due to several internal and external political and military reasons, direct Indian military interference against the Nepali people's war is not as easy as the Indian reactionary rulers make it out to be. But given the fast pace of the Nepali people's war and its influence in the Indian public's people's revolution, the chances of such interference by terrified Indian expansionists, with their foolish bullying attitude, is quite possible. Considering Nepal's geopolitical structure and its special location, the historical patriotism and integrity of Nepalis and the great people's war in the 21st century, such foolish acts on the part of the Indian rulers will help spread the people's revolution all over South Asia. It will trigger a wave of revolution in India itself, and Indian rulers will be preparing their own deathbed. As far as the people's war is concerned, such a war will transform itself into a national liberation war like in Vietnam and will receive the support of people in the region and the world. Since there is a possibility of such a foolish act by the Indian expansionist rulers and because of the submissive character of the old feudal regime in Nepal, our party is already working on a concrete plan to convert the entire country into a patriotic war front. We have also been appealing to the general people to be prepared for such a war. We believe that if India makes such a move, it will be crushed by the people's war and thus not only Nepalis, but also the Indian people will be freed from reactionary exploitation and suppression.



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than yours

feel and inflict pain

"The next time, the smoking gun could be a mushroom cloud?" No United Nations authority? "We will never again wait for permission to defend our country". No link between Saddam and al-Qaeda? "They only have to be right once. we have to be right every time". This is the real link between Iraq and 9/11—the rhetorical dissembling that renders victimhood not a point from which they might identify with and connect to the rest of humanity but a means to turn their back on humanity.

They portray America's pain as a result of 9/11 not only as unique in its expression but also superior in its intensity. When 3,000 people died on September 11, *Le Monde* declared: 'We are all Americans now'. Around 12,000 civilians have died in Iraq since the beginning of the war, yet one waits in vain for anyone to declare that we have all become Iraqis, or Afghans, let alone Palestinians. This is not a competition. Sadly, there are enough victims to go around. Sadder still, if the US continues on its present path, there will be many more.

Demanding a monopoly on the right to feel and to inflict pain simply inverts victimhood's regular contradiction—the Bush administration displays material strength and moral weakness. ● (GNS)



find it difficult"

has been on hold since Norway brokered a truce in February 2002, but the negotiations are suspended and many are worried the current crisis could put the ceasefire under strain.

In April 2002, the Tamil Tigers pulled out, claiming they were being sidelined. Later they wanted to discuss proposals for an interim government in the north—which the government of former Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe was unwilling to do and the current government has remained noncommittal on.

Last Thursday, the main unit of the Tamil Tigers ambushed and killed a renegade guerrilla named Reggie and two of his close aides in rebel-held eastern Sri Lanka. Suspected Tiger gunmen also killed a rival political activist in the capital Colombo. Reggie was the deputy and brother of breakaway Tiger leader V Muralitharan, better known as Karuna.

The Tigers accuse Karuna of siding with the Sri Lankan army but the government and the army have denied this. Solheim met President Chandrika

Kumaratunga in an attempt to shift attention from the deadlock to gains achieved from the 2002 ceasefire. "Everyone should appreciate the enormous benefit of this no-war-no peace situation. If war had been here, 10,000 or 20,000 people would have been killed," he said.

The benefits have undoubtedly been immense. At the Kilinochchi Central College the student population has increased more than 100 percent since the ceasefire. "Children are now eager to come to school," says the college's principal, P Muttaiah.

Banks operating in Tiger held areas are also doing good business. "Since the ceasefire, the customer base has grown," said Vivekanandan Jananadan, the Kilinochchi branch manager of the Tiger-controlled Bank of Tamil Eelam. Three banks under the Sri Lankan government, too, operate in the town and boast of a similar customer base.

At the Kilinochchi vegetable market, vendors said that business has never been this stable. "Business is good here, we don't have big problems. It

will be good if it stays this way," says KG Hemalatha. She and her husband are the only Sinhalese doing business in Kilinochchi's main market. This northern city is predominately Tamil, though Sinhalese make up about 70 percent Sri Lanka's population.

While the talks are deadlocked, development work is continuing. A new water tower is being built right next to the one destroyed during the war, and the A9 highway, which was a pothole ridden dirt track in 2002, is now smoothly paved.

But fears of a resumption of hostilities still persist.

"No body is going to live forever, not even Prabhakaran or the president," said Shamnugam Sivasa, a coconut seller. "While this struggle is for land, the sons of innocent men and women are dying."

In areas under its control, the Tigers have the support to revert to armed hostilities. "Even if we don't agree with all the policies of the Tamil Tigers, they are fighting for us. We have to be given what was denied in the past," said P Kandasamy, a retired civil servant.

Tamil Tiger political chief Tamilselvan admitted to reporters last week that the peace process was in crisis. "We are patient, but of course there is a limit," he warned. ● (IPS)

WB denies watering down green rules

WASHINGTON — Peter Woicke, the director of the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC), has strongly rejected the concerns of more than 100 environmental, development and indigenous groups that his agency is planning to water down its strict social and environmental conditions on its future loans and investments.

In a letter sent to Woicke and World Bank President James Wolfensohn last week, the groups registered 'deep concerns' about the IFC's intent to replace its 10 'Safeguard Policies' on protecting the environment and local communities with new 'performance standards' that would set objectives for each project.

Such a change, the groups charged, implies a major shift from a mandatory and compliance-based approach to a mainly discretionary approach. "Reasonable people must be able to understand and agree upon the bottom-line standards that will be expected of IFC-financed projects," according to Janneke Bruil of Friends of the Earth International (FoEI), most of whose national chapters signed the letter. "These decisions should not be left to the whims of individual staff."

Woicke denied that the 'performance standards', which he hopes will be approved by the end of the Bank Group's fiscal year in 30 June 2005, will have that effect. "I don't think in today's world that it would be possible for any part of the World Bank Group to lower our standards," Woicke said.

IFC's 2004 annual report this week detailed \$4.75 billion in new investments to private-sector initiatives in the developing world, a substantial increase over its 2003 commitments. Since its founding in 1956, the agency has committed more than \$44 billion of its own resources and arranged some \$23 billion dollars in syndications in

140 developing countries. The IFC has been considered a global leader in imposing social and environmental conditions on its loan commitments since the early 1990s and particularly 1998 when most of its 10 'Safeguard Policies', which are designed to ensure that the projects it supports do not harm the environment or local communities, were introduced. (IPS)

Resurgence of drug-resistant TB

Super drug-resistant forms of TB are at the tipping point of a global epidemic, and only small changes are needed to help them spread quickly, US researchers predicted this week. Two separate studies show that multiple-drug-resistant TB, which can only be cured with a carefully monitored cocktail of drugs taken for months on end, could easily start spreading more commonly.

The reports, published in the latest issue of the journal *Nature Medicine*, coincide with another report published last week saying the World Health Organisation's efforts to control multi-drug-resistant TB were not working as well as hoped. If all the reports are true, it means that TB could make a dangerous new resurgence, and with new strains that are even harder to fight than the old ones. TB infects an estimated 8.7 million people a year and kills two million a year despite widespread control efforts. The disease is spread by airborne bacteria that settle into the lungs and cause long-term infection. Many people who are infected do not become ill themselves but can spread it.

Tough hygiene and treatment campaigns beat TB back in places such as Europe and North America, but AIDS, with its attacks on the immune system, helped TB make a comeback in the 1990s. TB is making special gains in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia. And TB strains resistant to several antibiotics are becoming increasingly prevalent, with hot spots in Russia, Eastern Europe, South Africa, China and Israel.

WHO's main strategy to control it is called 'directly observed treatment, short course' or DOTS, which involves using trained health professionals to watch patients take their long courses of antibiotics. Even a little carelessness in taking antibiotics can help TB mutate into drug-resistant forms. But some scientists had found that the mutant strains, while difficult to eradicate in the host patients, were not easily spread to other people. (IPS)



Rich forgive poor debt

WASHINGTON—Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that have been campaigning for years to write off tens of billions of dollars in debt owed by poor countries to international financial institutions say their dream may soon be realized at the meeting of finance ministers of the G-7 this week.

The world's wealthiest governments, will meet to decide whether to back a joint British-U.S. proposal to cancel all of the debt owed by 33 of the world's poorest nations to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and regional multilateral development banks. "We are counting down to freedom from debt," said Marie Clarke, national coordinator of Jubilee USA Network, at a rally across the street from the US Treasury Tuesday. "We are encouraged by Treasury's apparent support for full multilateral debt cancellation, but time is running out. We need action, not more words, on Oct. 1 when the G-7 meets."

The plan is designed to replace the eight-year-old Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, created to reduce the debt of some 41 eligible countries to more manageable levels in exchange for their implementation of far-reaching economic reform programmes designed to make their economies more attractive to foreign investment. So far, 27 countries that together owed \$100 billion have seen their debt reduced by about \$30 billion.

Remembering the pain of revolution

Two books on the Cultural Revolution reopen old wounds of a brutal time



Last month a friend asked me how much I really knew about China's past, even the recent past—just 20 years ago. He found it hard to believe that China could take an objective look at its Red Period while the generation that lived through it is still alive.

I told him I had read two books on the subject in Chinese, published in China, two months

ago. One of them was *Part One: A Hundred People's Memories of the Cultural Revolution* by Yi-Cai Feng, the other was *The Past Does Not Disappear Like Smoke* by Yi-He Zhang.

One of the stories in *Part One* was that of a woman who had killed her father with her own hands. She had tried to save him—an elderly academic—from the continual

harassment of the Red Guards, but her parents had persuaded her to kill them both, one after the other. She killed her father, but there was not time to kill her mother: the Red Guards discovered that the family was trying to commit suicide. So she and her mother jumped from a fourth floor window. She survived but her mother died a few days later. She was charged

with murder, and spent more than 20 years in jail. Her memories of her parents were confused, she told the book's author, and although she ate three meals and went to sleep and got up everyday, she hardly felt alive.

I understand these feelings of being dead and

BOOK
Xinran



alive at the same time, and of having mixed emotions towards your parents. I was seven-and-a-half when the Cultural Revolution took place and I, too, behaved as I thought a 'good daughter' should. My father was in prison and I wrote him a sentence in blood pricked from my finger. It said: 'You must repay the blood of the Chinese people!' I believed what I was told: that my father's family had helped the British drink Chinese blood as if it were red wine (my grandfather worked for the British company GEC for more than 30 years). This letter was stuck on the wall in his prison cell. I never talked to my father about this: I knew I could never erase the letter from either of our memories.

In one chapter of the other book, *The Past Does Not Disappear Like Smoke* there is a story about an educated family during the Cultural Revolution. A mother and her daughter try to live as if

nothing has changed: they wear nice clothes, use the best china, listen to English radio. Soon, to keep the Red Guards from these things, they decide they must destroy everything. I know about this. I saw it, too—my skirts, my books, my toys, my beloved doll, all burned and destroyed at the same time. The Cultural Revolution was a mad, unbelievable, and unforgettably painful moment.

But I was sad to read, at the end of Yi-Cai Feng's book, that when he went to interview young Chinese people recently about their feelings toward the Cultural Revolution, most of them had no idea what he was talking about. Some of them even asked why he would make these things up. Others said that China should have another revolution so that they could get out of exams.

China needs people like Peng and Zhang, who are prepared to dig for the truth and to uncover painful fads. We need them so that a younger generation can know how brave their parents were, and how much they owe them. These books may not be 100 per cent factual but, as Feng says, he has to protect the people who have told their stories, changing names, places and dates. These people have suffered too much already to have their lives overturned again. ●

Xinran is the author of *Sky Burial*

You don't want fries with that

Even if Kathmandu is one of the few places on earth without a McDonald's, this documentary is worth seeing

As with Michael Moore's polarising documentaries, the balance of fact and opinion wavers in films like Morgan Spurlock's *Super Size Me*.

The viewer is asked to question society through the lens of an opinionated camera, and the success of such films hinges on the presentation of the opinion. *Super Size Me* wraps its subject and its politics like a Happy Meal, masking an indigestible subject as entertainment.

Super Size Me follows its director on a 30-day experiment meant to check the obese volatility of the fast food industry: Spurlock promises to eat three McDonald's meals a day, every day, for a month. There are rules: He has to try everything on the menu, and every time an employee asks if he would like to 'super size' the meal, he must agree.

'Super sizing' is a cultural phenomenon of sorts. It refers to a considerable augmentation of the average fast food meal, instead of the normal burger, fries and a drink, one gets a burger, extra-large fries, and an extra-large drink. Spurlock is asked to super size only nine times during his monthlong experiment. The first time, after eating McDonald's for a mere three days,

the larger meal made him vomit in the parking lot.

Spurlock admits that his idea ignores the consumptive rationale of any logical eating plan. He knows that by eating three McMeals a day, he will be consuming more calories, fat, salt and sugar per meal than he needs. Three doctors deem Spurlock in good health before he embarks on Ronald's diet. He (the man, not the clown) is 6'2" and about 185 pounds. He is in good shape.

The truth can be a flawless weapon, however, and predictably, Spurlock's results are horrifying. He gains 10 pounds in the first week, eight pounds the week after, and nearly 30 pounds by the end of the 30 days. He 'pickles his liver' as if he were binge drinking, according to one of the doctors, all of whom strongly encourage ending the experiment after 20 days.

Spurlock persists, and although it's painful to watch, his wit and style keep the film afloat in the french fryer, as it were. He balances the greasy grotesqueness of his quest with facts and funnies. In one scene, Spurlock is in the car with a legal adviser. The adviser says that like the cigarette companies and their candy cigarettes, the food chain uses Happy Meals and play areas to make children associate McDonald's with 'positive

feelings' from a young age. Spurlock replies something along the lines of, "When I have kids and we drive by a McDonald's, I'm going to punch them in the face."

The film presents a wealth of information indicting fast food's health-depleting qualities and the permeation of those qualities in an ever-fattening American culture. The most interesting moments don't involve caloric numerology or Spurlock hunting McDonald's officials, Michael Moore-style. Instead, the best spotlighting is found in the unique—and real—characters formed from the fast food industry. One man has eaten over 19,000 Big Macs and remains skinny and relatively healthy. There is also a fascinating interview with the son of the owner of Baskin-Robbins, who claims that his childhood was pockmarked by a mood-swinging addiction to ice cream. He also notes that both his father and his uncle (Baskin) died of heart trouble when they were around 50 years old.

Spurlock's biggest success is his unending human accessibility. Even late in the month, when he admits to feeling depressed, craven, smelly and sexually uninspired, his sense of humor persists, keeping a glint in his eye and a movement to his film that never tapers off. ●

<http://www.supersizeme.com>



FILM
Max Braden



its subject and its politics

Vertical golf

Hills, valleys, and slopes

Beautiful undulating terrain is an integral part of most beautiful golf courses and a feature of the three most-played courses in Nepal.

Precision scoring sports by and large have uniformly flat surfaces from which to aim from. Golf is a major exception, and that is one of the many charms of the game. There are uphill, downhill and sidehill

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



lies. Add to this combinations of side and up, side and down, and you can easily comprehend why a player needs to be armed with the ability to understand the

intricacies of each uneven position.

Practice ranges have flat hitting surfaces, and usually a perfectly level and 'bouncy' Astroturf mat to hit from. Beginners almost always start their game from here, and this is the type of shot they get used to hitting. Playing on a real course, they are faced with this new awkward challenge, and seem baffled at why they have such difficulty hitting the ball. Their well-practiced normal 'flat lie' swing ends up with miss hits and often even air shots. The cause is undoubtedly a lack of understanding the lie and knowing the adjustments to make.

Balance is a key in executing a good golf swing. When playing from uneven lies, this becomes crucial, as the body is not used to swinging with gravity pulling at it from an angle. In all the scenarios below, remember to concentrate on balance and easing off on the swing. To compensate for this, a club (or two) extra should be taken to achieve the needed distance.



When the **ball is above your feet** the ball will naturally draw (right to left for right handed players). Compensation must be made by aiming right of the target. The ball is closer to you than normal, so choking down on the grip helps you adjust for this level difference. Never try to hit a full shot from these lies, and remember to take an extra club.

When the **ball is below your feet**, the ball tends to fade. Therefore, aim left of the target. To keep balance, hit easy and take one or even two extra clubs.

Uphill and downhill lies can be maddening, yet we see the masters of the game play them with seeming ease. What is their secret?

The common mistake is in setting up to the ball with the shoulders horizontal, irregardless of the lay of the land. If you do that on an uphill lie, you will end up with a swing that is too steep, driving your club face into the slope, hitting high and well short.

For both uphill and down hill shots, take a club and hold it across your shoulders, then bend your knees appropriately, and shift your upper torso until the club is parallel to the slope. Now your swing path and your club's angle of approach will be similar to what you would have on level ground. Remember again to swing easy to stay balanced, and to take a little more club to make up for this.

Armed with this knowledge, analyse the lie you have, make the necessary adjustments, and see the difference in your shot making. ●

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

Rajendra's gold

This has been a winning season for athlete Rajendra Bhandari. A few days after he broke his own national record in the Athens Olympics, the sportsman of the Royal Nepali Army's Tribhuban Club clinched a gold medal in the 5,000m race at the Asian Allstar Athletics Championship in Malaysia.

This was the first time Nepal has won the gold medal in the Asian level athletic event, with more than seven Asia-Pacific countries took part. Our Rajendra came first with a time of 14.16.36 minutes.

Bhandari had emerged as a promising athlete after he won two

silvers in the 9th South Asian Federation games in Pakistan. Then, he broke his own national record by finishing the 5,000m in 14.04.89 minutes.

So why did he take more time in the Asian Allstar Athletics Championship than in the Olympics? Bhandari says he was confident that he would win after hearing that a champion from Qatar pulled out due to muscle injury. "When you aim for the medal, you consolidate your energy for the last minute dash," he explained. "Under that strategy, I was second till I was 200m from the finishing line and from then onwards I overtook the lead runner." ● (Sharad KC)



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STATUTORY DIRECTIVE : SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

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

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

...gazing outside our Heroji wonders what to do on **World Animal Day** (this year?)(Oct-6th)

Hey, why not play with me instead?

and decides to stay indoors and watch the day on the television!

#39 2061 by jigme gaton - read. love. write.

KE GARNE? WHATEVER.
But be a Heroji - Be Kind to Animals

"The measure of a society can be how well it's people treat it's animals."
-- Mohandas K. Gandhi
Oct 2, 1869 to Jan 30, 1948
Next change:
Herojig turns off the tube and goes to the www.animalNEPAL.org website.

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Images of the Terai** Paintings by SC Suman at Indigo Gallery, until 3 October, 8AM-6PM daily. 4413580, www.asianart.com/indigo
- ❖ **A Walk along Bagmati River** Paintings by Dagmar Mathes at Park Gallery, Lazimpat. Until 10 October. www.parkgallery.com.np
- ❖ **Images from the life of Mahatma** Photographs at the India Nepal Library, RNAC building. 2-4 October
- ❖ **The Faces of Time and Colours of Sensibility** Paintings by Durga Baral, starting 1 October at the Siddhartha Art Gallery.
- ❖ **The Expressions** Paintings by Umesh Shrestha, Hari Jung Bomjon and Sudan Kumar Singh at Nepal Art Council, Babarmahal. Starting 1 October.

EVENTS

- ❖ **Changa Chait 2061** Kite flying at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot. 2 and 16 October, Rs 100. 4410432
- ❖ **The Earthquake Fair**, 2 October at Dhobichaur, Chhetrapati. 10AM-5PM, organised by Ward 17 Disaster Management Committee. 4222408.
- ❖ **Discussions at Martin Chautari:** Current Politics, 3 October, 3PM
Woman mountaineers and their challenges, 5 October, 5PM
Film Development Board plans, 7 October, 3PM
- ❖ **Kick-off celebration** for adults at Lincoln School, Ravi Bhawan. 4.30-10.30 PM, 9 October. Rs 700, 4270482

MUSIC

- ❖ **1974AD rocks Moksh!** Nepal's leading rock band in their home bar on 2 October, 7PM onwards. Rs 250.
- ❖ **World party** at Via Via Café, with world food, drinks and djs. 1 October, 8PM onwards.
- ❖ **DJ's @ Work** at Via Via Café. 2 October, 8PM onwards. 4700184
- ❖ **Sunday Reggae** at Via Via Café. 3 October, 8PM onwards. 4700184
- ❖ **Fusion Night** at the Rox Bar. Every Wednesday from 6PM onwards.
- ❖ **Live music** at Moksh. Full Circle on Fridays. 7PM onwards, free entry.

FOOD AND DRINKS

- ❖ **San Miguel Oktober Fest**, until 3 October. Beer as per the German tradition, plus delicious German cuisine. Unlimited beer, food, live music and fun at Poolside, Yak & Yeti, for Rs 777. 4248999
- ❖ **San Miguel Oktober Fest @ Soaltee Crowne Plaza** Unlimited San Miguel, bar-be-que, dancing and games until 9 October at the Garden Terrace. 6PM onwards, Rs 779. 4273999
- ❖ **Flavours from the North West Frontier** at the Café. Mouth watering delicacies from 1-15 October, 6:30 PM onwards. 4491234
- ❖ **Drin...king Utsav '04** Drinks of all types at the BICC, 15-19 October.
- ❖ **Oktoberfest** at the Rukhmuni Bar, Dhokaima Café, Patan Dhoka. 5522113
- ❖ **Just Devine Dashain!** After office happy hour, 4-8PM, with free snacks and 20 percent off drinks. Also buy one JD Cocktail, get one free. All through October at 'Jack Lives Here'-1905 Kantipath. 4225272
- ❖ **Free drink deals** at Red Onion Bar, Lazimpat
- ❖ **La Soon** Restaurant and Vintehque, moved in the lane next to the Egyptian Embassy, Pulchowk for spacious indoor and outdoor seating. 5537166.
- ❖ **Fresh Catch** Seafood every Saturday and Sunday at The Café
- ❖ **1905 Bow-Thai Promotion** Burmese-Thai Cuisine from Burmese Guest Chef Roshan. Every day, 6PM. Thomas Kilroy at 1905 Kantipath.
- ❖ **Genuine Thai** cuisine at Royal Lotus, Bakhundole. 5521231
- ❖ **Delicious barbecue dinner** Fridays at Summit Hotel. 5521810
- ❖ **Farm House Café** Unlimited nature with delicious meals at Park Village Hotel. 4375280
- ❖ **Dwarika's Thali** Lunch at the Heritage courtyard. 4479488



GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Dream Holiday** package tour to Malaysia during Dasain and Tihar. Marco Polo Travels and Qatar Airways, 2012345, malaysiaholidays_marco@polo.com.np
- ❖ **Getaway package** nights stay at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
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- ❖ **Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge** Pure relaxation and business as usual. 4361500

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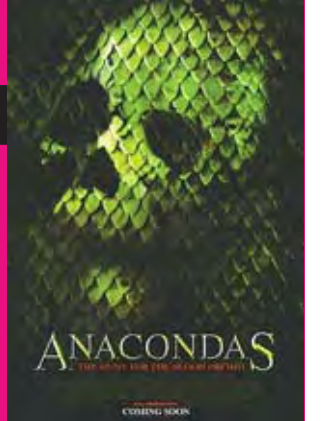
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A scientific expedition sets out to the island of Borneo in search of the blood orchid, reputedly the key to immortality. The hunt leads them deep into the jungle, where they find that they're surrounded by anacondas. Strengthened by the blood orchids, these snakes are longer, faster and smarter—and the scientists find themselves fighting for their lives. If slithering snakes and shivery thrills are your thing, then *Anacondas: The Hunt for the Blood Orchid* is just the ticket.

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KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

Records of the Kathmandu Valley's air quality show that so far this year, the pollution levels have dropped slightly in comparison to 2002-2003. The average PM10 (particles small enough to enter the human body) concentrations in Kathmandu between November 2003 and August 2004 were about eight percent lower than they were during the same period the year before. This is probably due to the introduction of new brick kiln technology, because the most significant improvement in pollution levels was evident in Bhaktapur, which is surrounded by brick kilns. But the improvements may soon be offset by the increase in diesel vehicles and the combustion of adulterated fuel.



NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



Though the tentacles of the last monsoon pulse brought showery rains over central and eastern Nepal this week, by the time you read this column, this year's monsoon will have been truly over. Here come the misty, warm mornings and pleasant autumn afternoons perfect for kite-flying. Even so, some isolated localised showers will occur mostly in the higher valleys and in the late afternoon. After all, October gets about 61 mm of rain and it has to fall somewhere. This satellite image taken on Thursday at noon also shows that it may be prudent to still keep umbrellas handy there may be some surprise rains early next week caused by moisture-laden air that will rise on thermals and fall as rain.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

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CHANGA

This Saturday, Club Himalaya in Nagarkot is the place to be for the second phase of the annual Changa Chait 2061 festival to welcome Dasain. Nepal's top corporate houses, businesses and travel industry will be taking part. The championships carry prizes: First prize is a two-way ticket to Amsterdam courtesy Martinair, second prize is roundtrip to Delhi on Royal Nepal and third Prize is a two-way trip to Pokhara for two on Buddha Air.

While the kite aficionados zoom and dive and try to cut rivals out of the sky, others can enjoy the live music dance party, a food festival, or just go for a walk to enjoy the fresh clear air of this mountain resort and its scenic environs. Club Himalaya is also offering a Changa Chait special offer for those who want to stay overnight at this splendid resort at Rs 3,000 for a double occupancy room. Contact: Mitra Bhattarai at 01-4410432



रेडियो सगरमाथाको साथी बनौं
आफ्ना कुरा रेडियोबाट मनाउँ

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

साथी बनेपछि:
रेडियोबाट आफ्ना कुरा भन्न पाइनेछ।
सहूलियत दरमा सूचना प्रसारण गर्न सकिनेछ।
रेडियोबाट सघन्यवाद नाम प्रसार गरिनेछ।

साथी बन्न लाग्ने शुल्क:

व्याक्तिगत	साधारण रु. १,०००/- वा सोभन्दा बढी (हरेक वर्ष नवीकरण गर्नुपर्ने)
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(थप जानकारीका लागि कार्यालय समयभित्र रेडियो सगरमाथामा सम्पर्क गर्नुहोस्, फोन: ५५२२००९, ५५४२२४५)



KIRAN PANDAY

MESSY STRIKE: Two days of garbage piles up in Asan after the Maoist bandas on Tuesday and Wednesday.



KIRAN PANDAY

OUR TURN NOW: No sooner had the Maoist banda finished, then Nepali Congress students were out on Thursday morning burning college furniture outside the Engineering Campus in Pulchowk.



KUMAR SHRESTHA/NEPALNEWS.COM

HALF-ARSONED: Kangresi students tried to set fire to this government vehicle in Patan on Thursday, but police managed to rescue it from major damage.



NEPALNEWS.COM

FOOD CARAVAN: Kathmandu welcomed the international People's Caravan for Food Sovereignty at a rally in Kathmandu on Thursday. Three vehicles carrying foreign participants were torched by Maoists in Dhading on Tuesday night.



KIRAN PANDAY

LIQUID DIET: Among the Oktoberfest events this week for Kathmandu's beer guzzlers was this one at the Yak and Yeti.

Message of peace

Returning to Nepal after five years in college in Delhi, Susanna Phoobo was shocked by how much the violence had escalated in her homeland. "Children were being recruited for war, but people seemed blasé about it," Susanna says. She needed to do something about it.

A year later, Nepali tv stations are airing Susanna's anti-war music video. The 25-year-old spent months putting together newspaper clippings and snippets from tv news and documentaries to accompany her five-minute song, *Shanti ko Sandesh*, by Susanna and The Axis.

The video features chilling visuals of everything from vandalism and street riots to smouldering ruins and corpses—interspersed with images of children running, playing, getting shot and picking up socket bombs.

A preliminary screening in June got mixed reviews: some raved, but others were concerned it was too graphic, especially for young children. Some local tv stations had similar reservations, and NTV even suggested cuts. Three months later, very few stations play the full video, usually cutting it short before the final minute, which features real images and staged footage of corpses and bleeding bodies.

Even so, the video is compelling—so much so that the first few times the lyrics, music and Susanna's powerful vocals may barely register. The lyrics are simple and poignant: 'They say today there were battles and violence in the village again/ they say many died, many were injured/ they say screams of suffering rent the sky/ they say blood and tears flowed as a river'.

Filming some parts of the video took Susanna and her team around Bishanku, on the Valley outskirts, where she worked with village children for the unsettling scene where a boy picks up a socket bomb, which abruptly cuts into the newspaper headline 'Child dies in explosion, brother seriously injured' and then a real photo of an 11-year-old with a stump for an arm.

Making fake socket bombs and smuggling them past security checkpoints out of the Valley was hard enough, but the children were leery about touching something that looked so much like the real thing. "Initially, the kids were scared, they knew everything about socket bombs," Susanna recalls. "We had to explain to them that it wasn't real, there wasn't anything inside it."

Encouraged by the response to *Shanti ko Sandesh*, Susanna is already thinking about her next project: a similar video on domestic violence. ● (Jemima Sherpa)



KIRAN PANDAY

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More good news

As if the world wasn't depressing enough, we in the newspaper business are determined to make you more miserable by not allowing a single day to go by without news of genocides, terrorism, massacres, hurricanes and George Bush's continuing lead in opinion polls. But that is the way the cookie crumbles, and you ordinary mortals have no option but to glance at these off-putting items of news, and turn immediately to the comics page.

Luckily, there is still one newspaper that brings us glad tidings, items of wholesome news that are uplifting, inspiring and tell tales of the triumph of the human spirit. Unfortunately, it just folded because of an acute shortage of content material. But it is our duty to carry on the grand tradition by carrying on the good fight to look for happy news in every dark and dank corner and bring it to our reader's attention, although we take no responsibility for the veracity of these reports:

UNDER MY HAT Kunda Dixit



of the triumph of the human spirit. Unfortunately, it just folded because of an acute shortage of content material. But it is our duty to carry on the grand tradition by

No Oil Price Hike This Week

BY OUR CRUDE REPORTER

Breaking from its usual tradition, Nepal Oil Corporation failed to announce its weekly hike in petroleum price this Friday, saying it hadn't finished calculating losses after crude oil broke the \$50/barrel mark.

"But not to worry, we'll make up for this lapse with a double digit increase next week," a senior NOC official assured reporters, adding that this was good news for those committing fuel adulteration since every increase means a heftier margin for bootleggers.

Airport Taxis To Stay

BY A GLAD ANALYST

The nefarious attempt by a used-car dealer to replace the airport's Antique Taxi Service has been foiled in the nick of time.

The shady deal would have involved replacing the tottering 30-year-old Datsuns that currently ferry passengers from the airport and charge an arm and a leg for the experience, with much newer 1975 model Toyopets. If it had gone through, the move would have struck a severe blow to efforts by tourism officials to give arriving passengers a taste of hippie-era Nepal on the drive in from the airport.

"Our historic taxis would have been replaced by newer models that wouldn't rattle as much, have much cleaner seats, and wouldn't have wheels falling off even once on the drive to Thamel," a spokesman of the Antique Taxi Service said, "the good news is that we outbid the competition by paying higher-up authorities more money under the table to extend our contract."

Peaceful Committee Doing Homework

BY OUR CHEERFUL CORRESPONDENT

The High-Level Peaceful Committee, which has already spent two days on the homework given by Comrade Awesome with a list of six multiple-choice questions, says it may need the weekend to complete it.

"The questions are really tough, we aren't used to such difficult homework," said the Minister of Jungles, threatening to close all traffic at Ratna park in protest unless question papers are made simpler in future. One particular question seems to have stumped the committee:

Q: Are you really in charge?

- Yes
 No
 We will ask the concerned higher-up authority and get back to you

Maoists Not Needed Anymore: Girija

BY A HAPPY-GO-LUCKY HACK WHO PREFERS ANONYMITY

Ex-prime minister and leader of the pro-demagoguery alliance, GP Koirala, told rioters burning cars in Pulchok Thursday his party was now capable of creating as much, if not more, mayhem than Maoists.

"We will prevent ministers from going to work," he said, and then added as an afterthought, "we will also prevent anyone else trying to commute to work." But he warned rented arsonists they may have to take a salary cut because of a cash crunch, and since there was no more money left to buy tyres they'd have to set fire to college furniture.

"We don't even need to call a banda to bring the city to a halt," he boasted, "why do you need the Maoists if you have me?"

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