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Weekly Internet Poll # 160

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John Kerry	69.9%
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Don't know	1.3%

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Weekly Internet Poll # 161. To vote go to: www.nepalimes.com

Q. Should the pre-2002 parliament be reinstated?



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ANALYSIS
by PUSKAR GAUTAM

The recent escalation of Maoist rhetoric over an impending Indian invasion is being followed up with frenzied tunnel-digging throughout the country, ostensibly to thwart Indian air raids.

The tunnels are symbolic of the rebel leadership's change of focus towards external enemies: 'US imperialism' and 'Indian expansionism'. The leadership and cadre are at present busy in military and political training, and believe their 'strategic offensive' within Nepal will not be successful unless the external intervention is addressed.

There appears to be greater coordination than ever before between the Nepali Maoists, international partners and Indian Maoist groups. After a meeting in Calcutta last month, Indian Maoists and their South Asian comrades coordinated strategy and mooted the concept of a 'Himalayan Revolutionary Zone' from Kashmir, through Nepal, Bhutan and into Assam.

Tunnel vision

Nepal's Maoists are literally going underground to spread revolution in the region

In their analysis, poverty, ethnic exclusion, and topography make the Himalayan arc ideal for a trans-boundary revolution in which guerrillas can move freely across borders. They want to convert the ethno-separatist agenda of militants in the Indian northeast to fight a united class war. Maoist activities have escalated in western Bangladesh this year and a new Maoist party has been formed in Bhutan. The goal seems to be an umbrella group called a 'South Asian Federation' including militancies throughout the region. Nepal's Maoist revolution is therefore now part of a regional strategy coordinated with international revolutionaries.

Even so, the Nepali comrades are taking advantage of continuing political disarray in Kathmandu and see an opening in the Deuba government's push for elections by April 2005. They expect an election will further polarise the parties and split the anti-'regression' alliance. Those for polls will be seen to be in the 'royal' camp, while those boycotting will be labelled pro-Maoist. If the Girija Congress boycotts polls, its cadre may defect en masse to Deuba.

There is some logic in Deuba's argument that he has to go for elections because talks are not possible. It is doubtful if elections will be free and fair, and turnout will be low. A bloodbath is not inevitable, it will depend on the nature,

mechanism and phases of the poll process. And it won't be life-or-death for the Maoists if polls do happen, they will not try to launch unnecessarily costly offensives during it.

Deuba is obviously laying the groundwork for elections with the TADO ordinance and rampant militarisation. He often cites Kashmir and Afghanistan: if elections can be held there with sufficient troop strength it can be held here too.

But the bottom line is that the 'people's war' in Nepal is now not just Nepal's headache, but of India and other countries in the region as well. ●

Editorial p2
Unconstitutional Day



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UNCONSTITUTIONAL DAY

Monday is Constitution Day and a holiday. But most Nepalis will mark it as a day of national mourning. The constitution has been in life support for three years now. It is clinically dead.

Once described by its own framers as the "best in the world", the 1990 Constitution was a document that emerged from the unprecedented upheaval of the People's Movement. The hard right had lost its shady backdoor influence and was never happy about being sidelined. It has been plotting ever since to worm its way back.

As it turned out, the post-1990 elected national leadership obliged by making a mess of democracy and relentlessly insulting the constitution. And when the comrades went underground in 1996, the ultra-right found common cause with a force that hated pluralism as much as it did.

Since then, our democratic constitution has been dismantled bit by bit in front of our eyes by a feckless political leadership that couldn't see beyond the tip of its nose, by Mandale remnants desperate to ride again, by impatient rightwingers in the palace, and by the Maoists who wanted a shortcut to end it all. However much they shed crocodile tears now, they all had a hand in its demise.

To be sure, 1990 was an incomplete revolution. The constitution it spawned was not perfect, but no constitution is—they are supposed to evolve and mature. Some of the things the framers left intentionally ambiguous were the role of the monarchy, the degree of its Hinduness and the army's chain of command.

As in other constitutional monarchies, they left residual powers in the hands of the head of state with clauses like Article 127. But whatever its language, the preamble left no doubt about the spirit of the constitution: sovereignty rested with the people, the monarch was bound by constitutional norms.

Deep down, this is what the present stalemate is all about: How much (or little) power the king should really have and who should command the army. And it doesn't look like this is going to be resolved without a ruinous fight.

This Constitution Day let's ask ourselves: How much longer are we going to kill each other over something that could be resolved if leaders showed a little vision and statesmanship?

In the village of Tatopani in Jumla, a wizened man who looked a lot older than his 50 years, was telling us recently about how his community is trapped between the Maoists and the army when he broke down and wept. Sobbing, he asked, "When will the king talk to the Maoists, when all of us are dead?"

An unpatriotic act

TADO will foster more impunity

The renewal of a reformulated Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Ordinance 2004 (TADO) has raised concern. The clause that provides for detention without trial for up to a year has been

GUEST COLUMN
Seira Tamang



called a violation of the basic tenets of human rights, an autocratic provision enacted in the absence of parliament against the spirit of the constitution and further fostering a climate of impunity among Nepali security forces.

TADO in any of its avatars has always been condemned for the manner in which it has granted the security forces sweeping powers. At a

fundamental level, the military has no real legal basis with which to detain civilians. TADO allows the army to make arrests but detention and prosecution falls under the State Case Act which empowers the police, and not the army, to investigate up to a period of two months.

The recent disclosure to the courts by the army that it has senior Maoists in detention is critically important because it is the first time it has publicly acknowledged detaining people. A ruling in the military's favor paves the way to make the detentions legal and will undermine the role of the judiciary.

TADO also enables the arrest of people on 'suspicion' alone. The arbitrary and subjective nature of deciding what/who is,

or is not 'suspicious' aside, as preventive detention this means that no crime needs to have been committed. Yet they are now to be held for up to a year without trial. It is important to remember that even criminals, those who have actually committed crimes, are allowed access to legal recourse within 24 hours of arrest.

President of the Nepal Bar Association, Sambhu Thapa, said this week that the provision for three-month detention without trial under the Public Security Act was sufficient for the government to fight the insurgency. The necessity of denying people basic legal rights in the name of security appears now to be a given.

It is not at all clear that the



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LETTERS

NEPAL'S GUANTANAMO

The conflict in Nepal is inexplicably neglected by the international media but two weeks ago, UK television viewers had for the first time full exposure to it. Potential tourists might not have been encouraged. The impact of the Maoists on life in rural Nepal was a major theme in an episode of Michael Palin's immensely popular and much acclaimed series *Himalaya*. This showed Maoists forcing the abandonment of the initial recruitment of Gurkhas because of the alleged 'abduction' of the British officer in-charge and an interview with trekkers who showed a receipt issued by the Maoists for contributions 'asked'. A clear impression was given that the countryside was effectively under the control of the Maoists.

This message was strongly reinforced by an extended report on 'Newsnight', the BBC's flagship daily current affairs program. This featured film of Maoists doing military training, interviews with the victims of Maoists' intimidation and violence, and allegations of serious human rights abuses by the security forces. There was an interview with Sher Bahadur Deuba in which he

was dismissive of the Maoists: "They're not that big a threat. They can create problems. They are quite capable of terrorising. That's one of the reasons that sometimes they create problems, otherwise they are on the run."

Asked about the fate of the disappeared, he replied: "We are going to announce the whereabouts of the people who have disappeared like Guantanamo Bay in Nepal. And we will take action against anybody, any officer who deliberately abuses human rights."

Asked specifically if "the families of the 662 who have disappeared between 2000 and 2003 will all be told where those people have gone, he replied: "They will definitely be told very soon. They will all be told very soon. They will be made public, yes." Asked if he can guarantee that, the reply was an emphatic: "Yes, Yes." Those familiar with the fate of such assurances in the past will not be holding their breath.

Name withheld, London

BUSHWHACKING

After reading your editorial, 'Bushwhacking' (#219) I want to tell you that I am one American who not only wishes you could cast a ballot in our election (and not for Bush)

but wishes our own voters could cast ballots too. As was the case in the 2000 election, Bush's party is doing its corrupt best to disqualify or intimidate hundreds of thousands of African-American and Latino voters, as well as Democratic Party voters in general. I don't know if it's apparent in the international press but people have registered, and are trying to vote in much greater numbers than in previous elections, often fighting last-minute legal battles instigated by Bush's party to do so. Many of our constitutional rights have been taken away by the so-called Patriot Act, and our TV and radio stations are under the control of a couple of huge Bush-supporting corporations. Diebold Corporation, that manufactures the computerised voting machines used in many states this year, which can count votes from remote locations, has contributed millions to Bush's campaign. On the eve of our presidential election, many of us here are more frightened than we have ever been about the course the non-elected president and his administration are taking.

Hilary Dirlam, North Carolina, USA

• Your editorial 'Bushwhacking' was very eloquent. The fact is that

throughout history, 'ham-handed powers' were wont to throw their weight around. Ancient rulers in this part of the world, too, specialised in 'bullying' peaceful nations around them under various guises. Local chauvinists do not miss an opportunity to recall how, once upon a time, the national borders extended from this river to that river.

N A Pityata, email

• I thought the editorial, 'Bushwhacking,' was brilliant (let the people of the world so affected vote in US presidential elections). You look to be, and read, as the 'hippiest' English publication in Nepal.

FA Hutchison, Kathmandu

TIBET

Many thanks for reprinting Pico Iyer's 'Tibetan reflections' (#219). In July, I chanced quite, literally, accidentally upon a unique publication called *Kyoto Journal*. Its 57th issue carries an article, 'On the ropebridge' also by Pico Iyer. Since it is a long essay, Iyer paints Tibet's ancient, modern and her latest situations in a composite portrait. The piece you outsourced should be read in tandem with or after the longer and previous one. I expect these two essays are

included in Pico Iyer's latest book, *Sun After Dark*. Tibet is Nepal's next-door destination, leading to the northern lights, and it is assumed that Nepali tourism entrepreneurs and captains of business and industries are aware of this all-important fact.

Peter J Karthak, Kathmandu

PREDATORS

Re: 'We're not whores' (#218) by Naresh Newar. It is a shame that Nepal's labour law enforces patriarchal values and the notion of power by forcing women into sex work. The call to regulate undocumented labourers and decriminalisation of women's work in cabin restaurants and registering them is not new. We should continue to debate the issue and lobby for appropriate laws and gender sensitive policies so that clients and restaurant owners don't exploit women and they get the wages and other benefits they are entitled to under the labour law. Only then can women be saved from predator employers and delinquent clients.

Meena Poudel, UK

RED ZONE

Kunda Dixit's work to expose how every ordinary Nepali in western

strategy of preventive detention has had any impact on the state's ability to defeat the Maoists. What is clear is that it is in detention that so many forms of abuses take place: torture, disappearances, rape and killings. TADO legalises this process of making anyone and everyone vulnerable to arbitrary treatment. With the judicial system helpless when security forces deny detaining people and the National Human Rights Commission is unable to have full and unimpeded access to detainees, anyone and everyone is vulnerable to being disappeared.

Writing of the old TADA, the recently released Human Rights Watch 2004 report on Nepal states: 'TADA has allowed the security forces of Nepal to literally get away with murder. The security forces have used their sweeping powers to broadly target anyone suspected of having Maoist sympathies, including lawyers who defend Maoists, members of left-of-centre political parties, human rights workers and civilians who are forced to give shelter to the Maoists.'

State security is officially sounding somewhat conciliatory on human rights lately and has initiated limited steps towards heeding judiciary directives. Indeed, TADO assumes that the army is now taking human rights seriously. But in the absence of independent human rights monitoring in the field, this is a dangerous assumption for either side in a dirty war.

Amidst what Amnesty International has called Nepal's 'human rights catastrophe', TADO only underlines the urgent need for a Human Rights Accord with nationwide monitoring. This is the only way to guarantee real security for ordinary people. ●

hills are trapped in a senseless system of so-called 'people fighters' is highly appreciated ('People in the Red Zone', # 219). The story touched us all deeply as it painted an accurate picture of poor Nepalis at a time when the urban-centric and few fortunate enough people were preparing for Dasain. It was shocking to hear that Nepalis in remote parts need to have a special visa to move around in their own district. It seems that the road towards prosperity (which is the right of every individual in democracy) is virtually blocked for a majority of Nepalis. The worst part, however, is that the conflicting parties claim that they are the 'genuine' representatives of the people.

The country's supreme court is empowered to interpret the constitution and see that it is functioning properly. Unfortunately, it has repeatedly acted according to

STATE OF THE STATE CK Lal



the word rather than the intent of the supreme law of the land. As a result, the constitution is in limbo.

Its interpretations on citizenship and language issues have been exclusionary in the past but with its recent judgement on reservations for dalit and janjati students the court has lived up to its reputation of being a bastion of conservatism.

Had the 1990 constitution been fully functional, there would have been some logic in the directive of the supreme court that the government make laws before enforcing positive discrimination policies to address the grievances of the marginalised. But in the absence of parliament, the court's injunction is status quoist. No wonder dalits and janjati students are angry.

In issuing the directive, the court seems to have ignored that, depending upon the position of the observer, the constitution is either comatose or dead. There is no way operative laws can be enacted in the present context without resorting to the patently undemocratic practice of getting an ordinance issued.

People like Jubari Lal Bhattarai and Dirgha Raj Shahi are victims from both sides.

Sameer Ghimire, Sydney

● Kunda Dixit's chilling and moving account of what the people of Kalikot are going through ('On a knife-edge', #219) is journalism at its best. He has given us the facts straight, without embellishment and without editorialising and in the process has given us, the readers, a first-hand account of what the war means to ordinary Nepalis. It should goad our rulers and revolutionaries to move the peace process forward.

Gopal KC, Kumaripati



KUNDA DIXIT

Dead or alive

On Constitution Day, we should be thinking about how to revive it

Sadly, the supreme court itself has been directly involved in creating such a condition.

In a landmark verdict, the court had endorsed Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's recommendation on 22 May 2002 to the king to dissolve parliament and hold elections on 13 November even when the kingdom was under a state of emergency.

Reading out the unanimous decision of the court, Chief Justice Keshab Prasad Upadhyay had intoned to baffled journalists on 6 August 2002: "The dissolution of the House is a political issue outside the purview of the court. The apex court has the right to interpret only those issues that are of a legal and constitutional nature. It cannot give its verdict on political, social and economic disputes. The court cannot provide a panacea for all kinds of controversies, issues and disputes."

Apparently, he resorted to legalese in order to bypass the responsibility of protecting the constitution. Rather than courting controversy by being proactive in favour of the constitution, the apex court decided to let it crumble under



the weight of an internal emergency. Had the court acted with more foresight, we wouldn't be faced with the inevitability of a constituent assembly 15 years after the promulgation of a new constitution. After all, the constitution is a living document that evolves with time to meet realities unimagined by its framers.

Last week, the president of the Bar Association, Shambhu Thapa, told the press that the court should reactivate the constitution rather than allow it to atrophy. Fortunately, the court still has an opportunity to review its decision in light of developments over the last

two years. It has been easy for the court to direct the executive to make laws, now it needs to address the more crucial issue of pulling the country out of the current legislative vacuum.

No matter what Deuba says in public, he knows meaningful polls can't be held in the country. So the formation of a new legislature through elections is ruled out. Progressive laws to address the aspirations of the excluded communities can't be passed in the absence of a functioning parliament. The result: escalation of the insurgency.

Legal experts close to the 'ruling opposition' UML have done all kinds of constitutional acrobatics to suggest a way out of the impasse: an all-party convention to form an ad hoc legislature, proportional nomination from the political parties of the dissolved parliament to form an interim parliament and recognition of the authority of Rajya Sabha as that of parliament.

But the most workable alternative for constitutional revival is still the restoration of the last parliament. If not that, then we may as well recognise its demise and begin framing a new constitution. ●

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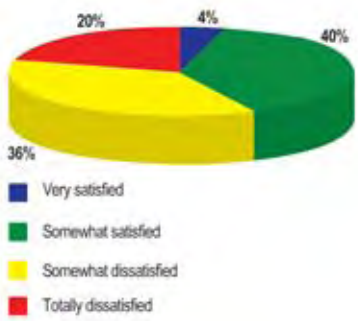
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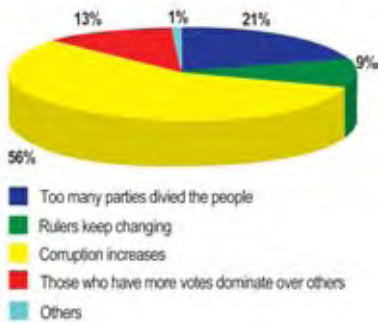
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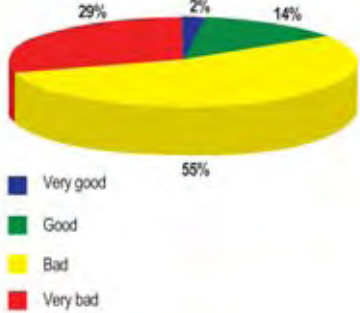
On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Nepal?



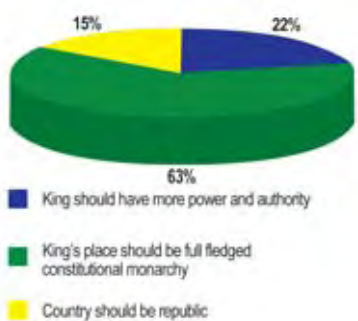
Which of these do you dislike most about democracy?



How do you assess the country's situation after King's move on October 4, 2002 compared to situation before that?



Which view among these regarding the monarchy, do you think is right?



80 percent of Nepalis

A new baseline survey of democracy shows a majority of Nepalis are in favour of the status quo on the issues of monarchy, religion, state language and state structure

A new nationwide public opinion poll to gauge what Nepalis think about democracy has confirmed previous surveys to show that a majority reject dictatorships. Many want a full-fledged constitutional monarchy and prefer a national rather than an ethnic or regional identity.

A majority of Nepalis are in

POLL ANALYSIS Krishna Hachhethu

favour of the status quo on the issues of monarchy, religion, state language and state structure. However, the agenda of state restructuring has considerable appeal for a substantial percentage of the respondents, most of them from caste/ethnic, regional and religious minorities.

The 'State of Democracy in South Asia Poll' is a regional exercise to get a baseline evaluation of democracy in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The project was coordinated by the New Delhi-based Centre for the Study of

Developing Societies and used a multi-pronged methodology to make a comprehensive assessment of democracy in the region with a caste-ethnic breakdown. The full results of the Nepal poll will be released on 7 November in Kathmandu.

In the Nepal poll, most (51 percent) respondents say what democracy means to them is primarily 'freedom, equality and liberty'. A similar proportion think 'basic needs like food, clothes and shelter for everyone' are the most essential characteristics of a democracy. Some 68 percent say freedom of speech and action are what they 'most like' about democracy.

Asked to assess the way democracy works in Nepal, 57 percent are 'somewhat' or 'totally' dissatisfied. A similar proportion draws a correlation between an increase in corruption and democracy. Sixty-one percent of the respondents do not agree with the statement 'everyone enjoys equal rights' in Nepal. Nearly the same

number disagree with the statement that Nepalis 'enjoy freedom of speech without fear'. More than three-fourths think a bulk of Nepalis do not have the basic necessities.

Comparatively, respondents appear more wary of reposing their trust in political parties and parliament than in other state institutions, signifying a lingering memory of post-1990 political instability. In separate questions about the level of trust, the court system scored the highest 'great deal of trust' (30 percent) followed by election commission (26 percent), local government (25.5 percent), the army (25.5 percent), police (21 percent), civil servant (21 percent), central government (19.5 percent), parliament (17 percent), and political parties (14 percent).

Close to two-third of the respondents (62 percent) agree that 'democracy is preferable to any other kind of government' and a full 80 percent feel democracy is 'suitable' or 'very suitable' to Nepal. Only 28 percent are indifferent and 10 percent said they prefer a

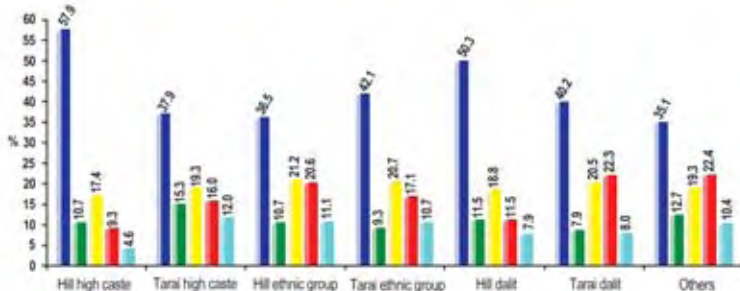
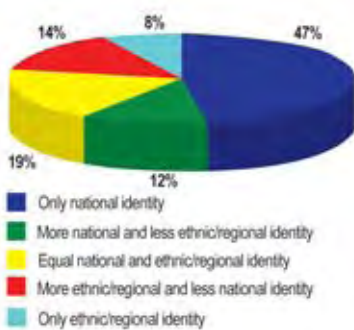
dictatorship. Only 16 percent regard the 4 October 2002 move by King Gyanendra as a positive step. A full 84 percent view Nepal's political situation since then as 'bad' or 'very bad'.

Even though 51 percent of the respondents say they have no access to mass media (newspapers, radio and television), 80 percent have never taken part in any rallies or demonstrations, and 65 percent say they 'never' discuss politics.

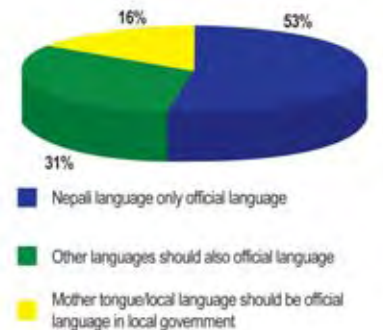
More than two-thirds surveyed say they are 'very proud' about being Nepalis, while 49 percent say they are 'very proud' of their ethnic/regional identity. Ethnic and national identities in Nepal appear to complement each other. Nearly half of those surveyed say they want to identify themselves as 'only Nepali' and only eight percent say they want to opt for 'only ethnic/regional identity'. Nineteen percent like to project their identities as 'equally Nepali and ethnic/regional'.

Most respondents (91 percent)

How do you like to identify yourself?



Which, among these views regarding language, do you choose?



It's over America has chosen its president and the rest of the us must live with that

It's over. There are no recounts, no second chances. The American people have spoken and delivered unto President George W Bush a decisive re-election mandate. What he does with that is the story of the next four years, not just in the United States but around the world.

Incidentally, at this point, perhaps it's wise to point out that any

HERE AND THERE Daniel Lak



talk of a world ballot in the US presidential

election is spurious, silly and impossible. Lose that thought. It will never happen.

No, America has chosen President Bush and the rest of us must live with that. If we believe in democracy, if we insist that there is wisdom in majority rule, if consensus matters, then it's Bush for us. This doesn't mean carte blanche for more pre-emptive war or treaty busting by his government. But let us hear no more whining about 'illegitimate presidents' for there are none, at the moment, in charge in Washington.

So why did the voters who matter, those in Republican strongholds and

several 'battleground' states, choose Bush over the earnest and intelligent John Kerry? From America's bruised left, you will hear talk of conspiracies, lies and mutterings about 'stupid voters in the heartland'. But perhaps there's a more magnanimous explanation.

First off, there's war. America has never ever voted a war president out of office. The proudest republic on earth makes its elected president the actual commander-in-chief of its armed forces. Not a figurehead like Queen Elizabeth of Great Britain but an officer who can send his troops into battle. We know this already, so do the Afghans and Iraqis.

This was an overwhelming reason given by many voters who chose Bush in the past week's ballot. You can't change horses in mid-stream and never mind if half the country and most of the rest of the world—perhaps mistakenly—thinks that the horse is lame, not overly bright, or incapable of finding a creative path through the thorn bush. You're on 'em. You ride 'em.

Then there's terrorism. As Americans of all political persuasions stood waiting to cast their ballots this past November

Second, one thought pulsed through their mind. There's been no terrorist attack on American soil since 11 September 2001. For many voters, even some Democrats, President Bush got credit for this. Again, forget the logic of the left or those in the know about the real reason for al Qaeda reticence (craftiness, long-term plans, the way fear mongering by the right wing plays into terrorist hands). Forget it all. America is safe because George W Bush is standing on guard. And wisely, the president's handlers had him repeat this over and over on the campaign trail.

Various other issues and attributes bestowed upon Bush played into his victory too. Such as the growing gap between the country's liberal, cosmopolitan urbanites on the east and west coasts and the people who live in the centre or the south. These are two worrisome solitudes and both political parties in the US encourage them to win temporary electoral advantage. Divide and rule worked for the British Empire for a time but it won't work for much longer in America. Both extremities of the country are changing, becoming more

mixed and yes, even more cosmopolitan.

Places like Kansas are increasingly Spanish speaking, New York and Los Angeles are leaning Republican thanks to Asian, African and other voters who value conservative social values and fiscal prudence even above tolerance and welfare policies.

Within 25 years, America's largest ethnic group, larger than white Europeans, will be Spanish speakers from Latin America. These people voted for President Bush by 60 percent in this election. What will they do when they form a plurality of the American people?

And finally, there's Kerry. A fine, fine man in my estimation, but honestly, on reflection, rather challenged in the charisma department, too easily portrayed as a smug, elitist liberal from a dying breed in a dying part of the country. Not 'one of us' for most Americans.

There are lessons here for the still worthy and estimable Democratic Party.

They have four years now to learn, and give it their best shot in 2008.

Ain't democracy grand? ●

want democracy

either 'strongly agree' or 'generally agree' with the need for both majority and minorities getting equal treatment and similar numbers agree with 'special treatment and protection to minorities'. Asked if minorities should take up the way of life of the majority, those for and against were nearly 50-50. But there was near-unanimity on the question of gender equality.

Two-thirds of the respondents feel 'generally safe', and only 20 percent say they feel 'fully safe'. Asked what makes them feel insecure, the majority fears 'anti-social elements' (62 percent), followed by 'deteriorating political situation' (21 percent), and only 21 percent say the 'Maoists' make them feel insecure. The 'state' and 'wild

animals' ranked next with 14 percent each.

On the whole, Nepali citizens seem to feel more comfortable with the economic condition of their own household than that of the country. The ratio of household and national economic condition is 55:31 for 'satisfied', 38:13 'better than past', and 53:37 'will be better in the future'. Surprisingly, the people feel individually better off, and have more hopes for themselves than for the nation.

Most respondents seem to be in favour of public sector involvement in industries, transportation, electricity and water. Most think the civil service should not be trimmed, and only a quarter favour privatisation. Nearly 60 percent of

the respondents are in favour of foreign direct investment, the rest oppose it.

Asked about possible solutions to the conflict, among those who responded with definite answers, 69 percent favour a 'roundtable conference', 22.5 percent want new elections, and only 5.5 percent want a reinstatement of parliament.

Among those who responded with definite answers (treating 'could not understand' and 'no opinion' as missing variables), a clear majority of the respondents (51 percent) are in favour of framing a new constitution, 40 percent want the present constitution amended and only nine percent are satisfied with it. Among those who prescribe a new

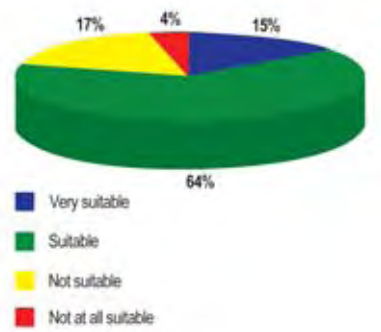
constitution, three-fourths are in favour of elections for a constituent assembly.

As in earlier public opinion surveys, 63 percent want the king to be a 'full-fledged constitutional monarch'. Twenty-two percent wanted him to have more power and authority and 15.5 percent are in favour of a republic. Two-thirds of the total respondents want Nepal to be a Hindu state (73 percent of the Hindu respondents) whereas most non-Hindus wanted the country to be secular.

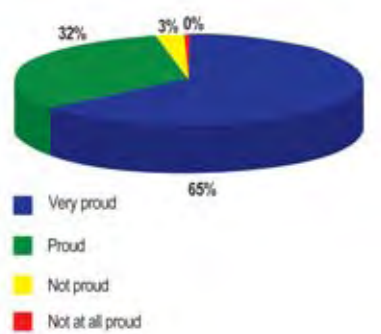
A majority is in favour of the status quo in retaining Nepali as the 'sole official language' but 31 percent favour recognition of other official languages and 16 percent want local languages for local governance. Most respondents want Nepal to remain a unitary state, only 24 are in favour of federalism and 8.5 percent are in favour of ethnic autonomy. ●

The full report is being released next week by the State of Democracy in South Asia Nepal. Contact: 5535038.

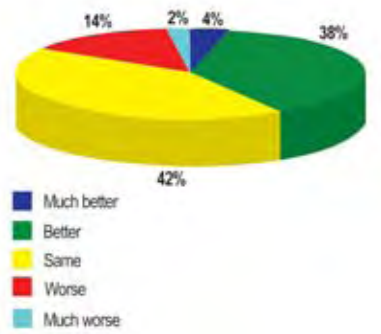
How suitable is democracy for our country?



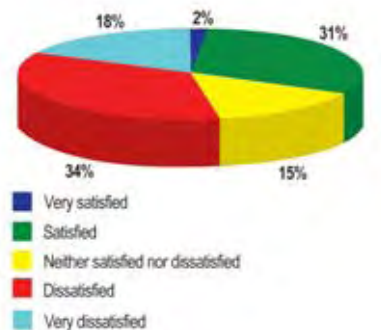
How proud are you to be a Nepali?



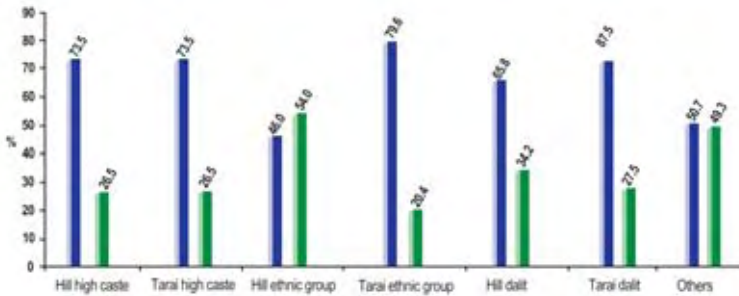
As compared to a few years ago, how is the economic condition of your household today?



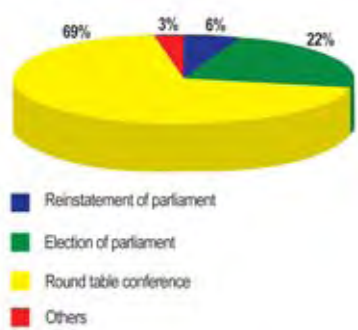
How satisfied are you with the present economic condition of Nepal?



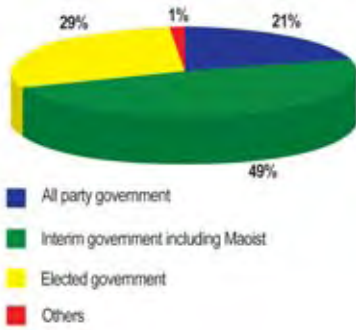
Should Nepal remain a Hindu state or be a secular state?



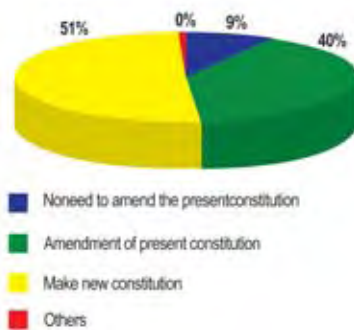
What could be done to bring the Maoists to dialogue: with Parliament?



What could be done to bring the Maoists to dialogue: with Government?



What could be done to bring the Maoists to dialogue: with Constitution?



METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted from 6 August-20 September in 163 polling stations, 31 in urban and 132 in rural areas, spread over 39 parliamentary constituencies of 38 districts. Face-to-face interviews based on a structured questionnaire were conducted with a nationwide sample of 3,249 respondents. Of them, 45.5 percent were male, 54.5 percent female. Eighty percent were rural, and 45 percent illiterate. Hill caste (including Newar) made up 40.4 percent of the respondents, tarai caste were 14.7 percent, hill ethnic were 17.4 percent, tarai ethnic made up 4.5 percent. Hill dalit were 6.3 percent, tarai dalit 3.8, and Muslim 3.2. Religion-wise, 83.4 percent were Hindus, nine percent Buddhist, three percent Muslim, three percent Kirat and one percent Christian.



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Karnali offensive

Hundreds of rebels swooped down on Gamgadi just after midnight on Monday setting fire to a dozen government buildings. The army and police appear to have stayed in the safety of their barracks an hour's walk above the town while the Maoists went on an arson spree in the bazar. However, there was a security patrol in the town which engaged the Maoists and forced them to retreat. A body of a Maoist was found and it is believed that several others were killed or injured.

Buildings belonging to the district administration, police, forest, land revenue, post office, DDC and Nepal Telecom were set on fire. Offices of NGOs, CSP/DFID, SAPPROS, RCDC, were also gutted. UMN staff Kristi Kirjavanen had her satellite phone and Rs 50,000 stolen.

Later that night, Maoists attacked the powerhouse of the Small Hydroelectric Centre in Dolpa, destroying it. Damage is estimated at Rs 133 million, the district headquarters and Dunai is expected to be without power for months. The Maoists also returned to Jumla and destroyed the one government building that had been spared in their last attack in August – the District Soil Conservation Office.

In Humla, the rebels destroyed the Nepal Telecom office, which means plans to activate 150 phone lines in the district distributed last month are now wrecked.

Spinal conference in Nepal

One night five years ago, US neurosurgeon Daniel Spitzer received a frantic telephone call from the wife of a friend in Nepal. The man had fallen off a cliff and broken his neck. Was there anything Spitzer could do? The doctor bought a surgical halo, an expensive device designed to immobilise the neck to allow it to heal, and arranged to send it via Federal Express to Bir Hospital where Dr Upendra Devkota was treating the patient. But the box got stuck in Dubai even as the time of operation neared, because of problems of using a courier service to transfer a medical item.

After urgent calls (and threats) all around, the head harness arrived in Kathmandu as air cargo and was rushed to be fitted on the patient: journalist Kanak Mani Dixit, who had broken his neck in a trekking accident on the way to Manang. Dixit wore it for six months and after recovering, with the help of friends set up the Nepal Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre in Jorpati.

Spitzer (left) is in Kathmandu this week to attend the Fourth Asian Spinal Cord Network conference being organised at the Hyatt by the Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre of Jorpati. Nepal's neurosurgeons, physiotherapists, and others working with the spinally injured are going to be attending the conference with doctors from Asia and Europe.

To ensure maximum benefit from his trip, Spitzer arrived on Monday night with six more surgical halos that he has been collecting from patients in the US over the past several years and five duffel bags full of neurosurgical equipment.

24-hour BBC on 103 FM

BBC World Service is broadcasting its 24-hour FM radio service in Kathmandu starting Friday, 5 November. BBC 103 FM will be the first round the clock news in English over FM for listeners in the valley. BBC will use the Radio Nepal transmitter and it will continue its regular Nepali Service news from Radio Sagarmatha 102.4 and other FM stations in Nepal.



MIN BAJRACHARYA



ANIL SHRESTHA

Nepal's latest tourist attraction: meeting mountain guerrillas

Close encounters with Maoists

RAMESH POUDEL in POKHARA

It was bound to happen sooner or later: Maoists have become Nepal's latest tourist attraction.

Trekking lodges along the Annapurna Base Camp trail are abuzz with hikers exchanging experiences on their encounters with the rebels and passing around precious souvenirs: Maoist tax receipts emblazoned with portraits of Lenin, Stalin and Mao.

Compared to last year, when many tourists were apprehensive about meeting Maoists and felt uncomfortable about paying a 'revolutionary tax' to a group espousing violence, this season's trekkers seem to have taken the rebels in their stride.

"They behaved like friends," said Joni Lundstrom from Sweden, "they gave us a receipt for Rs 1,000 and told us they would provide us with security."

There is an apparent paradox here: anywhere else in the world news of violence dissuades tourists but in Nepal it seems to be turning out to be something of a draw. Part of the reason is that the young Maoists that trekkers have met on the Annapurna Base Camp trail are non-threatening, friendly and helpful. The result is that the Annapurna trail has seen a spurt in trekking compared to the last season when publicity about firefights near Ghandruk forced many to go to Khumbu instead. Some 200 trekkers have been passing through Pokhara every day headed to Annapurna Base Camp or to Ghorepani.

Although the war tax is mandatory, it doesn't seem to bother individual trekkers much, they see it as just another fee that tourists have to pay the authorities every step of the way in Nepal. Although trekking permits and charges have been scrapped for the Annapurnas there is still the Rs 2,000 Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) fee.

Till last year, the Maoist receipts were from the 'People's Liberation Army'. This year the Maoists have a checkpoint in Ghorepani where they charge Rs 1,200 (\$15) for entry and give receipts bearing the name of the Maoists' Magarat Autonomous Region. Another checkpoint in Ghandruk (pictured above) is on the road to Annapurna Base Camp and there the Thambuwan Autonomous Region charges Rs 100 per day as 'people's tax'. But they are flexible. When a Japanese trekker met Maoists only on the return journey when all his money had finished, the rebel sentry gave him Rs 700 and sent him down to Pokhara.

The Maoist tax has now become so organised that trekking agents even budget the expense for their groups before they go on the trek.

"For many trekkers, coming across guerrillas with guns is an exciting experience," Val Pikethly, a Canadian trekking guide told us recently. "They get excited because they are not affected by the insurgency like the locals are."

Amanda Mockidge, a British trekker, came across rebels in the Annapurna region in western Nepal recently and was asked to pay Rs 500. "I enjoyed chatting with them," she recalled, "they said they would use the money for the revolutionary cause." Trekkers say they are never forced to pay the money but the Maoists

usually carry a gun and they pay anyway just to avoid trouble. In the remote Kangchenjunga and Karnali treks, the fee is \$100 per trekkers and Rs 500 for per porter and guide.

Despite frequent reports of encounters with Maoists, many trekkers have returned from their Annapurna treks without ever meeting the rebels. Other parts of Nepal, such as Everest and Langtang, are free of Maoist activity even though porters have to go through intensive searches by security forces at checkpoints along the trail.

Bandinima Sherpa, vice-president of the Trekking Agents Association of Nepal, says news of friendly Maoists have spread through the Internet and travellers' chats and most trekkers are not rattled to meet rebels anymore. "Trekking is adventure tourism, and they see it as a part of the adventure package."

Even so, tourism officials deny they will ever sell Maoism as a tourist attraction. They say the conflict has ruined the local economy, and everyone in the mountains is waiting for a durable ceasefire and lasting peace so the tourists return in the numbers they once came.

No tourist has ever been directly harmed by the Maoists but news of the conflict in the international media has affected arrivals even though numbers are climbing again this season for the first time since 1998. ●

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Jumla's road to the future

"We can live without food, we have done that before, but we can't live without peace."

KUNDA DIXIT in JUMLA

Successive governments in Kathmandu have been talking about a Karnali Highway linking Surkhet to Jumla in western Nepal for decades.

After 1990, in response to pressure from local electorates, money was finally sanctioned. The World Bank stepped in with a loan but lethargy, bureaucracy, and the insurgency have delayed a highway that everyone hoped would be the lifeline for Nepal's most neglected and deprived zone.

This year, Rs 460 million has again been earmarked and work has resumed from both the Surkhet and Jumla sides. The two ends of the road reflect two distinctly different philosophies: in Kalikot the work on a 73 km stretch has been handed over to the army and in Jumla local communities are digging 32 km.

The army's section along the Karnali River traverses some of the most rugged terrain in Nepal. The military argues that since a lot of dynamite is needed, it doesn't trust anyone else with the job. Because of rebel activity, it needs a forward base every few kilometres to secure its workers.

Contractor Yudistir Khadka is waiting behind a rock for a dynamite charge to go off. After the explosions, he says, "It is difficult, the rock has to be blasted and despite the army presence we can't get enough workers." Five of Khadka's workers from Dolakha were among the 35 the army mistakenly killed at Kotbara airfield in February 2002.

But here in Jumla, the terrain flattens out and local communities have been given 500 m of road each to dig. Ratna Bahadur Shahi of the Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre (KIRDARC) says the self-help model is working well. "If we don't build this road ourselves, no one else will," he says. Indeed, the two models for road building may also be a lesson in how to sustain development activity in areas under rebel control.

At Tatopani, 20 km south of Jumla, hundreds of villagers are hacking through the rock with their bare hands. Each community is paid for a stretch of road, locals get jobs and benefit from the road. "I have seen mothers dying while giving birth on the side of the trail because they couldn't be carried to a hospital in time," says Dhan Bahadur Buda of a grassroots group.

At the rate of construction, the Jumla end of the highway will be finished in six months. But the Surkhet part will take another three years even if the Maoists allow it. And it doesn't look like they will. Local Maoist in-charge, Makar Bahadur Shahi, says: "We will not let the army use the excuse of the road to encroach on our territory." In Jumla, because locals are involved, the Maoists say they support the road. Many local youths have decided not to go to India since there is work at home.

Even if the road from the south doesn't get to Jumla, KIRDARC wants to start a local transport cooperative to run electric minibuses in the 32 km stretch to Jumla. Electricity won't be a problem. The Jumla powerhouse has been rebuilt after it was destroyed in a

rebel raid two years ago and the Maoists run their own 30 kw mini-hydro in Rarali VDC.

The Maoists have also started farm collectives, more out of necessity than ideology. Because of the exodus of young people from the villages there aren't enough farmhands. "Some families have land and no one to work it, others have people but no land. With the collectives everyone shares work and harvests," says Mani Kesh Gautam, a soft-spoken comrade who is area in-charge at Kudari.

Indeed, social reform seems to be rapidly taking root in one of Nepal's most conservative and underprivileged areas. Women are treated more equally and they don't have to give birth in the cowshed anymore. Untouchability is on the way out and dalits eat with other castes. But, was it necessary to kill people for change that was happening anyway as education and awareness spread? Maoist student leader, Comrade Parbat, has the intense gaze of someone steeped in party doctrine, and replies: "Chairman Mao said history has taught us that entrenched feudal domination cannot be uprooted without armed struggle."

Jumlis have been empowered by the launch of their own community radio station, Karnali FM. It broadcasts news, political interviews and information on health, environment and other issues. In an area with no other media, the radio has raised awareness levels. "You can actually see the self-confidence in the people after the station started," says announcer Hari Debi Rokaya at Karnali FM, "The people of Jumla already feel like it is their own radio." Maoist leaders in the surrounding mountains listen to the station as well but complain there isn't enough news and current affairs.

KIRDARC's Min Bahadur Shahi says the radio and the highway have proved that it is possible to deliver services to the people and ensure development even in insurgency areas. "You just have to be straight forward about it, do genuine good and have a channel of communication with both sides," he says.

Jumla has a district hospital but the doctors have gone home for Tihar and there are only seven patients because it is difficult for villagers to travel due to Maoist restrictions. That is why Shri Bahadur Bhandari and his group decided to take health care to the villages through a network of 3,000 trained mothers. "The Maoists leave us alone because they know the people need us," he says, "and we can't just sit here and say there is a war going on and not do anything."

Just outside Jumla, Tirtha Bahadur Buda takes a break from road-digging and yearns for peace to return: "We can live without food, we have done that before, but we can't live without peace." ●

A TALE OF TWO ROADS: The last stretch of the Surkhet-Jumla highway is relatively flat (top to bottom) and is being dug by local communities, while in Kalikot it is being blasted through the mountains by the army.



Offering an olive branch



ALL PICS: AARTI BASNYAT



From top to bottom: Chitlang Valley in all its finery, picked olives before they go for processing, olives being loaded before being transported to Kathmandu, Vinci, one of Bauder's olive groves.

One way to bring peace may be to oil Nepal's economic engine with innovative cash crops

AARTI BASNYAT in CHITLANG

Hartmut Bauder had two choices when he returned to Nepal in 1995: open a pharmaceutical company or start an olive farm. Though he had worked as managing director in a pharmaceutical company in India for 18 years, he chose to start an olive grove.

After a long and hard struggle, the first olive farm in Nepal was established under the registration of Himalayan Plantations (HP). Land with suitable climate and soil had to be found, it had to be near a road. Finally, Bauder settled on Chitlang.

The olive is a native to Asia Minor and spread from Iran, Syria and Palestine to the rest of the Mediterranean basin 6,000 years ago. It is among the oldest known cultivated trees in the world, being grown even before written language was invented. The olive has a lot of associations from its leaf being the official symbol of peace to it being the sign of land in the story of Noah's ark in the Bible.

Olive is also one of the healthiest oils around. The people of the Mediterranean who use only this oil have been found to have fewer cardiovascular and carcinogenic ailments and live longer than the rest of the world.

A childhood in southern France instilled in Bauder a lifelong love for all things Mediterranean. When the

opportunity to own an olive farm came, he grabbed it.

A scenic four-hour drive away from the capital, nestled in the midst of yellow mustard fields, the blue-green olive trees thrived. When he started in 1995 Bauder tells us, "It was just an experiment, I wanted to prove that it could be done." Now the trees have grown and he has proved his point: the farm yielded 70 litres of olive oil last year and this year he expects the yield to triple.

Bauder wants to teach his adopted country to love the olive. He says, "You don't plant olive trees for yourself but for the sons of your sons. I want Nepali farmers to each have a couple of trees. This way, they can produce their own oil for cooking and eating and it is healthier. The process of extracting oil from olives is as simple as making orange juice. This makes it even more feasible."

Nepal has ideal conditions for olive trees, and there are indigenous wild olives here. The climate needs to be semi-arid and the soil rich but not water retentive. Marginalised lands not used for other crops are perfect for olive trees. Bauder took advantage of this and bought 10 hectares in

Chitlang.

Olive oil available in the Kathmandu market is often adulterated because it is mixed with cheaper hazelnut oil. The chemical components of both oils are relatively the same and it is almost impossible to detect the difference in a chemical analysis.

Spain is the biggest producer of olive oil in the world right now. Tunisia and Morocco are upcoming producers but they haven't been able to market the oil effectively. Nepali olive oil was sent for testing in Australia, Italy and Germany last year to get a feel of the standard of olive oil being produced here. The results were very encouraging: olive oil from Nepal was considered 'extra-virgin', having the highest quality.

This year Bauder plans to send the oil for official registration and certification to ensure acceptability in both national and international markets. As his dream slowly comes to life, Nepali investors waiting on the fence can cash in on the opportunity. If it does not make Nepal a viable olive oil producer, it would at least make it self-sufficient. ●



Lhasa bus

Chinese and Nepali transport authorities signed an agreement last week to start direct bus services from Kathmandu to Lhasa from May 2005. Each side will be operating two buses daily in the initial phase. They will be of three types with varying facilities and prices. One-way fare for First Class buses will be \$70, \$60 for Standard and \$50 for Coach Class.

To Dubai

The Thai charter airline, Phuket Air, is to begin thrice-weekly Boeing 757 flights on the Bangkok-Kathmandu-Dubai route from next month. The airline reportedly has fifth-freedom rights between Kathmandu and Dubai, and this is expected to provide a choice to passengers who now have to rely only on Royal Nepal Airlines on that direct route. The Phuket Air flight is also expected to allow Gulf-based tourists to combine their Thai and Nepal holidays.

Druk Air to Delhi

Druk Air has started a new winter flight schedule offering early morning Kathmandu-Delhi flights on its new Airbus 319 on Sundays and Wednesdays. Delhi-

Kathmandu flights are on Fridays and Saturdays. From 11 November-14 February the airline will go back to its BAe146 three times a week from Paro to Kathmandu and Kathmandu to Delhi on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays and back on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays.



Qatar flying more frequently

Following the recent open skies policy announced by the Indian government, Qatar Airways is tripling the number of weekly non-stop flights between Doha and Mumbai, Cochin, Trivandrum and Hyderabad with 51 flights weekly from 1 November. Qatar flies from Kathmandu to Doha and Kuala Lumpur with 14 flights a week.

Slowdown in decline

Tourism officials are enthused that tourist levels are up in October compared to September. But this October is 12 percent down from last year mainly because of publicity about the Maoists blockade and anti-Muslim riots. "Tourism is picking up again," says Tek Bahadur Dangi, chief executive officer of NTB, "but it takes a long time to rebuild our image after the mass cancellations in September, after international media reports of strikes and demonstrations."

The decline has hit Indian arrivals the most, numbers have been consistently slowing in the past four months, with 31 percent fewer arrivals this October compared to last October. Non-Indian arrivals decreased by eight percent in comparison to last October, mainly for Americans, Japanese, Italians and Chinese visitors. But there were modest increases for Australians, British, French, Dutch, Spanish and German tourists in October, largely because of the resumption of flights to Europe.

Let's spend

A vibrant Tihar culture can boost the economy

It will take some days for Kathmandu to get over the Dasain hangover, and, by then, the Tihar fever will have taken over. Traffic is reduced on Kathmandu roads, restaurants do less business. In India,

ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed



however, the opposite is true. Dusshera and Diwali are festivals when people spend, spend, spend. They travel, they shop, they eat out and generally let themselves go.

In Delhi and other North Indian cities, thousands swarm to see the burning of Ravana's effigy. In Bengal, Durga Puja is now packaged as a carnival for tourists. The celebrations have a lot of corporate sponsorships available as they exploit the opportunity to keep in contact with the consumer.

While driving through the smaller towns and cities, one observes that the festive zeal has more to do with spending. There is non-stop activity 24 hours with people pouring into the streets. Street vendors do booming business and all shops are open because this is the best time for business. Transport entrepreneurs happily work overtime.

In Nepal, the Dasain-Tihar culture is strong and people do buy new clothes and splurge on a goat or two, but on the whole it is a family festival when people stay indoors. The only thing they spend is time with family and

friends and usually on cards. There is little that serves as a tourist attraction. Let's take an example: The average Indian or a foreigner would rather go to Kolkata to see the magnificent *puja pandals* or visit the Mysore palace than come to Nepal and watch buffalos being decapitated.

Consumer evolution is making more and more people eat out and travel more, especially during holidays. In America, the period between Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year marks half the average annual family spending. In Hong Kong, the bulk of entertainment spending takes place during the Chinese New Year. It is time we in Nepal started selling and I mean really selling our festivals.

How can we get people to come out of their houses during Tihar and other festivals? How to ensure that the festivity is packaged to suit young spenders, and I am not talking about selling tickets to the Kot to watch animal sacrifices. Could there be exhibitions and events that revolve around historic sites and temples? Tihar melas that combine entertainment with religion? Wouldn't food festivals and carnival-style programs during jatras be feasible?

If Nepali economy is to grow, there has to be more spending. For that, we first need to earn more. And once we have done that, the spending culture during festivals creates more



ANUP PRAKASH

lower middle class entrepreneurs, be it ice cream vendors or balloon sellers. This spreads the wealth around and creates a whole new downstream multiplier. And Dasain-Tihar would mean more than just boomtime for the slaughterhouses. ●

"More growth only if peace is restored"



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Everest Bank Limited has earned its spurs as a pioneer in housing loans. Its Executive Director, SS Dabbas, worked for three decades at India's biggest public sector bank, the Punjab National Bank. On Everest's tenth anniversary, he explains the vision behind the institution.

What will the next 10 years be like?

The trend in the stock markets and financial results is that the banks have fared quite satisfactorily. Despite the economic slowdown and the fragile situation, the banks have sustained their growth. What worries me is if this growth can continue because of the impact of the slowdown in the industrial sector in the last few years. The banks have sustained growth by diversifying their product line, by keeping their spreads high. The interest rate in savings have gone down tremendously, lending rates have also gone down as per market rates. Looking at the inflation figures, bankers should be concerned on behalf of our depositors. If the spreads come down, with diversification, the impact will be seen in the performance of the banks in the coming days.

Isn't banking getting a bit crowded?

There is fierce competition among private sector banks and so far they have been reaping benefits because our two largest government owned banks are not playing the role they should. Once their health improves, and they are working on it, they would come in aggressively and this will impact private sector banks which will not be able to match their size and network. To meet this challenge, private sector commercial banks will have to re-devise their strategies in three areas: They have to be technologically superior, they will have to start monitoring non-performing assets, and human resources skills and knowledge have to be upgraded to meet national and international competitions that have been brought about by the WTO, SAFTA, BIMSTEC, etc.

What do you expect the public sector banks to do?

They can play a pivotal role in the economic development of the country. Looking at the size and the network they have with them, it has not been exploited in the right way. Their non-performing assets have increased to an extent that their

entire energy has to be used to reduce such assets. They have not been able to focus on other developmental activities, or new products. The public has a negative perception which has to be reversed.

What is the trend among depositors and borrowers?

Customers are happy if they get to deal with a stronger entity. Such stronger entities are possible after mergers and acquisitions. That will also win the confidence of customers and shareholders. Look at the stock market, even today the public have faith in private sector banks.

What has been the response to your housing loans?

About two and a half years ago, when I talked about launching direct housing loans, there were not many takers. Everyone thought this was a grey area. But at Everest Bank we had given very deep thought to the idea, and today, every bank is into home loans. Being the pioneers we have reaped rewards, we have modified the needs of borrowers. Our target clients are from the middle and the upper middle class and they are the least defaulters.

How has the Rastra Bank's recent policy of reducing the cash reserve for the private banks helped in liquidity flow in the market?

The reduction of the Cash Reserve Ratio under the new monetary policy resulted into the increase of availability of funds in the banking sector. For sometime, there was excess liquidity but Nepal Rastra Bank was trying to follow the peace budget. Big and new investments, like hydropower, will happen only if peace is restored. And if that happens, this liquidity, which seems to be in excess today, would fall short. In that case, we will have to look abroad to financing our projects.



Eurasian spoonbill

ALL PICS: PAUL STERRY/BCN



River tern

TIM LOSEBY/BCN

Birds of passage

Let's watch birds so they don't disappear

NARESH NEWAR

It is the season for bird-watching once more as Nepal becomes the transit point for millions of birds travelling south for the winter.

The bar-headed geese are honking their way in arrow-shaped formations down the Kali Gandaki this week. The ducks come by the hundreds of thousands to land in the backwaters of the Kosi Tappu sanctuary in eastern Nepal, and others make brief stopovers in wetlands and take off again for India, Africa or southeast Asia.

The Kosi Tappu Wildlife Reserve is regarded as one of Asia's most significant sites not just for migratory water birds but also birdwatchers from all over the world. Kathmandu Valley is also blessed with two famous bird hills on its rim: Shivapuri and Pulchoki which host up to 300 species of birds in their vicinity.

But habitat destruction and draining of wetlands, not just in Nepal but also along the migratory routes is endangering these birds.

Twenty years ago, over 50,000 birds were sighted here at Kosi Tappu in one day. Last year, the Annual Waterbird Count noticed that the daily number was down

by 9,800 birds. "It was a sharp drop, and it looks like wetland habitats are under severe threat due to overfishing, animal grazing and farm encroachment," says ornithologist Hem Raj Baral of Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN).

Besides Kosi Tappu, ornithologists have also noticed a dramatic drop in the population of water birds in the rivers and ponds of Royal Chitwan National Park. "Waste water from Bharatpur, Narayanghat and the Bhrikuti Paper Mill pollute the Narayani poisoning the fish and then the birds," adds Baral. Pokhara's famous lakes are also a favourite spot for migratory and indigenous birds. But siltation, encroachment and pollution have taken their toll in recent years.

Besides water bodies, bird habitats in tarai grasslands are also threatened. Nepal is home to eight percent of the world's bird species with 861 species recorded here. Of these, 133 species are under threat and 73 fall under the critically threatened category. Most of this is due to the destruction of forests and grasslands and contamination of water bodies.

The white-rumped vulture, slender-billed vulture, Bengal florican, swamp francolin, lesser adjutant, grey-crowned prinia and sarus crane are some of the threatened species in the tarai.

"The bird population declines when there aren't many suitable habitats to breed in. During mating, males need enough grasslands to flaunt themselves and attract females, failing which they won't breed," explains Sarala Khaling from World Wildlife Fund for Nature Conservation (WWF) Nepal.

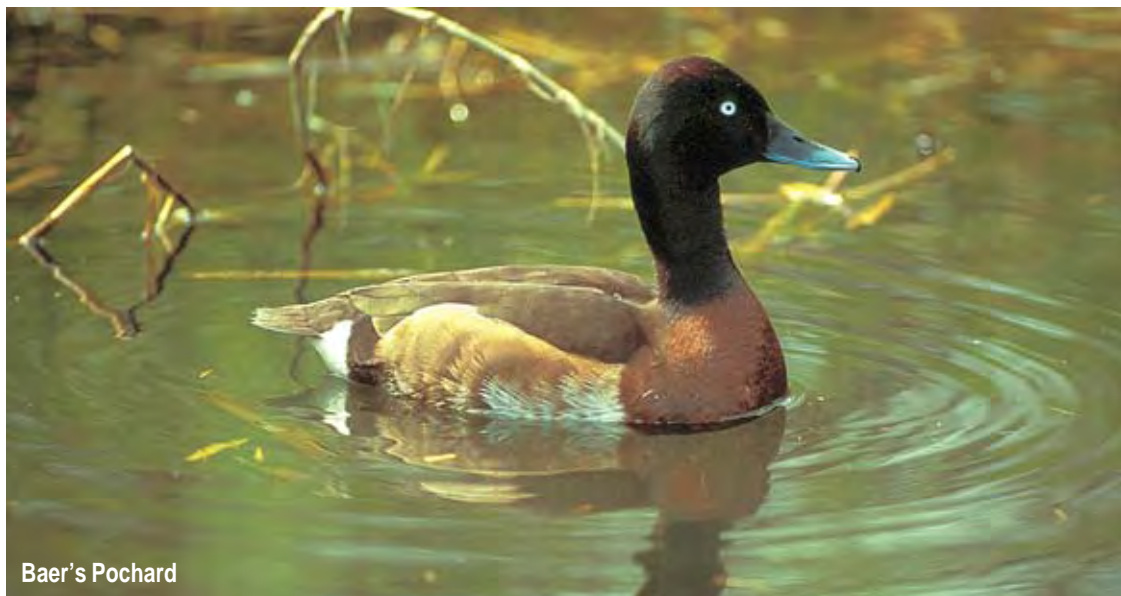
According to the newly-published *The State of Nepal Birds 2004* by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and BCN, the species most at threat are those categorised as 'specialist birds' with special habitat needs. Among them are: the pale-headed woodpecker, coral-billed scimitar babbler, fulvous parrotbill and the golden-breasted fulveta which survive mainly on bamboo groves. The great hornbill and great slaty woodpecker require mature trees for feeding and nesting. As trees and bamboos vanish, so do the birds.

Khaling says conservation of birds is given secondary importance to flagship species like tigers, rhinos and elephants. Only a few organisations focus on bird conservation in Nepal and ornithologists are frustrated with the lack of interest among the government and donors in protecting birds.

"They think that giving funds for protected areas will conserve birds. Most birds are actually dying and nearing extinction outside the national parks," says ornithologist Tika Giri. Vultures across South Asia, including the Nepal tarai, for instance, are near extinction because they ingest a veterinarian drug called diclofenac from livestock carcasses. (See 'No more circling' *Nepali Times*, #185)

The Bengal florican, doesn't exist anymore outside protected areas. There used to be an estimated 5,682 Bengal floricans till a few decades ago, now they are down to less than 100 in the four national parks.

A native of Chitwan, Giri has sighted over 800 species in the 20 years he has been involved in bird conservation. He believes



Baer's Pochard

TIM LOSEBY/BCN



Grey headed fish eagle

the only way to save our birds is by telling people about them. "People are not indifferent to birds, they just don't know how they are responsible for their disappearance," says Giri, who blames modern farming methods that promote pesticides and agrochemicals.

Pesticides are responsible for endangering at least 20 species, mainly birds of prey, large wading birds and storks.

Says conservationist Sagendra Tiwari from IUCN: "Farmers know the role of birds in balancing the ecosystem. What they don't know is how pesticides and fertilisers affect them." ●



Great Bittern

Bird Conservation Nepal
www.birdlifeneal.org
(See also 'Bird Country',
Nepali Times #133)



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Baburam on BP

Kantipur, 26 October

कान्तिपुर

Mr Parshuram Pokhrel,

I wish to congratulate you for having been appointed the chairperson of Sundarijal-Jail-turned-BP-Koirala museum. I must also thank you for converting the prison into a museum. I believe that the establishment of the BP museum is important. BP was an important figure in the building of modern Nepal. I remember meeting him on different occasions between 1977 and 1982 and how he inspired me.

Today, as a revolutionary communist, I have fundamental differences with BP's philosophy and politics but I do not hesitate to declare that BP is indeed one of the most influential and multidimensional personalities of modern Nepal. As a matter of fact, both BP and PL (Pushpa Lal) are two unrivalled pillars of Nepal's democratic/leftist movement. It is ironic that these great thinkers were never successful politicians. Today, it is just the opposite: successful politicians of Nepal aren't great thinkers. Opportunists without calibre are so-called leaders.

A subjective study and investigation on the wide gap between thoughts and politics has become our immediate need. No society can make historic changes without appropriate identification and proper use of knowledge. The reason behind the crisis we see in Nepali society today is due to the dearth of thinkers in political movements.

As long as we try to look bigger than we really are, finding a solution to the country's crisis is almost impossible. It is in context to this that we must believe the museum will help younger generations study a great thinker and politician such as BP.

As far as BP's national tolerance policy is concerned, instead of idealising, we need to analyse it scientifically to reach a subjective conclusion. History has shown that development of knowledge and science takes place on the basis of negation. For instance, the relative materialism and scientific thoughts of Arastu in the west and of Gautam Buddha in the east during the ancient period was barred by unscientific thoughts of the materialistic middle age. In similar ways, the relative progressive ideal of BP's earlier part was not there in the latter part of his life.

We need to decide which part of BP's life to follow. Considering the Sikkim scandal and feudal nationalism in Nepal then, BP's saying ('I am joined at the neck with the king') is an illusion. We must understand that today's national and international scenario has changed significantly.

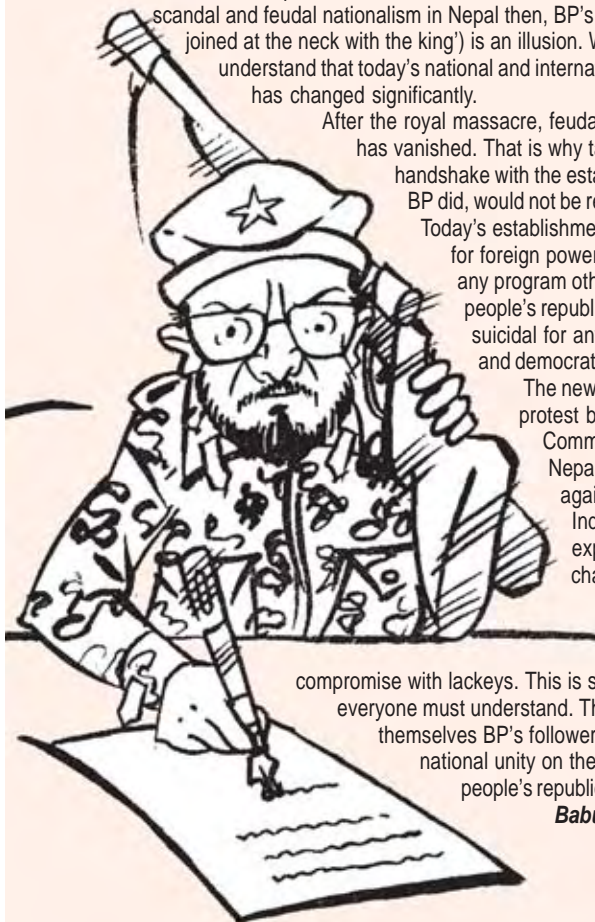
After the royal massacre, feudal nationalism has vanished. That is why talking about a handshake with the establishment, like BP did, would not be reasonable.

Today's establishment is a broker for foreign powers. Discussing any program other than a people's republic would be suicidal for any nationalistic and democratic power.

The new phase of protest by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) against reactionary India ruler's expansionist character and policy means that there will be no

compromise with lackeys. This is something everyone must understand. Those who call themselves BP's followers should forge national unity on the basis of a real people's republic.

Baburam Bhattarai



Two replies to Baburam

Kantipur, 2 November

कान्तिपुर

Baburam Bhattarai was right to point out the superficial ways of our political leaders. Just as he stated in his letter, we see a dearth of real thinkers in politics. In fact, even BP's followers have forgotten his philosophy on social transformation. They need to understand the difficulties that BP faced and what he chose to do.

Bhattarai's letter has raised hopes. Like he said, in the past, queens were all-powerful. Then came Jang Bahadur Rana. In 1950, the Ranas were overthrown. In 1990 Ganeshman Singh emerged a political giant. Today, when someone is fighting for the people, why should he be stopped? Can we expect the country to achieve peace through the respect Bhattarai has shown for BP's philosophy?

Basu Jamarkattel

In his letter, Baburam Bhattarai has mentioned Gautam Buddha. It does not sound right coming from Bhattarai. Buddha never resorted to guns to impose the thought of relative materialism.

Bhattarai regards Buddha's philosophies as scientific while he resurrects the characters of Nadir Shah and Genghis Khan.

Using various excuses, Bhattarai went into the jungle and took up arms. In Buddha's country, where you can have a peaceful movement, what meaning does violence have? Buddha was a revolutionary figure. He was an atheist who dismissed the caste system. But as soon as Bhattarai had a chance, he took his parents on a pilgrimage to Manakamana. Bhattarai must know that because of Buddha's stance against the caste system and the existence of god, Buddhism emerged as a strong movement for social change. That was the reason Vedic priests boycotted Buddha in many villages and barred them from giving him alms. Buddha's favourite disciple, Maudgalyayan, was hacked to death with his head crushed. Yet Buddha did not call for revenge and instead preached peace, equality and non-violence.

Ramcharan Yadav

Interrogation

Bimarsa, 29 October-4 November
by Shankar Roka

रामेश

As the whole city slept, I was in the middle of nowhere expecting to die soon. It was the night before Fulpati, I was walking down the street when a young man, of around 25, blocked my path. He asked me to follow him towards a taxi around the corner. Inside was another man with his face covered by his jacket. He grabbed my hand and pulled me inside. As I struggled, the driver also held onto my hand while the person behind me shoved me into the taxi.

"We're from the army and you're under interrogation," the man in the back told me rudely. "Why do you always write about the Maoists? Who are your sources? How do you get all the information? Where do you meet the Maoist leaders? What is your position in the Maoist party?" I replied politely and softly, saying I was just a journalist doing my job. I tried to assure them that I didn't write against or for either the Maoists or the government. I didn't carry weapons, only my pen and wrote the truth.

By then I was scared. No one knew I had been abducted and they had taken away my cell phone. Was this what happened to the other journalists like Krishna Sen, Ishwar Chandra Gyawali, Govinda Acharya, Khila Bahadur Bhandari, Manrishi Dhital and Om Sharma. Would I be tortured and disappeared like Rebat Sapkota, Chun Bahadur Gurung, Danda Gurung, Shakti Lamsal and Gopal Budathoki? Was this going to be another case of

journalists becoming news themselves?

It's true Bimarsa broke the news about the Dasain truce, which was an exclusive a few days before Prachanda's statement. This could have been the reason why I was being questioned. The three men told me that they had been following me since morning. It was almost two in the morning and they seemed to be running out of questions. Then they tried to intimidate me by saying I was on top of the palace's blacklist. "Just remember what happened to Gopal Budathoki," one of them said ominously. He looked really tired and said he was releasing me. "You can go home now, but I still think you are associated with the Maoists," he added. As I got out of the taxi, I noticed that its license plate had been covered up.

Underground

Rajdhani, 31 October

राजधानी

Maoist leaders say they have built tunnels along the Indian border where they expect Indian military offensives against them. Maoist politburo member, Pampha Bhusal, addressing a program at Jhibakhola of Baglung on 30 October said: "We believe the tunnels will be necessary to counter Indian attacks. The Indians are getting worried about the success of the people's war in Nepal."

Bhusal, who is believed to be the sixth in the party hierarchy, said the Maoists were fully prepared to defend the country against India, and

that the leadership had taken the decision to fight India. "That is the reason why we have built the tunnels in the bordering areas."

Bhusal explained that the Maoists were dealing with two kind of wars at present: one against India and the other against the "old regime" within Nepal. "The government had been transporting soldiers from one place to other even during the Dasain truce which means it is preparing for a fierce offensive. We have no choice but to take on the old regime through war." Bhusal was addressing a mass meeting which criticised People Front Nepal or its campaign against the Maoists. Bhusal charged PFN activists of posing as Maoists, robbing people and manhandling Maoists. "If you don't stop all this, apologise in public and return all the looted properties, we will attack them," she warned. "The PFN has become reactionary like the Nepali Congress and the UML." Bhusal attended the program, three days from Baglung Bajar, amidst tight security.

Protection patrol

Kantipur, 31 October

कान्तिपुर

TAPLEJUNG-The local community in the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area (KCA) is trying to promote tourism by assuring visitors of security during their stay in the area with day-and-night patrols. "We have been patrolling camp sites to make sure tourists are not looted or harassed," says Mingma Sherpa of Yamfudin



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Heavy barbell: Election

Light barbell: Peacetalk

राजधानी Rajdhani, 31 October

QUOTES OF THE WEEK



Yadab has been legally kept in detention on orders of the authorities. So the writ for his release should be quashed.

Chief of Legal Department of the Royal Nepal Army, Brigadier General B A Sharma in Kantipur 4 November, in response to the Supreme Court order to release senior Maoist leader Matrika Yadab

VDC. Last year, some Maoists beat up an American tourist when he refused to pay them. The incident was reported in the international media, causing a sharp decline in the number of tourists visiting KCA. Now, the Maoists have realised that tourists are not coming even in the peak season and it is the rebels who are warning the villagers from harassing their guests in anyway. They have warned hoteliers and businessmen not to overcharge tourists.

"It is more peaceful here now and tourists have begun visiting again," says happy villager, Ritu Gurung, from Kabeli. The KCA even provides tourists with kerosene so the surrounding forests are not cut.

Land, ho!

Deshantar, 31 October

KAILALI-Indian and Nepali authorities are not doing anything to prevent Nepali land from being encroached upon by people from across the border. Indian authorities have installed new border posts at Parasain VDC, and local residents are furious. Indian officials say the new posts are where the surveys shows they should be. One old post number 94 has been replaced by number 773, which is three km away from the original spot. Farms belonging to many Nepali families are now in

India. About 10 bighas of land belonging to a community school has also been encroached upon. Kathmandu has remained silent on this issue making it easier for India to intrude. Even the political parties are quiet.

Royal tika

Jana Astha, 2 November

Senior police officials who did not go to the royal palace to receive Dasain tika from the king last month are in trouble. These are officials who would spend hours waiting at different power centres to get transfers to places where they could earn illegally. But when it came to waiting in queue for a tika from the only Hindu monarch in the world, many of them chose to stay at home. Police headquarters has issued a circular to all stations asking them to prepare a list of officials who went to receive tika from the king. Those who did not go to the palace have been asked to furnish an explanation. The headquarter wants their answers at the earliest. Officers fear they will now be blacklisted and not get promotions or be transferred to places not of their choice. The police headquarters is believed to have begun the investigation after a visibly small number of police officers turned up at the palace for royal tika this Dasain.

Voting right

Speaker Taranath Ranabhat in Kantipur, 1 November

कान्तिपुर

The government is using its propaganda machinery to make people feel it is working towards restoring peace and holding general elections. But what it wants to do is still not clear. Apart from the government, there are two other forces directly related to elections: political parties and voters. For the parties that ruled the country for 14 years with the people's confidence, elections are not something they can run away from.

As far as the voters are concerned, they first need to be assured that peace will be restored. Due to the conflict, a big chunk of voters have left for foreign countries to earn their livelihood. The remaining voters have no interest to take part in the polls.

But this does not mean we should look for excuses to obstruct the people's participation in a democratic exercise. The government should not prolong the state of political limbo of the last two and a half years. If such a situation persists, instability and lawlessness will prevail. If the country is run with the help of one ordinance after another, the constitution will have no status and the rule of law, which is the basic essence of a democratic society, will become a joke. That is why the constitution needs to be activated at the earliest and we need to have a legitimate government.

There are three ways of restoring the House of Representatives: First through elections, second through the court's decision, and third through the king's order. Of the three, an election is the best alternative. We need to consider the other options only if elections cannot be held. For the king to issue an order reinstating the House of Representatives either the prime minister will have to make a recommendation or the court will have to make such a ruling.

Before elections take place, we need to prepare the basic infrastructure and agree on some preconditions. For instance, there needs to be a



national agreement and pledge on the results. Recent sample polls suggested that very few voters will turn up at polling booths under present circumstances. There may not be voting in some constituencies.

Normally, even if the result of such an election receives legal approval, it will not get political endorsement. If that is the case after our elections, the conflict will escalate. This is why we need an all-party consensus before the polls.

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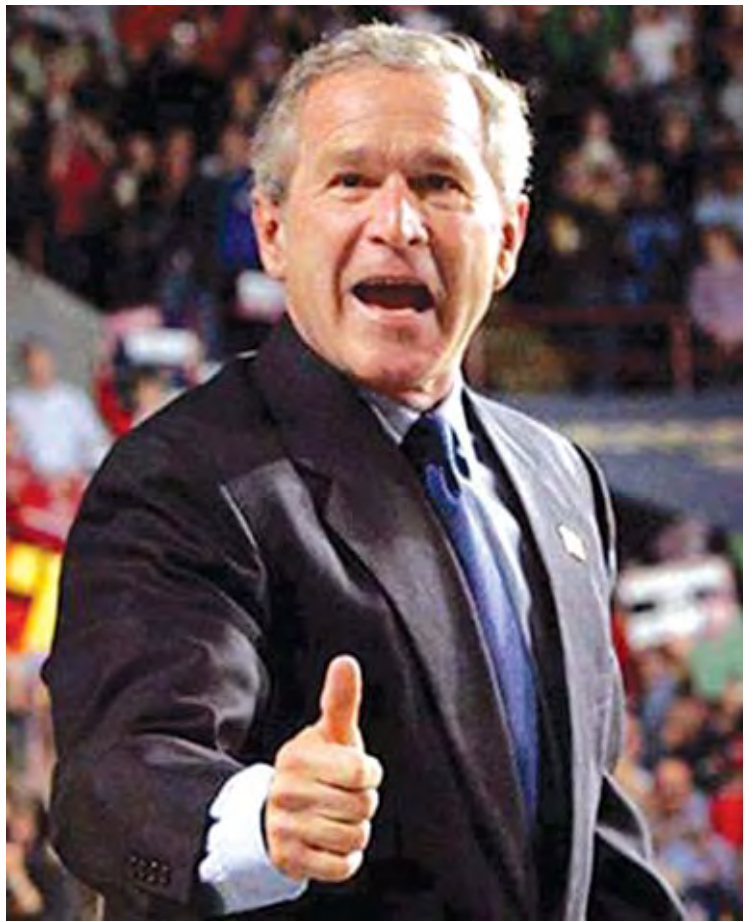
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America's class chasm

Bush's conservative, evangelical middle America defeated Kerry's liberal, coastal elitists

NEW YORK In the aftermath of the civil war that the United States has just fought, one result is clear: The Democratic Party's first priority should be to reconnect with the American heartland.

John Kerry's supporters should be feeling wretched about the millions of farmers, factory workers and waitresses who ended up voting — utterly against their own interests — for Republican candidates.

One of the Republican Party's major successes over the last few decades has been to persuade many of the working poor to vote for tax breaks for billionaires. The Democrats are still effective on bread-and-butter issues like health care, but they come across in much of America as arrogant and out of touch the moment the discussion shifts to values.

ANALYSIS
Nicholas Kristof



"On values, they are really noncompetitive in the heartland," noted Mike Johanns, a Republican who is governor of Nebraska. "This kind of elitist, Eastern approach to the party is just devastating in the Midwest and Western states. It's very difficult for senatorial, congressional and even local candidates to survive."

In the summer, I was home — too briefly — in Yamhill, Oregon, a rural, working-class area where most people would benefit from Democratic policies on taxes and health care. But many of those people disdain Democrats as elitists who empathise with spotted owls rather than loggers.

One problem is the yuppification of the Democratic Party. Thomas Frank, author of the best political book of the year, *What's the Matter With Kansas: How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*, says that Democratic leaders have been so eager to win over suburban professionals that they have lost touch with blue-collar America.

"There is a very upper-middle-class flavour to liberalism, and that's just bound to rub average people the wrong way," Frank said. He notes that Republicans have used "culturally powerful but content-free issues" to connect to ordinary voters.

To put it another way, Democrats peddle issues, and Republicans sell values. Consider the four G's: God, guns, gays and grizzlies.

One-third of Americans are evangelical Christians, and many of them perceive Democrats as often contemptuous of their faith. And, frankly, they're often right. Some evangelicals take revenge by smiting Democratic candidates.

Then we have guns, which are such an emotive issue that Idaho's Democratic candidate for the Senate two years ago, Alan Blinken, felt obliged to declare that he owned 24 guns "and I use them all". He still lost.

As for gays, that's a rare wedge issue that Democrats have managed to neutralise in part along with abortion. Most Americans disapprove of gay marriage but do support some kind of civil unions (just as they oppose 'partial birth' abortions but don't want teenage girls to die from coat-hanger abortions).

Finally, grizzlies — a metaphor for the way environmentalism is often perceived in the West as high-handed. When I visited Idaho, people were still enraged over a Clinton administration proposal to introduce 25 grizzly bears into the wild. It wasn't worth antagonising most of Idaho over 25 bears.

"The Republicans are smarter," said Oregon's governor, Ted Kulongoski, a Democrat. "They've created ... these social issues to get the public to stop looking at what's happening to them economically. What we once thought — that people would vote in their economic self-interest — is not true and we Democrats haven't figured out how to deal with that."

President Bill Clinton intuitively understood the challenge and John Edwards seems to as well, perhaps because of their own working-class origins. But the party as a whole is mostly in denial. To appeal to middle America, Democratic leaders don't need to carry guns to church services and shoot grizzlies on the way. But a starting point would be to shed their inhibitions about talking on faith and to work more with religious groups.

Otherwise, the Democratic Party's efforts to improve the lives of working-class Americans in the long run will be blocked by the very people the Democrats aim to help.

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WAVE Events

Reluctant talkers in Andhra Pradesh

SONNU CHHINA
in HYDERABAD

Far away from the talks table in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh's Maoist People's War Group, whose cadre strength had dwindled during the crackdown by the former government of Chandrababu Naidu, have been going ahead with recruitment and are busy stocking arms.

Intelligence sources confirmed that the Naxalite strength has doubled in recent months and said the YSR Reddy government has muzzled the state police.

The Greyhounds, an elite police force of 3,000 commandos created to tackle the rebels, have been recalled to Hyderabad. All superintendents of police, including those who know sensitive districts like the back of their hands, have been reshuffled.

"We have stopped all

combining operations. Even if we see Naxals carrying illegal arms, we have been told to remain non-confrontational," said a senior officer. The fate of peace talks is on shaky ground and the state government has not succeeded in getting the People's War Group to disarm.

"This peace is temporary, deceptive. We are certain that if hostilities resume, the result will be really bloody," said an officer at his new posting. "The problem is with the talks. We have lost the psychological advantage. We have been pushed back four years. We feel ditched by the government. A lot of sacrifices have been made," he said.

Over 500 policemen have been killed in the last 30 years. "Without really consulting the police, the political powers have gone to the negotiating table. We were given a fait accompli: talks have to happen, it was on the poll manifesto and all our reservations were overruled...they

are playing their political games and the police have been made scapegoats," he said.

"Their demands are just not valid in this day and age. Andhra is not the feudal society it was 30 years ago," said another officer.

Maoist groups recently united and have created a corridor from Andhra all the way to Nepal. "YSR does not want to feel politically isolated at this stage. Before anyone asked him to, he went to the table. Now he is looking for the first exit," said another officer.

The officers have express instructions not to talk to the media. Director General of Police SR Sukumara has maintained throughout that he will back the ceasefire and provide a suitable environment for the talks. The only time he erupted was when Naxals demanded a higher salary for constables during the first round of talks. "It's none of

their business," he shot back.

The Maoists are trying to push the government into a corner. Varavara Rao, poet and emissary of the People's War Group was full of praise for his Nepali comrades. He told reporters during a lull between two rounds of peace talks with the Andhra government last week: "We support the Nepal revolution. If the Indian and the US governments back off, the Nepali Maoists will definitely succeed in their struggle in Kathmandu."

But this bigger international picture is the last thing on the Andhra Pradesh chief minister's mind. All he is doing for the moment is to ask the rebels to stop planting red flags in big farmers' fields. He doesn't know how he will get them to lay down arms during the next round of talks. And he doesn't know how his panel will figure out the Naxals' sweeping demand for land reform. ●

(Indian Express)



"We support the Nepal revolution. If the Indian and the US governments back off, the Nepali Maoists will definitely succeed in their struggle in Kathmandu."

Varavara Rao, Maoist negotiator from the People's War Group

Beware of DV e-crooks

NEW YORK—The email message is sprinkled with telltale exclamation marks and misspellings, but to foreigners yearning to live legally in the United States, it may seem like a dream come true: 'Congratulation, you have won DV-2004-1005 USA National Visa Lottery!!!'

In fact, the electronic message which goes on to ask for contact information, a photograph and \$349.67 in fees, is just the latest swindle to hit would-be winners of the green card visa lottery conducted yearly by the US State Department. Applications for the 2006 lottery, officially known as the Diversity Visa Lottery, will be accepted electronically on a State Department website, www.dvlottery.state.gov, from 5 November to 7 January. Last year was the first time Internet applications were required and nearly six million applicants competed for a chance to apply for 50,000 immigrant visas.

The lottery is intended to promote immigration from countries that send less than 50,000 migrants to the US every year and includes Nepal. Swindles like the phony email message seem to proliferate during lottery season, said Angela Aggeler, a spokesperson for the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs. Among the frauds recently brought to her attention, she said, were pop-up windows that might help swindlers capture the email addresses of potential applicants searching for advice.

There is no fee to enter the lottery, though legitimate services may charge something to help with the application. Applicants selected in the random drawing are notified by mail and only by the Department of State, Kentucky Consular Centre. All other notifications are fake.

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Portraits of Nepal

Toni Hagen's *Nepali Faces* is more than a calendar for 2005, it is a memento for a good cause

In Toni Hagen's classic work *Nepal: The Kingdom in the Himalaya* (first published in 1961) there is a photograph of five students at an outdoor school in Bhojpur. One is a Rai, one a Bahun, one a Chettri, one a Tamang and one a Kami, representing a microcosm of the caste/ethnic diversity of Nepal. Long before Dor Bhadur Bista wrote *People of Nepal* to introduce the country's people and their cultures to the world, and long before Jan Salter painted her *Faces of*

Nepal in pencil and oil,

REVIEW
Manesh Shrestha

Toni Hagen had travelled all over the country and met a population which was just entering the modern era after Rana rule.

The 2005 calendar *Nepali Faces*, published by the Toni Hagen Foundation, is once again a testimony to the late Swiss geologist-turned-development expert's work among Nepalis in the 1950s. Indeed, what makes this calendar unique is that the 13 colour prints were taken about half a century ago. The calendar has been printed in Nepal and its proceeds are to go to the activities of the Toni Hagen Foundation which tries to inform Nepalis about their own country, its diversity in geography and population.

Hagen first came to Nepal in 1950, a couple of weeks before King Tribhuban 'took refuge' at the Indian Embassy in Lainchaur and the century-long Rana rule ended. He was part of the four-man Swiss Forward Team sent by the Swiss government on the Nepal government's request and thus inaugurated official development aid to Nepal. But why was a

geologist a part of the team? Hagen recalled that after his field visits, Ranas would accost him and ask if he had discovered any gold.

Hagen was in Nepal for six months on that first visit. He returned in 1952 as an employee of the Nepal government to conduct the first geological survey of the country, travelling more than 14,000 km on foot over eight years to corners that no one had been to before. It is doubtful if anyone else, barring his expedition sardar Aila Sherpa, has seen as much of the country.

Coming from Switzerland and having some definitive views on how Nepal could/should develop, Hagen looked for development opportunities. He proposed ropeways as the means of transporting goods as well as 'green roads', promoted self-help over foreign aid, small-scale projects over big ones and located quite a few choice spots for hydropower projects including the Karnali Bend. Hagen's Swiss team had envisaged the Kulekhani dam in 1951. It was built in 1982.

Rather than bring goods from outside into the countryside and thus ruin local livelihoods, Hagen proposed local produce from the hinterland reaching the bigger market outside. He even advocated doing away with the National Planning Commission as an anachronism: how could Singha Darbar decide what was good for rural Nepal?

The success of the Tibetan carpet industry is a testimony of Hagen's earthy wisdom and long-term vision. He was instrumental in setting up the carpet weaving training centre for Tibetan refugees in 1960 insisting that they earn their livelihoods rather than live on hand-outs. By the 1990s, carpet export



had become Nepal's biggest source of foreign currency.

Few know that Toni Hagen was as accomplished in his skills as a photographer, a fact that impressed BP Koirala who wrote the foreword to the first edition of his book. The quality of pictures in the *Nepali Faces 2005 Calendar* tells us why he was impressed: portraits from 50 years ago are alive in fully-preserved colour.

Faces tell what ethnic or caste group a Nepali belongs to. But in these calendars, it is also their clothes and appearance that give us hints. Only in the last decade has there been a homogenisation of attire in the hills. But here, it is easy to make out who is who from the apparel, coiffure, ornaments, as well as features. The pictures in this calendar tell us how the people of Nepal differ in appearance even today: Chettri of western Nepal, Newar of Kathmandu Valley, Bhotia of the far northwest, Tamang of the east, and Tharu of the southwest Tarai. Like attire, even this will one day change with the rapid inter-marriage and integration of Nepali ethnicities.

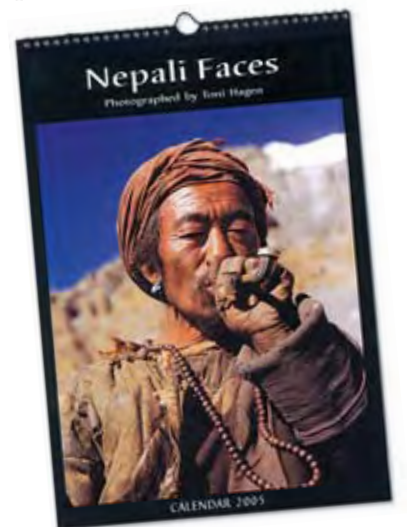
The calendar celebrates Nepal's diversity, but it also reminds us how much and how little has changed in the

lives of the people in these past 50 years. Those were innocent times and the faces that peer out of Toni Hagen's calendar seemingly chide us contemporary folks for having stumbled on the path to progress.

The calendar is a perfect new year gift for those who care for Nepal and want to remember an intrepid geologist, his affection for this country and its people. ●



Toni Hagen studying ammonite fossils in Jharkot in 1955 with Dhaulagiri in the background. Hagen's portrait of a Jumla girl (top) who must now be 65 years old.



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Swinging by the rules

Knowing the rules can make all the difference

Golf is known as a gentleman's game. It is perhaps the only sport played on such an expanse of open space that competitors often never get to see one another during the game, despite playing the same field under similar conditions.

It is also essentially a self-regulating game: golfers should understand the basic rules.

One must understand that the rules are meant to assist players rather than impose penalties on them. That means, as a golfer, you need to 'play the ball as it lies, play the course as you find it, and if you can't do either, do what is fair'.

However, to do what is fair you need to have adequate knowledge of the rules. In general, golfers are so preoccupied with their swing

that they tend to assume they know the rules. It is only when the rules begin to work against them in the form of penalties that they start realising the harsh realities

of their ignorance. By then, of course it's too late to lament, "Oh if I had only read the rules or called a marshal for a ruling!"

World's no 1 golfer Vijay Singh was penalised during a PGA tour tournament in 2003. His breach was removing a loose impediment on the green with a towel. Luckily, he realised and corrected his mistake by adding a two-stroke penalty before signing his scorecard. This prevented him being disqualified from the tournament.

You can see that even top professional players get confused at times with the rules of golf. Remembering every single rule is quite impossible but whenever doubt creeps in, a marshal is called or two balls are played with a decision sought afterwards.

Vijay Singh paid his two-stroke penalty in 2003 but a revision of the Rules of Golf the following year allows the removal of loose impediments with towels.

The rules are amended once every four years. It is of paramount importance to keep yourself updated. References are available on the United States Golf Association website www.usga.org. Click on 'Playing the Game' and read Decisions on the Rules of Golf 2004 - 2005. For an explanation of the general rules, consult with your local club professional.

Often seen at the club level are golfers taking wrong drops from unplayable lies, water hazards and lateral water hazards. A recurring problem is how the proper point of entry into a hazard is not identified and neither is the nearest point of relief.

In this game you are given the initial privilege of being your own judge. The game is no fun if rules are not followed.

This Saturday on 6 November, if you are part of the KIA Open at Gokarna Golf Club, keep the above in mind and save yourself from being unnecessarily penalised. ●

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

A Himalayan challenge

Whether you want to race your kayak and raft, or just watch, Bhote Kosi is the place next week



KIRAN PANDAY

AARTI BASNYAT

Nepal is a prime location for white water rafting with Karnali and Sunkosi being rated among the top 10 rivers in the world. Trisuli, Kali Gandaki, Bhote Kosi and Tamur are also famous for their white waters. Upto 15 percent of tourists who visit Nepal also take to the thrill of the rapids.

The Nepal Association of Rafting Agents (NARA) is well aware of the potential that Nepal has for white water rafting, and is trying to promote this sport both nationally and internationally. Since 2002, NARA in association with Peak UK have been organising the Himalayan Challenge down the Bhote Kosi river.

This year, the competition is to be held from the 13-15 November with both kayak and rafting races along a stretch of the Bhote Kosi from near the Chinese border down to Dolalghat.

In the kayak races, there are

three events: kayak free style, kayak slalom, and kayak downriver races. In the rafting department, there is only one event called the raft downriver race.

NARA hopes to promote rafting tourism in Nepal through the tournament and get international coverage of some of the finest white waters in the world. It also hopes its Nepali rafting crew gets exposure to international-level training and competition so Nepal can compete in international kayak and raft competitions.

NARA's slogan is 'Nepal is your white water destination' and in a bid to promote white water rafting, it also organises the Trisuli river festival every year on the last Saturday of May. This event aims at promoting rafting among local tourists and has more of a picnic air.

This year, NARA plans to host at least 300 participants. Some 50 Nepalis and 75 foreigners have already registered. Participation fee is

Rs 1,000 for Nepalis and \$50 for foreigners. Those who want to watch the event can do so. There is a package deal for \$25 with transportation, food, accommodation and thrill are taken care of. The event is only for professional rafters and kayakers with a minimum requirement of having rafted in at least Grade Five rapids.

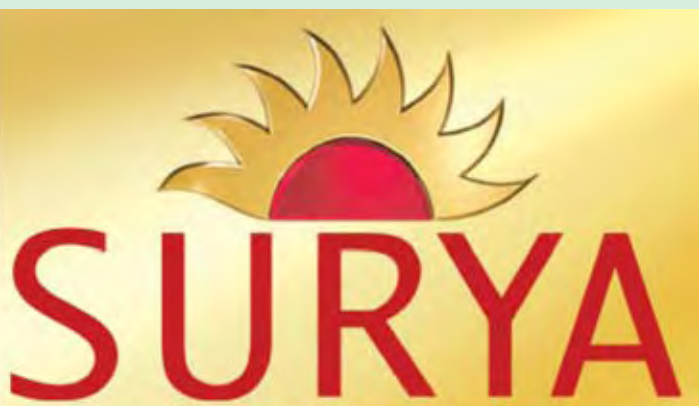
NARA General Secretary Nani Kaji Thapa tells us, "The number of participants are increasing every year, and their skill levels are also improving." Although international publicity of the maoist conflict has affected rafting, it is not expected to deter the true raft and kayak aficionados this year.

But aren't people getting bored with Bhote Kosi every year? Thapa replies: "Yes, next year we plan to change the river." ●

Himalayan Challenge Bhote Kosi
13-15 November
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of Rafting Agents
4244048, nara@enet.com.np

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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.)

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

Our Heroji begins his first trek not knowing anything about the Nepali Porter System (NPS) ...



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- Nepali Porter System (NPS)**
- * A few bits of rope
 - * Britney Spears t-shirt
 - * Shower shoes.

KE GARNE? WHATEVER.
But be a Heroji - Eat less and exercise regularly.

"The civilized man has built a coach, but has lost the use of his feet."
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson, American Poet (1803-1882)

Next change: Herojig gives up, hires Binod (a trekking guide), and then takes a pony ride up to Muktinath-Chumig Gyatsa.

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

#43 2061 by jiggy gaton - read. love. write.

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

❖ **Uneven Fragments** Art forms by various artists at Gallery Nine. Until 12 November. 4428694

EVENTS

- ❖ **Video Show & Discussion on Psychological Conditioning** at Nepal Japan Children's Library, Lainchour, 3PM on 6 November. 4279712
- ❖ **Nepal Kaleidoscope Photo Competition** on any subject that portrays Nepal or the Nepali way of life, submission deadline 16 November. www.pjclub.com.np
- ❖ **3rd Annual Ride and Rage** with the Himalayan Enfielders to the Last Resort on 20-21 November. Rs 1,500 per person, includes transport, food and accommodation. 4440462
- ❖ **WCN Amateur Nature and Wildlife Photography Competition** for amateur photographers. Deadline 30 November. 5524202, www.wcn.org.np
- ❖ **Bluebird Festive Blast** Shopping specials for Tihar at both Tripureswor and Lajimpat outlets.

MUSIC

- ❖ **Tata Young Live** at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu on 5 November, 7.30 PM onwards. Entrance Rs 2,500. 4720382, 2081040
- ❖ **Fusion Night** at the Rox Bar. Every Wednesday from 6PM onwards. 4491234
- ❖ **Deo** at Not Just The Jazz Bar, Fridays at Hotel Shangri-la, Lajimpat.
- ❖ **Jatra Friday Nites** The Strings. 4256622
- ❖ **Happening Live Jazz in town** by Cadenza at Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lajimpat. Every Wednesday and Saturday, 7.45 PM onwards.



DRINKS

- ❖ **Island Bar** with DJ Raju and The Cloud Walkers. Rox Bar 4491234
- ❖ **Free Drink Deals** at Red Onion Bar, Lajimpat

FOOD

- ❖ **International Food Festival** at Hyatt Regency, 11AM onwards 6 Nov
- ❖ **Charcoalz** a barbecue of Western, Indian and Mongolian delights at Hotel Yak & Yeti, 6PM to 10PM. Till 30 November.
- ❖ **La Soon** Restaurant and Vointheque, Pulchok for spacious indoor and outdoor seating. 5537166
- ❖ **Fresh Catch** Seafood every Saturday, Sunday at The Café, Hyatt
- ❖ **Genuine Thai** cuisine at Royal Lotus, Bakhundole. 5521231
- ❖ **Delicious barbecue dinner** Fridays at Summit Hotel. 5521810
- ❖ **Friday Nights** at Subterranea Club Kilroy. 4412821
- ❖ **Farm House Café** Park Village Hotel. 4375280
- ❖ **Café Bahal** Newari and continental cuisine under the giant Cinnamon tree at Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel. 4700632
- ❖ **Barbecue-Ban Bhoj** at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **Vegetarian Creations** at Stupa View Restaurant. 4480262
- ❖ **Splash Spring BBQ** Wednesday and Friday 6PM Radisson Hotel
- ❖ **Executive Lunch** at Toran Restaurant, Dwarika's. 4479488
- ❖ **The Beer Garden** at Vaijyantha, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **Dwarika's Thali** Lunch at the Heritage courtyard. 4479488
- ❖ **The Tharu Kitchen** at Jungle Base Camp junglebasecamp@yahoo.com

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Dream Holiday** package tour to Malaysia during Tihar. Marco Polo Travels and Qatar Airways, 2012345,
- ❖ **Canyon Swing** 140 m down stream at The Last Resort. 4439525
- ❖ **Getaway package** night's stay at Godavari Village Resort 5560675
- ❖ **Shivapuri Heights Cottage**, steve@escape2nepal.com
- ❖ **Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge** ihar special. 4361500
- ❖ **Golf** at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa. 4451212
- ❖ **Weekend Special** at Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha. 4375280
- ❖ **Early Bird discounts** at Shangri-La Hotel & Resort. 4412999

In ancient Greece, the passion of two of literature's most notorious lovers, Paris, Prince of Troy (Orlando Bloom) and Helen (Diane Kruger), Queen of Sparta, ignites a war that will devastate a civilization. When Paris spirits Helen away from her husband, King Menelaus (Brendan Gleeson), it is an insult that cannot be suffered. Familial pride dictates that an affront to Menelaus is an affront to his brother Agamemnon (Brian Cox), powerful King of the Mycenaeans, who soon unites all the massive tribes of Greece to steal Helen back from Troy in defence of his brother's honour. Two worlds will go to war for honour and power. Thousands will fall in pursuit of glory. And for love, a nation will burn to the ground.

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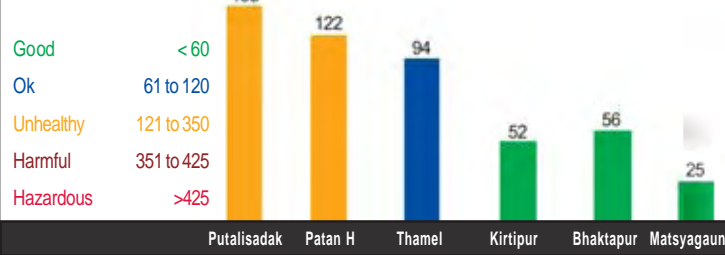
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KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

One festival just got over and another is to begin. As the respite in air pollution takes a break, pollution levels are reaching dangerous levels. Putalisadak is back to its unhealthy concentration of PM10. Patan Hospital and Thamel are catching up fast. With Tihar around the corner and firecrackers in the air, it looks like a bad week for air quality. Keep your masks on.

24-30 October in micrograms per cubic meter. Source: www.mape.gov.np



NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



An anti-cyclonic circulation in central Asia, abetted by a high pressure zone over northern India is bringing in dry and cold air into the subcontinent, which explains the below average temperature and the clear bright weather of the past week. It also chased away lingering moisture that was giving us overcast skies. This spell of dry, clear weather with fresh air from the Tibetan plateau is expected to continue, notwithstanding the circulation over the Arabian Sea that is sending some plumes of high-altitude cirrus riding the jetstream in our direction. Expect chilly nights, thickening morning mist and warm balmy afternoons in Kathmandu Valley.

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

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(थप जानकारीका लागि कार्यालय समयभित्र रेडियो सगरमाथामा सम्पर्क गर्नुहोस्, फोन: ५५२८०८९, ५५४२२४५)



KIRAN PANDAY

ALL SMILES: Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and Ambassador Zameer Akram responding to a question from the audience at a talk organised by the Nepal Council of World Affairs and the Pakistani Embassy on 1 November at the Soaltee Crowne Plaza.



ADULT FRANCHISE: Former Foreign Minister Chakra Bastola casts his ballot at a mock poll organised by American Deputy Chief of Mission, Elizabeth Millard, on 2 November to coincide with the US elections. John Kerry won, 28-10.



KIRAN PANDAY

HELSINKI-KATHMANDU: The first chartered Finnair 757 of the season touched down at Kathmandu on Wednesday bringing a plane-load of Finnish tourists and journalists.



KIRAN PANDAY

BOWLED OVER: The Indian Embassy team, winners of the Soaltee Crowne Plaza Super Sixes 2004, let off a victory cheer at the Tribhuvan University stadium on Monday.



KIRAN PANDAY

PINCHING THE TIP: Health workers and curious onlookers at a rally to mark National Condom Day on 30 October at Tundikhel.

Sisters three

Upstairs, in the Lajimpat Park Gallery, Neera, Neeti and Juni point reverently at a portrait of their father, Ramananda Joshi, who set up the Gallery 34 years ago.

Ramananda was a painter himself and wanted to create a home for the arts at a time when there were few places to exhibit in Kathmandu.

The three sisters grew up in an artistically-stimulating environment. They watched their father paint but didn't really want to become artists themselves. Park Gallery first opened in Pulchok and the girls got involved in organising things and helping out dad. Park hosted many exhibitions and gained fame quickly. When Ramananda died suddenly in 1988, the responsibility of running fell on the delicate shoulders of Neera, Neeti and Juni.

"Dad had plans to expand the gallery and we are fulfilling his dream," says Neera, the eldest. With the support from their mother, the three sisters have been running the gallery in Lajimpat now for a year and a half. There have been people who have offered to buy the gallery but they are determined not to sell. "We want to try and promote young talented artists and give them exposure," says Neeti.

Park Gallery also offers custom framing for exhibiting artists and gives art classes to students during vacations. For the Joshi family, Park is more than just a

business. "It is tough to survive just on art. There are times when we feel discouraged but we remember dad's legacy and that inspires us to carry on," explains Neera, who is a botanist and has published her own collection, *Flora From Kathmandu Valley*.

The sisters have divided up the

work: Neera takes care of the creative end. Neeti is the manager, while young Juni does the interiors. Juni has learnt fast, and says people in Kathmandu have realised aesthetics is not just costly interiors: "A painting doesn't just brighten up a room, it adds beauty and expression to people's lives." •

(Sampada Malla)



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PRISMA/04

Journalists should tell the truth: Minister

BY OUR ARMCHAIR ANALYST

Journalists must help in the process of nation-building by sticking to facts even if they are wrong, the Minister of Lies and Statistics opined yesterday at a ceremony to honour the country's ten most-imaginative columnists.

Gradually warming up to the subject, the magnanimous minister added that if the Fourth Estate reported truthfully on government statements they knew to be factually incorrect, they wouldn't have to pay taxes and all billboards in the country would be banned.

UNDER MY HAT
Kunda Dixit



Without mincing words, the Minister said: "Correspondents must accurately report our lies so

the reading public is not misled." *(That is what he factually said, I swear. -Editor)* Later, the Minister distributed plaques, shawls and envelopes to fifth columnists whose writings in the past year have been found to contain the fewest number of verifiable facts. I'll show you my plaque if I can get this shawl off.

Nepal's corruption ranking improves

BY OUR UTTERLY CORRUPT CORRESPONDENT

For the first time since records started being kept, Nepal scored less than 3.0 points in the world corruption rankings, overtaking Azerbaijan, Angola and Transylvania in the 2004 Transparency International Coefficient.

"It is a matter of great national pride that we are now at par with the most-corrupt countries in the world, Haiti and Bangladesh," said the Director-General of the Department of Graft and Sleaze, "but this is no time for complacency, we must not rest on our laurels, we must be even more crooked because there are countries where malfeasance is spreading faster than here."

The DG said Nepal is on target to achieve a 2.5 Index in next year's survey. He added: "We are even prepared to bribe the folks at Transparency International in case we don't quite make it."

Tenth Condom Day observed

KATHMANDU—Underlining the need to correct prevailing ignorance among the general populace about regression, the four agitated parties took out a procession through the streets of the capital this week to mark International Condom Day.

Activists, social workers, teachers and daily-wage earners took part in the procession, carrying anti-regression banners, shouting pro-condom slogans and creating a monstrous traffic jam around Dharara. Said an agitator: "We are very happy with the turnout, it shows the political parties are totally against general erections at the present time."

In other news:

India-Pakistan War breaks out

BY OUR UNDIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

India and Pakistan are going to war for the fourth time after independence after a mix-up over a tea party invitation in the landlocked Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal escalated into a full-scale nuclear conflagration.

"They didn't invite us for tea, so we had no option but to fire an incontinental ballistic missile on our front page," said a visibly-peevish editor from the frontlines. He added: "We didn't want to be petty, but thought what the heck, since we are in neutral territory we might as well."

As the nuke-tipped pettiness escalated, it threatened to derail Indo-Pak rapprochement, and the leaders of the two countries once more refused to shake hands in public.

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