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Know Your Rights

A children's guide to the Convention on the Rights of the Child



Times nepalnews.com
 Weekly Internet Poll # 162

Q. Do you agree with the proposal for a special quota for disadvantaged groups in education?

■ Yes 62%
 ■ No 35%
 ■ Don't know 2%

Total votes: 584

Weekly Internet Poll # 163. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Are you proud to be a Nepali?

The road to war



Nepal's highways used to be pocked with potholes, now they have landmine craters like this stretch in Kailali where five soldiers were killed on Tuesday.

RAMESWOR BOHARA

RAMESWOR BOHARA
 in BANKE

Maoist highway ambushes in the first week after Tihar indicate a dramatic shift in tactics by the rebels.

By blocking remote stretches of highways with trees, they lure troops out of their barracks and ambush them. In four attacks in western and central Nepal on Tuesday and Wednesday, 19 soldiers and police were killed and weapons looted.

At Agaiya on the East-West Highway, police trucks are still smouldering three days after six soldiers were killed. The highway is cratered and trees used for barricades litter the road. Buses and cars are plying again after three days, but the faces of stranded passengers wear a haunted look. There are no security forces in sight.

In a brief but fierce firefight at Khairi Khola near Kusma on Wednesday, eight APF personnel were killed. The police had taken cover on the side of the road, and were ambushed by hundreds of Maoists who ran away before a nearby army contingent arrived.

The army says the rebels have resorted to these "hit-and-run" attacks because they can't mount big raids on military bases anymore. The army has also launched pre-emptive airborne assaults in the Maoist heartland in the midwest after Dasain.

"We had intelligence they were planning a big attack, but we have been dispersing them," said one source. "That is why they are forcing our security patrols to respond to blockages on the highways."

If the rebel plan is to get the soldiers out of the security of

their barracks, it is working brilliantly. "It is known as a tactical trap," explains military strategist Indrajit Rai, a retired Indian military officer. "When the vehicle hits the mine, the soldiers are distracted and in shock, that is when they are ambushed."

In the Krishnabhir attack on Tuesday (see p 17) hundreds of Maoists ambushed an army convoy after setting off several land mines along the Prithvi Highway. Rai says the Maoists need guns and ammunition since their supply lines from India have been disrupted. "They also need to arm new recruits," he adds.

The Maoist offensive also indicates that they have abandoned the political option for now. "They failed to mobilise the people through ideological indoctrination, so they are on full military mode,"

says political analyst, Dhruva Kumar. He says the army should have expected this, and blames the high casualty on poor planning. "The security forces need to do much more work to improve intelligence," he adds.

The army says it has been able to penetrate rebel cells, especially in eastern and central Nepal (see p 7) and credit better intelligence for the Maoists' inability to launch any major frontal assault since Beni in February. The army has Indian-built mine-protected vehicles, but these are designed to withstand explosions from below, not roadside bombs planted on slopes that come from the side. ●

Editorial p2
The world is watching us

(Additional reporting by Navin Singh Khadka)

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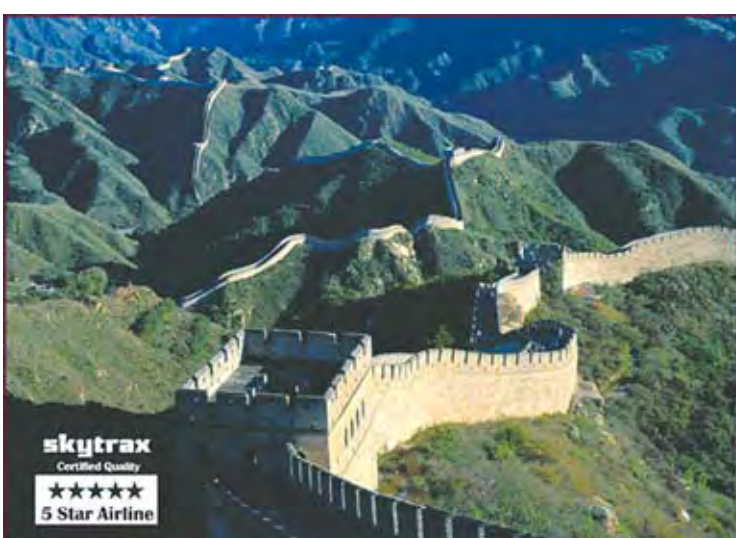
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Children are caught in the middle of this conflict. Sometimes they are abducted by Maoists and other times they are beaten by the security forces on the pretext of being Maoists. One friend was beaten senseless by the Maoists in the classroom for protesting against them. Another friend was taken by the security forces and has not been seen since. The school gave his attendance record to the officials but were not able to get him released.]

Boy, Doti

Information, freedom of thought and speech, participation

These rights are about access to information, about thinking and believing what you like, and about having your say and being heard.

The Convention says that you have the right to obtain and share information of all kinds and in all forms, as long as that information is not damaging to yourself or others. (13) Specifically, you have the right to diverse and reliable information from the mass media, especially (but fortunately not only) information aimed at your health and well-being. Television, radio, and newspapers should provide information that you can understand, and should not promote materials that could harm you. (17)

"We have to be consulted because we live our problems, and we are the ones who know the solutions." Santiago, 15, from Uruguay, speaking at the UN Special Session on Children

You have the right to freedom of thought, and to follow your chosen religion. On the other hand, your parents and guardians should guide you, taking into account your 'evolving capacities' — that is, how able you are to make decisions and understand the world around you. (14) So get those capacities evolving!

Expressing your opinions (13) is another crucial right in this group. In particular, it is your right to have your say — and be listened to — when adults are making decisions that affect you. And this should not just be lip-service. Your opinions should be taken into account, and be given 'due weight' according to your age and maturity. (12)

You also have the right to free association: that is, to get together with other children and young people and to join groups and organizations. (15)

The other day they visited our school and lectured us. I asked, "Why do you kill simple village people? Why do you ask money from farmers?" They were upset by my questions and asked my friends about me. Now the whole village knows and says, "Poor thing, now they will kill her too." I feel very sad and I am losing weight. Can you imagine how I feel?]

Girl, Gulmi

Where to start

By Kul Chandra Gautam*

UNICEF works to give every child the best possible start in life. How do we do that? We do so by working with parents and communities to give our children our love, a family, and the best care and education that we can possibly provide for them.

We try to anchor our children in a caring community, a safe, healthy and protective environment. We try to give them time to learn, play and grow.

We cannot know, in advance, what is in our children's future. And we cannot choose which child to care for. We must care for them all.

None of us expect our children to be born into an ideal world. But all of us hope for them to be born into a world that is fit for children.

Vitamin and mineral deficiency is the source of the most massive "hidden hunger" and malnutrition in the world today.

The "hidden hunger" due to micronutrient deficiency does not produce hunger as we know it. You may not feel it in the belly, but it strikes at the core of your health and vitality. It is especially damaging to human brain, learning ability and productivity.

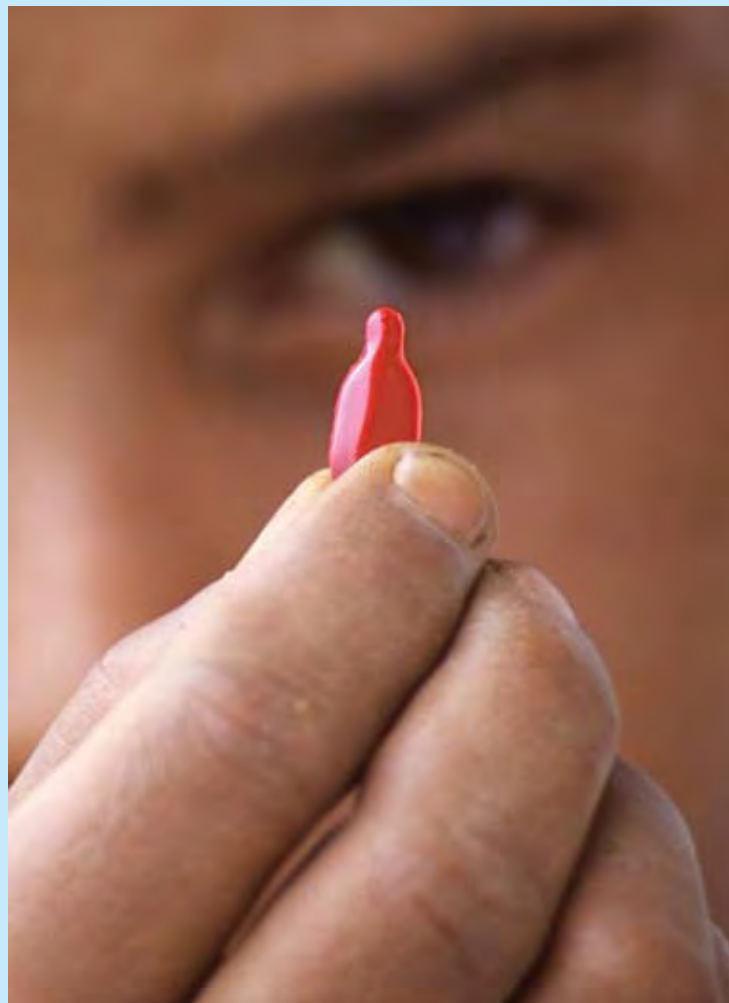
Unfortunately, the "hidden hunger" remains widespread, posing devastating threats to health, education, economic growth and indeed, to human dignity, in developing countries.

We also know today that micronutrient deficiencies are subtle and insidious. They can cause blindness and brain damage. They can induce stillbirths and abortions. They make people fatigued and lethargic.

They can make ordinary childhood diseases such as diarrhoea, malaria and measles fatal. They contribute to the high rates of maternal and child deaths.

Micronutrient deficiencies render investment in education less effective as children are unable to concentrate in their studies.

To further compound this human suffering, the economic losses attributable to micronutrient deficiencies are huge — up to 5% of the



Credit: UNICEF Nepal/2004/Chamberlain/0771

National vitamin A distributions help Nepal's children fight disease. They reduce eye problems caused by vitamin A deficiency, like not being able to see at night.

GDP of many countries.

The enormous impact of micronutrient deficiency is largely invisible. Silently, micronutrient deficiencies trap people, communities and entire countries in a cycle of poor health, poor educability, poor productivity and consequent poverty, often without the victims ever knowing the cause.

Yet we're dealing with a problem that has essentially been solved in much of the developed world, and for which there are available and affordable solutions.

We can fortify staple foods such as flour, sugar, salt, margarine or cooking oil, with essential vitamins and minerals for a few cents per person per year.

We can distribute vitamin and mineral supplements, especially to vulnerable groups such as children. A vitamin A capsule, for example, is effective for up to 6 months and costs as little as 2 cents. A three-month supply of iron tablets for pregnant women costs 20 cents.

We can ensure everyone is informed about the kinds of foods that can increase the intake and absorption of vitamins and minerals.

And we can control diseases like malaria, measles, diarrhoea, and parasitic infections, which can help the

body to absorb and retain essential vitamins and minerals.

It's all been done before, in the industrialized world. And the report shows that the technologies to do so are now so simple and so inexpensive that we can rapidly control vitamin and mineral deficiencies worldwide.

If we combine our efforts and our energy, we can have an extraordinary impact in the fight against vitamin and mineral deficiencies and achieve global progress in a way that few of us have imagined to be possible.



*Mr Gautam, UNICEF Deputy Executive Director, made these remarks during a speech in New York in March 2004 to launch the Vitamin and Mineral Deficiency Global Progress Report.



Maina's story

Grieving parents discover after eight months that their disappeared daughter is dead



ALL PICS (EXCEPT MAINA'S STUDIO PORTRAIT) : MUNA SHARMA

Clockwise from left: Maina's mother, Debi, after hearing that her daughter was killed. Maina in a posed studio picture taken last year. Bhagbati Secondary School in Kabhre's Kharelthok where Maina studied in Grade Nine. Maina's cousin, points to a picture of his sister.

MUNA SHARMA
in KABHRE

A middle-aged man and his wife were weeping outside the District Police Office in Kathmandu three months ago. We tried to console them and got caught up in a tragic story of the suffering of the innocent that is becoming increasingly familiar across Nepal today.

Purna Bahadur Sunuwar

and his wife Debi had just hit another dead end in the search of their 15-year-old daughter, Maina, who had been taken away by soldiers eight months ago. An army patrol from the Lamidanda barrack in Kabhre had arrested Maina from her home on 17 February 2004 for being a suspected Maoist.

Purna Bahadur and Debi had gone to the army base the next day only to be told that their daughter was not there.

Thus began an eight-month long ordeal for the parents as the search for their missing daughter brought them to Kathmandu. Debi refused to believe that her daughter was dead and devoutly followed all religious fasts, visiting temples in Kathmandu every day.

The Sunuwar are dalits but are fairly well-to-do in their village of Kharelthok in Kabhre. In Kathmandu, they had rented a small dark room

for Rs 700 a month in Lagan which had a kerosene stove, two pots, two plates and a bed. When we met them, their rent was already four months overdue. Driven to desperation, Purna Bahadur picked plastic bags to sell so he could feed himself and his wife.

After a story about Maina's disappearance came out in *Himal Khabarpatrika* in April, human rights organisations and the military's legal department finally took notice. Even at that time, the Royal Nepali Army's legal officers told us: "We are investigating, we can't say anything at the moment." At the same time, the family and neighbours also told human rights groups they were being harassed by local soldiers.

In September, after Maina's trail in Kathmandu went cold, we accompanied her parents to Kabhre. The Sunuwar live relatively well by rural Nepali standards in a two-storey *rato mato* house. Rats scamper away as we open the door to an upstairs room where Maina used to sleep. There is a battered tin trunk and Maina's hand bag and slippers. Debi begins to sob as she sees them. Neighbours told us they had seen Maina being taken into the barracks on the day she disappeared.

We went to the Bhagbati Secondary School nearby where Maina used to study in Grade Nine. Her classmates ran towards us as her parents approached, thinking Maina had been located. They were crestfallen when told she was still missing.

Back in Kathmandu, we

approached people we knew in the army and the administration to find out what had happened to Maina. But the more we investigated, the less hope there seemed to be that she was still alive. In the course of this investigation, we came across another 20-year-old woman from Kabhre who was detained with Maina. We can't reveal her name or her village for security reasons.

Here is a transcript of what she said: "After detaining me, they took me along because I knew where Maina lived. They made me wear combat fatigues, while they were in civilian dress. When they caught Maina, they took us in the car to the Lamidanda barrack. They handcuffed us on pine trunks and beat us continuously. I must have fainted and when I came to, I found all my clothes were torn and I was only wearing my panties. They kept me there for six days, beating me mercilessly. Then they handed me over to the police who sent me to jail." She admits she was a Maoist but says Maina wasn't. She shows us the welts and cuts on her thighs and hands.

Four months ago, Purna Bahadur and Debi still hadn't given up hope about finding their daughter and were getting ready to go on a hunger strike in Kathmandu. Just before Dasain, the Royal Nepali Army finally admitted officially that their daughter was dead. ●

See also: 'A climate of intense fear' (Nepali Times #217).

Maina's story was included in the Human Rights Watch report, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place* released last month. It was also broadcast in a documentary on the German-French ARTE TV on 20 October.

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Polarity vs plurality

Intolerance and extremism are two sides of the same coin

During a presentation on the current situation in Nepal in New York recently, a representative from the International Crisis Group accurately depicted the

GUEST COLUMN
Dipta Shah



political polarisation in Nepal. Moderate elements in the political spectrum are being sidelined by a radical leftist insurgency, which in turn, has facilitated the re-emergence of a counterbalancing extreme right-

wing reaction.

The so-called middle ground (normally occupied by vibrant mainstream parties and democratic forces) is presently a leadership-void that consists of embers from a dying anti-regression movement, haunted by its own past of corrupt and unethical politics. Needless to say, the implications of this widening vacuum and leadership crisis on Nepal's long-term political outlook, are alarming.

As the polarisation sets in, there is a

concurrent trend in Nepal to misclassify individuals into one extreme camp or the other, based on some inclination of the individual's political creed. Since the definition of an 'absolute middle' is arbitrary, the concept of neutrality is equally obscure. Given the prevalent climate of fear and distrust (both contributors to extremism), moderate conservatives and liberals alike, are

categorised as extremists in their respective camps.

A direct manifestation of this undemocratic tendency is the deplorable human rights situation in Nepal. Another manifestation is the suppression of moderate voices which are intentionally inundated by extremist propaganda, rhetoric and counter-rhetoric. The result is further polarisation, increased extremism and the consolidation of a deadly cycle that breeds on its own decay of mistrust, misinformation and the erosion of democratic principles.

Although the oldest and dirtiest trick around, feeble attempts at skirting the issue have gained momentum in Nepali politics. When placed in a questionable position, the easiest, most cowardly response is always to deflect attention away from the guilty party by making some baseless accusa-

THE WORLD IS WATCHING US

There is an idiosyncratic Nepali trait: if we don't look at something we think it's not there. A pedestrian will run across the highway not looking at a bus he knows is coming straight at him. Or we think that if we ignore a problem it won't bother us. Shopkeepers litter the sidewalks right outside their pasals, even though it is putting off customers. Families chuck trash into the street below because out of sight is out of mind.

So we will endure rotting refuse right on our doorstep, tolerate injustice and accept wrong even if it is not in our own longterm interests. The fatalism of Nepal's dominant caste has been a subject of sociological and anthropological studies ever since Dor Bahadur Bista's seminal work, *Fatalism and Development*. But today the fatalism is combined dangerously with a millenarian belief in a saviour, the knight in shining armour who will come and rescue us and deliver us into a new dawn.

Well, things don't work that way in the real world. A political resolution will not just happen, peace will not land on our laps. The people have to vent their outrage and demand from the self-appointed rulers of both extremist politics that they end their power struggle. They have to put moral pressure on the political parties to first unite among themselves, then unite with the king and finally negotiate with the rebels for an acceptable exit strategy.

Traditionally tolerant and historically apathetic, we have allowed others to determine our destiny, accepting the outcome as our karma in this life. But the brief period after 1990 when we were allowed to freely chose local and national leaders has whetted our appetite for freedom.

If the government spokesman's purported remarks about a return to authoritarianism was a trial balloon, it was quickly pricked. We now know that the future is not written in the stars, it is shaped by the decisions and informed choices we make today.

We are no longer a forbidden hermit kingdom. The world is watching us and the world is worried: about the conflict spreading and setting fire to neighbourhood, about extra-judicial killings and disappearances, and about the unprecedented hardships and misery faced by Nepalis. They want to help, but international law requires us to ask them first.

Nepal's donors are relying less and less on diplomatic niceties these days. They want to revisit the commitments made at the Nepal Development Forum to see if resources aren't being fungified. They are egging the government to make public the auditor general's report which has been stuck three years in a row. Even Nepal's staunchest allies are aghast at the human rights situation here.

We need national indignation to pressure our rulers to muster the political will for peace. So far, all we see is a willingness to drag on the war.



LETTERS

IT'S NOT OVER

Daniel Lak's observations in his column Here and There ('It's over', #220) about the recent US presidential elections and the triumph of democracy, despite the Bush administration's numerous misdeeds, are sharp and correct as usual. I wonder when we will be able to say the same about Nepal!

Saurav Jung Thapa,
Amherst, USA

● As Daniel Lak says in 'Leaving in droves' (#221) maybe Americans should not abandon America just because their man lost. If they really believe in democracy, they will stay in America and try to reform it. But until there is a genuine visionary alternative to Bushite neo-cons (and not wishy-washy flip-flopers like Kerry) I'm afraid America is going to be even more fundamentalist.

M Arif, email

SISTERS THREE

This refers to 'Sisters three' (#220) by Sampada Malla. I write to say that there's a missing link in the chain of Park Galleries established by the late Rama Nanda Joshi. The late Joshi also

had his gallery on the ground floor of the then Park Restaurant building at Ratna Park. Hence the name of his salon, Park. In 1967, we Casino Nepal staff used to gather at Ratna Park for our shuttle bus in the evening and went in to talk with Joshi Dai in his showroom and studio. Perhaps the gallery was there well before its street front became our rendezvous every evening. Then the Park Gallery was relocated to his tole, perhaps his own ancestral house, in Pulchok quite close to and across the old Patan Damkal. I hope this information fits in the chronological order of Rama Nanda Joshi's three Park Galleries, and not only the two described in the story. That between the 'Park' Galleries at Lazimpat and Pulchok, there was the actual one befitting the name because it was located at the Park Restaurant/Ratna Park itself.

Peter J Karthak, Kopundole

PIECE CORE

Re: 'We shall return' (#221). On 22 November it will be 41 years since the assassination of US president John F Kennedy. I'm an American old enough to have heard Kennedy's speech (on black and white TV) calling for a Peace

Corps in 1962. I've had friends in the Peace Corps, and almost thought of joining myself, until I investigated the daunting and demeaning selection process. It would have cost me thousands of dollars to even apply. I'm sorry that the present US administration thinks it has to cut and run from Nepal. I don't think that the Peace Corps will return to Nepal...not in this lifetime. This has more to do with ending 'liberal' programs and increase spending on violence and war than concern for the people. Myself, I have launched my own 'Piece Core' and anyone can join for nothing! There is no bureaucracy, all you need is a bicycle, and a strong heart/mind to

join us on our peace pilgrimage to Mt Kailas next year. Kennedy would have endorsed such an effort. Om shanti.

FA Hutchison
www.cyclingpeace.org

DEEP BREATH

I fully endorse the Indian sage, Ravi Shankar's advice to the Maoists ('Maoists need breathing exercises', #221). Their revolution has a major flaw, it relies on violence as the means to an end. Violence breeds violence, and they will not be able to control the monster they have unleashed. Armed struggle is also morally repugnant because it involves killing fellow human being, and

fellow Nepalis. Who gives them the right to kill people? Mao? Marx? Only the creator can destroy, only god can take life. The Maoists are earning a lot of bad karma for destroying the country, and ultimately they will self-destruct because they have taken the path of violence.

Guru Thapa, Mumbai

CORRECTIONS

Tulsiram Upadhyay was mistakenly attributed to a quote in Sharad KC's 'Taxed to death' (#221) from Surkhet. In the box item ('Ambushed child') accompanying the same article, the family of Jay Chandra were reported to be displaced from Humla, they are actually from Mugu.



tion that causes doubt over the legitimacy of the party initiating the skepticism.

Faced with this, the responsible reaction would be for those who feel victimised by unwarranted accusations to publicly refute and attempt to redeem themselves. This is the very essence of democratic discourse, a display of facts that allow the public to arrive at their own conclusions. However, more often than not perpetrators of the abuse of authority find absolute solace in their ability to simply shift the scrutiny onto those who expose systemic weaknesses.

Unfortunately, for those who cower in the shadows of their own misdeeds, weak attempts at deflecting the guilt of their inadequacies tend to backfire. A cardinal rule in diplomacy is to never make threats (via attempted character assassinations or otherwise), in the absence of moral grounds and credibility with which to back up the threat. It is precisely because this tenet is repeatedly ignored in Nepal's politics, that those who break them are just as easily exposed.

For would-be politicians, civil servants (or any fair-weathered fans of democracy), hiding behind their guilt-ridden pasts, shame on them for engaging in acts of such pettiness. These are the corrupt and morally destitute that hide behind a façade of democratic solidarity, while serving to propagate anti-democratic practices. Hypocrites like these brand others and further polarise society to avoid public scrutiny themselves.

It is in direct contravention of established democratic norms and practices to malign individuals based on their supposed political orientation. Lying to the 'left' of an arbitrary 'middle' does not make a person a Maoist. Similarly, being 'right' of the same centre line does not make another a monarchist, an autocrat or a dictator.

For those who perceive the application of the terms 'rightist' or 'leftist' in Nepali discourse as forms of denigration, it is time for a lesson in the meaning of a fundamental democratic norm: tolerance. ●

A blast from the past

Mohammad Mohsin hasn't unlearned the mental habits of the Panchayat

The contagion of foot in the mouth disease is spreading. Nepal's de facto premier Mohammad Mohsin last week warned a group of editors and publishers of leading

STATE OF THE STATE
CK Lal



newspapers in Kathmandu that an "authoritarian regime" was in store for Nepal if the current government failed to do what it was formed to do. Although the venerable editors and publishers gave the remark varying degrees of prominence in the next day's papers, the disinformation minister's remarks sent shockwaves that are still reverberating.

In interviews since, Minister Mohsin has appeared to retract a part of his statement, using the excuse that those who hold high office often resort to when there is an uproar: he accused the media of misquoting him.

What he said he meant by an "authoritarian regime" was that there was a risk of Maoist authoritarianism spreading in case his coalition of the willing is undermined. Even if that is true, Maoists already don't mind calling themselves 'totalitarian', so to refer to them as 'authoritarian' is giving them a certain degree of respectability the insurgents haven't even asked for.

Mohsin is echoing Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's conviction that the salvation of the present government lies in holding some kind of election at any cost. That cost may have to be paid by the people and not the politicians in Singha Darbar. Mohsin thinks there may be problems in getting the election machinery rolling and seems determined to make those problems a self-fulfilling prophecy. After all, his boss got sacked last time around because he couldn't hold polls. This time the strategy seems to be: to be seen to be trying one's best to

organise polls.

The fault is not Mohsin's and Deuba's alone. King Gyanendra laid the groundwork for the present political predicament by saying in a television interview two years ago that he did not want to be an "active" monarch but a "creative" one. He went on to tell a gathering in Nepalganj in February that the days were over when the monarchy is "seen but not heard... watching the people's difficulties but not addressing them and being a silent spectator to their tear-stained faces".

When royalspeak is about a certain kind of days being over, we must accept the statement at face value. But in the two years since October Fourth we have seen an era of revolving door governments, of nominated nobodies with neither real authority nor any apparatus for democratic answerability.

Minister Mohsin is an interesting example of a politician without popular base forced to survive in all kinds of extreme situations on the strength of his wits alone. He was one of the interpreters of the authoritarian ideology of the Panchayat, an experimental political system with the king as an active leader of the people. The experiment lasted over three decades before it collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions. But aparchiks like Mohsin are yet to unlearn the mental habits of Panchayat which makes them run to the palace at the slightest hint of a crisis.

Mohsin must have realised by now that he is stuck with a thankless and dead-end job. And he can't mask the current anti-democratic drift by disingenuously warning of a lurking risk of authoritarianism. It takes enormous courage to look back with detachment and admit that you have spent all your life justifying the unjust. But there comes a time when all of us have to face the mirror and come to terms with our own fallibility. Mohammad Mohsin is an erudite man, and he must know that such a time has arrived. ●



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WAVE The Himalayan PEPSI

The government faces a tough UN resolution unless it agrees to international human rights monitoring by March

International (ir)resolution

MANJUSHREE THAPA



HRW

This week, several international human rights organisations met in Geneva to begin assessing Nepal's progress on human rights in anticipation of the 61st annual meeting of the UN Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR) in March 2005.

The Swiss government had wanted to table an Item 9 resolution last March, but keen diplomacy on the part of the Nepali government and backdoor lobbying by the American and Indian governments, had helped avert this. Nepal got a mere knuckle-rap in the concluding chairperson's statement, which condemned the Maoists' indiscriminate violence and appealed to the government to strengthen its efforts to ensure fundamental rights.

Human rights activists feel strongly that a resolution is justified this time, as state and Maoist violations have increased since March. Hanging in the balance next March is the credibility of the OHCHR in Nepal.

After the chairperson's statement, the OHCHR deputed a senior human rights advisor and two international advisors to Nepal last summer. They are working to strengthen training, monitoring and reporting within the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and also to finalise a memorandum of understanding between the

government and the OHCHR on international monitoring of the commission's work.

Yet there is some disquiet among activists regarding the OHCHR's work here, and concern that it may have allowed the government to water down the original MOU, which called for extensive international monitoring. David Johnson, OHCHR's senior human rights advisor, confirms that the MOU has been revised to limit the number of international advisors to five, and place them under Nepali authority.

"This is not UN monitoring," he says. "It is national monitoring." He maintains that international monitoring would have been impracticable: "UN staff second to the NHRC would need UN security permission to move around, which might not always be forthcoming. Or maybe the UN security mechanism might decide to withdraw its staff. The NHRC wouldn't have control over international monitors."

Though Johnson says that the NHRC has agreed to these revisions — and has in October launched the UN's global support project to the international community, acknowledging as much — NHRC members, when contacted for confirmation, say that they do not know of any final agreement. The MOU, they say, is still shuttling back between the OHCHR and the government, and they have only heard rumours

Paying the price It's high time the Nepali people were asked what they wanted

What price peace? This can be an infamous backdrop to warmongering but it's also a crucial question to ask at almost every stage in a conflict.

In Nepal, the last ceasefire between the Maoists and Kathmandu broke down because the government of the day,

HERE AND THERE
Daniel Lak



closely allied with the Royal

Palace and the Royal Nepali Army, thought the notion of a constituent assembly too threatening to the future of monarchy. Whatever they may say, the Maoists are not monarchists. Some form of republic is their ultimate goal.

So the last government allowed peace to collapse, arguably even collaborating in the atrocity at Doramba in 2003, because the monarchy was seen as too high a price to pay. War crimes may not be too vivid a description of the massacre of unarmed people at Doramba, and this is a chicken that will come home to roost. But the thinking was that constitutional monarchy was more important than peace.

Now things may just be different. Nepal's long decline has continued unabated, even under a more broad-based

government with clear participation across, say, 75 percent of the political spectrum. The word 'peace' is uttered daily by ministers, monarch, media and probably every other citizen of the kingdom. Yet war is unabated and the tunnel has no end, let alone a light. Committees, conflict resolution seminars and candlelight vigils urging peace at any cost are weak gruel alongside bloodshed and lives permanently altered by violence.

So what price peace? Surely this is the question of the moment and not just for the government or the occupant of the throne. Nor do guerrilla groups, however successful and well-organised, have the right to dictate terms. The Maoists are a

player here and will never be victorious enough to call all the shots. So too, India, the main regional power, and Nepal's many friends in the wider world. They can call for calm until they're blue in their national faces. It simply doesn't wash.

The final arbiter on all of this has to be the Nepali people, that much abused and misrepresented group. They must have a voice. And the time is ripe for it to be heard. Just examine the international precedents that are so relevant right now. The United Nations and Washington spared no expense to organise what appear to have been successful elections in Afghanistan.

The same uneasy alliance is moving

heaven and earth and shedding a lot of blood to let the Iraqi people be heard in January.

I for one think the vote will go ahead in Iraq and the result will both vindicate some of America's behaviour in the country and alarm those in Washington who fear political Islam.

Billions upon billions have been poured into war ravaged lands to let peoples' voices still the clamour of violence. Serbia, East Timor, Cambodia in the 1990s, Guatemala; all these troubled places have used a whiff of democracy to divert energies and establish a voice at the international table. I would argue that Nepal is better placed to consult its citizens than any of those countries and let there be no artificial limits to distract from the main question.

What price peace? Will it cost a monarchy? Will it mean that Mao is well and truly dead? Will it mean UN mediation, a regional force to deal with holdouts? A truth and reconciliation effort? War crimes investigations?

Economic development on a grand scale and an arms embargo? It's not my call, it's not the king's, neither G P Koirala's nor Comrade Prachanda's.

No, this is a matter for the people of Nepal and it's high time they were asked for their opinion. ●



MIN BAJRACHARYA

about changes made to its latest draft.

This kind of confusion has led to widespread speculation that the OHCHR has bowed to the government, which has consistently tried to undermine the NHRC. Lawyer Mandira Sharma says such misgivings may stem from simple procedural confusions, because the revised MOU remains unavailable for wide public scrutiny and discussion. "Nepali civil society has no idea what they contain," she says. "And this secrecy has sown mistrust."

But Satish Kharel, former Secretary of the Nepal Bar Association, says that the OHCHR's very terms here restrict it. "The senior human rights advisor works under the UNDP," he says. "And the UNDP cannot cross the national government and administration. Were the OHCHR's mandate independent, they could play a proactive role in protecting human rights. They can't do that as UNDP employees."

Critics maintain that while the UNDP's relationship with the government tends to be of uncritical support, it is incumbent on the OHCHR—given the country's poor human rights records—to establish a

more bracing and dynamic relationship.

Several UN interagency missions have deemed that Nepal's human rights crisis has the potential to develop into a humanitarian crisis. Johnson worries about reports that local units of the security forces are pressured to report high body counts to prove their victory over the Maoists. "Their stated goal is to win the hearts and minds of the people," he says. "But we've heard the Maoists say that their best recruitment campaigns take place after the security forces come to the villages. The security forces are so abusive that they drive people into the ranks of the Maoists."

On the Maoists' side, the policy of forced abduction and indoctrination, including of children, also worries him. "Children can be extremely brutal, see things in black or white, do or die," he says. "The nature of the movement becomes more intense. You end up with young people who know nothing but brutality. And it becomes very difficult to stop this or rehabilitate these children." This, he says, is a new and frightening phase for the country.

Johnson believes that the

government would benefit from more UN special procedures: "Having worked in many countries closely with the military and police, we in the UN, know that human rights are not an obstacle to their work."

It is not up to the OHCHR staff, but to its member states, to table resolutions at its annual meetings. The Geneva-based International Committee of Jurists' legal advisor Ian Seiderman says human rights activists are hoping that next March, the EU will take the lead in this: "While the Swiss did a good job last year getting what they did in the form of the chairperson's statement, they do not carry the same political and diplomatic clout that the EU does."

Seiderman adds that if the government delays international monitoring to the NHRC, an Item 9 resolution may be warranted. "But if by March the MOU is in place and OHCHR monitors are arriving in Nepal, then an item 19 resolution would be appropriate." Item 19 resolutions are reserved for countries that have improved their human rights records and have requested technical assistance.

How the international community responds next March is now set to become a test of its resolve—or irresolution—on Nepal's human rights crisis. Observers say that the US, India, UK and EU bear an especially heavy burden, given their major, even decisive, role. ●

Holland-Himalaya film festival

The annual Himalaya Film Festival held in Amsterdam 6-7 November attracted 1,750 visitors over a two-day period. Nearly 50 films from the Himalayan region were screened, including conflict documentaries by Mohan Mainali and Nepathya's quest for the origins of the folk song, *Bheda ko oon jasto*, in search of a song. Some of the jury members were Nabin Subba, director of *Numafung*, Danish anthropologist Ditte Marie Seeberg and Dutch filmmaker Dirk J Nijland. Mainali also delivered a lecture on 'Democracy in Undemocratic Nepal: An Eternal Source of Violent Conflict'.



Nepali participants at the festival

Fasting for health

A Nepali student in the Philippines led several high school students around the world on a two-day fast to help raise money for a health post in Mugu. Following an international call for help by Help Nepal Network (HeNN), Suvayu Pant studying in Grade 12 at the International School in Manila took the lead and campaigned in association with the South Asian Cultural Club of the school to hold the charity event.

Along with Suvayu, Ayat Ali of Philippines, Daniel Johnson of Canada, Mark De Sousa of South Africa, Venessa Yung of Hong Kong and Cassie Vergel of China participated in the fast. The health post in Mugu was built in part with Help Nepal Network (HeNN), a global charity of the Nepali diaspora. www.helpnepal.net/suvayu.html

NSET awarded

The Nepali earthquake damage mitigation group, National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET) has been awarded this year's Tech Museum Award given in the Microsoft Education Award category for its low-tech innovation called the 'shake table'. The technology has been demonstrated in Iran, India, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Japan over the last six years and will be put up at the Tech Museum at Silicon Valley. The Tech Museum Awards honour innovators and visionaries around the world who apply technology to improve human condition in education, equality, environment, health and economic development. This year, more than 580 nominations were received from 80 countries and NSET was selected for the Best of the Best category in technological innovation.

INTER-CULTURAL FILM SOCIETY

shows this film-program on Sunday, 21st November 2004

in Nepal Tourism Board, Bhrikuti Mandap, Kathmandu.

TANVIR MOKAMMEL TRILOGY

Three films by the well-known film-maker from Bangladesh, Tanvir Mokammel. Please note that the first film starts at 2.00 pm, the second at 3.15 pm and the third at 5.30 pm

A TALE OF JAMUNA RIVER

Jamuna River documentary, 2002 start at 2.00 pm

a journey-film and shot with an open mind, the film-unit recorded what they had experienced on their journey in one of the widest and world's most fascinating rivers - the Jamuna.

LALSALU

"A tree without roots"

2001 after a novel by Syed Waliullah, 1948 start at 3.15 pm

This is the story of Majid, a Mullah, who suddenly appears in a village and creates a holy shrine above a grave belonging to a great saint as he declares to the simple villagers. Over time he becomes one of the village leaders and starts dominating people all in the name of religion.

ACHIN PAKHI

"The Unknown Bard" documentary, 1996 start at 5.30 pm

Bauls are the troubadours of Bengal. With their mystic songs and inimitable lifestyle, bauls are a very special sect. As a song-composer, Lalon Fakir's (? - 1890) position among the bauls is unique. Even hundred years after his death, Lalon still has immense popularity. This is a biographical documentary on Lalon.

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

The Royal Norwegian Embassy is seeking a local staff member. The staff member will be involved in different parts of the Embassy's work - partly be advising in relation to the development co-operation where Norway focus upon primary education, energy and good governance and partly in relation to the political developments in Nepal. Analytical skills and an ability to work well within a team will be required in addition to:

- ◆ Nepali nationality
- ◆ University graduate, Master's Degree in social/political science
- ◆ Excellent spoken and written skills in Nepali and English
- ◆ Good general knowledge of Nepali political/bureaucratic system/traditions
- ◆ At least five years recent relevant working experience
- ◆ Computer literate (M/S Word, Excel, etc.)

Please submit copies of bio-data and references within the 1st of December to the Embassy. Forwarded applications and documents will not be returned.

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Divided, they stand

Despite this week's highway ambushes, the Maoists are in some disarray

From Kathmandu to the eastern hills and down to the tarai, there are increasing indications that all is not well with the Maoists' legendary control and unity.

Factionalism, desertions and disharmony in the ranks are much more rife than it appears on the surface. The Maoists themselves admit that frequent arrests and killings of their leaders in the past year have affected activities in central and eastern Nepal.

The most significant recent arrest was of Sadhuram Debkota (alias Comrade Prashant) who took over as head of the Valley Command after Kumar Dahal was arrested in Patna in June.

Prashant had established a strong Maoist presence in the city by terrorising those he was extorting. The Maoist leadership was impressed with how he has been able to revive the rebel presence in the capital despite heavy security crackdowns.

Prashant had just returned to the capital on 28 October after a three-week visit outside the valley, and was preparing to leave for his new assignment in eastern Solukhumbu-Okhaldhunga. There has been tension between the central leadership and the Valley Command over extortion money collected from businesses in Kathmandu.

But there seems to be more to Prashant's arrest than meets the eye:

- He was casually arrested in a busy area of Bhote Bahal and



Comrade Prashant Head of the Kathmandu Valley command was captured on 4 November

about Maoist arrests and defy court orders, this time they flashed the news to media within half-an-hour.

- The Maoists have been strangely silent, usually they release a statement strongly condemning detentions.
- Prashant was arrested with Keshab Prasad Kandel who the UML says is its party member and wants him released.

Army sources say it retrieved a computer, mobile phone and other documents with valuable information about senior Maoist leaders and the underground party's activities in the valley.

Prashant is originally from Phujel VDC in Gorkha. He is 28, and was studying Electronic Engineering at Balaju Technical Institute while he was district chairman of the Maoist student wing. He was moved to Kathmandu from the Dhading, Nuwakot and Sindupalchok regional committee.

The Maoists have also recently lost central adviser Comrade Dirgha, the 70-year-old minister of the Magarant Autonomous Region. He along with three other regional leaders were killed on 11 October in Juluke of Argakhanchi while on their way to attend a meeting in Kapilbastu. Army sources say information on Dirgha's whereabouts was provided by a female guerrilla captured after she sprained her ankle while fleeing.

only a handful of soldiers were sent to track him down, usually for someone of his seniority there would have been bigger bandobast.

- Usually the army keeps quiet

What this shows is that the Maoists generally appear strong because of the security forces and the government machinery are not present. If they were, the Maoists would be forced to restrict their movement only within their strongholds.

In the eastern tarai, the Maoists have seen a rash of corruption incidents, desertions and degeneration into warlordism. Some have disappeared after collecting revolutionary taxes. The party's Parsa secretary, Shiv Chandra Kushwaha (alias Comrade Jamin), was banished to a labour camp in the hills for not being transparent about his accounts. He probably didn't get a more severe punishment because of his role in the landmine attack that killed 12 policemen near Birganj in July.

In Rautahat, platoon commander Shambhu Yadab (Comrade Ajay) was accused of misappropriating party funds and has defected. On 22 July, he abandoned the party and started his own Madhesi Tiger group. On 25 July, Jay Krishna Goit from Saptari abandoned the Maoist-affiliated Madhesi National Liberation Front and started his own Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morcha which has been threatening non-Madhesi government employees to quit their jobs. Goit told us he now has his own "liberation army", and there are fears this might

spark off an ethnic conflict.

In the urban tarai, Maoist activities have been reduced a great deal after the arrest of top members of the Maoists' Special Task Force in Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari. The army says it has collected valuable intelligence on Maoist operations in the east. For example, it knows that the Mechi-Koshi 18 Battalion, 'D' company has 160 fighters and is armed with limited numbers of assorted captured rifles. Two central members Sher Man Kunwar (Comrade Bishal) and Mohan Chandra Gautam were killed in Siraha by the army last month.

Ram Bahadur Thapa (Comrade Badal) has taken over the Maoist Eastern Command after Mohan Baidya (Comrade Kiran) was arrested in Siliguri in June. Even so, there has been no improvement and the Maoists have taken these setbacks seriously. Recently, they held a strategy meeting to change district commanders and area in-charges.

The army itself has been adding muscle at the Eastern Brigade Headquarters in Itahari by increasing its troop strength of 12,000 by another 3,000. Brigadier General Pradip Pratap Bam told us in the past year and half, 36 new army bases have been added and 20 more are planned. •

Reports by Dambar Krishna Shrestha in Dharan, Chandra Kishor in Birganj, Ram Prasad Pudasaini in Kathmandu and Bishnu Prasad Ghimire in Arghakhanchi.

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NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

If you haven't read the fine print, here it is:

- A three-minute call from a pre-paid phone to a post-paid phone is nearly 38 times more expensive than a call between two fixed lines at non-peak hours.
- The call you could make on a landline for Rs 1.30 can cost Rs 24 if you called a land phone using a pre-paid mobile phone.
- If a friend calls you between 10PM and 6AM, the receiving call in your post or pre-paid phone is free but the caller ends up paying for every minute even if a

Phony business

Do you know you are paying through your nose for phone calls?

land phone is used.

Most telephone users think that since there are more phone services to choose from, the prices have gone down. Not true. In fact, the variety of services have thrown up a bewildering array of tariffs and price structures which most consumers aren't even aware of.

"I got the shock of my life when I got my first bill," says Gopal Lama, a driver who stood in line for two days to get a pre-paid SIM card earlier this year. Lama has now sold it to a friend. He just can't afford to use it.

Most consumers are so happy with the status symbol of a new mobile phone that they aren't even aware they are being ripped off. Most don't bother to find out the price of calls, the times they are cheaper and the astronomical mark-ups when using pre-paid cards.

But that's OK. Even the Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTA), is not sure if Nepal Telecom's mobile tariffs are justified. The government regulator allowed Nepal Telecom (recently turned into a company) to fix charges to get a 25 percent return on its annual investment. The trouble is NTA is not able to monitor whether its own rules are being followed and Nepal Telecom hasn't

reported cost and investment details. "We are still waiting for Telecom's reports," admits NTA spokesman Kailash Neupane. "We have time and again questioned them about pricing methods and asked them to reduce tariffs."

The Authority has received complaints about high phone costs from consumer groups. A group of lawyers recently demanded that NTA remove the 30 percent pricing difference between pre-paid and post-paid services. The NTA simply forwarded the demand to Nepal Telecom and that was that.

When asked, Nepal Telecom justified its high costs saying it used to subsidise fixed line costs from surcharges on international calls. But when income from international calls plummeted worldwide, it was forced to transfer the surcharge to mobile users. "We had no choice," explains Nepal Telecom's Managing Director, Sugat Ratna Kansakar. "But our mobile phone tariffs are still cheaper than those of Singapore and some South

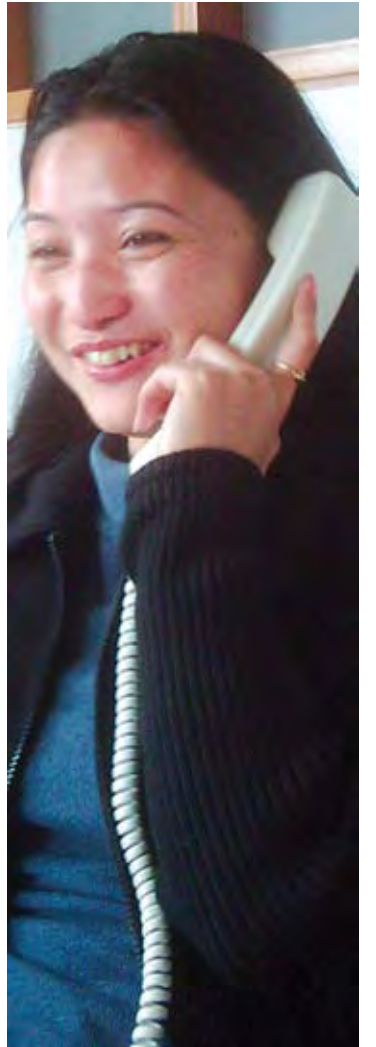
Asian countries."

But should differences in tariff of fixed and mobile lines be so wide? Why should a pre-paid mobile user calling a post-paid phone pay 38 times more than the price of a call between two landline phone sets? And why can't our local calls be as rock-bottom cheap as in India, where deregulation has benefitted consumers?

Kansakar says the difference grew after Telecom reduced the cost of local calls: "We reduced landline costs to promote internet use in Nepal."

As in India, the price of mobile services could go down with more competitors in the market. The government has deregulated the telecommunication sector and the Indian joint-venture Spice Telecom is getting ready to start with new investors after a two-year delay.

"Once there are other operators, the prices of mobile phones will certainly go down," says NR Mokhariwale, chief of United Telecom Limited (UTL) which last year



launched phone services in Kathmandu Valley with its 'wireless local loop' technology. (see interview, p 9)

While consumers wait for prices to fall, it would help if they analysed the pricing structure of the phone service they have. Consumers, for instance, don't even know that there is a budget call scheme through Nepal Telecom to call any country in the world for only Rs 25 per minute.

We put it to Nepal Telecom that consumers may not be aware because it hasn't told them about it. Kansakar says public awareness is a problem. He admits: "Perhaps our publicity has not been enough." ●

Type of call	8AM-6PM (call charge Nrs)	10PM-6AM
Local to local call	1.27 per 2 mins	1.27 per 8 mins
Local line to post-paid	5.08 per 2 mins	10.16 per 8 mins
Local to pre-paid call	5.80 per 2 mins	10.16 per 8 mins
Post-paid to local	9.16 per 2 mins	14.44 per 8 mins
Pre-paid to local	11.88 per 2 mins	47.52 per 8 mins
Post-paid to pre-paid	10.68 per 2 mins	36.64 per 8 mins
Pre-paid to post-paid	13.14 per 2 mins	47.52 per 8 mins



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Smart cards

Smart Choice Technology (SCT) has signed up Krishi Premura (KP), a Hongkong-based money transfer company, as an associate member of SCT Network. KP will ride on Laxmi Bank's affiliation with the network and arrange for ATM cards to be issued to its clients. A tripartite agreement was signed between SCT Laxmi Bank and KP on 6 November. Laxmi Bank has been issuing ATM/Debit cards accepted all across the network of SCT, which provides the technology, business process and services infrastructure to support financial transactions through Automated Teller Machines (ATM) and Point of Sale (PoS) terminals. SCT currently has eight member banks with a few more expected to join in. This new service will benefit Nepalis who receive remittances from abroad. KP will be able to provide customers with pre-paid ATM cards, in lieu of the remittances they receive from abroad. These customers will have access to SCT's network of over 26 ATMs all over Nepal. KP will have cards automatically 're-charged' when fresh remittances are received. Apart from ease of operation, remittance cards provide greater security to beneficiaries. Introduction of remittance cards is expected to bring about a whole new dimension to the vibrant remittance business and help channel more remittances into Nepal through legal channels.

"Privatising telecom is win-win"

NR Mokhariwale is the Chief Executive Officer of the Indian telecom joint venture UTL which pioneered wireless local loop (WLL) technology in the Kathmandu Valley and made it possible for customers to bypass long queues for landlines from Nepal Telecom. Mokhariwale tells us about UTL's plans for expansion and prospects of phone tariffs coming down.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Nepali Times: What has been the response to your services in Kathmandu?

I would like to thank our customers for the overwhelming response to our services. The number of customers are certainly not up to our expectations due to delay in launch of our handheld terminals which are easier to carry.

Any expansion plans?

Initially we set up our network with deployment of 14 BTSs to cover Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur. In view of the high demand from the outskirt areas and the formation of two new municipalities of Thimi and Kirtipur in Kathmandu Valley, we recently added 11 more BTSs. Since our license covers services in the entire country, we will be expanding our services to other cities also.

Will you introduce other services besides WLL?

Apart from providing the WLL telephones, we are offering international lease circuits including provisioning of Internet bandwidth from level one Internet switches. We have also started providing ISD services by establishing a satellite earth station and an international gateway switch. Furthermore, we are planning to provide ISDN connectivity to corporate users/ business houses and E1 connectivity to Internet Service Providers.

There are reception complaints about WLL sets.

UTL has deployed latest CDMA 2000 1x technology which provides superior quality voice by optimal usage of available frequency spectrum.

Is competition going to get stiffer after deregulation in the telecom sector?

The launch of UTL was already the beginning of competition in telecommunications in the country. Hte opening up of the telecom sector is a win-win situation for all: incumbent operator, new operators, overall economy of the country and most importantly for the consumers.

But will prices go down?

Certainly. And there will be an improvement in the quality of service and customer interface. After UTL started ISD services through its own gateway, prices came down by as much as 70 percent. Calls to the Middle East which used to cost Rs 90 per minute are now down to Rs 25.

Should mobile phones be necessarily more expensive than the landlines? What is the basis of fixing the tariff?

Pricing primarily depends on the volumes. In most of the developed and few developing countries, the number of mobile customers have overtaken the number of fixed lines. With increasing numbers the rates will certainly come down.

Open skies, closed minds

Domestic airlines and airports reflect the state of the nation



Necon's ATR at Pokhara airport during happier days.

KUNDA DIXIT

Skeptics of free market and reforms now have a good excuse. The implementation of the government's open skies policy that began more than a decade ago has not really resulted in better customer service. While you may argue that airports are still managed by the government, it is to blame for the poor service of private

Of course one does not know how much security and safety has been compromised. For example, this Beed observes how flight attendants deal with mothers carrying infants in a private airline in India vis-à-vis a private airline in Nepal.

Rest of the world: the nervous mother of the wailing baby is briefed on how to handle seat belts or tackle air pressure during take-off and landing. Nepal: mother of wailing baby is totally ignored and made to fend for herself. None of the private airlines believe in assigned seats and seem to enjoy the chaos this creates. Maybe, the intention is to give the hundred people inside a plane the exact experience of a bus ride to Banepa at rush hour.

With domestic airlines catering to tourists, the logic would be to have some English speaking ground staff. But ground handling is worse than air handling. What happened? Our service industry was supposed to be of international standard.

A deregulated airline industry functions best when the government oversees the maintenance of standards and growth. In the United States, the land of the biggest airlines and largest global air travel

share, a strong Federal regulator has ensured that safety is not compromised and the customer gets the best options both in terms of products and price. In Nepal, a weak regulator has allowed private airlines to do as they please. The closure of once high-fliers like Necon has shown the the 'take the money and run' attitude is prevalent in the private sector.

The performance of private operators in the airline business has given anti-globalisation and anti-reform lobbyists reasons to dissuade government businesses from opening up. The less said about airport management the better. While millions are collected through airport tax every year, there is minimal investment in upgrading facilities.

The commotion of having passengers of 100-seater jets trying to get through counters, security, ramp buses and boarding procedures made for a 15-seater aircraft is aptly symbolic of the state of Nepal. The public non-address system, non-existent baggage handling, and the general attitude of staff that passengers should be grateful they have a seat is symbolic of the failure of deregulation. ●

arthabeed@yahoo.com

ECONOMIC SENSE Artha Beed



players. Reforms without regulation can be worse.

Ten years ago, we compared the inefficiencies of the state owned airlines of India and Nepal. We should today have been in a position to compare the efficiencies of private airlines, but we aren't.

In India, the flying public is pampered both in terms of quality and price. In Nepal, airline owners have pampered themselves at the cost of the consumer (*See also: Under My Hat, 'Royal Uneconomic Class' #214*). Gone are the smart-looking people behind the counter, the courtesy and in-flight services. The operations benchmark has been relegated to the Gongga Bu Bus Park. It is basically the 'fill it, shut it, forget it' policy.

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Norwegian jazz group revisits Nepal



Urban Connection (UC) represents the new generation of young Norwegian jazz musicians. UC combines the traditional acoustic form of expression with the energy of today's electronica.

UC is inspired by the music of the 50s and 60s — hard bop/free bop as well as world music/folk music and the 70s jazz-rock. The band's expression is energetic, groovy and tight, and their music, which is original, is presented with a virility and freshness that is hard to find today.

In 2000, UC was selected as the unofficial European champions in jazz at the Temprin de Jazz in Avignon (France) and toured the Baltic region as well. It won the Norwegian equivalent of the Grammy for the album *Urban Connection* in 2001. Its other albums are *French Only* (2002) and *UC3* (2004). UC will play at the Keshab Narayan Chok at Patan Museum on 25 November.

Nepali Times conducted an email interview with band member Hakon Mjaset Johansen
What was it like playing in Kathmandu last year?

We had a great week in Kathmandu. Met a lot of nice people, great musicians and a very kind audience.

What is it about Kathmandu that inspired you to return?

All the friendly people, the atmosphere and them wanting us back for a concert.

It was inspiring for us to meet Nepali musicians who really enjoyed what they were doing and have respect for the craft. It is important to be open to new influences and there will be money on the table to support local musicians encouraging them to develop.

What do you think of the "jazz explosion" with artistes like Diana Krall, Norah Jones and Jamie Cullum?

I do not think too much about them. They do whatever they want, the audience around the world enjoy whatever they enjoy. There is room for everyone, jazz was never an expression meant to meet a special group of people or the masses. Having big record companies backing you is good but most important is sincerity, honesty and a genuine will to make good music. The result is for everyone to judge.

When can we expect another studio album?

We have just released our third studio album *UC3* and it will be available at our concert.

Have you ever considered collaborating with Nepali artistes for your albums?

We met Manoj Singh last year. He is a great musician with whom it would be a pleasure to collaborate when the opportunity occurs.

How is the audience in Kathmandu different from that in Europe?

We do not feel there is such a great difference. Music is a universal language and as long as the energy is sincere, everyone understands.

For tickets contact: Upstairs Jazz Bar and Summit hotel, Rs 750
 Further information contact: Mahesh Sajani 9851052968

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This special supplement for children – marking the anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on November 20, 1989 – is supported by UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund.

Know your rights

Today we live in a world where almost everyone agrees that anyone below 18 years old is a child and has the right to special care and protection.

It has only been since 20 November 1989, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), that the world has benefited from one set of legal rights for all children and young people.

Once we got it though, almost everyone was quick to agree to it.

Only a few months after it was adopted, 20 countries had already 'ratified' the Convention (gave it legal force). And today, 191 countries have ratified the CRC. [Nepal ratified the Convention in 1990.]

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most widely ratified human rights agreement in the world. It details your rights and how they should be applied in its 54 articles, plus two optional extras (or 'protocols').

The Convention starts off by saying that everyone under the age of 18 (the definition of a child), regardless of gender, origin, religion or possible disabilities, needs special care and protection because children are often very vulnerable (articles 1 & 2 — the numbers in brackets correspond to the relevant article in the Convention).

It also says that governments must take action to ensure your rights are respected (4). It ends by describing ways of putting theory into practice and monitoring progress (41–54)

Although the Convention has 54 articles in all, it is guided by four fundamental principles:

Non-discrimination (2): you should neither benefit nor suffer because of your race, colour, gender, language, religion, national, social or ethnic origin, or because of any political or other opinion; because of your caste, property or birth status; or because you are disabled.

The best interests of the child (3): laws and actions affecting children should put your best interests first and benefit you in the best possible way.



Credit: UNICEF Nepal/2004/Bogali/0857

Seven-year-old Bipana Dhakal is member of Meghauri VDC child club, in Chitwan. She actively participates in monthly meetings where some 33 children discuss children's rights and the problems that affect their lives and their community. The child club helps children learn to express themselves, to learn about the issue of discrimination, and to participate in the sanitation and hygiene program. Child club members also talk with their parents about the importance of going to school and of participating in child club meetings.

Survival, development and protection (6): the authorities in your country must protect you and help ensure your full development — physical, spiritual, moral and social.

Participation (12): you have a right to have your say in decisions that affect you, and to have your

opinions taken into account.

As you are exploring the various rights, try to see how each of these four fundamental principles informs them.

These are *your* rights. If you do not know what they are, how will you know if they are being denied? So start investigating!

Let us put our children first

By Dr Suomi Sakai*

Your time as a child should be a time of growth. It should be a time of playing, learning, exploring, developing.

It should not be a time of hunger, illness or ignorance. And it certainly should not be a time of fear.

You need enough food so that you can grow to your full height. You need good nutrition, including enough vitamin A and iron so that your body can stay strong and fight disease.

You need vaccinations to protect you from measles and other diseases that can kill or disable you.

You need access to clean water and latrines to protect you from diarrhoea and other diseases.

You also need protection from violence, from abduction, from trafficking and exploitation. You need to be safe and you need to feel safe.

You need parents or guardians to be there to care for you.

You need a school to go to and a teacher to teach you all the things you need to know, including how to read, write and count.

And you and your parents and guardians need to feel that your school is a safe place, where you can learn and play in peace.

Your childhood provides the foundation for your life as an adult. It helps determine the quality of your adult life, which should be based on a strong foundation.

Tomorrow is the 15th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This Convention means that these needs of yours I have talked about above are also your rights.

I take this opportunity to appeal to all adults in the country to reflect on our own childhood.

Let us ask ourselves: What sort of childhood do we want our own children to have?

Let us put our children first.



*Dr Sakai is the Representative of the UNICEF Nepal Country Office and mother of two children.

This article comes from the UNICEF Voices of Youth Website. You can read it at the following address: http://www.unicef.org/voy/explore/rights/explore_155.html

Read the full text of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at

http://www.unicef.org/voy/explore/rights/explore_157.html

Read the full text of the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Conflict

http://www.unicef.org/voy/explore/rights/explore_230.html

Read the full text of the Optional Protocol on the sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography: http://www.unicef.org/voy/explore/rights/explore_231.html

Know your rights



साबुन पानीले हात धोओ। भाडा पसालावाट सुरक्षित रहो।
 "Our health is in our hands" – this national campaign aims to reduce illness and deaths from diseases like diarrhoea, which kills some 40 children each day in Nepal.

Survival, living standards, environment

You have rights to survival, to healthy living conditions and to health care.

First of all you have the right to survive and thrive – to develop physically, mentally, spiritually, morally, psychologically and socially. In other words, you have the right to conditions enabling you to grow into the healthiest and happiest person you can be, well prepared for life. (6) Not a bad place to start!

It follows that you have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet your physical, mental and social needs.

Parents and guardians are responsible for making sure this right is upheld, and governments should help families who have trouble protecting this right because of lack of money or other reasons. (26, 27)

You also have the right to the best achievable quality of health care, to keep you free of illness and disease, and also to keep your body, mind and whole self as healthy as possible. To fulfil this right, the Convention says that it is important that you have access to good facilities, such as doctors, clinics and hospitals, and access to safe water, nourishing food and a clean environment.

The Convention also says that richer countries should help poorer countries to finance health care. (24)



The National Measles Vaccination Campaign aims to save the lives of 2,500 Nepali children in 2005 by vaccinating 9.5 million children aged above nine months to under 15 years.

Protection from harm



Credit: UNICEF Nepal/2003/Joshi
 A father carries his sick child to the health post in Namdu, Dolakha, four hours away from his village - it is important that children and their families have access to health services.

These rights are about your right to protection from abuse, violence and exploitation.

You have the right to be protected from physical and mental injury and abuse, and from neglect, whether you're living with your parents or other approved caregivers.

Your government should do everything it can to ensure this protection, including making sure laws are in place and that you have access to services and spaces where you are safe from harm. (19)

You should not have to do work (child labour) that is dangerous or might interfere with your education or otherwise harm your development. You should also be protected from 'economic exploitation' (32) — in other words you should not have to work for unreasonable rates of pay or for long hours or miss getting an education.

Your government must also do all it can to protect you from:

Our country is being torn apart by the fighting. There are mines and bombs everywhere. Our life is not safe. We don't know whether we will die tomorrow or the day after.

Girl, Sunsari

- the use of dangerous **drugs** and involvement in the drug trade (33),
- **sexual abuse** and exploitation, including prostitution and involvement in pornography (34 — see also the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography),
- **kidnapping** or **trafficking** (the illegal buying and selling of people) (35),
- any other form of **exploitation** (36)

No one under the age of 15, and preferably under the age of 18, should be allowed to take direct part in a **war**. And as a young civilian, you have a right to expect all possible protection during a war. (38, Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict)

If protection fails and you are harmed in any of the ways

described above, you have the right to suitable help and treatment to help you recover and live a normal life again. (39)

Being a child or young person does not mean you can just do anything you like. Rights come with responsibilities. One of those responsibilities is obeying the law. However, if you break the law, you should be treated fairly, with your age taken into account. You also have the right to appropriate support during **legal proceedings**. No

punishment should be cruel; no one under 18 should be sentenced to life imprisonment or death; detention should be a last resort and, if you are detained, you should be treated well and allowed contact with your family. (37, 40)

Know your rights

‘I had to flee to India because of the security situation. I have no money and cannot study. There are guards where I am working and I cannot leave. I work day and night. I think of home very often and I cry.’

Boy, Bihar

Education, culture, development



Credit: UNICEF Nepal/2003/Amatya

Schools should be safe places where children can learn and play in peace.

Name, identity, care

You have rights to be officially registered and recognized, and to be looked after properly.

Your birth should be registered with a local government agency without delay and you have the right to a legally registered name and nationality.

Governments must respect your right to preserve your identity, nationality and family relations. (7, 8)

You have an overarching right to a standard of care that ensures your well-being, whatever your circumstances. (3)

Governments should respect the rights of families, including extended families and legal guardians, and their responsibilities to direct and guide you so you can exercise your rights in the best way possible for you. (5)

You also have the right to know and, as far as possible, be cared for by your parents. (7) You may be separated from

your parents only for your own good — for example, if a parent is mistreating or neglecting you. If your parents have separated, you have the right to have contact with both of them, unless this might harm you. (7, 8, 9) Divided families should be allowed to move between countries so that parents and children can visit each other or be reunited for good. (10) Governments should take steps to stop you from being illegally taken abroad or kidnapped by a stranger, family member, parent or any other person, and not returned. (11)

If possible, both your parents should share responsibility for bringing you up. They or your legal guardians should always consider what is best for you. Governments should provide services to help parents look after their children, especially if both parents work. (18)

The law should prevent unfair or illegal interference with your privacy, your correspondence, your family, and your home. In other words, you have the right to private and confidential communication with people at home and elsewhere, for example in health clinics. You should also be protected from ‘unlawful attacks on your honour and reputation’ (16), especially in legal matters — though this does not mean that you can get your brother, sister, parents or friends locked up for calling you a ‘lazy slob’, even if it isn’t true!

If your own family cannot look after you, you have the right to appropriate alternative care: foster parents, for example, and, as a last resort,

These rights are about schooling, cultural traditions and arts, and leisure activities.

You have a right to an education, and primary education should be compulsory (required) and free.

Secondary education should be available to everyone and governments should ensure that no one is excluded because of poverty.

Discipline in schools should respect your human dignity by following a spirit of understanding and tolerance and never causing you physical or mental injury. (28)

Education should develop your personality, talents and abilities to the fullest. It should also encourage you to respect your parents, human rights, the environment, and your own and other cultures. (29)

You have the right to learn and use the language and customs of your family,

whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where you live. (30)

Last but not least, you have a right to **relaxation and play** and to take part in **cultural, artistic and leisure activities** appropriate for people your age. (31) The Convention does not specify exactly what ‘appropriate’ activities might be for different age-groups, so what this means in practice depends on customs in your country and community.

‘I used to look at them, the children on the *kori* and *mehtas*, but never dared to enter the school compound. I used to be scared ... Now I am going to school with my books. I want to learn more, to know more. I want to keep studying so I can become a teacher.’

Girl from Mushahar family, Sunsari, who graduated from a UNICEF-supported Out of School Programme class to regular school.

state institutions such as orphanages. This should take into account your ethnic, religious and cultural background and the language you speak. (20) If you are adopted, the first concern must be what is best for you. If you are adopted by people in another country, the safeguards and standards should be at least equivalent to those in your own country. (21)

If you are not being looked after by your parents, you should have your situation reviewed regularly. (25)

If you are a refugee, you must be protected and your rights respected, as spelled out in the Convention. A refugee is someone who has left his or her country because of ‘a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion,

nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion’ (according to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees).

If you have a physical disability or learning impairment you should be given special care and support to help you live a full and independent life and be an active member of your community. (23)



Golf in Pokhara

Surya Nepal Western Open opens in Pokhara

Those of us who have lived in Kathmandu have had the privilege of being able to play golf. That same opportunity was not available in Pokhara.

Golf in Pokhara has quite a short history. It was not long ago that ex-British Gorkha officer Maj Ram Bahadur Gurung envisioned spreading golf to more places in Nepal, and what better place than his favourite city, Pokhara.

After retiring from the army and returning to Nepal, he gathered support from his ex-colleagues in the army and local friends. In 1994 the Himalayan Golf Course was established in Pokhara. For those who have yet to lay their eyes on this

masterpiece, you will be astounded to learn that the Himalayan Golf Club is possibly one of the most adventurous and amazing golf courses in the world.

With the stunning backdrop of Mt Annapurna, fairways spread next to Bijayapur Khola and the views of the 100m deep gorge within and around which the course lies, the encounter is simply stunning. Any golfer living in or visiting Nepal who doesn't take time out to play this most exquisitely set golfing experience is missing a chance of a lifetime.

The launching of the Himalayan Golf course opened up a new opportunity for those in the area. For quite a while, interest remained mostly with ex-British Gorkha officers and a few hardcore locals. That was until 1999, when Surya Nepal showed its commitment to promoting sports by announcing a new local professional golfing event, the Surya Nepal Western Open.

The arrival of top local professional golfers and the extensive publicity generated by Surya Nepal created quite an impression and impact. I have witnessed a steady growth of golf in Pokhara over the years. We now regularly see new faces

around the clubhouse with a golf club in hand.

Subsequently, a few other golfing facilities were developed. The well known Yeti Golf Course at the Fulbari Resort & Spa should spring right to mind.

Growing interest amongst the golfing community and the game's die-hards also resulted in the establishment of a practice driving range in the heart of the city. Their aim was to improve their own game and to provide a perfect learning opportunity for new aspirants. This easily accessible range is a 15-minute drive from any part of the city, and having such a facility in town is a real asset and luxury.

Without a doubt Pokhara is a famous tourist destination in Nepal. With this added facet of golfing, I feel we just need to let the world know, we will be adding a new dimension to our tourism.

This year again, Surya Nepal continues its commitment of sports development with the two-day, 36 hole Surya Nepal Western Open 2004 tournament which will be played over 19-20 November.

As always we expect to see a crowd of people at the Himalayan Golf Course, especially on the exciting final on Saturday. Take this once-a-year chance to witness the event and perhaps meet some friends there who will induct you into the game. ●

For more information call 986021150.
Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and Golf Director at
Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu.
prodeepak@hotmail.com



Go take a bike

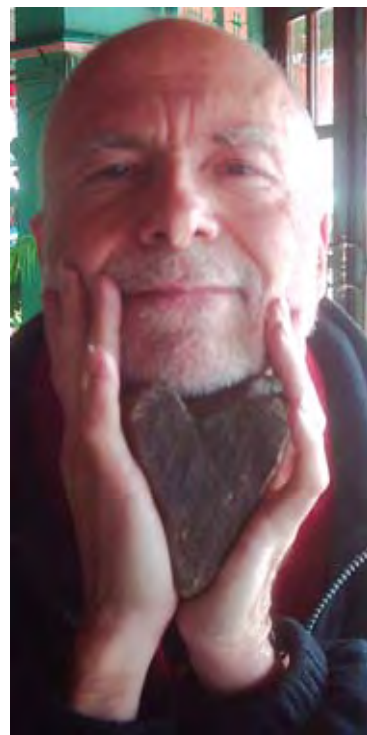
Kathmandu Mountain Bike Panauti-Godavari race kicks off on Saturday

If you've been wondering how to shed those kgs gained over Dasain and Tihar, wonder no longer. The annual Kathmandu Mountain Bike Race is here on 20 November.

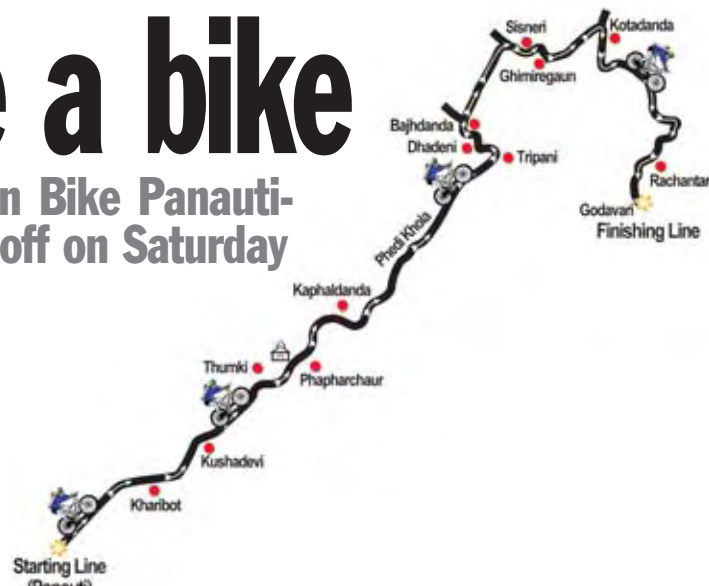
Organised by Kathmandu Mountain Bikes Company, a part of Himalayan Expeditions Nepal, the event promises plenty of pedalling action along the valley rim.

Some 100 participants, international and Nepalis, are expected. Of the 72 participants in last year's races, nine of the top 10 finalists were Nepalis. Our guys are getting more serious considering the sport only took root a few years back and was dominated by international racers.

The race this year will start from Panauti, pass through Lakuri Bhanjyang, Sisneri, climb up Kot Dara, and end in the foothills of Pulchoki at Godavari covering a total of 30 km. The prize money till date is Rs 10,000, Rs 7,000, and Rs 5,000 but could go up depending on the number of participants. As usual there are four categories: Open, Seniors, Below-40, and Women.



ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY



One reason the prize money might not sound as attractive is that there are no foreign sponsors. Says Sharad Pradhan of KMB, "We would like to conduct the race with or

without outside help." So get your gears, crank up your spirits and prepare to race. ●

(Alok Tumbahangphey)

For more information, www.kmbnepal.com or call Sharad Pradhan 9851077385.

Pedalling peace

Some race for fun, others pedal for peace. Cyclist and world peace pilgrim Fredrick Alexander Hutchinson ('Hutch') is back in town on a mission. In June 2003 Hutch was given a sacred stone (see pic), in the shape of a heart, from the Sisnaajini (Sierra Blanca) mountain, one of the four most holy peaks in southeastern Colorado by the Navaho Indians to place it in Mt Kailash, Tibet as a gesture of peace between the east and west. His journey, which began in January 2004, took him to Europe where he spent his summer in The Netherlands spreading the word. This October, Hutch landed in Kathmandu and is now preparing for the last leg of his mission that will start in May.

Interestingly, Hutch got his bicycle from Peter Stewart of Himalayan Mountain Bikes in 1998 and will be using the same wheels for this trip as well. Hutch likes to take his time, stopping to smell the flowers and talking to people along the way. He has never raced professionally but maintains a strict routine. "When you're older you like to go slower," says the 65-year-old. If you think you have it in you Hutch will be heading for Mt Kailash next May. Think about it, its worth the cause and much more.

email: hutch@cyclingpeace.org
website: www.cyclingpeace.org



WONDERING WHERE TO GO THIS WEEKEND??
sure, we're open on all other days too...

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RAMESWOR BOHARA

HIGHWAY AMBUSH: A police truck still smouldering after the Maoist attack in Khairi Khola that killed eight Armed Police personnel along the East West Highway on Wednesday.



ANUP PRAKASH

NON-VIOLENCE VIGIL: Peace activists burn candles and pray for the souls of 92 Nepali killed in the month of Kartik on 16 November. At least 20 more people were killed in fighting that same day.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

NEPAL MANDALA: Bhintuna Peace Mandap made of coloured powder at Masang Galli on the occasion of the Nepal Sambat 1125 on 13 November.



RAM HUMAGAIN/NEPALNEWS.COM

REMOTE CONTROL: International delegates and government ministers at the inauguration of a seminar on Remote Sensing for Sustainable Development in Mountain Areas held at the Soaltee Crowne Plaza on 15 November.



KIRAN PANDAY

DIGGING AWAY: Bulldozers at work this week in Lumbini for next month's World Buddhist Conference at Buddha's birthplace.

A Bhaktapur brick-layer

Bal Krishna Kasula does not have an engineering degree. He never went to university, all he has is a high school diploma. But so skilled is Bal Krishna in constructing and designing earthquake-resistant buildings that he is now training engineers and masons in earthquake-prone areas around the world.

In 1999 architects from the Kathmandu-based National Society for Earthquake Technology-Nepal (NSET) discovered his brick-laying skills while retrofitting a primary school building to make it earthquake resistant. NSET trained him to be a trainer of earthquake-resistant

construction technology. Soon, he was retrofitting schools in Bhaktapur, Kirtipur, Nagarkot and Kathmandu and teaching other masons to do the same. In the last five years, he has helped rebuild more than 20 schools and trained more than 50 brick-layers. His skills were so useful that NSET sent him to Kabul, New Delhi and Tajikistan to train local masons. Most of them are now building with Nepali-designed earthquake-resistant technology.

Bal Krishna recently returned from Bam in eastern Iran which was devastated by an earthquake in December 2003. "It was quite difficult convincing them in the beginning, but they were overwhelmed when we showed them our demonstration set," recalls Bal Krishna. The models show how retrofitted houses remain intact

when they are jolted, while traditional houses crumble. (See: '70 years later', #178).

Next week, Bal Krishna is off to Japan where he will train a group of Japanese students from four universities in Kobe, which was also badly damaged in an earthquake in January 1995. Over those two months, the Bhaktapur brick-layer will help design earthquake-resistant houses by combining Japanese and Nepali techniques.

Says Bal Krishna: "The Japanese have a lot of experience in earthquake-resistant buildings, but there may be a thing or two we can also show them."

(NARESH NEWAR)



Bal Krishna constructing a model of an earthquake-resistant house while training Afghan builders in Kabul last month.

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“We haven’t lost, they haven’t won”

Interview with Maoist spokesman Krishna Bahadur Mahara
BBC Nepali service, 17 November

BBC



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Krishna Bahadur Mahara: Why has your party rebuffed the government’s repeated invitation for peace talks?

BBC: It is not that our party is not interested in talks. We are serious and concerned about it. We also take note of the Nepali people’s wish for negotiations. But the fact is that talks need to reach a conclusion. We have attended two rounds with the old regime, and from that experience we know that they were never serious about conclusive talks. There are clearly two state powers in the country: our new power in rural areas, and the old regime which is confined to urban areas. Both sides should understand this reality.

What will it take to convince you to sit at the table?

The old regime needs to make public the way it sees us, and what it sees as the way out of this conflict.

They have to make public their commitments for a progressive solution. They will have to stop the unprecedented military buildup and killings of innocent people in so-called encounters. How can talks take place in such a situation? We need to see genuine political commitment.

There have been talks about a division in the Maoist leadership.

Absolutely not true. We have no differences on either holding talks or continuing the war. There was a consensus for the previous rounds. And if there is an international mediator and we get answers to the questions we have asked, we are still ready to negotiate.

But there have been contradictory statements from the leadership recently.

We have had enemies working against us since the beginning. They were engaged in propaganda and they will continue doing it. It’s no big deal.

You say you are for the people but there is untold suffering because of the insurgency you launched.

It depends on your point of view. We don’t agree with your statement and we don’t think that the people look at things that way. Yes, a few people have suffered and whether such suffering is widespread is a subject of debate. Those who were working against the village people have now come to the towns. Those who left because of their anti-people activities, very few were innocent and we have been telling them they can come back. Many have returned, but there are those who still can’t though there aren’t too many of them.

The security forces seem to have been successful in finishing off some influential commanders.

We don’t feel that way. They can’t enter our strongholds without extra security. They are actually confined to their barracks and are losing ground. They stage fake encounters. Yes, some of our commanders and senior leaders have also been killed and that has been a loss, but it doesn’t mean we have lost and they have won.

What is your party’s stand on elections?

Elections are not the solution to the present problem. It could be a solution for the forces within the old state power. Elections under the old constitution would be a slogan and a precursor for a big war. If we are looking for a solution, we should be looking at elections for a constituent assembly and not for a parliamentary system.

India now sees your revolution as a common threat. Is it becoming more difficult for you?

The Indian rulers have a wrong way of looking at the smaller nations in South Asia. In the name of security, they wish to keep us within their security umbrella.

We don’t only want to liberate the people of Nepal from their autocratic rulers but also from interference by Indian rulers. This is nothing new, the Indians have been against us in the past and it will remain so. We believe we will not win the final battle unless we fight Indian expansionism.

Will you then take your war to India?

We are going to India to fight them. India has been intruding into Nepali territory. They interfere with us politically, economically, socially and culturally and that is how they have been exploiting us. Now they are also preparing to interfere militarily. The Nepali and Indian peoples will fight together against the enemy.

Why do you say you will only talk to the king?

We want to talk with the person and institution that holds power, authority and makes decisions. If the government can prove that it has these powers, we are ready to hold talks with them. But the government will have to prove that it controls the king and the army. Power is centralised with the king at present, he is pulling the strings from behind the scenes.

Underground rift

Budhabar, 10 November

बुधवार

A top Maoist source has revealed a hardline faction has won out in an internal power struggle. Those for dialogue and a political solution are said to be in the minority and have been sidelined. Most leaders appeared to be against peace talks at a recent Maoist central committee meeting in Rolpa. The anti-talks faction led by senior Maoist leader Ram Bahadur Thapa alias Badal was backed by central committee members Posta Bahadur Bogati alias Diwakar, politburo member and military commander Nanda Kishore Pun alias Pasang, politburo member Netra Bahadur Chand alias Biplab and the Chief of the ‘Magarant autonomous people’s government’ Santosh Buda alias Barun. In the minority were rebel leaders Prachanda, standing committee member Baburam Bhattarai, spokesperson Krishna Bahadur Mahara, politburo member Barshaman Pun alias Ananta, among others. The meeting was said to be divisive and senior leaders spent most of the 10 days blaming each other for the increasing number of arrests of comrades in India. Since the hardline faction dominated the meeting, the concepts of ‘strategic offensive’ and ‘tunnel war’ have prevailed. The rebels’ earlier demands for a roundtable conference, interim government and constituent assembly have taken a backseat.

Constructive war

Nepal Samacharpatra,

16 November

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

The security forces and the Maoists are competing to make their presence felt in Dailekh by

trying to compete in development work. Both sides are now engaged in building roads, bridges, water supply networks, and more. The Royal Nepali Army has begun several development projects, which will be completed in a few months. These include the construction of a bridge over the Chupra stream, a road linking Chupra to Dailekh Bajar and a public park said to protect the area built by the Pandaba brothers as mentioned in the *Mahabharata*. Nainaraj Dahal, brigade chief of Bahawani Baks, said the army would renovate schools in the area. Not to be outdone, the rebels have completed many development projects in the region and plan to finish some more in the next few months. With the engineers and other technicians in their party, the rebels have completed small-scale hydropower projects, built suspension bridges, public waiting areas and a 40-km road between Dungeswor and Patinkala.

Party purification

Jana Astha, 17 November

आस्था

A politburo member of the CPN-Maoist revealed that the party was on the verge of a vertical split even before its last central committee meeting was held in July. Maoist leader Barsha Man Pun (Ananta) wrote in *Janabidroh*, ‘The party was on the verge of a split. Huge discussions and debates were held but the party moved on.’

Alleging the government of spending a huge amount to cause a split in the party, Ananta wrote, ‘The reactionaries were euphoric, the government disbursed Rs 250 million to cause a rift in the party but it remained intact.’ Was it spent buying Maoist

leaders? Ananta claims that the party emerged united following the central working committee meeting in July. From now on the party will hold debates and discussions for more than a year over proposals to select central members of the party. He dubbed it a ‘pure communist exercise of the 21st century’.

According to information received, the July meeting of the Maoists agreed to begin the ‘party purification’ campaign under which it is said that the central leaders, especially politburo members, would have to donate their property to the party and involve their spouses and children in party activities as well. A Maoist source says that this had irked many politburo members. Even Prachanda conceded through his statements that despite his declaration, grave allegations were leveled against some comrades in the central working committee meeting. Ananta says in his article that the central leaders who faced such allegations were re-evaluating their responsibilities, moral and disciplinary obligations.

Babu Ram Bhattarai was reportedly most ‘revolutionary’ about donating property and involving their children. As his wife Hisila Yami is already active in Maoist politics and he has lost all personal property. Bhattarai has no problems in getting his only daughter involved in party activities. But Prachanda and leaders like Dina Nath Sharma have kept their children away from party activities and find the ‘purification process’ a problem. Another rift was over the ‘tunnel war’ campaign. There is disagreement inside the Maoist party vis-à-vis the party’s outlook towards India and the ‘tunnel war’.

(Nepalnews.com Translation Service)



Hive: ‘Democracy’

I don’t think it’ll drop easily, sir, I’m being attacked from all sides.

कान्तिपुर Kantipur, 18 November

QUOTES OF THE WEEK



It’s really unfortunate our UML leaders are unable to write a note of dissent against the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Ordinance (TADO) and Royal palace expenses.

UML leader KP Oli in *Nepal Samacharpatra*, November 18

Highway ambush

Phanindra Silwal in Kantipur, 17 November

कान्तिपुर

KRISHNABHIR-After the Maoists called a Dhading Banda on Tuesday, we were on high alert. My friends and I were sitting in front of my office at the Highway Information Centre, when a vehicle full of soldiers stopped in front of us. I knew the soldiers, they were on patrol from Gajuri.

Suddenly their walkie talkie crackled to life. "We have been ambushed, we have been ambushed..." the voice at the other end said frantically and then went silent. With permission from the soldier, I sped off in my motorbike. Further down the road, locals warned me not to go there was heavy gunfire. At Malekhu an army patrol asked me to tell the soldiers ahead that three army vehicles were coming for help.

I saw many soldiers at the Charaundi junction where the road from Gorkha and Prithvi Highway meet. I told them that help was on its way, but as soon as I said that I realised they were Maoist guerrillas in combat fatigues. One of them said, "Ok guys, get ready. Three enemy vehicles are coming." They interrogated me. I showed them my Nepal One Television ID card and they allowed me to film.

It was 9.45 AM and there was shooting going on in the bajar. There were around 150 rebels and they had divided themselves into several groups. Some were carrying two radio sets, one looted from soldiers they ambushed through which they monitored the army's communications. They would first listen to the army's radio set and then issue orders through their own set, "Just use the LMG, just use the LMG," one of them would shout instructions.

A female guerrilla was interrogating a wounded soldier. When I approached them, she asked, "Are you a journalist or human rights activist?" When I said I was a reporter, she said that the offensive had taken place under her command and her name was Pratiksha. "Broadcast this news with my name and take note of the fact that we have followed the rules of war," she said and handed the injured soldier to me. "Take care of him and hide him before the others spot him, the fighting hasn't finished yet," she said.

I took him to a house and dressed his wound. Outside, the Maoists were dancing and shouting with their captured weapons. Never before had I seen so many Maoists, they had come here under from the east under the Special Ring Command. Two were carrying a rocket launcher, others were carrying guns with tripods, all had AK 47, INSAS SLR assault rifles.

I sped on to Krishnabhir but by the time I got there, the rebels had left. An army truck riddled with bullets, shrapnel and still on fire lay on the side of the road. There was a soldier's body nearby.

I returned to fetch the injured soldier I had hidden in the house. About 500 Maoists were walking towards Ghylchok in Gorkha, others were climbing uphill to southern Dhading. As I rode back to Malekhu with the injured soldier, we were met by an army vehicle. I handed over the injured soldier and they headed for Krishnabhir. (As told to Ujir Magar)

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महिला र बालबालिकाहरू प्रतिको शोषण र अत्याचार निन्दनीय कार्य हो। महिला र पुरुषबीच भेदभाव गर्ने सामाजिक कुरीतिहरू र बालबालिकाहरू उपर गरिने सबै थरीका शोषणहरू हटाउन सबै सचेत नागरिकहरूले संयुक्त रूपमा प्रयास गर्ने समय आएको छ। गाउँघरमा हुने सामाजिक भेटघाट र सामूहिक छलफलमा पनि यस्ता कुराहरू उठाई जनचेतना बढाउनु शिक्षित र सचेत नागरिक हरूको कर्तव्य हो।

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More money for MDGs

BRUSSELS-The UN's Millennium Development Goals to halve poverty by 2015 can still be met but the European Union will need to pull surprises soon, says Eveline Herfkens, the UN secretary general's executive coordinator for the millennium goals. She hopes European countries will present a surprise at the UN General Assembly next year when progress towards the goals will be assessed. "EU member states committed to achieve at least 0.33 percent (of gross national income towards development aid) by 2006 as a step towards achieving 0.7 percent," she said. "I hope they will make additional commitments." Such a move, she said, "would certainly shame the United States, so that they will be obliged to follow suit."

Five European countries (Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark and Luxembourg) have crossed the 0.7 percent figure recommended by the UN. World Bank president James Wolfensohn told reporters that the development goals are out of reach by the 2015 deadline. "Nonsense," Herfkens said. "Anything is possible, but very little time is left." (IPS)

Indian in US Congress

NEW DELHI-A world away from the hurly burly US politics, residents of Malerkotla, the only Muslim-majority town in the Indian state of Punjab, have been celebrating the results of the recent election.

Friends and relatives of newly elected US Congressman Bobby Jindal, who is of Indian origin, are rejoicing as well-wishers stream into their homes in India, days after the 2 November election in the United States. But the electoral victories of Jindal and at least five other US citizens of Indian origin are not just a matter of pride and cheer here. They signal the arrival of the Indian community in mainstream US politics after remaining in the background as fundraisers and contributors to both the Democratic and Republican parties. Among US citizens of Indian origin who won in the elections are Nikki Randhawa Haley in South Carolina, Swati Dandekar in Iowa, Kumar Barve in Maryland, Satveer Chaudhary in Minnesota and Upendra Chivukula in New Jersey.

The election of another Punjabi, Nikki Randhawa Haley, to the South Carolina assembly has added to the good news. Haley, 32, a Republican from District 87, will become the first US politician of Indian roots to hold elected office in South Carolina. Swati Dandekar in Iowa was re-elected over her Republican contender two years ago to make it to the Iowa state assembly, and was the first Indian-born US citizen to win a seat in the state legislature. (IPS)

No smoking in Bhutan

Smoking has been banned all over Bhutan from this week. Shops, hotels, restaurants and bars selling tobacco products have been ordered to dispose of existing stocks before 17 December. The tobacco ban will not apply to foreign tourists, diplomats or those working for NGOs. But, warned Karma Tsering of Bhutan Customs: "If any foreigner is caught selling tobacco products to Bhutani nationals, he will be charged with smuggling." Bhutan is the first country with a total nationwide ban on tobacco. "We want no pollution and good health for our citizens," said Bhutani minister, Jigme Thinley told the BBC.

Strategic partnership

BRUSSELS-The European Union and India have signed an unprecedented 'strategic partnership' deal amidst concerns over India's human rights record. Top EU officials and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh signed the agreement on 8 November at the 5th EU-India summit in The Hague. The agreement outlines how the two sides will cooperate on trade, research, development, counter-terrorism, shipping, regional concerns, conflict resolution, environment and space exploration. However, activists say the EU has 'renege'd' on its responsibility to address human rights issues with India in recent years. They say in spite of India's recent high rate of economic growth, there is a 'dark side' of 'rampant and unchecked use of torture by police, the impunity of people responsible for inter-religious massacres and crimes against humanity, extensive definitions of anti-terrorism laws, bonded labour, violence against women, re-application of the death penalty'. (IPS)

The fifteenth anniversary of the Velvet Revolution on 17 November 1989, which brought an end to 41 years of communist dictatorship in Czechoslovakia, is an opportunity to ponder the meaning of moral behaviour and free action. Today we live in a democratic society, but many people – not only in the Czech Republic – still believe that they

COMMENT Václav Havel

are not true masters of their destiny. They have lost faith in the fact that they can really influence political developments, much less influence the direction in which our civilisation is evolving.

During the communist era, most people believed that individual efforts to effect change did not make sense. Communist leaders insisted that the system was the result of history's objective laws, which could not be challenged, and those who refused this logic were punished, just in case.

Unfortunately, the way of thinking that supported communist dictatorships has not disappeared entirely. Some politicians and pundits maintain that communism merely collapsed under its own weight – again, owing to 'objective laws' of history. Again, individual responsibility and individual actions are belittled. Communism, we are told, was only one of the dead ends of Western rationalism, therefore, it was sufficient to wait passively for it to fail.

The very same people often believe in other manifestations of inevitability, such as various supposed laws of the market and other 'invisible hands' that direct our lives. As there is not much space in such thinking for individual moral action, social critics are often ridiculed as naive moralists or elitists.

Perhaps this is one of the reasons why 15 years after the fall of communism, we again witness political apathy. Democracy is increasingly seen as a mere ritual. Generally, western societies, it seems, are experiencing a certain crisis of the democratic ethos and active

Velvet + 15



What communism still teaches us

citizenship. It is possible that what we are witnessing is a mere change of paradigm, caused by new technologies, and we have nothing to worry about. But perhaps the problem is deeper: global corporations, media cartels and powerful bureaucracies are transforming political parties into organisations whose main task is no longer public service, but the protection of specific clienteles and interests. Politics is becoming a battleground for lobbyists; media trivialise serious problems; democracy often looks like a virtual game for consumers, rather than a serious business for serious citizens.

When dreaming about a democratic future, we who were dissidents certainly had some utopian illusions, as we are well aware today. However, we were not mistaken when we argued that communism was not a mere dead end of western rationalism. Bureaucratisation, anonymous manipulation and emphasis on mass conformism were brought to 'perfection' in the communist system. Some of the very same threats are with us today.

We were certain then that if democracy is emptied of values and reduced to a competition of political parties that have 'guaranteed' solutions to everything, it could be quite undemocratic. This is why we put so much emphasis on the moral dimension of politics and a vibrant civil society as counterweights to political parties and state institutions.

The fall of communism was an opportunity to create more effective global political institutions based on democratic principles, institutions that could stop what appears to be, in its current form, the self-destructive tendency of our industrial world. It is necessary, just as it was during the Communist era, that we not lose faith in the meaning of alternative centres of thought and civic action.

Let's try to build a global civil society and insist that politics is not just a technology of power but needs to have a moral dimension. ●

(Project Syndicate)

Václav Havel was the first president of the Czech Republic.



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An unholy mess

The Sankaracharya case shows that no one is above the law in India's secular democracy

Whenever we talk of the triumph of Indian secularism, we remind ourselves of growing Hindu fundamentalism. The recent arrest and incarceration of Kanchi Shankaracharya Jayendra Saraswathi on Diwali day is one of the finest pointers in understanding the functioning of various institutions of India, and the in-built corrective mechanism of the Indian state.

Jayendra Saraswathi was arrested as the prime accused in a brutal contract killing of a

COMMENT
A S Paneerselvan



former devotee. The fact that this highly influential religious leader could not get bail for nearly a week indicates the presence of various checks and balances, though not always perfect, and the dictum 'all are equal before the law' seems to be in effect.

His repeated pleas for special treatment have been rejected. The state prosecuting agency used the clever ploy put forth by the Pontiff against denying bail. The Pontiff's counsel argued that Shankaracharya is a

powerful individual with a huge following and that he would not run away from inquiry. The Tamil Nadu government accepting his clout said it had enough room to believe he will destroy the evidence and intimidate witnesses.

The state also rejected the contention that he will not run away by quoting Jayendra's 1987 disappearance act as precedence and the recent intelligence agencies report that the Pontiff was trying to reach Nepal where he enjoys a close relationship with the palace.

Jayendra's arrest shows the Hindutva forces are not strong as they make themselves out to be. There was no real protest in Tamil Nadu, and in fact, there were celebrations in Kancheepuram on the day of arrest. The BJP and its pro-Hindutva forces could not get any of the mainstream legal luminaries to appear for the Pontiff and had to request their *bête noire* till yesterday Ram Jethmalani, who was the opposition candidate against Atal Behari Vajpayee in the May 2004 general elections. Second, their worst fear that this trial might open a can of worms is already coming true.

The Kanchi Mutt seat of the pontiff has been a powerful political player for the Hindu Right over a century, and gets its legitimacy



from the notion that it was one of the five mutts established by Shri Adi Sankara, the founder of Advaita philosophy and that the mutt is more than 2,400 years old.

All historians agree that Adi Sankara was born in the late seventh century AD and that he founded four mutts: Sringeri in the South, Dwaraka in the West, Badrinath in the North and Puri in the East, using a simple theory of a mutt for each cardinal point. Kanchi Mutt holds that Adi Sankara was born either on 508 BC or on

482 BC which makes him a close contemporary of Buddha.

While the theological textual scrutiny busts the antiquity claims, the legal and colonial records debunk the claim that Kanchi Mutt is the 'central mutt' with powers over the other mutts.

There has been no reference to Kanchi Mutt in any text till late 18th century. There are references only to Kumbakonam Mutt. ●

A S Paneerselvan is a Madras-based journalist.

Defence deal

NEW DELHI-While India is ready to enter into a 'defence cooperation agreement' with Sri Lanka, it is wary of being drawn into any military involvement in the island nation, analysts here say.

And that explains the delay in the signing of a formal defence agreement that was at the heart of Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga's four-day visit to India last week.

The 20-year separatist war has left over 60,000 dead on both sides and the two-year peace talks between Colombo and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are stalemated. According to Professor S D Muni, South Asia expert at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Kumaratunga's government was keen to beef up military preparedness with Indian support. Colombo held six rounds of talks with the Tigers between September 2002 and March 2003. But last April, the rebels abruptly pulled out of negotiations demanding recognition, first, for the right to self-rule before proceeding. Kumaratunga's India tour preceded a three-day visit to Sri Lanka, by Norwegian Foreign Minister Jan Petersen in a new bid to revive the peace talks that were supposed to follow a ceasefire that Oslo successfully brokered in February 2002.

Petersen who was scheduled to hold discussions with both Kumaratunga and the reclusive LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran in the rebel stronghold of Kilinochchi has already made it known he did not have high expectations. Colombo, too, seems to be in an intractable position. According to former Indian army general A S Kalkat, the difficulty for Kumaratunga's government lay in the fact that the LTTE had become a 'de jure' power in the north and east of the island.

India is wary of getting involved ever since its troops that went in to restore peace got bogged down in a costly war against the Tigers. ● (IPS)







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DARJEELING

So far, and yet so close

AARTI BASNYAT in DARJEELING



Nepalis were first taken to Darjeeling as labourers in British tea plantations because they could work at high altitudes. They stayed on in India and today their children and grandchildren make up Darj society. They still identify with Nepali music, culture, art and tradition, but they are Indian. As Niraj Lama, senior reporter here for the Calcutta newspaper, *The Statesman*, puts it crisply: "We are politically Indian but culturally Nepali."

Norbert Sharma, a student from St Michael's College, gives it another spin: "Like you say American Indians, I guess you could call us Nepali Indians."

As you walk down Chaurasta, you pass groups of school children led in lines by their teacher. They are all singing 1974 AD's famous song *Nepali ho*. The people here manage to stay in two completely different countries and still balance the eccentricities of both. Though, as a woman of high standing in

Darjeeling society who is originally from Nepal maintains, "I would never consider myself an Indian. I still say I am a Nepali."

The people of Darjeeling live in a tightly-knit community and identify more with Nepal and its cultural heritage than Nepalis themselves. Almost everyone speaks Nepali and those who don't, understand it. They have Nepali names, sing Nepali songs, eat Nepali food and have Nepali features. They honour

Bhanubhakta more here than in the bard's native land.

But there is a disconnect. Most Darjeelingays can't figure out why Nepal is going to the dogs. Kushal Rai, proprietor of Penang Restaurant, says, "I go to Kathmandu often but I don't understand what is happening there." He holds a Nepali passport due to his ex-British Gorkha status. It is clear that the people of Darjeeling fear the insurgency in Nepal, but they are underinformed about its severity.

To be sure, Darjeeling has her own problems. There has long been an autonomy struggle, often violent, against the distant state capital in Calcutta. Darjeelingays say they have nothing in common with Bengalis and want their own state. As Sharma says, "We are different. Our language, culture and even the way we think does not match."

To add to these problems, Darjeeling society has begun to see a gradual split within its own community. When the labourers came from Nepal they left behind their caste communalism and came

together as Nepalis. They celebrated all festivals from Christmas to Dasain. Now they are growing more caste and class conscious. The reason behind this phenomenon, according to Lama, is the quotas the Indian government reserves for 'scheduled castes, tribes and other backward castes'.

The reservation makes it easier for certain groups to get an education and employment. Although it would benefit some Darjeelingays on a personal level, it will create a rift in society that wasn't there before and make their fight for increased autonomy more difficult. In spite of the problems Darjeeling has faced or will face, it remains the undisputed 'queen of the hills'. The town's splendid location on a high ridge overlooked by Kangchenjunga is unparalleled. The town has seen recent bloodshed and hard times, but has managed to overcome both.

The people of Darjeeling remain incredibly friendly and helpful. They may have started to search for their roots, but are just as happy being themselves. ●

Eating out

Darjeeling may not have the varied cuisine of Kathmandu but it has some great eating places dating back to the British days. Glenary's, a two-storey restaurant with a basement has pastry, confectionery, coffee and an Internet cafe on the ground floor and a proper restaurant with Chinese, Indian and continental food on the second. Keventer's is the place for breakfast with reasonable prices and good quantities of food that taste as good as it looks. Fiesta and Amigo café are located in the heart of Chaurasta and offer a range of food from South Indian to Italian pizzas. Fiesta also has an Internet café for the Net savvy who like to surf as they eat. The Park serves Indian food and for vegetarians there is the famous Aangan chain. Darjeeling has a new club called Velocity, which caters to the DJ music crowd. Buzz, a basement pub below Glenary's, caters more to the live music and rock crowd while Joey's is an Irish-type pub where you can lounge.

A must-do in Darjeeling is to visit the local bazar and stack up on the famous Sikkim churpis (solidified yak milk) and local candy. Most places in Darjeeling close early or run out of food by 9:30-10PM. It would be prudent to make it an early dinner.





ALL PICS: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA



Getting there

Travelling to Darjeeling is as simple as going to Pokhara. Tourist buses offer direct services from Kathmandu to Pashupatinagar for about Rs 550, a ride of 15-17 hours (barring blockades, bandas and curfews). From there a taxi into Darjeeling costs about Rs 800-1,000. The scenery is beautiful with tea gardens on both sides of the border. If you are in a hurry, take one of the several daily flights to Bhadrapur (Rs 7,000 roundtrip) which doubles as a mountain flight with spectacular views of the entire eastern Himalaya. Bhadrapur to Pashupatinagar by taxi is Rs 1,500. Non-Nepali and non-Indians are not allowed to cross over by Indian immigration at Pashupatinagar, they have to cross at Kakarbhita.

Darjeeling's 3 Ts

The Darjeeling carnival began last year in an effort to promote tourism. Says Ajay Edwards, organiser of the festival: "The 3 Ts of Darjeeling's economy has been tea, timber and tourism. Tea is no longer that big and timber we have done away with." That leaves only tourism and the carnival brings together the music, culture and people of Darjeeling and the northeastern states in a celebration of the hills. This year the telecom company, Hutch, launched itself in Darjeeling and was the main sponsor of the carnival. The festival comprises of events such as the chungti competition, where the locals participate. The highlights of the carnival this year included the Aziz Ibrahim concert organised in association with the British Council and Rock Street Journal, the 1974 AD concert, a fashion show by NIFT graduates, the porter Olympics and a youth conference of the northeastern students called 'Way forward — Resilience and Hope'.



Tiger hill

Tiger hill is situated 15 km from Darjeeling at a height of 2,590m. It is a prime location for locals and tourists alike for viewing the amazing sunrise and its reflection on Kangchenjunga. Well worth the early morning wake-up. A tour package including the Monastery and Batasia Loop will cost you IRs 450. If you want to catch the sunrise, you have to wake up at 4AM to avoid the traffic. The crowd at Tiger hill can be a major turn-off when you want to enjoy a quiet sunrise with about 300 other people clamouring for the same view. They will show you Mt Everest, but it looks as tiny as viewing Everest from Nagarkot.



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The Adventures of HEROJIG
(white man in nepa)
HELLO. NAMASSTHAY!
by Jiggy gaton

A long long time ago (Nepali time) in a country so far away it may as well have been Mars, Thomas, a broke X-New York stock-broker, thrice divorced, just off Paxal, and now on his way to Religion, decided to leave LA and go trekking in Nepal.

Three years later he's still here...

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"Lata ko desh ma gaando tanderi."
in a land of fools, a man with a goatee is a hero

— ancient Nepali proverb

Next Change: Thomas gets a new name, learns to drive a Hero Honda, and goes to a party - all in one day.

Herojig's Adventures also at www.extreme-nepal.com *FROM THE HISTORIC ARCHIVES - Strip #1 - New Cartoon Each Friday! (c) 2003 by Jiggy Gaton but only when - or if - Nepal ratifies WTO agreement.

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Near Wild Heaven, Voice from the Mountain** exhibition of photographs by Yuko Akiba at Park Gallery. Until 5 December. 5522307
- ❖ **November Medley** Collection of paintings and sculptures by various artists at Siddhartha Art Gallery. Until 1 December. 4218048
- ❖ **Japanese Graphic Art** Poster exhibition at Embassy of Japan, 9.30 PM to 4.30 PM. Until 10 December.
- ❖ **A Touch of Purity** Paintings by Erina Tamrakar at Gallery Nine, Lajimpat. 4428694



EVENTS

- ❖ **Living without conflict**, video show and discussion, 3PM on 20 November at Nepal Japan Children's Library, Lainchour. 4279712
- ❖ **The Sound of Music** at The Royal Nepal Academy on 19 and 20 November, a fund-raiser organised by Triyog High School. 4470608, 4476425
- ❖ **Standing in the Shadows of Motown**, a film about musicians who created Motown, 19 November at Moksh, Hardic Fitness Centre. Free entry. 5528703
- ❖ **Ganesh's Trunk Holiday Bazaar** at Baber Mahal Revisited on 20 November, 11AM to 6PM. 4436040
- ❖ **Asman Mela** at Hyatt Regency, Boudha on 20 November, 10AM to 6PM. Entrance Rs 50.
- ❖ **Sizzling Weekend Treat** Live music, dance, barbeque and karaoke at Garden Terrace, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **How to Tame the Crazy Mind** Dharma talk by Robina Courtin on 20 November, 10AM-4PM at Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre. 4414843
- ❖ **3rd Annual Ride and Rage** with the Himalayan Enfielders to the Last Resort on 20-21 November. Rs 1,500 per person. 4440462
- ❖ **Tanvir Mokammel Trilogy** Three movies by Tanvir, famed Bangladeshi filmmaker, at Nepal Tourism Board, 2PM, 3.15 PM, 5.30 PM on 21 November.
- ❖ **Mughe-E-Azam**, a 1960 classic film by K Asif at The Film Club, Baggikhana, Patan Dhoka, 5PM on 24 November. 5542544
- ❖ **WCN Amateur Nature and Wildlife Photography Competition** for amateur photographers. Deadline 30 November. 5524202, www.wcn.org.np

MUSIC

- ❖ **Kutumba**, a live performance by the folk instrumental band, 6PM onwards on 20 November at Moksh. Entrance Rs 300. 5528703
- ❖ **Urban Connection** live at Patan Museum Square on 25 November in aid of Save the Children. Tickets Rs 750. 9851052968
- ❖ **Hey DJ** at the Yak & Yeti on November 26.
- ❖ **Ramailo Saanjh** fusion music with Ishwor Gurung and his bands on 1 December. Entrance Rs 1,200 from 7PM-10PM. 4479488
- ❖ **Fusion Night** at the Rox Bar. Every Wednesday, 6PM onwards. 4491234
- ❖ **Jatra Friday Nites** Live music by The Strings. 4256622

FOOD

- ❖ **Sizzler Week** Sizzler of your choice at Rs 99 at The Bluestar Hotel, Tripureswor, 16 to 30 November. 4228833
- ❖ **Charcoalz** A barbecue of Western, Indian and Mongolian delights at Hotel Yak & Yeti, 6PM to 10PM. Till 30 November.
- ❖ **Traditional Thanksgiving** three-course dinner at Kilroy's of Kathmandu and K-too! Beer and Steakhouse, Thamel. 4250440, 4700043
- ❖ **Nepali Platter Unlimited** drinks in Splash at Radisson Hotel throughout November, 6PM-8PM. 4411818, 4423888
- ❖ **Tickling Tastebuds** barbeque every Friday at The Shambala Garden Café, Shangri-la Hotel, 7PM onwards. 4412999
- ❖ **La Soon** Restaurant and Vinotheque, moved in the lane next to the Egyptian Embassy, Pulchok for spacious indoor and outdoor seating. 5537166
- ❖ **Genuine Thai** cuisine at Royal Lotus, Bakhundole. 5521231
- ❖ **Delicious Barbecue Dinner** Fridays at Summit Hotel. 5521810
- ❖ **Farm House Café** Delicious meals with nature at Park Village. 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
- ❖ **Executive Lunch** at Toran Restaurant, Dwarika's. 4479488
- ❖ **The Beer Garden** at Vajrayantha, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **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, malaysiaholidays_marco@polo.com.np
- ❖ **Canyon Swing** 140 m down stream at The Last Resort. 4439525
- ❖ **Getaway package** night's stay at Godavari Village Resort, includes dinner and breakfast. 5560675
- ❖ **Shivapuri** Tranquil village, superb views and birdwatching. Shivapuri Heights Cottage, on the edge of Shivapuri National Park. Steve@escape2nepal.com
- ❖ **Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge** Pure relaxation. 4361500
- ❖ **Bardia National Park** with Jungle Base Camp Lodge. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com
- ❖ **Golf** at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa. 4451212

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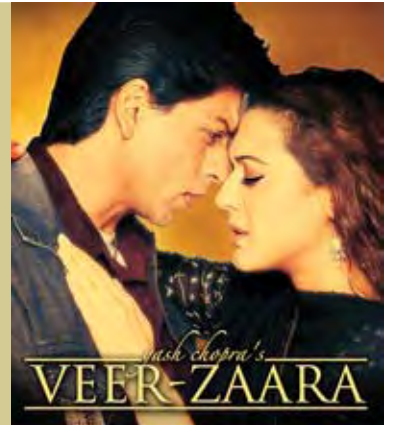
DEXO MUSIC CENTER
Thamel, Tel: 4423526, 4249726

Veer-Zaara portrays the trauma of partition. In true Yashraj tradition, it is an emotional love story. Saamiya Siddiqui (Rani Mukherji) is a Pakistani lawyer who helps two lovers. Veer aka Veer Pratap Singh (Shahrukh Khan) is from India and Zaara aka Zaara Hayat Khan (Preity Zinta) is from Pakistan. Due to the partition, they have been separated. This film is shows how love conquers all and goes beyond boundaries drawn by men.

JAINEPAL CINEMA

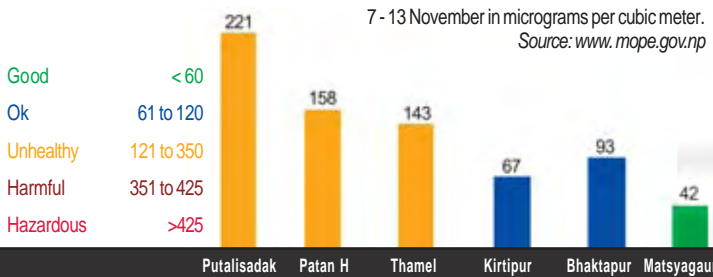
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KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

The air pollution level in Kathmandu increased steadily last week. In the first three days, the average PM10 concentration in Kathmandu Valley was within the national standard of 120 micrograms per cubic meter, but in the days that followed PM10 concentration crossed to unhealthy levels. The air pollution was at its worst on the day of Laxmi Puja, when the PM10 at Putali Sadak was almost three times the national standard. Compared to the previous week, the PM10 levels in all six stations have increased with Putali Sadak recording an increase of 26 percent.



NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



The seasonal jet stream drift has brought turbulent conditions on domestic flights and a band of moisture all the way from the east coast of Africa. The clouds are riding the jet stream and will only bring light rain and snow in the upper valleys. Kathmandu's maximum temperature will plummet to 19 Celsius over the weekend. This means it will take longer for the morning mist in the Valley to burn off, hazy smoggy conditions will persist all day. Conclusion: expect a gloomy weekend and cooler weather.

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रेडियो सगरमाथाको साथी बनाउँ, आफ्ना कुरा रेडियोबाटै भनाउँ

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

साथी बन्न लाग्ने शुल्क:

व्यक्तिगत	साधारण	मानार्थ	आजीवन
साधारण रु. १,०००/- (हरेक वर्ष नवीकरण गर्नुपर्ने)	रु. २५,०००/- (हरेक वर्ष नवीकरण गर्नुपर्ने)	रु. २५,०००/- (नवीकरण गर्नु पर्ने)	रु. २५,०००/- (नवीकरण गर्नु पर्ने)
संस्थागत	साधारण रु. १५,०००/- (हरेक वर्ष नवीकरण गर्नुपर्ने)	रु. २०,०००/- (नवीकरण गर्नु पर्ने)	रु. २०,०००/- (नवीकरण गर्नु पर्ने)

साथी बनेपछि:
रेडियोबाट आफ्ना कुरा भन्न पाइनेछ।
सहलियत दरमा सूचना प्रसार गराउन सकिनेछ।
रेडियोबाट सघन्यवाद नाम प्रसार गरिनेछ।

(थप जानकारीका लागि कार्यालय समयभित्र रेडियो सगरमाथामा सम्पर्क गर्नुहोस्, फोन: ५५२००८९, ५५४२२४५)

Old age home for the world's tyrants

News this week that the noted Indian godman, Shankar Acharya, was thinking of retiring in Nepal just before being nabbed by Madras Police is an indication of this country's enormous potential as a retirement destination.

Our tourism planners should try to cash in on the huge worldwide market for ex-tyrants, retired despots and tycoons who are on the lookout of a safe haven where they will be left alone in the autumn of their lives to splurge their ill-gotten wealth. Nepal offers the perfect destination for them: laws are lax, the scenery is nice and they will feel right at home here among local gangsters who are among the world's friendliest.

But it would be foolish to rest on our laurels and wait for the world's genocidal cliques and mass murderers to come to us. Competition is stiff, and other countries are vying to entice them

UNDER MY HAT
Kunda Dixit



with incentives like tax holidays, one-window cash repatriation and free dental treatment. There are countries with a lot of experience in this field: Saudi Arabia hosted

Ugandan pensioner Idi Amin for the rest of his natural life and even allowed him to indulge in occasional cannibalism to keep him happy.

Emperor Bokassa spent his retirement and all the money he plundered from the Chadian exchequer in France. Baby Doc Duvalier also retired in the south of France with his Tonton Macoute comrades and found it quite agreeable. Florida is the favourite destination for Latin American junta retirees, superannuated death squad leaders and failed coup plotters where they find the climate salubrious and local politicians whose values agree with their own.

What I'm trying to say is that despite Nepal's myriad advantages, it is not going to be a cakewalk to convince the world's ex-tinpot dictators to come here. What do we offer that others don't? What is our USP? Our thinking needs to be strategic and we must have a masterplan. A grand design, if you will. I'm sure His Majesty's Government is thinking of ways to skim off the pension of the world's scum.

The first thing of course is never to sign any extradition treaties with anyone. That would instantly destroy efforts to promote Nepal as a retirement destination. For example, Mr Radovan Karadic may feel perfectly at home in Nepal these days and we could probably convince him to come, but why should he if he knows that we could hand him over to the ICJ in The Hague? Ditto for Mr Dawood.

The second thing is to restore dictatorship in Nepal so overseas despots can hit the ground running when they arrive. What noted international thugs also like about Nepal is that even if they are arrested by mistake, jail breaks and flying out undetected can be arranged. (Theme song: 'Where have you gone, Mr Robinson?')

But we also need to be more proactive in pin-pointing potential retirees. First thing we have to do is shortlist the target group, and in the national interest I'd like to propose a few notorious names:

1. Saddam Hussein (We could put him on a retainer as a human rights adviser.)
2. Mobutu Sese Seko (Will be allowed to wear a hat made of snow leopard fur while here.)
3. Imelda Marcos (She can stash Swiss cash via hundi, and we'll throw in a couple of hundred pairs of shoes for free.)