

The Nepal Digest

The First Nepali e-Magazine

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About The Nepal Digest

The Nepal Digest (TND) is a publication of TND Foundation, global not-for-profit information and resource center (registered in New York, USA) committed to promoting issues concerning Nepal. All members of TheNepalDigest.org will get copy of [The Nepal Digest \(TND\)](#). Membership is free of charge and is open to all.

The Nepal Digest is the first Nepali electronic e-magazine in the Internet. The Nepal Digest hopes to create a free and democratic electronic platform -- free of all political views, free of cultural biasness, against prejudices and unjustness of all kinds.

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You can submit your articles, views and news at its website <http://theNepalDigest.org/submit.htm> or via email contact@theNepalDigest.org. The TND team appreciates your support.

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Mourning Times: "Execution of 12 Innocent Nepalese in Iraq"

September 1, 2004

Special TND Blog By *Ujjwal Bhattarai*

Honestly, all Nepalese are so shocked right now that no one I have spoken to in past 24 hours can believe what has happened in Iraq. This sad and depressing incident has caused behemoth anger and frustration among all Nepalese living in Nepal and abroad. Despite receiving calls from several TND readers "to do something", I felt that it was too late to do anything at least for those 12 unfortunate brothers of ours. However, when I read that thousands more have recently left Bombay to Kuwait heading towards Iraq, I sensed the potential danger, which has compelled to pull myself up and convert my anger and frustration into collections of voice and efforts.

WE (TND TEAM) STRONGLY CONDEMN THE BRABAROUS KILLINGS OF INNOCENT NEPALESE AND URGE THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT (AND EXISTING US SUPPORT IN IRAQ) TO FIND AND PUNISH THESE TERRORISTS. WE ALSO EXPRESS OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHIES TO THE FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF THE VICTIMS.

Even though the terrorists gave no demands, preconditions, or no ultimatum and simply butchered the innocents, the situation could have possibly been different provided that the Nepalese government had acted more promptly and seriously. By leaving the matter to two ambassadors only, Nepal did not show that it cared enough about the victims. The hope of the freedom of hostages would have been slightly higher if, at the least, the government would have sent high level official to Iraq, (Jordan or Kuwait) to directly negotiate with the captives. They did not try enough. So no matter how much we condemn our own government's negligence and lack of interest to save our boys is not adequate.

The other side of coin - the violence in Kathmandu or other parts of Nepal against Muslims in general is unnecessary and sad. We are proud Nepalese and we are known for our religious tolerance and we should keep it up that way. Act of "taking revenge" might sound tempting however by burning mosques, and offices of mid-eastern airlines will only hurt than help. In Suman Pradhan's words " Are they [Muslim Nepali] any different from the 12 Nepalīs killed in Iraq for the mere fact that they were Nepalīs? ". Fellow Nepalese, yes, it is very difficult, however, please you have to calm down.

Ujjwal Bhattarai

(For TND)

Murderer's statement

"We have carried out the sentence of God against 12 Nepalīs who came from their country to fight the Muslims and serve the Jews and the Christians believing in Buddha as their God.,"
-The statement by Army of Ansar al Sunna

Terrorists made their victim read the followings in front of a TV camara

"We come here to Iraq on the basis of an agreement between our company, Nepalese agency, and the American (army), with the help of a Jordanian company... to help with American force," said one of the hostages, seated amongst the 11 other captives.

The salary is ... 2,500 dollars they give us on guarantee, and then they said for us that the situation is not dangerous in Iraq but we see the situation is dangerous

We are arrested by unknown group and this is on evidence the situation is not under American security or control in Iraq. So we ask anyone who wants to come to Iraq not to be cheated by these high salary because they are false and America is lying."

Nepalese Government's Response

- Government has strongly condemned the act.
- They have decided to compensate the victims by giving Rs. 1 Million to victim's families.
- They have initiated to rescue other Nepalīs present in Iraq.
- The government has canceled the registration of Moonlight Consultant Pvt. Ltd.-the company that had sent maority of 12 Nepalīs to Jordan who were later murdered in Iraq.

- The government has raised the ceiling of accident and life insurance for Nepalis going to work in Gulf countries from Rs 100,000 to Rs one million.

UN Secretary General of the UN, Kofi Annan, condemns the murder

Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, has condemned the murder of a dozen Nepali civilian hostages in Iraq terming it as "gruesome." A statement released by Mr. Annan's spokesman at UN Headquarters in New York Tuesday said the Secretary General was "appalled and dismayed" by the murders of the 12 men and offered his deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims.

Nepalis in North America Condemn Iraqi Militant Executions

By Gauri Adhikary

The Nepalese Americas Council (NAC) strongly condemns the barbaric actions of the Iraqi militants who killed 12 innocent Nepali workers and then, even more appallingly, publicized the killings on a website.

We join with all the civilized people in the world in offering our profound condolences to the family members of the slain workers and praying for the souls of the departed.

The NAC maintains that there is nothing in the teachings of any world religion that condones cold-blooded murder. Some of the purported statements of the militants, which invoked the name of Buddha and sought to incite religious hostilities, only demonstrate their irresponsible, ignorant and misguided ways. The brutal killing of poor Nepali workers caught up in the hostilities without any demands or deadlines suggests that the killers are capricious, criminal bullies regardless of their lofty religious sounding statements. The international community and government of Iraq should find the savage killers and punish them.

The NAC recommends that Nepali workers be dissuaded from working in Iraq since there is no reasonable mechanism in place to provide them personal security.

It calls upon the government of Nepal to institute measures to prohibit Nepali workers from being sent to these areas of conflict without adequate safeguards, information, and insurance already in place for them. Immediate steps should also be instituted to ensure that sufficient compensation is paid to the families of the victims and to engage in diplomatic and regulatory efforts to prevent any such occurrence in the future. We also call upon the Nepali government and the Nepali diplomatic entities working in the area to arrange for the immediate transportation of the deceased bodies for a proper cremation in Nepal.

The NAC also calls upon its member organizations and individuals to lodge their own protests by urging their governments and representatives to condemn the militants. While world condemnation might appear to mean little to the anarchic savages that perpetrated this atrocity, it might help save lives in the future if there is any humanity left in these fanatics at all.

The NAC is a coordinating body of Nepali organizations in North America founded in 1991. It counts among its members, over 25 Nepali organizations from all over the USA and Canada.

ANA has started "Nepalese Hostages in Iraq Fund"

The Association of Nepalis in the Americas (ANA) is collecting donations for the Nepalese Hostages in Iraq Fund. ANA 100% guarantees that every single penny received will be delivered in full and equally to the grieving family members of the victims. While monetary compensation is no substitute for lost lives, the funds will be disbursed to those parents who lost their sons, the wives who mourn for their husbands, the siblings who will miss their brothers and the children who will never see their fathers again. Country of Nepal and Nepalis living abroad have been left shocked and devastated by this horrible tragedy.

Consider contributing to this cause, even if it is a small amount. More information about the gruesome event and how you can help is available online at <http://www.ANAonline.org/iraq>.

Nepalis in North America Condemn Iraqi Militant Executions

Sharda Thapa

NRN-ICC Representative USA

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GBNC organizes Vigil to remember the departed souls

The Greater Boston Nepali Community (GBNC) is holding a vigil to remember the departed souls and strongly protest against the horrendous acts of terror.

Please join us as we hold hands against the injustice committed against our brothers.

Date: Thursday September 2, 2004

Time: 7 pm

Venue: Harvard Square in front of the T- Station next to Au Bon Poin, Boston, MA

King Gyanendra expresses sorrow at the killing of Nepalis

His Majesty King Gyanendra has expressed deep sorrow on behalf of himself and HM Queen Komal at the killing of innocent Nepalis by terrorists in Iraq.

In a message broadcast by the state-run Nepal Television Wednesday evening, King Gyanendra conveyed his condolence to the families of victims and wished for eternal peace of the departed souls.

Source: NepalNews.com

*** COMMENTS ***

Comments by [Gautam](#) from United States on Wednesday, September 01, 2004 at 11:22 - IP Logged

How sad. 🙄🙄 List of unfortunates:

Aug 31st 2004

Prakash Adhikari (Jhapa)

Ramesh Khadka (Lalitpur)

Lalan Singh Koiri (Dhanusha)

Mangal Bahadur Limbu (Dhankuta)

Jit Bahadur Thapa Magar (Gorkha)

Gyanendra Shrestha (Khotang)

Rajendra Kumar Shrestha (Khotang)

Bodhan Kumar Sah Sudi (Dhanusha)

Manoj Kumar Thakur (Dhanusha)

Sanjay Kumar Thakur (Dhanusha)

Bhekh Bahadur Thapa (Rolpa)

Bishnu Hari Thapa (Lamjung)

Comments by [Gautam](#) from United States on Wednesday, September 01, 2004 at 11:23 - IP Logged

May their soul rest in peace.

Comments by [Dr. Upendra Mahato](#) from Russian Federation on Wednesday, September 01, 2004 at 12:01 - IP Logged

Received via Email - Ed.

Press Statement of International Coordination Council of Non-Resident Nepali Association on the Barbaric Executions of Nepali Hostages in Iraq September 1, 2004

The International Coordination Council of the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRN-ICC) along with Nepali communities all over the world condemn in the strongest terms the dastardly act of terrorism committed on 12 innocent Nepali workers by Iraqi militants. This atrocious crime against poor workers from a small country having no role whatsoever in the Iraq war is senseless and shocking to the civilized world. Nepalis from all parts of world are appalled and outraged to see the ghastly killings publicized on a website. We join with all the decent people in the world in offering our profound grief and heartfelt condolence to the families, friends and loved ones of those who have been the victims of this heinous crime. We strongly believe that there was nothing in the teachings of any world religion that condoned cold-blooded murder. Some of the purported statements of the militants, which invoked the name of Buddha and sought to incite religious hostilities, only demonstrate their ignorant and misguided ways. The brutal killing of poor Nepali workers caught up in the hostilities without any demands or deadlines suggests that the killers are capricious criminal bullies regardless of their lofty religious sounding statements. While utterly condemning the evil forces of Iraq, we strongly urge the HMG that those responsible for illegally smuggling Nepalis to Iraq be brought to justice immediately, require the responsible companies to compensate the families of those killed according to international standards, and instruct Nepali diplomatic missions in India, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and UAE that Nepali workers be dissuaded from going to Iraq from these countries since there is no reasonable mechanism in place to provide them with personal security.

The NRN-ICC also calls upon the Diaspora in the world to lodge their own individual protests. While world condemnation might appear to mean little to the anarchic savages that perpetrated this atrocity, it might help save a life in the future.

May the God give eternal peace to the departed soul and fortitude to bereaved family to bear this irreplaceable loss.

Dr. Upendra Mahato

President

International Coordination Council (ICC)

Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA)

Comments by [kamala Sarup](#) from United States on Wednesday, September 01, 2004 at 16:47 - IP Logged

Nepalese Hostage's murder as "barbaric."
-Kamala Sarup

Militants in Iraq had done the greatest harm to Islam and humanity by killing Nepalese hostages. The killing, by a group calling itself the Islamic Army in Iraq, cancels out centuries of civilisation and takes us back to the dark ages of barbarism. The killing of Nepalese people is a tragic, incomprehensible loss for Nepal. Even, the new Al-Qaida trend of beheading human beings and posting the pictures on the Internet is horrific and most disgusting. This must come to an end.

No cause could justify the heartless murder of the Nepalese hostage. There is simply no justification for those kinds of atrocities. Even terrorist should know the killing united Nepal. Nepal is and must remain unified and together.

It was a barbaric, depraved, cowardly act of premeditated murder against an innocent human being. The scene is reminiscent of the Nepalese people; just as horrifying, just as brutal, just as incomprehensible. It was a horrible, inexcusable murder. We Nepalese condemn this horrible act because those Nepalese had committed no crime. We condemned the hostage's murder as "barbaric."

The killing of Nepalese held hostage in Iraq a crime against humanity. It was a "brutal act" that had shocked the entire country. The captors had caused harm to humanity and Islam. Targetting innocent civilians in Iraq is deemed terrorism. They have taken the lives of innocent people. The whole country has gone into mourning over this news. It is a crime against humanity.

Twelve Nepalese taken hostage in Iraq by an Al-Qaeda linked group have been executed. We Nepalese people need to know what happened and what is being done to bring to justice those who committed such repugnant murders.

Even last week, the Nepali hostages have appealed to the government to take stern action against an agent of Moonlight Manpower Company who, they said, forced them to go to Iraq despite their unwillingness to go there. They also called on Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba to initiate urgent efforts to rescue them.

Since terrorism has turned into an extremist Islamic regimen that accuses whole societies and countries. Even we know, being taken hostage is a frightening and highly dangerous event but no one can accurately answer the importunate yet legitimate question: How to stop terrorist acts?.

Even prime minister Deuba had appealed for the hostages' release, saying they were poor men just trying to support their families. Their families also pleaded for their release. Nepal is very disturbed and angered by the terrible and repulsive crimes. Murder of Nepalese people should be punished. This is against the people of Nepal. Even last week Nepal asked Iraq to mediate the release of Nepalese hostages. Nepal has always condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and believes that such barbaric acts can never be justified.

Now we have a question, will Nepal government will take all precautionary measures to ensure the safety of Nepalese people from Islamic terrorist?

Now, Nepal will need to fortify and strengthen itself. Nepali people as well as all those who are concerned about the future of civilized Nepal must also improve its efficiency in all key functions of the country. We are devastated to hear the news of the death of our people. Their murder is an appalling and our thoughts go out to the families to whom we can offer our condolences. It is also widely known that Islamic terrorism or any kinds of terrorism meant in practice bloody terrorism and forced labor. Even on the other hand, these terrorist separated us from our families. They are criminals and murderers, so without eliminating them peace will not exist in this world. We Nepalese condemn them. Not only we in Nepal but the entire world will condemn it in strong words.

Comments by [Surendra R Devkota](#) from United States on Wednesday, September 01, 2004 at 22:55 - IP Logged

The Ugly face of the Western Media After I saw the photographs of these kidnapped fellow citizen and read their story, I checked the so-called the western democratic and free speeches bla bla bla newspapers, I did not find anything. Except a confusing news reporting of BBCNEWS.com, I could not find any further on or offline contents. I copied some of the news stuffs including government of

Nepal's request to these bastard terrorist, and send to the NPR (National Public Radio), and urge to the NPR not to avoid or overlook this episode. I heard nothing! How come such a large scale of kidnapping case by terrorist was simply overlooked by the western media? Had it been a case of any other country, it would have ended in other way? Why our issue was not carried out by global media? May be they did not smell the fart of any like minded fellows! Had it been sincerely and fairly covered it would have saved their lives.

The present aftermath reporting by the western media is simply crocodile tears. Just another whither million denounces!

Comments by [Ravi Adhikari](#) from United States on Thursday, September 02, 2004 at 01:12 - IP Logged

This is the worst day we Nepalis -- inside and outside the country --have ever faced. There is no word that could explain the grief and condemn the barbaric acts. Moreover, I strongly believe that it was the failure of the government in Nepal -- if there is any -- which failed to broker a deal with the terrorists. Even the countries like India and Phillippines, who are being accused by Islamic world of committing violence against Muslims and Islam, have successfully secured the release of their citizens from the same monster. They even released an American journalist at the heartfelt appeal from his sister. Alas, no one worked for those poor 12 Nepalis.

In my opinion, if our government or any of it's BHATMARA representative had gone to Baghdad or at least addressed the abductors over the Al-Jazeera TV while explaining the peaceful coexistence of all religious groups in the only Hindu Kingdom, we would not have seen this day. We have been hearing from the Thekedars of the sh*tal Niwas that Nepal had a very friendly relations with Gulf countries -- Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Baharain, Jordan and so on -- we should have worked through them. They should have explained the fanatic abductors that if something unfortunate happens to these Nepalis, it will have a very bad impact on entire Islamic society in Nepal. Unfortunately, that's what is happening right now in my beloved motherland. Onr Nepali is after the life of another Nepali.

At this sad moment, I trully miss the services of great nationalist such as Sheikh Idris of Rautahat and peope's poet Ali Miya of Pokhara. By the way, where in the hell Janab Mohammed Mohsin Mantriji had been during all these days? Had he explained to the Islamic world how Muslims are being treated in Nepal and being a Muslim -- let's face it -- what he had got so far from the majority Hindus, we would not have lost the 12 innocent lives. Unfortunately, at least I have not heard him doing anything. Fot ther government's part, it has no right to shed 'crocodile's tear' and announce the monetary consolation. Does money bring them back?

Looking at the whole tragic episode, now, I'm pretty much convinced that a commonor's life in Nepal has no importance to the rulers. I repeat, is there is any government in Nepal? As a sensible citizen, however, we should remain away from any sort of reactionary act against our Muslim brethren in Nepal. But those Nepali Muslims who love to dance to the tune of Islamic fanatics, needs to monitored, scrutnized and punished, no matter how powerful they might be. Sheikh Idris and Ali Miya have to be the ideal to Nepali Muslims but not Hohalla Khan or Fashad Sheikh of any foreign land.

At last, the only way which could help us survive this difficult and painful moment is, we have to remain 100% Nepali in our heart and unite ourselves more than ever.

Comments by [GP](#) from United States on Thursday, September 02, 2004 at 10:06 - IP Logged

I have few questions, unanswered. I don't who is going to answer them.

1. Why Prakash Saran Mahat is still there in Foreign Ministry? Why did not he resign? We knew he was there for just position to make illegal money as much as he can.
2. Mushrooming of Manpower Companies. All these political parties have their own Bhada ka tatto having enjoying the benefit of ransom from Poor Nepalis who wish to go to Iraq or other war infected countries to turn their life to better. Will they have more precise guidelines? I don't think.
3. Mohamad Mohashin? An inept Minister, who could have acted well in advance and approached to Islamic leaders around the world and delayed the deadlines, that could have avoided this massacre.

4. World leaders failed to note the biggest massacre in Iraq by terrorists recently created by Bush and his company. Remember Deoba went to meet Bush to support his campaign against World Terrorism, but, today we are paid for his visit and support to Bush.
5. Islamic cleric in Iraq said (Yahoo news had a news clip) it (killing) is understandable because they were supporting American Army? I don't get sense in this sort of "understanding" by Islamic Cleric in Iraq? How he got information that Nepalis were there to support American Army? Were they mistaken as Gurkha Soldier working for British Army? If not this is arrogant message from Cleric, because they are denouncing the kidnapping of french journalists? For me it looks that Cleric was scared of French power and was negligent / deliberate towards Nepalis because Nepal is powerless.
6. An Ambassador "Rana" (I don't who is the current ambassador of Nepal to USA or UK... Jordan or Arabian country) said that these Nepalis were illegal? Does any Nepali ILLEGALLY enters any country, deserve death penalty? Should not he be given enough warning? Where does Nepali govt. provide such information? It is said that these Nepalis were forced to enter to Iraq? Who is responsible?

GP

Comments by friendsoftnd@tnd.org from United States on Thursday, September 02, 2004 at 15:41 - IP Logged

Received via e-mail. -FofTND

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PRESS RELEASE

The International Nepali Literary Society is shocked and saddened by the loss of invaluable lives of twelve innocent Nepali citizens in a cruel and barbaric terrorist act in Iraq. At this moment of sorrow and pain, we all the Nepalis in diaspora are with our beloved brothers and sisters in Nepal and express our deepest sympathy and sincere condolences to the bereaved families.

We would term the killing of Nepalis as a barbaric, brutal and cruel act and condemn this inhuman terrorist activities. We call upon His Majesty's Government of Nepal and the international community to take necessary measures to fight against the terrorism. We also appeal all the sections of Nepalis Society to maintain peace and inter-religious harmony in the country, which has been prevailed among us as a tradition and culture.

The INLS Headquarter will remain closed to mourn the loss of our twelve innocent brothers, on Thursday 2nd September 2004.

01 September 2004
 DuBaSu Chhetri
 President, INLS
 Washington D.C.

Comments by Reader from United States on Thursday, September 02, 2004 at 21:19 - IP Logged

Another Delhi based writer also raises the same concern that of Surendra Devkota.
 Global media buries killing of Nepalese hostages
 New Delhi, Sep 1

Oscar-winning actress Charlize Theron's injury got more play than the brutal killing of 12 Nepalese hostages in Iraq, as leading global media houses relegated the tragedy to the back pages. As the Himalayan kingdom Wednesday erupted in fury against the slaughter, forcing the imposition of curfew in Kathmandu, international newspapers and TV channels did not highlight the terror killings on their websites.

Web editions of The Guardian, The Telegraph, Washington Post and Le Monde mentioned nothing about the incident or its fallout on their homepages, but drew attention to another terror incident -- the armed seizure of a school in northern Russia.

The New York Times on the web had a link referring to the incident on its homepage, whose best part was devoted to the ongoing US Republican convention.

The BBC and CNN's international edition fared a little better. The two posted the story of the executions and the violence in Nepal prominently beside the leading story -- the Russian hostage drama.

But the Fox News Channel's portal gave the Iraq executions a miss. "Only the Asian media has been sympathetic to the incident. I haven't come across even one international publication that has written a full story on it," said Paul Soren, a researcher with the New Delhi-based Observer Research Foundation's (ORF) South Asia Programme. While the incident screamed in the headlines of most Indian newspapers, the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera TV channel too had carried the killing of the 12 Nepalese contract workers by the Ansar al-Sunna as the top news story on its website.

China Daily too gave prominence to the incident that initially left Nepal stunned and later drove its citizens to fury, leading to attacks on mosques and offices of two Middle East airlines in Kathmandu. "The coverage of the Western media is markedly different from what it was when an American was decapitated by Iraqi militants a few months ago. They (media) had then condemned the terrorist outfits in Iraq," said Soren.

"Now there is not even a passing mention about the incident, just because it happened to a dozen Asians. So much for their bias."

Sources

<http://www.newslookmag.com/>

Comments by [Ritesh and Bindu Chaudhary](#) from United States on Friday, September 03, 2004 at 16:04 - IP Logged

This seems to be one of the worst era in Nepal's history where Nepalese are under attack everywhere. Nepalese are neither safe inside their own country, and neither outside. When Nepalese are getting butchered everyday by their own brothers and sisters (the Maoists) in their own country, people watching on the outside know how weak the nation is and what the value of human worth and dignity is in that country. That is why it was so easy for those criminals to heinously murder a dozen of our brothers within a matter of a few days of their captivity.

Take the example of our neighboring country India, whose government was successful in getting back their three captive citizens safe from Iraq, who were held captive since July 21. But the Nepalese government could say or do nothing but blab their mouth saying they could do very little as the Nepalese had entered Iraq illegally. What a shame! And is this the kind of response one would expect when the innocent lives were pleading the government for help?

The Maoist scare has left the nation enraged, scared, disintegrated, voiceless, grieving, and in shock. We have lost lives in uncountables; we cannot afford to lose any more- not outside the country and neither inside. Unless we remain united and integrated, outsiders are going to kill us, maim us, pity us. We want peace, integrity, the back up of the government and a ruler with a strong vision who can bring Nepal back on the track. We, the people of the country, including Government and the Maoists need to come out of their vested interests to unite as "one", if we want to have a voice and a power to prevent any crime against any Nepalese anywhere, anytime, by anybody in the future. May the souls rest in peace, may God give courage to the family of the deceased, May God Bless Nepal!

Comments by NDYCUSA from United States on Saturday, September 04, 2004 at 23:37 - IP Logged

Press Release

The Nepalese Democratic Youth Council in USA strongly condemns the gruesome murder of Nepali hostages describing it as barbaric and inhuman and expresses shock and anger over the incident. The brutal killing of Nepalese by terrorists in Iraq has shocked and grieved the whole world. The NDYCUSA condemns the inhuman murders and sees it as brutal activities against the human civilization. We strongly condemn the shameful murder of innocent Nepalese who had gone to Iraq for pure livelihood. The terrorists murdered them without putting forward any condition or demands and without listening to the voice of humanity, which is inhumane and barbaric, NDYCUSA urges international community to condemn and bring to justice those responsible for the inhuman crimes. NDYCUSA appeals to the Government to take strong action against the foreign manpower agencies responsible for sending workers to Iraq. We also appeal to the Nepalis brothers

and Sisters to maintain peace and nonviolent protest at this tragic movement. NDYCUSA expresses heartfelt condolence to the bereaved families and we the Nepalese community in USA are strongly with them at this movement of grief. We will try our utmost best to provide some financial support to the bereaved families. Sincerely,

Anand Bist
President
&
NDYCUSA Family,
01 september 2004

.....

Editorial: "Is This the Beginning of the End?"

Dear Readers:

On August 20, 2004 - the 3rd day of Kathmandu blockade, more than 150 newspapers/news-agencies reported News of Kathmandu blockade with heavy importance. This eerie news of Kathmandu was covered all around the world by well-known media sources such as Reuters, Voice of America from DC, Bloomberg from NY, "The Globe and Mail" from Canada, TVNZ from New Zealand, Al-Jazeera from Qatar, Channel News Asia from Singapore, Swiss Info from Switzerland, The Scotsman from UK, International Herald Tribune from France, Daily Times from Pakistan and Hindustan Times from India to name a few. BBC pushed this news to the headline of South Asian section on its website blaming the Maoists for being extreme while later "The Times of India", devoted an entire editorial of Aug 24, 2004, to the episode stating "The palace would be reluctant - to put it mildly - to liquidate itself. However, some concessions have to be made by both sides." This unprecedented flow of news about Nepal certainly indicated the seriousness of the matter.

If Maoists were conducting this blockade for publicity and pressure, they did a darn good job. However, if they were thinking of devastation for millions of innocent people living in the valley, one of whom was quoted saying "I have rice stocks only for 10 days.[Reuters]", they were committing a huge crime.

Even though Maoists have lifted off the blockade at present and life in Kathmandu valley seems to be shifting back to normal, the possibility of yet another stronger blockade is still plausible. In case of another such blockade, which could be considerably longer, how could the government cope and tackle the situation? Will they be ready?

With all this in mind, the people have started asking the questions "Is this the beginning of the end for the government? Are Maoists really ready to take over the Kathmandu Valley?"

Ujjwal Bhattarai
Editor/Co-ordinator
The Nepal Digest (TND)
contact@theNepalDigest.org

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Who said what?

By TND Research

"RIM had advised the Maoists to fight to finish."

- Former Prime Minister **Surya Bahadur Thapa** (revealing why Maoists had walked out of previous second round of peace talks). Source: Kantipur daily.

....

"Neither can we finish the Maoists, nor can they capture Singha Darbar (the federal government secretariat in Kathmandu). Both must accept co-existence."

- Deputy Prime Minister **Bharat Mohan Adhikary**, Source: Reuter's news agency

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"Soon after I came to Rail Bhawan [rail headquarters] at 0930, I ordered that all the gates be closed. All those who came late were stopped at the gates. I will not tolerate this."

Laloo Prasad Yadav, Rail Minister of India, ordered a day's pay be cut from salaries of railways employees who show up late at work.

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"Beauty is a curse."

- **Halle Berry** in People magazine

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Murder of Dekendra Raj Thapa

By TND Editor

Murder of Dekendra Raj Thapa

In one of the most unfortunate recent incidents, Dekendra Raj Thapa, a Dailekh-based Radio Nepal correspondent was brutally murdered by Maoists. This has certainly aroused a new trend of fear and intimidation among journalists. Even though Maoists have acknowledged that the murder was a "mistake" and "never to happen again in future", only few believe that such actions will not be repeated by Maoists.

TND strongly condemns killing of a journalist. Such a brutal and insensitive act will not score Maoists any points. Maoists must never forget that with fear and intimidation they can never win.

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Interview: Mr. Krishna Nirola, President of ANA

By Kamala Sarup and Ujjwal Bhattarai

Recently, Kamala Sarup and Ujjwal Bhattarai presented a set of questions to Mr. Krishna Nirola, President of ANA for an interview with TND. He graciously accepted the offer and replied back with his answers. Presented here are excerpts of the interview with Mr. Nirola.

Introduction to ANA

ANA is an organization of the people of Nepali origin and friends of Nepal in the Americas. ANA was founded in July 1983 in Corning, New York and was incorporated in Washington DC in 1983 as a non-profit tax exempt organization. The purpose of ANA is the promotion and preservation of Nepali identity and culture in the Americas. More information is available at its website www.ana-home.org.



Mr. Nirola has been living in Washington DC area since July 1968. His family includes his wife Rita, daughters Shila and Isha, and a son Sanjog. He is an Civil Engineer by profession and works for Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) since March 1983.

About ANA and its Members

Q1. You have been President of ANA for few years now. What did you enjoy most about being a president of ANA?

Mr. Nirola: I enjoyed mostly serving the Nepalis community in Americas, meeting many non-resident Nepalis not only from the Americas but also from all over the world at our conventions. It is always a pleasure to see ANA grow from its humble but ambitious beginning in Corning to where we are now, an internationally known association of Nepalis abroad!

Q2. What are current number of A. General memberships, and B. Paid memberships of ANA?

Mr. Nirola: We have currently about 250 life members and over 60 paid regular members and all other Nepalis are unpaid ANA members.

Q3. It is believed that there are more than 50,000 Nepalese in USA. What might be possible reasons, in your opinion, that Nepalese are unhurried on becoming ANA members?

Mr. Nirola: While one would like to see all Nepalis in North America be our paid members, it is not a realistic goal. You should ask those who are not paid members why they do not join. My own guess is that many of those 50,000 (I do not know how reliable that number is) many are either students, or are still in the process of settling down in the Americas. It is not that we do not want all of them to join, but realistically we expect only those who have settled here permanently to join. Even among them, each has his or her own expectation from ANA, which realistically ANA cannot meet either legally or philosophically. It is a non-profit organization and its main goal is social and cultural. If you look at other similar organizations, I won't be surprised if the membership (paid) ratio to total pool of potential members, we are not doing that badly. But certainly we could do better, much better.

Q4. What is ANA doing to increase number of its members, and to reach the mass of Nepalese people?

Mr. Nirola: ANA is already well known not only in America but also all over the world. Just look at the visitors who come to our national convention. It is always difficult to recruit paying members to any organization specially if there is no direct benefit to them. Hopefully as people realize the necessity and values (however indirect) of organizations like ANA, they will join.

Cultural Center in Washington DC:

Q4. Even with almost 20 yrs of planning, proposed Nepali temple in DC is still an incomplete dream. What seems to be major hurdles for this project?

Mr. Nirola: Establishing Nepal Education and Cultural Center (NECC) has been a primary goal of ANA from the very beginning. We now have a 3.4-acre land, and a self-sustaining temple. Lacks of money and resistance from neighbors have been problems. The latter problem can be handled, but fund raising is difficult, as every organization knows. NECC is now already a quasi-independent body registered on its own and its board of trustees is diligently addressing these issues. With donations of time and money from dedicated Nepalis, I am sure we will achieve this goal sooner or later.

Q5. What is the financial state of this project? How much funds has been raised? How much do you expect ANA need to raise more to complete this mission? How's been the fund raising going in last 3 years of your leadership?

Mr. Nirola: We have raised so far over \$60,000 in last three years and we have about \$75,000 in bank. The current appraised land value of our site is \$500,000. We need about a million dollars to complete the project. Various avenues of fund raising are being contemplated.

Q6. How do you want to set the expectation of Nepali community for REALLY having our own temple and cultural center in DC? In other words - Will we have our cultural center eventually?

Mr. Nirola: Sooner or later, yes, definitely.

Q7. At every Nepali gatherings where there are debates about ANA, there follows a complain that ANA lacks unity within itself, and due to power -struggle between various factions, ANA's role has been limited to "clubhouse for few elite Nepalese". What is your response?

Mr. Nirola: ANA's members are all educated people with their own ideas, and certainly at times there have been difference of opinions. You may call it lack of unity; I see it as our strength. ANA is a completely membership driven organization, almost every issue is put up for vote. So objectively I do not see how any one can complain about being clubhouse and all that. Any member has the same vote as so called elite member has.

Having said that, I realize such a perception exists in the general community. I ask anyone who wants to find the truth, take the following steps: join the association, bring up the issue that bothers him/her, if the Executive members do not listen/ or care, bring the issue up for vote. That to me is a democratic and much more constructive and effective way, rather than just complaining from outside. And it works. For example, while many of the so-called elites did not want to rejoin NAC, the members voted otherwise and now ANA is a member of NAC. ANA is very transparent in its activities.

Q8. If such factions exist, how do you plan to reconcile and bring the unsatisfied group into the main stream?

Mr. Nirola: See the answer to Q7 above.

Q9. What is your vision about including white collar professionals, blue collar workers, students, and others alike into national organization like ANA?

Mr. Nirola: ANA is "collar" blind! Our annual membership dues are relatively cheap; even most of the students I know spend more than that every month on their cell phones. And at local levels of organizing conventions, the students already do play very important roles. So one cannot say that they are not already active in ANA. The basic issue is how to convince people to join an association from which they do not perceive getting direct benefit? It is a tough job. Right now for most people ANA is relevant only at the annual convention, and even there we allow everybody to attend with little or no difference in registration fees. And actually many do not even register. We could take a hard stand at the convention, but we have decided that the Convention is one occasion that ANA is

providing to the youth across America to meet once a year and we consider it as fulfilling one of our mission.

Relationship with other organization/NRN

Q10. Now that you have joined NAC umbrella after so many years of reluctance, what was the main rationale of that move? What benefits can NAC append to ANA?

Mr. Nirola: As you know our members originally voted to join NAC for one year, then extended the membership for one more year and then decided not to continue membership. Now they have voted to join again. It just goes on to show how democratic our organization is. These voting patterns also indicate that our members are deeply divided on this issue, primarily because many of its members do not see the value of joining NAC. Now that we have officially joined, ANA extends its full support to NAC, and let us see where NAC goes. After all, NAC is composed of many organizations, and we are just one of them. If we become too proactive, we will be charged with bullying.

Q11. What is the status of proposed merger with ANMA?

Mr. Nirola: It is fully detailed in our last Newsletter, please go to:
www.nepalhorizons.com/ANA/juneNL.pdf

Q12. Given that a new international "NRN Association" has been formed to handle issues related to Non-Resident Nepalese, do you see any change in ANA's valuable role in NRN issues? If yes, please illustrate?

Mr. Nirola: ANA has raised NRN issues from the very beginning, and it will continue to be active in this area, on its own and in cooperation with other organizations. Achieving the goal is more important than which organization gets the credit.

Q13. Recently, Nepali community had an opportunity to express its concerns about Nepal and its political situation under a petition drafted by Dr. Alok Bohara. What was ANA's role on that petition? Do you consider that as a successful and meaningful signature campaign for Nepal?

Mr. Nirola: While ANA was not the originator of the petition drive, we fully supported it. Achieving peace in Nepal is the desire of every Nepali and ANA supports every action taken by any organization or individual to achieve this goal. Again, as in NRN issues, the goal is more important than who gets it done. Now as to how effective the petition drive was, it is for historians to decide.

Caring and Giving back to Nepal

Q14. Could there be any role of ANA (and international organizations) in the process of government-Maoists negotiation? Please share your opinion on ANA's position in UN mediated peace process in Nepal.

Mr. Nirola: As I said earlier we supported the petition drive. Being a tax-exempt non-profit organization ANA does not want to and is not legally allowed to get too much involved with internal politics of Nepal.

Q15. What is your view on present political situation in the country?

Mr. Nirola: Since we are talking mainly about ANA in this interview, I do not want to get into my personal political views here.

The Final Words

Q16. Please summarize your achievements towards Nepalese community as the President of ANA? Any final message to readers?

Mr. Nirola: I have always supported and been actively involved in ANA activities from the very beginning first as a regular member, and then in various official positions, and as a president for last three years. I will continue to support ANA after finishing my term also. So for me my role in ANA is a long one and a continuing one. As for my achievements, if any, as a President, let others decide.

Finally, I would like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to talk about ANA with your readers. Through your columns I would like to remind everybody, that we Nepalis, some if not all, tend to treat every organization like they were political in nature and every difference of opinions as if they were personal vendettas. Some of your own questions show the same line of thinking. ANA is not a political organization. The President and other officers do not get any monetary awards (on the contrary it actually costs a lot of their time and their own money too) and have no POWER over anybody or

anything. ANA's president is accountable only to its members and not to Nepalis at large. The only reward for the President and others is the satisfaction one gets from serving voluntarily a cause that one believes in. I encourage all to join and be active in not only ANA but also other similar voluntary organizations. We have to start appreciating and encouraging voluntary services among our community.

Thank you.

Immigration Questions and Answers

(Ramesh K. Shrestha is a practicing attorney in New York City. His office is located at 377 Broadway, Suite 801, New York, NY 10013. Tel: (212) 625-3394, Fax: (212) 431-4460, Email: Rshresthalaw@aol.com. His practice concentrates on Immigrant and Nonimmigrant Visas, Business Immigration, Extraordinary Ability, National Interest Waivers, Labor Certification/Permanent Residency, Detention/Bond, Removal/Deportation Defense before Immigration Courts/Executive Office for Immigration Review, Department of Justice.) He will answer TND reader's immigration related questions. Questions can be asked by visiting our submit page or simply by emailing at contact@thenepaldigest.org. TND sincerely thanks and appreciates Mr. Shrestha's contribution. - Editor)

There are 3 questions and answers in this issue.

Question 1:

SBA from Canada asked:

Hi, I arrived to Canada about two weeks back. Currently I have student visa for 4 years. I am doing my second degree here. Would you be able to tell me if there is an option by which I can get greencard of Canada ASAP?

Answer:

Your question involves practice of Canadian immigration law. Thus, it is recommended that you contact a Canadian immigration attorney.

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Question 2:

Biswas Sharma from USA asked:

How long it will take to get K3 visa for Nepal. What is the quick procedure? I have heard it may take 3-6 months but technically it is the quicker process for pending I-130 should not take more than 2 months. What do you suggest if the person has not been filed his I-130 yet and waiting for citizenship interview.

Thank you for your kind advice which I will heartly appreciate.

Answer:

Dear Sharma ji:

It is necessary to have an I-130 pending when you file a petition for K-3. With regard to the processing time, it depends on at which Service Center the application has been filed. However, the tentative processing time for a K-3 petition is 3 to 6 months or more.

For a K-3 petition, the petitioner must be a U.S. citizen and I-130 petition must be pending when a petition for K-3 is filed because the K-3 is coming to the United States to wait for the approval of the pending I-130 petition.

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Question 3: (Follow-up on Question 2)

Biswas Sharma from USA asked:

Dear Ramesh ji:

Thank you for your prompt reply. I am going to file from San Francisco California no idea how quick they do. However i just applied for Citizenship few week ago haven't received any conformation either.

It may take 6-8 month to get citizenship done. My question is if file I-130 for my spouse with my current status (Green Card Holder). Does it make difference or i have to wait citizenship and file I-130. I heard have notify Visa centre to upgrad status is very slow process.

I sincerely appericiated.

Answer:

Biswas ji:

It depends on what your preference is. I would file an I-130 petition now and make a request to upgrade the visa petition later when you become a US citizen. Because your naturalization application is still up in the air.

Good luck.

Ramesh K. Shrestha, Attorney-At-Law

(Disclaimer Notice: Legal answer provided must not be construed as a legal advice rather it is an answer general in nature. One must seek legal advice from an immigration attorney for his or her particular legal matter.)



Politics: "Whither million denounces!"

By Surendra R Devkota

A few months ago in an interview, one professor simply asked me why I did not return to my beautiful country once he visited many years ago. I wish I could go back to my living heaven for gaas, baas, and kapas, and enjoy the social rituals, natural beauty, and organic livelihood for the rest of my life.

As we all know our native places are deserted as a ghost town. By watching a long queue in front the so-called manpower agencies, we can guess that how our young people are very much eager to leave their places as earliest as possible.

It is estimated that about one million people have already left their country. The brave Gurkhas are now being a major sources supply of the labor forces in the neighboring regions. During an infrequent communication with people living in native areas, I also learnt that mostly elderly people are living or waiting their final days as helpless, and under the shadow of terror. Both soldiers of new and old regimes routinely visit to these people for different reasons like donation or information, and threat them as if they are the rulers. No one should dare to defy either threat since they know the ultimate fate. Those who defied had counted their days. It is also heartbreaking news to me to know that a couple of family friends were also cleared by the government soldiers as they helped to rival soldiers by providing meals. If these people didn't provide the meals, revolutionaries would have chopped them off. What an empathy dilemma to them! I never read the names of these people "missing in double action" ,albeit those killed by the royal army. Hence it may be doubtful to repeat frequently cited guess estimations: nine, ten or more thousands.

Had we accounted the total condemnation of the Maoist brutalities it should have exceeded ten or twenty thousands mark. I am sick of reading the ritual denounces of these state dealers like the ministers or so-called leaders or NGO chairs. I assume it is nothing more than the crocodile tears, if not mere politics. You know, why? Is that the only activity they can do? It's too much! I do not how you all tolerate such feelings sincerely. How come we lost our human sensibility, and social feeling? Will we be able to recover our glorious social capital in future?

There are hundreds of unanswered questions to be answered by both the rulers and Maobadis. There are several examples of irresponsible and irrational activities conducted by different sections of state broker. Further, country witnessed many unethical political hugging. There were times when innocent people were killed by the propagators of the People's war, or even by royal army, many so-called human rightists simply overlooked the incident as if nothing happened. But when one or more Maobadis were killed, dozens of denouncement used to appear in overnight.

A section of society was paying more sympathy to Maobadis than it deserves. Encouraged by many unholy compassion, eventually Maobadi insurgency was very successful to destroy the new roots of democracy in Nepal in a very short period of time, which is also as desired by few ruling and advantageous elites. Take another impious but historical event in Holeri how royal army and Maobadis shook their hands. In cumulative terms, as of now Maoist are prevailing by pushing the country into a turmoil of regression, regret, and restless.

It is also true that about 15 years ago, Maobadis were failed to win people's mind through democratic exercise, and now they are trying to overcome their war through seizing people's heart. This sort of Prachanda path got momentum due to murky philosophy of rulers and vested interest of administrators. Further it is equally unfortunate that Nepali people did not find true leader (s) to support fully by their hearts and minds, since almost all of them are like empty vessel sounds much. As Maobadis are approaching to rulers' edge, royal army is interested in counting cash in banks. What a great army! Forget the guns, and guerrillas! That's why it is the 'royal army' under Gynendra path!

Seems we are still heading towards either collateral or multilateral damages. If a royal government with either failed (police) or paralyzed state machinery like bureaucracy and military is requesting Maobadis for its routine business, what do you expect from people? I wish we don't have to read further denounces in different formats.



Politics: "Validity of Our Constitution"

By Raman Raj Misra

Evan after the experience since 1990, the Nepali intellectuals have not been able to distinguish between the "democracy" they had learnt from textbooks and the actual operational democracy of Nepal. They are still totally ignorant of the reality of our democratic dispensation. Recognition of reality is mostly beyond the capacity of the Nepali intellectuals. Consequently, they think that our Constitution is inviolable and capable of directing our polity. But they do not seem to accept the fact that our Constitution can and have been violated over and over again in our democracy.

Since the last couple of years some Nepali intellectuals have been finding faults in our Constitution, which their brains had initially discerned it to be "the best Constitution in the world"! Such clamour has increased since the Constitutional impassé due to the incapacity of the political Parties to participate in the scheduled election in 2002. Now those with minds that are incapable of breaking the Constitutional deadlock have been advocating for Constitutional replacement instead. But such people with such mental level do not realise that even if the present Constitution is modified, altered or replaced, it will not make much difference.

This current Constitution was drafted (mostly plagiarised) by just eleven appointees lead by Biswanath Upadaya, whose sole and overriding, intention was to render the Monarch as powerless as in the Rana period. The feasibility of the Constitution was not considered. The Constitution makers also did not consider the lessons from our own political history. Most likely, it was beyond their mental capacity to make such considerations.

Most of the provisions of the Constitutions were blindly copied from the Constitutions of foreign countries. So our democratic Constitution is nothing but an imitation. A layman would have known that an imitation, by definition, would not and never be real. But being intellectuals, our Constitution makers, well versed in plagiarism, could not and cannot possibly have the common sense of the laymen.

Since it is the Nepali intellectuals, with imitative minds, who are currently advocating for Constitutional change, one is forced to wonder whether this idea is really indigenous, or appropriate. Another question that arises in the minds of laymen is what type of people, with what type of brains will be entrusted to amend or substitute this Constitution in the future. No doubt, again it will be the same type of people who had made the present Constitution. So one cannot expect anything better.

Yet another question is that whether this slogan for Constitutional change is a ploy of the current political combatants to get an upper hand in the current crisis. Is the advocated reform or replacement of the present Constitution forced by the bayonets to serve such vested interest or is it really for the wellbeing of this country? Further, given the changed geopolitical equation since the 1990 and consequently the subservient body language displayed by our leaders in front of specific foreign

dignitaries, does it really matter, in terms of the level of sovereignty of Nepal, whether we retain, reform or replace this Constitution?

Our intellectuals and politicians have chanted the word "Constitution", only when it suits their purpose and have accepted its violations at other times. If the violation of the present Constitution is tolerated, condoned and justified, what difference does a reformulated or substituted Constitution make? If the current Constitution is violated with impunity and without retributive consequences, it stands to reason that any future Constitution will also be similarly violated. So what is the use of having a Constitution at all, if it is violated at one's convenience?

There has been many violation of the current Constitution from its very inception. The very first time was right after the first General Election of 1991. The Constitutional right (Article 36) to choose the leader of the parliamentary Party and Prime Minister of the elected Nepali Congress MPs was ignored by Ganesh Man Singh and Krishna P. Bhattari, by appointing Girija P. Koirala to be the Prime Minister. The Constitutional right of the 114 Congress members in parliament at the time was usurped without even conducting a mock voting for the sake of Constitutional formality. It showed, contrary to whatever may be written in the Constitution, that the persons who are not elected by the people can, in actual reality, appoint the Prime Minister, if they are the leaders of a dominant party.

One can enumerate many such instances of Constitutional violations but it can be construed as allegations. However, the verdict of the Supreme Court, will surely be enshrined in our history and will prove that violation of the Constitution had occurred. Our history will also record that neither the Supreme Court, nor the Parliament or any institutions or Parties have taken any measures to penalise those who have violated the Constitution. Except for the Monarch, the Constitution does not require the Cabinet nor our Legislators nor our Judiciary and certainly none of the political Parties "to preserve and protect" this Constitution.

The Supreme Court has never even reprimanded those for any judicially determined violations. Other violations, not declared by the Court as such, naturally are just tolerated. Our experience has shown that such violations, if ever brought to the notice of the Supreme Court, can at best be nullified, but there is no bar for repeating such violations again, as the violators are not penalised and not even reprimanded. In fact, those who have violated the Constitution have at times been actually rewarded!

The Supreme Court had declared that Girija P. Koirala had violated the Constitution when making an "agreement" with India on Tanakpur. Instead of being punished he was rewarded, as he not only retained the confidence of our Parliament and that of the Nepali Congress, but was made Prime Minister three more times, subsequently. The last time he was Prime Minister, the entire Nepali Congress dominated Parliament passed the controversial Citizenship Bill, deceptively presented as Financial Bill to purposely by-pass the Upper House. The Supreme Court declared this Bill to be unconstitutional, but those who passed such unconstitutional bill were not punished. Finally, Prime Minister Sher B. Deuba, rendered all existing land transaction laws null and void, through his "Land Reform fiat" in 2001. The Court declared it unconstitutional and restored the "rule of law" after two weeks, but did not even provide a reprimand to the violator of the Constitution.

So the reality of our democratic dispensation is that Constitution can be violated with impunity. No one is punished or reprimanded for violating the Constitution. Yet the Nepali intellectuals, not in tune with reality, still think that our constitution, changed, replaced or maintained will be inviolable and can actually direct our polity properly. Hence, today our farcical intellectuals are entertaining us by their comedy of debates, on the future Constitution of Nepal.



HIV/AIDS: "Women suffer in silence"

By Kamala Sarup



The increasing proportion of HIV and the higher HIV/AIDS death rate in women is a serious cause for concern. Firstly, in Nepal the number of women with HIV infection is already high and is most likely to increase in the future. Secondly women in Nepal possess relatively low status, economic and social, in the family leading to discrimination in access to food and nutrition, health care, and education. HIV infection among women is on the increase, and government still lacks programmes targeted at HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment of those women. Political instability, and political crisis have an undeniable impact upon Nepalese women health.

This dimension of discrimination could further increase if they have HIV/AIDS resulting in poor health, becoming destitute, and possibly an early demise. If women, particularly some of the vulnerable groups among the population, are not targeted for protection from HIV infection it is most likely that they would become victims of the HIV epidemic in Nepal. HIV in Nepal was largely being spread by migration and the cross-border trafficking of women. The disease is found not only among sex workers in Nepal but also among housewives and new born babies.

Social and economic inequalities, gender violence, and social position as youth combined with young women's particular biological vulnerability place young women at considerable risk for HIV infection in Nepal. HIV epidemic is spreading from the high-risk groups to the general population indicating that more women would be infected in the future.

Thus, women having HIV has a multiplier effect in terms of both vertical and horizontal transmission of the virus. At the same time, wives of migrant labourers also have multiple partners and thus transmission goes unchecked. Many get infected unknowingly through husbands who then leave them pregnant and widowed. Unable to share their woes with anyone, women suffer in silence. Unless male attitudes and gender bias are changed through education, counseling, and training, prevention programs are unlikely to turn the tide against the disease.

Prevention is very important, especially among young pregnant women, as the burden on them is greater. The situation is most alarming in Kathmandu, Biratnagar and Pokhara. HIV/AIDS epidemic in Nepal is inextricably tied to the social and cultural values and economic relationships between men and women and within communities. While social inequalities facilitate its spread in the country, the virus, in turn, reflects and reinforces these inequalities.

Women are the least powerful because Nepali society praises patriarchy and male sexuality and mourns the births of daughters. In addition, there is an absence of choice at the individual and systemic levels, whether it is the choice to use a condom or even to have sex. Even among those who have heard about HIV/AIDS, awareness of how to prevent infection is low.

In the last few years, prevention experts have shifted from looking at the HIV/AIDS epidemic solely as a health issue to focusing on other factors that increase vulnerability to infection. HIV/AIDS epidemic, particularly the way in which it is spreading to women, poses challenges to the reproductive health of women. Since HIV has no cure and there is no vaccine available, the issue of HIV among women in Nepal needs to be considered not only with an objective of preventing its infection, but also from the point of providing medical, social, and economic support to those already infected. If HIV infection is a potential threat to couples who have already accepted sterilisation, it is important that they use condoms to prevent HIV infection.

Nepali women with HIV are subjected to various forms of violence and discrimination based on gender. If condom use is central to the HIV infection control strategy in Nepal, its implication in terms of the supply required to meet the demand will be huge. Actions are urgently required to protect women from the epidemic without waiting for a higher proportion of them to be infected. Access to health care is more important for Nepali women infected with HIV because of their specific health needs. Thus, the status of women is an important variable influencing the risk of HIV infection.

Nepali women require special and urgent consideration because of their social and sexual subordination, are disproportionately affected by the epidemic. The vulnerability of women to HIV must be understood in the broader context of deeply embedded social and gender inequalities which lie at the heart of women's inability to deal effectively with the risks and needs created by the epidemic. Unless the interaction between HIV infection, cultural values and the rights and needs of women is recognised, the fundamental changes required to stem this epidemic will be unattainable. Women are also in a markedly disadvantaged position with respect to confidentiality.

HIV prevention efforts to date have failed to offer women effective and achievable ways of reducing their exposure to transmission risks. The prevention efforts have focused on three issues a reduction in the number of sexual partners, monogamy or fidelity within relationships and safer sexual practices, in particular the use of condoms, that reduce the likelihood of HIV transmission when exposure occurs. This imbalance in the focus of HIV prevention efforts must be redressed as a matter of urgency.

The ten-year old insurgency has taken a severe toll on women, both emotionally and economically besides exposing women and girls to sexual abuse. The situation in Nepal deserved particular attention because the Maoists war had not allowed the country to set up the necessary conditions

required to combat HIV/AIDS. The security conditions have directly affected the spread of HIV/AIDS, and that conflict and civil unrest can increase vulnerability to HIV/AIDS particularly among women and children.

We must promote individual responsibility by empowering women and girls to make themselves less vulnerable and by involving men who are turning the tide of the epidemic. The fight against HIV/AIDS is part of peace-building; it is part of our efforts to make a better, more just and safer Nepal for all.

There is still lack of co-ordination between NGOs/INGOs and the government. Nepali laws remain discriminative and have not been able to address the rights of the HIV/AIDS infected people properly. Political commitment is lacking and the government is yet to take HIV/AIDS as a national issue. HIV prevention for young women should include access or referrals to STD prevention and treatment, pregnancy prevention and needle exchange services. HIV infection among women is on the increase, and Nepal government still lacks programmes targeted at HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment of those women and girls. Political instability, and political crisis have an undeniable impact upon Nepalese women health. Women are kidnapped and used as sexual slaves to service them and they are purposefully infected with HIV/AIDS.

Even recently, Nepal called upon the international community to provide more funds to the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria which hopes to raise a further three billion US dollars, one third each of which will be provided by the US, Europe and the remaining by other nations and agencies. Furthermore, The Global Fund awarded \$4.6 million over two years to Nepal to fight against HIV and AIDS. Though the grant was signed in August, the Country Coordination Mechanism (CCM) still fails to come up with any implementation plan.

Investing in the health sector makes good sense for conflict prevention as well as for socio-economic development. Health can help peace also in operational terms. Even on the other hand, comprehensive care programme was needed which would include treatment and counselling, particularly for women who were socially ostracised after their husbands had died of the disease. Nepali young women must be involved in the planning, design and implementation of HIV prevention programs. In order to be effective, HIV prevention with young women must be conducted within the social and economic context in which they are becoming infected. HIV prevention programs that promote community building and involvement can be effective.

Inadequate provision of health care services in the region has resulted in many women losing their lives. They are often deprived of rights to housing, property or inheritance or even adequate health services. Community and NGO representatives need clearly articulate their own priorities. For example, an advocacy plan needs to dovetail with the agendas of the various actors, including HIV and AIDS activist groups, family planning and reproductive health groups, women's rights activists, organizations that work with high-risk populations, men at risk and men who have sex with men. At the same time, advocacy needs to be focused enough to deliver clear messages and achieve measurable outcomes.

HIV prevention efforts must continue and expand in promoting male condom use for those for whom it is feasible. Likewise, advocacy efforts should talk about a range of existing and future prevention strategies and tools, that include behavior change communication, male and female condom promotion, and emerging technologies like microbicides and vaccines. No one method is actually better than another, but some may be more appropriate for certain users than others, and altogether they provide a well-stocked tool box for fighting the epidemic.

(Kamala Sarup recently wrote a book on Prevention of trafficking in women and girls for prostitution through media. B.P. Koirala Foundation, New Delhi, India.)



Social: "Merchants of Poverty"

By Vidhu Prakash Kayastha

A meeting recently concluded at the district administration office at Dhangadhi has fixed the support price of different quality of paddy sown and grown in Kailali district. According to the related news item, new price for the paddy has been fixed as Rs 730 for Rs 755 per quintal for low quality paddy like moto dhan and moto masino dhan respectively. These prices are upgraded from recent price of Rs 585 and Rs 710. Likewise price of mansuli, medium quality paddy has been upgraded to Rs 830 per quintal from the recent price of Rs 790 per quintal. This seems to be good news for the farmers.

But, in reality, the picture is not at all rosy as one gets misled after reading the report. The fact is bitter than one can think. When the mansuli paddy is transformed to mansuli rice the price goes beyond the purchasing capacity of an ordinary citizen. It is sold at the price of Rs 2850 per quintal. Price of rice is more than three times of the price of rice! The modest price would have been not more than double.

There are many socio-economic factors relating to the production of paddy. Nepal is largely dependent on its agro-products if not on the donations and so-called soft loans. And the fact is that the producers of the agro-products including paddy at the grass root level are never free from the vicious circle of poverty. They are born in debt, they live in debt and they die in debt. And so does the 80 per cent of the population of the country!

Immediately after the harvesting season, there comes seasons of festivities in the country. The farmers they spend with open fist in these seasons with the hope that they would get handsome returns from their harvests. In the Terai-belt one the hundreds of bullock carts moving like railway compartments can be seen through out day and night. They are moving towards the big rice mill where they sell their harvests. A normal time for a farmer to reach at the mill in his bullock cart is no less than a nightlong journey. Next day morning he desperately waits outside the main gate of the mill to enrol his name in order to weigh his paddy. Normally it takes him a day or two to see the babu or munshiji the clerical staff of the mill. A munshiji is always a busy man. He has to look after hundreds of farmers a day who comes to the mill to sell their harvest. It is quite normal that he will finally send the harvest of a farmer through the weighing machine after three days. Then the farmer goes to the munimji, accountant of the mill. Almost at the end of the day the munim would tell the farmer that the loan what he has taken from the mahajan would have to be deducted with 36 per cent of interest. His 50 quintals of paddy is billed as Rs 30,000. The book shows that he has taken a sum of Rs 12,000 as loan from mahajan. Rs 4320 have been added as interest. That means Rs 16,430 is to be deducted from the total billed amount of Rs 30,000. The total amount he is to receive is 13570. Munimji sends him home with cash payment of Rs 7,000. The balance of Rs 6570 would be paid after a week or two.

Mahajans are the people indirectly employed by the mills to visits the potential and needy farmers so that they could be hooked by paltry sum of loans from time to time.

I was wondering when the mansuli paddy was sold at the mills at the rate of Rs 450 a quintal a few years back, the price of rice it bought was Rs 16 a kg. Now I buy same rice at a price of Rs 28.50 a kg. When farmer is said to have paid Rs 600 a quintal of paddy, practically he is not getting more than Rs 400 because of the high interest of 36 per cent for the loan he pays to the same mill. The wide gap between the prices a farmer receives and the price a consumer pays has been a reality of the vicious circle of the poverty in the country. And, ironically, this magic game to keep the country below the poverty line is managed by handful of people who have a strong grip in the system that links a farmer with a consumer. These people, in real sense, are the merchants of poverty in the country.

The country is going through a phase of Tenth Five Year Plan. Literally it seems to be one of the best plans that a planner can make for a country like Nepal. But the trouble lies in the implementation. Without a strong mechanism and a political will-power to alleviate poverty, the country would not be free from the bane of poverty. Nepal was once a rice exporting country. I was personally thrilled, in mid '70s when I was told in south India that I was being served the rice imported from Nepal. Now, after thirty years Nepal has lost the pride to be a rice exporter. Talking about political will power, N T Rama Rao, the then chief minister of Andhra Pradesh in India kept his promise to feed people of the state with rice at a price of Rs 2 a kg in early '80s while it was around Rs 5 in the neighbouring states. The NTR legacy is still intact in Andhra and his formula of keeping the prices of basic needs like rice low has been followed in other parts of India as well.

I have heard a tale-piece. Few people who were taking bath at a river found live infants flowing in the river. They somehow rescued the infants and kept them safely on the banks of the river. They saw few more infants in the river. They saved these little lives also. But more infants kept flowing on the river. One among the people engaged in the rescuing the infants said, "Some of us must go and see who is throwing these little lives in the river." He along with some of his friends walked little bit in the opposite direction of the current of the river. There they found one person throwing kids in the river. They overpowered the culprit and the dreadful act was stopped.

Cannot we stop the merchants of poverty to rescue the people and the country from the present state of middle of nowhere?



Analysis: Maoist Rhetoric for United Nations Mediation

By P.G. Rajamohan

Reports indicate that the United Nations (UN) Additional Secretary General, Kul Chandra Gautam, and UN Special Envoy to Nepal, Samuel Tamrat, are due to arrive in Nepal on August 16 to "assess the present situation and report back to the UN headquarters, which will decide whether or not to mediate" between the Government and the insurgents of the Communist Party of Nepal - Maoist (CPN-M) to 'help resolve' the protracted insurgency plaguing the country. The UN's 'interventionism', in this context, has provoked at least some misgivings in certain quarters in Nepal and within the wider South Asian region. While the Government and political parties are yet to clarify their positions on UN mediation, the Maoists have, for some time now, been clamouring for such intervention, and have made it a precondition to any ceasefire and resumption of a 'peace process'.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan also expressed his 'deep concern' about the deteriorating condition in the Himalayan Kingdom and offered his 'good offices' to facilitate the peace process, immediately after two consecutive attacks by the insurgents at Bhojpur and Beni Bazaar in Myagdi district in early March, where an estimated 250 persons were killed. The then Government of Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa had unambiguously rejected the UN's proposal for mediation declaring, "We remain convinced that, due to the geopolitical situation and complexities of our problems, third party mediation is unnecessary. We do, however, welcome appeals for peace from the United Nations or any other friendly country or organization." However, the currently incumbent four-party coalition Government under Sher Bahadur Deuba's leadership appears to be coming under immense national, international and public pressure to initiate a dialogue, and has failed to clarify its position on third party intervention. The Maoists have also come under significant pressure from various quarters, to restore the negotiation process.

The Maoists have, of course, been fairly enthusiastic about UN or other international mediation, which would immediately confer a high measure of legitimacy and recognition on their 'People's War'. In such a context, formal UN mediation would legitimize the Maoists proposition of 'new vs. old regime'. The Maoists are also projecting their current pretensions that they were not interested in sustaining an armed insurgent movement to change the system, but are committed to a negotiated settlement, if possible, through international mediation. In the eventuality that they are ever in a position to form a Government, such a position would help the Maoists politically, by procuring a larger measure of recognition and support from the international community. An emphasis on third party mediation is also based on the Maoists' disenchantment with bilateral processes, and a desire to have a 'neutral' third party to hold the Nepalese state to any agreements that may arise out of the negotiations. Historically, in other theatres, such pressures have tended to be far more binding for the negotiating state than on anti-state entities, which often violate conditionalities with impunity under the cover of 'credible deniability and a wider amplitude of tolerance of international and mediating agencies for their transgressions. It is notable, here, that during the second round of peace talks, there was significant friction over the demobilization and restriction of Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) forces, as demanded by the Maoists, even while recruitment, consolidation and killings by the insurgents continued in wide areas of the country.

Worse, as Nepali Congress (NC) leader Ram Sharan Mahat notes, "The UN's Security Council Resolution 1373 has clearly stated that the violent activities of the rebels constitute terrorism. By that definition, the rebels are terrorists." Any UN mediation in the process would, consequently, confer a measure of legitimacy on an organization that it acknowledges to be engaged in terrorist activities against a sovereign state.

The consensus within the region also militates against pushing the 'Third party mediation' agenda too vigorously. The two neighbouring giants, India and China, recognize the Maoist insurgency as Nepal's internal problem, vesting the decision for third party mediation entirely in the country's leadership. The European Union and the major European donors have urged the Government to announce a ceasefire and to begin the peace talks as early as possible, but do not appear to be supporting external mediation at this stage. The Nepal Government, till now, also appears lukewarm on such proposals, a problem that is compounded by the enormous political difficulties in Kathmandu at present, with the King, the Government and the various political parties themselves engaged in a life-and-death contest for the political space, and no clear agreements on the structure of national power that could guarantee any negotiated agreement - bilateral or multilateral - with the insurgents. King Gyanendra who sees himself as an 'active monarch' and directly controls the Army, may well defy any agreements reached, if these require him to sacrifice any of the powers currently exercised by him.

On the other hand, the present Government has declared that the official position is that, at bottom, Nepal is a constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy.

In the meanwhile, the Maoists, on the one hand, argue for peace talks with UN mediation and, on the other, continue to violate all rules of war from all sides. During the two earlier rounds of peace negotiations, the Maoists used the ceasefire period to strengthen their cadre base and to acquire arms and ammunition from various sources, including subversive groups in India. And while they demand 'legitimate status' from the international community under the Geneva Convention, the Maoists have a history of unremitting violations of many of its crucial norms. On August 10, for instance, the insurgents attacked Army personnel in the premises of a hospital in the Dang district. They have, moreover, vigorously engaged in a campaign of terror through brutal killings, bombings and abductions across the country. They have also engaged in mass abductions and forced recruitment of large numbers of minors, and have now emerged as the terrorist group with the second largest recruitment and exploitation of child soldiers, after the LTTE, in South Asia. Since the collapse of the ceasefire on August 27, 2003, the Maoists have killed 1,029 people including 584 Security Force (SF) personnel and 445 civilians. Another 18,964 persons have been abducted, including 18,859 civilians and 105 SF personnel (till July 2004). Abductions - often in large numbers, sometimes exceeding fifteen hundred people - have included children, women, elderly people, teachers, farmers, journalists, and the very poor among the 'Dalits' (the 'lower castes'), who have then been forced to participate in Maoist 'People's Training Camps'.

The Maoists have now threatened to attack Phadim district and ordered all civilians to evacuate the town. They have also been using their sister and front organizations to disrupt normal life and exert pressure on the Government. After imposing successful transport and economic blockades in almost all the remote districts in since the breakdown of the ceasefire on August 27, 2003, the Maoist-affiliated United Revolutionary People's Council of Dhading, Nuwakot and Rasuwa districts, has announced that the major entry points in and around Kathmandu and its adjoining districts of Bhaktapur and Lalitpur, would be blockaded indefinitely in protest against the killing of some Maoist leaders. Another Maoist affiliated labour organization, the All Nepal Federation of Trade Unions (ANFTU) has threatened to close down 14 private companies on August 17, including Indian companies and joint ventures such as Surya Nepal, an ITC joint venture, and an Oberoi Group five star hotel. Meanwhile, the Maoist students' organization, the All Nepal National Independent Students' Union - Revolutionary (ANNISU-R) has been intimidating the Government through threats of a resumption of its strikes in educational institutions.

The recent split of two sister organizations of the CPN-M - the Kirant Workers Party (KWP) and Madhesi National Liberation Front (MNLF) - on July 27, 2004, creates new complications for future negotiations. Any, agreement with the Maoists alone may not be accepted by these splinter groups, and these circumstances will also need to be taken into the consideration, if at all a peace process resumes.

The danger of international third party negotiators - whatever their institutional affiliations - 'parachuting' into the conflict within such complex local conditions, to negotiate 'peace' with groups that have widely adopted the methods of terrorism and warlordism, cannot be ignored. As one commentator has noted, in another context, "We are all aware of the dangers to peace posed by warmongers; we must, however, guard equally against the 'evil that good men do'... There has, in many theatres of intractable conflict, been an easy tendency on the part of mediators to seek to negotiate the future of millions of victims of extreme and barbaric violence with its worst perpetrators." There is, consequently, urgent need to guard against the self-righteousness and arrogance of the 'peace community', and to recognize the unfortunate and extended record of "impulsive, and often disastrous, intervention" by apparently 'neutral' and well intentioned third parties in different parts of the world.

(Author is a Research Associate at Institute for Conflict Management. This article was originally published on SOUTH ASIA INTELLIGENCE REVIEW,[SAIR] Volume 3, No. 5 on August 16, 2004. - Ed.)



Law: Geneva Breakthrough: A Crucial WTO Deal Clinches

By Bashu Dev Phulara

After the weekend breakthrough in Geneva, a historic accord reached by the World Trade Organization (WTO) lately brought the long-stalled global trade liberalization talks begun in Doha back on track. After months of heated bargains and a year of deadlock following the dramatic breakdown of talks in Cancun in Mexico last year, the WTO's General Council meeting on 31st July 2004, sealed a "package of deal " that contains framework agreements for agriculture, and further market-opening initiatives for industrial products and services. It has aimed eventually at cutting subsidies and reducing barriers to the global trade in farm goods.

The final deal of WTO came after many hours of intense 'green room' talks. These so-called 'green room' talks are a vital mechanism of global trade negotiations involving about 20 selected countries, the aim of which is to extract subtle compromises between the industrialized and developing countries on various contentious issues. The deal was approved by a consensus of the 147-nation body-General Council (GC) shortly after, setting out the "framework for establishing modalities on agriculture". It also opened the way for full negotiations to start in September.

The accord adopted by the WTO meeting commits nations to lowering import duties and reducing government support in the five major areas of international trade - industrial goods, agriculture, development issues ,trade facilitation and service industries such as telecommunications and banking. The accord will set back the motion of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) launched by WTO members in Qatari capital -Doha in November 2001. The deal, which should have been concluded in WTO's fifth ministerial conference in Cancun-Mexico last year, was delayed by the bitter failure of the meeting where developing countries like Brazil and India were pitted against rich nations such as the US and the European Union.

The most significant achievement of the Geneva meeting was that WTO members have agreed to make historic reforms in global agricultural trade. It primarily means that the developed country members mainly the United States and the EU partners accepted controls on their agricultural policy they had not accepted before. This accord further sets the target of eliminating or reducing subsidies in farm trade that is likely to be years of tough negotiations to come". 'This is, therefore, a major turning point in global trade liberalization and it sets the ground for advancing multilateral trade.

Commenting on the outcome of the meeting, Director-General Supachai Panitchpakdi said it would greatly enhance members' chances for successfully completing the important Doha negotiations. The compromise would now help advance the course of global trade liberalization". It means that, decades into the drive for international free trade, the WTO-accord marks the first time that WTO members have accepted to anchor elimination in a global agreement.

In this context, the proclamation of Robert Zoelick, who was leading the G20 group of developing countries at the talks of Geneva, is worth quoting here "this is the beginning of the end for subsidies". Likewise, European Union (EU) trade commissioner Pascal Lamy revealed, "the Geneva text -also known as Oshima text- adopted by the meeting shows that the multilateral trading system is alive and kicking. But he was quick to add that the recent outcome represents merely a half way point in a journey which WTO members need to complete rapidly".

Agriculture has been at the core of the differences between the industrialized countries such as the EU, the US, Japan, Switzerland and South Korea on one side, and the developing countries led by Brazil and India on the other. The final deal spelt out that export subsidies in agriculture would be eliminated after further negotiations that would set the time frame, while trade-distorting domestic subsidies would be substantially brought down.

The final decision laid down the framework for negotiations on further market opening for farm products in rich countries. The WTO text went further by advocating tariff cuts, restricting export credits and charting cuts in domestic support that might distort international competition. Also, the deal has maintained the more flexibility on Special and Differential Treatment (S& DT) relating to agriculture for the developing countries, putting down exceptional emphasis on implementation issues. It also offers access to a Special Safeguard Measures (SSM).

As per the deal, only one of the four highly contentious Singapore issues, namely trade facilitation was adopted while other three issues-Competition, investment and transparency were left behind from

the negotiations under Doha development Round (DDR), giving details that work on these issues would proceed in the WTO. In service sector, the deadline for tabling the modified offers by the member countries on "the continuing service sector negotiations" has been delayed till may 2005.

In fact, a significant development in the post-Cancun talks in agriculture was the creation of a new 'P5' mechanism involving the US, EU, Australia, Brazil and India, which gave birth the final accord of the WTO. The emergence of the powerful developing country coalition, the Group of 20 led by Brazil, was also a 'positive' and 'healthy' development in the global trade liberalization talks. China also played a vital role during the negotiations, and all these developments predict well for the global trading system.

After the compromise was struck, many developing as well as developed country members saluted the "deal" to continue negotiations. Despite some criticisms against the deal all over the world the accord has been recorded as one of the better deals in the history of WTO. In this context, different countries considered it by differently. For example, Germany welcomed the WTO accord to salvage trade talks as a win-win deal for poorer countries and the world economy. Similarly, India a leader among developing countries, hailed the revival of WTO trade talks as a major victory, saying the move would help protect its massive agricultural sector from subsidized goods of rich countries.

The USA and Britain also welcomed a last-ditch agreement, calling it a crucial stage on the path to reducing world trade barriers. France was satisfied but the country's farmers criticized the deal saying, it would not help to close the rich poor divide. China addressed a WTO accord to revive global trade talks as not bad even if the demands of the developing world had not been fully met. Many other countries like Canada, Japan, Switzerland, New Zealand, Thailand and Singapore, among others greeted the decision agreed over the agriculture products by the WTO.

Above all, the WTO-deal is a key step toward a comprehensive global accord that has been discussed since three years now. Many point out that "the framework was a good deal for everybody. It is a good deal for trade liberalization. It is also a good deal for social justice. Although the developing countries are not fully satisfied with the accord but the framework is not bad so far. Developing countries' exporters have a historic opportunity to make greater market access in the developed world. The developed countries also will benefit by removing heavy agricultural subsidies from their budgets".

It is, therefore, incredibly important for the whole world. Concurring with RatnaKar Adhikari-a diligent Nepalese expert of WTO-it is worth noting here that, " In the context of this historic document having been signed, Nepal -the newest but one of the poorest members of WTO-should immediately constitute a team of experts to review the decisions and prepare the negotiating positions for the country in consultation with a range of stakeholders.

Though the Geneva meeting was successful, this is just a starting step in maintaining the balance between rich and the poor. There are reports that the Doha round of trade negotiations launched in Qatari capital in 2001 will only be completed by the due date of end of 2005. In fact, the weekend's accord is way behind the commitment agreed to in Doha. The foremost reason is that the WTO should now have been at the modalities stage, whereas the current "accord" is nothing but merely a "framework". A "framework agreement" is constrained to general guiding principles, a "modality agreement" deals with modus-operandi and details specific procedures of tariff cuts, though. After all, the different modalities where the hard-hitting options are on top, yet to be carried out.

(Sources: Different International news and analytical views of the experts in LA Times, Washington Post/ AFP/and The Herald Tribune, among others. Comments to the author can be reached at bphulara at hotmail dot com.)



Women: "Struggling Women Era"

By Ahuja Ruchi

No matter how modernisation or globalisation takes place in Asia, the condition of women living in an undeveloped rural area is in deteriorating state.

Do you know that in every 43 minutes, a woman is kidnapped, every 34 minutes, a woman is raped and every 93 minutes, a woman is burnt to death over dowry? And you talk about women's equality! It is just professed.

It is a mere a window dressing from conception to death, women have to suffer in uncountable ways. She is still called - "the weaker sex" - the assertion which was made in ancient times by *Manu* who said - "Since a woman is weak, she is unfit to enjoy freedom. She should always be kept under a man's protection." My worthy friends who talk of women's equality seem to have shut their eyes to the atrocities against women. How can you forget female infanticide and sex selective abortions which have become commonplace in the recent years?

It is the female who suffers hunger and poverty in great numbers; it is the female who receives less health care than the male. It is the female who is pulled out of school who lends a helping hand to her mother and is also sold and forced in the prostitution. It is again the woman who works a double day, bearing responsibility of child care and household chores, regardless of her contribution to family income.

Women welfare and rights are just a sham .if a few women have made their in the male dominated world, that does not proved their equality. Women's subjugation, marginalization and disempowerment are rooted in the very fabric of our society-in traditions, in religious doctrines and practices.

They have failed to free themselves from self-imposed shackles. No doubt women are guaranteed equality under the constitution but legal protection has little effect in the face of prevailing patriarchal traditions. Women still lack the actual powers to decide about their own future. Legal loopholes are used to deny the women inheritance rights.

A daughter is viewed as a liability. She is conditioned to believe that she is inferior and subordinate to a man. A woman is forced to accept her inferiority. Right from birth and through out her formative years, society forces a woman into a place, status and a role .She has lost her identity in the whirlpool of various compartments assigned to her-an obedient daughter, a polite sister, a devoted wife, a dutiful daughter-in-law and a loving mother.

There are many forms of rejection, which the girl child has to face even before she is born, to start with "female foeticide", besides these female infanticides. Malnourishment is the other reason or the factor that is responsible for the large number of deaths of a girl child in early childhood.

The status of women in the whole world is complex and complicated. So it is difficult to arrive at possible conclusion.

Therefore, most of the time we reach at contradictory conclusions. Just by declaring a year as the year of women empowerment or by amending certain acts, no upliftment can be achieved. Unless and until she comes out of a natural weakness of being shy, tearful, submissive, no upliftment can be possible.

She has to prepare herself to face challenges and consequences. Above all, the one old notion that a woman is inferior to man and mere a object which can be treated in any manner has to be changed. Society must learn to give freedom and respect to the women and here we have to play an important with the media so as to change the present consequence.

Media, unquestionably, could have played the pivotal role in the upliftment of women. Instead it has been a major counter part in exploiting the same.

The portrayal of women in media is the most degrading often being depicted as a commodity. Whether in advertisement, t.v serial or movies she has been portrayed as a showpiece. Especially ads commonly used her as a magnet to attract the consumer.

As far as movies and serials are concerned, they are a step ahead in picturing in worst forms. In serials, she is either depicting the good or evil shades. But now these ongoing serials are ignoring the daily struggle of livelihood, which a majority of women go through, be it in agriculture, organized or unorganized sector. Needless to say, the portrayal of women in movies is that of mere a sex symbols without emotions or feeling. Singing and dancing around the trees and uttering few dialogues are part of their tedious job-this first need to be change.

Any attempt to assess the status of women in society should start from the social framework. Social structure, cultural norms and value systems are important parameters of the women's role and her position in the society.

Social structure can bring certain trends to change; at the same time it can also prove to be an obstacle in their path. Religion, family, kinship roles as well as cultural norms can delimit their activities.

The vested interests in the society have interpreted religion and cultural norms in the form of ritual and duties, which simply goes against a woman's freedom and growth. The wrong perceptions are heavily biased against women since childhood, girls are reminded of the pitfalls they must avoid and uncertainties they face.

The advent of education has brought changes but it is restricted to urban areas only. Various government schemes are formulated to protect women from atrocities but it remained futile, women's problem bear no fruit. Law remains only on paper.

What role women can play in her own upliftment varies from class to class and from one age group to other. Lower class is practical and straightforward, for them if the husband is cruel then the only solution is to leave him. They are not bothered about the cultural norms and values their only need is food for life. Where as the middle class where most of them educated has no definite saying, and is the most helpless class. Basically they are made to follow all the norms and values.

For them no upliftment is possible beyond their culture. In the elite class, most of the women are involved with some social organizations and they talk about the self-confidence, self-esteem, equality yet hypocrisy exists.

Daughter, Sister, Wife and Mother are four important roles which a women plays in her life span.

But, unfortunately these roles never helped her to get acceptance and respect as a woman in society. She was and is still struggling to prove her existence in the male dominated society.

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Business: "Opportunities For Entrepreneurs to Invest in Nepal"

By Paras Acharya

Background:

With an annual per capita income level of \$236, Nepal is one of the world's poorest countries. Rapid population growth of 2.2% annually, landlocked nature and the rugged mountain terrain of a large part of the country add to the economic rigidities of Nepal. Though embarked to the periodic development planning exercise as early as 1956, Nepal failed to realize the importance of private sector and market oriented policy in the process of overall development of the country till late eighties and this resulted to several economic distortions and a very slow economic growth as indicated by the rate of GDP growth of only about 2.5% from 1975-80 to 1985-90.

After the restoration of multiparty polity in 1990 significant change took place in the overall development policy & strategies in the country, particularly and consequently under the new policy paradigm, a liberal policy anticipating greater role of private initiatives in the economy has been in place replacing the controlled economic policies practiced under the Mixed Economic Approach. Since then, the private sector development policy has been reoriented to identifying & removing the barriers for private investments, and creating private sector friendly economic environment so that the private sector would play pivotal role in the economy. Thus shift in the role of the government from active participant to facilitator not only brought positive psychological change in the private sectors, but also added economic dynamism through the active participation of private sectors in all areas, financial, aviation, manufacturing, trade, tourism and other service sectors and also shows a marked increase in GDP, i.e. increased by 6% in 1997-02.

Discussed below are some of the high potential and feasible sectors for the entrepreneurs to invest in Nepal.

1. Hydroelectric power:

Theoretical hydropower potential of Nepal's river based on average flow has been estimated 83 million kilowatts with the theoretical generation of 44 million kilowatts. Despite the enormous hydropower potential, till now Nepal has been able to generate only less than 1% of its total potential. Demand for power is growing at about 10% annually and it is estimated that country's power demand

will grow to 1.64 million kilowatts by 2015. A large amount of power produced in Nepal can be easily exported to neighboring countries, hence hydroelectric power is no doubt a sector with high returns.

2. Tourism:

The tourism is growing very rapidly and Nepal has tremendous potential for tourism development because of its unique natural & cultural heritage. Statistical data shows in 1990 around 2,55,000 tourists visited Nepal and this figure increased to 6,25,000 in 1996. Recent estimates based on tourist arrival indicate a very steady growth to reach 9,53,000 by the year 2010. Hence, the construction and operation of hotels and resorts offer promising prospects for profitable investment. Similarly investment in popular tourist activities and recreation would be successful undertaking.

3. Agro & Forest based industries:

Due to the varied agro-climatic environment, Nepal is very rich in medicinal and aromatic plants with over 700 plant species. With the establishment of the Royal Drugs Research Laboratory in 1962, commercial utilization of medicinal plants has been encouraged. The medicinal and aromatic plants can be exploited for the production of followings; essential oils from lemongrass, citronella, oleoresin from ginger, turpentine oil and resin from chir pine; medicines from Valeriana wallichii, Calamus acrous and Nardostachye jatamansi and etc. These medicinal plants have very high market value; a kilogram of medicinal mushroom called Yarshagumba costs around 90,000 to 1,00,000 Rupees.

Apart from medicinal plants, production of variety flowering seeds, vegetable production for export, fruit processing industries, timber industries etc are also economically important sectors.

4. Textile Industry:

The textile has been identified as a basic needs industry and high priority is attached to investments in this sub sector. Based upon minimum per capita consumption of 11 meters the total requirement of the textile is estimated at 2548 million meters. The production capacity at present is essential around 18.3 million meters and that meets the need of only 0.7% of the demand. So, in order to achieve self-sufficiency in clothing it is proposed to encourage the establishment of several textile units. The production of cotton fabrics & blends would be in high demand. In view of the high priority attached to this industry, investors are assured of very good conditions for profitable investment.

Apart from above mentioned, there are numerous other high priority and potential sectors. We need to understand that there are also certain challenges in each of above sectors but opportunities & challenges are compliment to each other. With the background that Nepal has already been amended as the 147th member of WTO, the environment for foreign investors has become more favorable. There is, therefore, definitely a high investment opportunity in different sectors. The most important thing from my point of view is that, the government should ensure the investment friendly environment through stable policies, plans and incentives on the priority sector that will encourage the entrepreneurs.



Help Nepal: Navin Dhakal on the Run

Help Nepal



(Picture: Walk Route)

A fund raising walk and run for Help Nepal Network On Saturday, September 18, 2004, Navin Dhakal will walk and run 35 miles (56km) around the Great Lake, Canada and raise funds for Help Nepal Network. "I will be trying to run for a few miles at least," says Dhakal.

Those interested in sponsoring this endeavor could do so online via 'givenow' link or should send cheques payable to Help Nepal Network to:

Nepal

Mr Ramanath Shrestha
Treasurer
HELP NEPAL Network - Nepal
Chabahil Chowk
Kathmandu
Nepal

USA

Mr Sanjeeb Khanal
Treasurer
HELP NEPAL Network - USA
287 Summer Street
Arlington, MA 02474
USA

Australia

Mr Ranjan Koirala
Treasurer
HELP NEPAL Network - Australia
P. O. Box 4752
Knox Shopping Centre
Wantirna South, VIC 3152
Australia

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Mr Prashidha Pradhan
Treasurer
HELP NEPAL Network - UK
112 Marlborough Lane
Charlton SE7 7DG
UK

Please write 'Great Walk' on the back of the cheques.

About Navin Dhakal:

Navin is a Chemical Engineer with BE from University of London and PGCE from King's College London. He went back to teach at Budhanilakantha High School, his alma mater and subsequently, taught at the United World College of the Adriatic (Trieste, Italy) for four years. In Italy, Navin founded HeNN-Italy during his stay there. Navin currently teaches at Pearson College, Canada, another one of the 10 United World Colleges. Navin feels glad that he is part of these two great organizations: the UWCs and the HeNN, which are both set up for a Noble cause.

About the Route:

The walk is 55.9km in total. It is a gravel logging road up to Rest Stop 9 at Honeymoon Bay. The remainder of the walk is on gravel shoulder of a two lane highway through a scenic wooded area. The route is level until Rest Stop 7. The elevation rises to 100m and declines before Honeymoon Bay.

About the Great Lake Walk: <http://greatlakewalk.com>

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ANA: ANA President's Message - August 2004

By Krishna Nirola

Dear ANA members and well wishers,

The Association of Nepalis in the Americas (ANA) held its 22nd annual convention from July 2 to July 4, 2004 at the Double Tree Paradise Valley Resort In Scottsdale, Arizona. This year about 700 participants attended the convention chaired by Mrs. Amrit Tuladhar, Vice President and Sunanda Sharma, Arizona Executive Member.

For the first time, this successful, extremely well managed convention was attended by participants from all over the world, including Nepal, Germany, Russia, Belarus, Australia and Myanmar. The two evenings of cultural programs had renowned artists Nepathya and Santosh and Nitesh Pant from Nepal. Young artist Prasanna Dhoj Pradhan made a special appearance. On Friday night there was a musical extravaganza with an assortment of contemporary beats for the younger audience.

Nepali movies Chameli and Ramhjam were screened throughout the day. The sporting events as part of the convention, had soccer and basketball games with teams participating from all over the U.S. On Friday evening, INLS held a Nepali poetry session. This session was highly acclaimed for bringing together a large pool of literary talents from all over the U.S. and Canada.

The Convention included several discussion sessions, such as Nepal Forum, Non Resident Nepali Forum (NRN), Women's Forum, and Young Adult Forum. For the art session, Mrs. Shobha Wagley, who came from Nepal, displayed her paintings.

This was her first exhibition of her works in the U.S. On Friday afternoon there was a session on the future road of cooperation among various Nepali associations including NAC and ANA. ANA Sports activities led by Mr. Sujit Pant, had soccer and basketball tournament with around 135 participants. There were four soccer teams and 8 men's and 4 women's basketball teams. Soccer attracted 4 teams with 68 participants from New York, Dallas, Team DC United and California. The final was between New York and Team DC United. Team DC United won the tournament by 2-1.

Men's basketball had 8 teams with 52 participants. These teams were from DC, Phoenix, Dallas, New York, Nebraska, Chicago, Washington State and combined team of Colorado and Massachusetts. The final was held between DC and Phoenix. DC won the tournament by 52 - 37.

Above all, the opening ceremony was truly beautiful with welcome song from the local hosts, garland welcome by panch kanyas, national anthem by Vanessa Shrestha and heart throbbing performance by Native American dancer Derrick Suwaima Davis that ended with thunderous applause and standing ovation. Many participants commented on ANA 2004 to be either the best or one of the best conventions ever.

The 2005 Convention will be held in Dallas, Texas.

ANA thanks the ANA 2004 Team consisting of Amrit Tuladhar and Sunanda Sharma, the Convention Chairs, Bikram Kumai, Darsana Tuladhar (CULTURAL PROGRAM TEAM) Dev Sharma (DANCE AND MUSIC) , Digdarsan Karki, Rabin Shrestha, Sudan Basnet, Rabin Gurung, Aalok Sharma, Arun Ghimire, Punya Khanal and Saurav Devkota (SPORTS TEAM), Sameer Pandey, Mrs. Banchana Pandey, Mrs. Kanchana Kandel, Mrs. Neesha Karki, Sumit (REGISTRATION), Vinod Shrestha (WEB), Dr. Ambika Adhikari (SESSIONS- a Panelist, helping draft the theme for Nepal) Praju Tuladhar with type setting the brochure, Mr. Laxam Basnet for roviding banner and flag, Mr. Ram Kharel for taking video tape, Lalita for contributing Pancha Kanya jewelries, Padma for ANA Logo patches, Mr. Dinesh Shapit for publishing brochure.

The ANA additionally thanks all the volunteers from New Mexico and Tucson, Arizona and from various other States without whose contributions such great event would not have been possible. Based on the results of voting, Mr. Raja Upadhyya announced the following two key decisions taken by the participants:

Should the Past Presidents have voting rights- No

Should ANA join NAC - Yes

ANA NEWSLETTER- Editor Shailendra Shukla raised the issue of utility of hard copy of the Newsletter in this electronic age but members supported the continuation of hard copy, hence he decided to continue.

Scholarship Committe- raised \$5000.00

Cultural Center- The convention was infromed about the delays in construction due to lack of funding and lack of support from neighborhood. The convention was also informed about the current effort being undertaken through legal help.

Next Convention- Dallas, Texas confirmed by Mr. Baikuntha Thapa

ELECTION COMMITTEE- Raja Upadhyay is to lead the Election Commission with Ramakant Adhikari and Sharda Bhandari as the members. A PO Box to be opened in

Dallas, TX. Raja and the Team to define procedures.

Treasurer Mahendra Karki presented accounts which is also available in www.ana-home.org.

ELECTION 2005- Raja Upadhyay informed that April 31st is to be the deadline for membership renewal. Nominatin date to be announced by Raja Upadhyay at a later date.

BY-LAWS COMMITTEE- The meeting proposed to add Jeet Joshi and Anup Pahari to the existing committee headed by Kunjar Sharma with Shailendra Shukla and Raja Upadhyaya as members The deadline to submit the proposed revision is by Oct 31st.

Krishna Nirola
President, ANA



Activities: "Bucks County Interfaith Peace Walk"

By Krishnaman Manandhar

Once again I feel greatly pleased to pay my deep respect to all my brothers and sisters who came forward to help smoothly conclude the Bucks County Interfaith Peace Walk last September and extend my deep gratitude with many thanks to all the institutes and individuals who offered the peace walkers food and shelter at each night haltage.

The interest and deep faith shown by the Bucks County residents on the mission of the peace walk has inspired me to continue the peace walk in the Upper Parts of the Bucks County next spring 2005.

Rev. Sandra Easner - A Buddhist devotee has announced her wish to donate money for the prayer wheels when she came to join the concluding ceremony of the peace walk.

The prayer wheels embossed with Mantras (sacred pronouncements) of the major world religions will be encircled around the proposed an ecumenical shrine to be built at some location within the Bucks County. The concept of the common interfaith peace pagoda is to pattern the structure along the line of the (Swoyambhu Nath Stupa in Nepal) which has been designated by UNESCO as world heritage site Hope our next peace walk will find out a piece of land so that we could build an ecumenical shrine as a meeting place for all the earth?s major faiths.

With the same purpose and the same principles once more I continue the peace walk with my same prayer wheel next spring to raise consciousness for global peace and nurture the interfaith harmony among the world?s different religions.

Purpose:

We the people a rainbow of diversity of race, tradition and spiritual expression being reflected throughout the world , wish to establish an environment to be distinguished by religious harmony, to promote international cooperation and to put an end to violence being perpetrated for allegedly religious reasons.

Principles:

- We respect the sacred wisdom of each religion.
- We respect the right of each religion to cultivate the tenets that make it especial.
- We listen to and speak with all our brethren from all religions and seek to deepen mutual understanding and trust.
- We embrace the gift of diversity without discrimination and want to learn from all model practices.
- We offer our readiness to cooperate with all other interfaith efforts.
- We respect the UN announcement designating 2000-2009 as The International Decade of Creating a Sustainable Global Peace for The 21st century.

Next peace walk to be undertaken in a manner of? Walking Meditation? will carry some new features such as T-Shirt? Desk Calendar 2005 and Peace Pilgrimage book for distribution to aid fund raising. Please come and join the peace walk which runs for a month We appreciate your participation even for a day. Trough the way of peace walk we will develop our opportunity to unite various spiritual views and discover alternative solutions to the problems at hand in the current situation of the world.

Through the medium of the peace walk we will attempt to gather and share ideas and examples toward the development of the true human spirit and reveal the unity of spiritual consciousness.

Finally our walking mission pursues the goal of peace and well being of all the humanity.

Please share some time with us to become personally involved in organizing and carrying out the peace walk as our walk depends upon your support.

(For further info, please contact Monk Krishna Man at Monkkrishnaman@hotmail.com. -Ed.)



Reflections from a decade back: "Facing Perils of Aids in Nepal"

("Reflections from a decade back" is a regular feature of rejuvenated TND. Pramod Pandey compiles this section from materials published approximately 10 years ago in TND. - Ed)

Compiled by: **Pramod Pandey**

Originally from: John Thor Dahlburg, Times Staff Writer, NEPALGANJ, Nepal

Originally published on: August 3, 1994

Source: Los Angeles Times, Electronic Edition

TND Date: August 7, 1994

Subject: "Facing Perils of Aids in Nepal"

"Facing Perils of Aids in Nepal"

In the antiseptic parlance of public health professionals, Amarwati is a "commercial sex worker" and potential "vector" for AIDS.

Two or three times a day, the 21-year-old woman with black curly hair and a nervous smile brings men into her modest home with stained yellow walls, and steers them toward a hard wood-frame bed.

As a fan overhead whips the warm air, she and her clients have sex.

She earns \$2 to \$3 daily. Amarwati, who has an 8-year-old daughter, is not unusual. So many women in her district of this lowland town in midwestern Nepal are prostitutes that a patch of dusty ground across from their homes seems, like a freakish garden drawn by Salvador Dali, to have bloomed with a crop of used, shriveled condoms.

Amarwati and her neighbors are among the reasons that officials in this small landlocked kingdom, renowned for its snowy Himalayan vistas and exotic culture, are now bracing for the onslaught of the human immunodeficiency virus, which causes AIDS.

"All symptoms point to the fact that when HIV begins to spread with velocity here, it will explode," said Dr. Daniel Tarantola, director of the International AIDS Program at the Harvard School of Public Health's Francois-Xavier Bagnoud Center.

Judging by available evidence, the study concluded, the number of people who are infected yearly with HIV has begun to decline everywhere -- except in Asia.

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Take Amarwati. Since she was 12 and her family desperately needed money, she says, she has been engaging in prostitution. Her mother did too, she says.

Both women belong to the Badis, a branch of the despised Hindu caste known as the Untouchables. Badi women have traditionally sold their bodies. An estimated 15,000 to 16,000 members of the subcaste live in Nepal, and 40% of their households contain at least one woman engaging in the sex trade, experts say. Each sex worker may support up to eight family members.

With an entire community dependent on prostitution for much, if not most, of its income, eliminating Badi women as potential HIV vectors, or carriers, is difficult. Handing out more than 7,000 condoms each month to the prostitutes and teaching them and customers how to use them with cartoons on a flip chart, as the grass-roots Social Awareness for Education (SAFE) does in Nepalganj, is just a start.

"Our purpose is also to supply an alternative profession for the Badi people," SAFE leader Dilip Pariyar said.

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Nepal's conservative Hindu morals also complicate the anti-AIDS campaign: Outside of marriage, people generally don't talk about sex. A woman is not deemed a man's equal and has little or no control over her sex life.

And in a country where 74% of adults are illiterate, prudery and ignorance seem to reinforce themselves.

"If you want to examine a person's private parts, either they refuse, or they leave the doctor's office," Karki said. "We really don't find out about some people (AIDS victims) until they die."

The first AIDS case in Nepal was diagnosed in July, 1988. Today, Health Ministry statistics say 100 men and 102 women have been found to be HIV-positive. Thirty of them have developed AIDS, and 15 have died.

Extrapolating from those numbers, the ministry estimates there are 6,000 HIV carriers in the country. But Karki admitted, "We really don't know the situation."

Other potential AIDS carriers include about 350,000 Nepalese who head to India each year in search of work. "They are uneducated and don't even know what a condom is," Karki said. In the other direction, an estimated 2 million truck drivers, farm workers and other Indians flock annually to Nepal, where they often patronize prostitutes.

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"Our strategy is to go to countries with low incidence of HIV, but where there is danger of rapid growth," said the Rev. Margaret R. Reinfeld, an Episcopal priest who is AmFAR's director of education and international programs. "We try to encourage community responses in ways appropriate for those countries, and not import ready-made solutions."

This has taken the anti-AIDS message in some strange directions that do not always meet with full approval from the American donors. This summer, members of an AmFAR delegation cringed as one of Nepal's oldest social-service organizations, Agroforestry, Basic Health & Cooperatives Nepal, distributed brochures at a Bhaktapur elementary school that were intended to inform children about AIDS.

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"If they use a condom, they get it," the Badi woman said matter-of-factly. "If they don't, they don't. It's my health."

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Literature: Poem >> "Quintessence of Quiescent"

By Pushpa Ratna Tuladhar

Up the polished ceiling above my bed
In my bedroom resting for a while,
A camouflaged lizard crawls his webbed feet
With dead silence in his spider tongue
Hunting a fly nearby in languorous mood

So unconscious of to-be catastrophe
Bony spine of mine chills enough
To freeze my whole body like an ice
For the certainty of yet another calamities

Befalling on my quiet turbid heart
At any moments of my present life.
My desire to rest for a while with
My frightened and horror-stricken mind

Strives to take up its clothes of fright and
horror
As if torched with mother of bomb
Runs naked towards the camera lens
With my screams frozen in frame

That unknowingly and unconsciously adheres
To the severe fading wall of my bedroom.
That portrait of mine destined to hide its reality
Sinks in time warped depth of ocean

Damped with futuristic dirt and dust
Wailing a digger to reveal the quintessence of
An embryonic present matured to rare earth
Out of an ovary of pregnant futurity.

(Pushpa Ratna Tuladhar, is a poet and editor of Layalama Online Magazine. Comments can be sent to pushpatuladhar@hotmail.com. -Ed.)

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Literature: Poem >> "River"

By Raghav Nepal

Brave, dare stem my course, I flow like time,
Ploughing through rough terrain in rain or sun.
Humble like air, if you respect my run,
But breach me, hear me roar, my temper climb.

Not dammed, to swell, sumptuous, delicious,
Come drink the wines and ale that I outpour,
Dredging a gully, scored sweet to its core.

Sputing through gorges, my virtue vicious,
Beauty in sheer falls with power to crush,
Energy feeds the world, and drowns thin sin,
Gives succour to those, whose faith may gush,

Who hear my voice, in whisper and in din,
Unlike human frailty, eternal flush,
Only disaster drought, makes holler to hush.

(Poet can be reached at nepalruckus at hotmail dot com. -Ed.)

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Articles about Nepal from Other Various Media

Highlights from various articles published on Nepal from various sources:

"Nepal under Maoist siege-Creative approach is the need of the hour"

By S.D. Muni

NEPAL is under siege. The Maoist insurgents have declared an indefinite blockade of Kathmandu since August 18. Though the Nepal government claims to be confident in dealing with the situation, ordinary citizens are feeling the pressure. Prices of essential commodities in Kathmandu are rising and tourists are leaving. Those scheduled to come have started cancelling their travel plans. The Maoists have also issued notices to 24 prominent business firms and industrial concerns to shut their operations, and all of them are complying with the dictate, ignoring the government's assurances of adequate security. Most of these establishments are owned by Royal family members and are run jointly with the foreigners, including Indian investors.

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More at "**The Tribune**"

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Richard Halloran in "Korean Herald"

Asked 10 years ago to assess the strategic importance of the small nation of Nepal nestled in the Himalayan mountains between China and India, an American diplomat in the capital, Kathmandu, made a round shape with his thumb and forefinger and said, "Zero. None."

Today, that has changed. As a Nepali analyst says, a spreading Maoist insurgency "is no longer a distant thunder in the hills." Terrorists who take their name from the Chinese revolutionary, Mao Zedong, have killed 9,000 to 10,000 people in eight years, operate in 73 of Nepal's 75 political districts, and have just ended a month-long blockade that threatened to strangle Kathmandu.

The insurgency has started to attract attention elsewhere in Asia and in America, despite the preoccupation with the troubles in Iraq. The new U.S. ambassador to Nepal, James Moriarty, explained why after his arrival last month. "Through extortion, torture, murder, bombings, and abductions," he said, "the Maoists have created a reign of terror throughout the country."

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More at "**Korean Herald**"

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"India plans air supplies to Nepal"

Aditi Phadnis / New Delhi August 21, 2004

"National Security Adviser JN Dixit today convened a meeting of top defence officials to discuss a contingency plan on air-dropping supplies to besieged Kathmandu.

Although details of the plans are not available, government sources said a proposal to carry out bread-bombing of the Nepal capital was worked out. Chief of Army Staff, Gen. NC Vij and Chief of Air Force Staff, Air Marshal S Krishnaswamy attended the meeting, in addition to Defence Secretary Ajay Vikram Singh."

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More at "**Business Standard**"

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"Nepal Under Siege" Editorial of Times of India, August 24, 2004

The palace would be reluctant — to put it mildly — to liquidate itself. However, some concessions have to be made by both sides. The point is — which party or parties are best suited to play the honest broker? Considering India's close economic, social and cultural ties with the Himalayan kingdom, New Delhi would seem to be ideally suited for the role. But India has, for far too long, been seen as a big bully, not only by Nepal but by other smaller neighbours as well. Any talks held under the obvious auspices of India would be doomed to failure. So, what are the alternatives? The present situation obviously cannot be permitted to continue. On their part, the Maoists, splintered as they are, have said they would be willing for a UN-monitored process. New Delhi and other friends of Nepal should try and persuade the palace to accede to this request. The donor agencies and NGOs, whose presence in Nepal cannot be wished away, could also play a positive role by endorsing such a move. Insurgency has brought Nepal's tourism-driven economy to a grinding halt. The prospect of India being saddled with another refugee problem is not exactly remote. "

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More at "**Times of India**"

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