One of the dynamics of the late 20th century and early 21st century politics has been the import of democracy in third world countries. However, democracy (in the purest, most liberal sense) has succeeded in only a handful of countries around the world. The reasons behind democratic failure can only be evaluated by reviewing historical, social and economic factors.

DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRестHA

16 YEARS AFTER THEY WERE FORCED OUT OF THEIR COUNTRY BY A DICTATOR, MORE THAN A HUNDRED THOUSAND BHUTANESE REFUGEES IN NEPAL CONTINUE TO WAIT FOR A SOLUTION TO WHAT HAS BECOME ONE OF SOUTH ASIA'S WORST REFUGEE CRISIS.

ANUP KAPHEL

Still Waiting

Plastic jerricans, marked with the names of their owners, are lined up by 2PM to collect water at this communal water tap in the Khuduna Bari Bhutanese Refugee Camp in remote eastern Nepal. The water runs for an hour or two at 3PM. Photo: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA
A New York minute, it is said, can be a
lifetime. New York has now been home to
Nepali Aawaz for a year! Our first
issue was published on October 8, 2005
and modestly distributed in a few east
cost cities. Today, the newspaper is still
distributed modestly, but to over 10 cities
across in the United States. And Nepalis
and others across the world take the time
to download and read the paper’s PDF
version from our website regularly.

Officials of a royal dictatorship to former
prime ministers and current ministers and
deputy prime minister of a democratic
Nepal. Nepali Aawaz is the voice of
sexual minority groups to the voice of
ethnic minorities, Nepali students and
immigrants who have made new homes
in countries far from home and Nepalis
who were forced to leave their homes.
Of course, none of this would have been
possible without the unquestioned
support of our friends in Nepal who take
time out from their busy life of a full-time
diplomat and come to read the paper. We
thank you for reading us during our first year and wish
you, for as long as we can. We thank you
for and about the Nepali diaspora that did
not exist before 8 Oct. 2005. As best as we
can, for as long as we can. We thank you
for distribution in their areas but haven’t
received them, sometimes we just can’t
refrain from promising strict publication
timelines. And we apologize to the many
Nepali communities and student groups
that have requested for copies of the paper
but haven’t received them, sometimes we just can’t
afford the shipping and handling. We do,
however, promise to keep this publication
free of cost for our readers and give them
a reason to continue picking up a print
copy or reading it online as they have in
the past. And we promise to continue to
offer this unique experiment and effort
for and about the Nepali diaspora that did
not exist before 8 Oct. 2005. As best as we
can, for as long as we can. We thank you
reading us during our first year and wish
you all happy holidays!

Editor, Nepali Aawaz. Dec. 06, NY.
Days in Nepali History

This issue’s ‘days in history’ are some of the news stories from Nepal published by The New York Times between 15 October and 15 December through the 1980s.

Everest Attempt Set Back
(15 Oct. ’81)
"Three members of a North American medical research team gave up an attempt to reach the summit of Mount Everest today because of winds, the Tourism Ministry reported. Radio reports from the team said the climbers had returned to Camp 5 at 26,300 feet but would try again tomorrow. The three are Chris Pizano of San Diego, Chris Kopczynski of Spokane, Wash., and David Jones of Vancouver, B.C.” (Reuters)

Nepal Enters the Space Age
(8 Nov. ’82)
"The son of King Birendra of Nepal spoke with Prince Charles of Britain today through a communication satellite earth station linking Nepal with the outside world. Britain provided about $1.2 million to help build the station, which replaces the high frequency radio system used since 1964.” (UPI)

A New Little Bear In Nepal
(6 Dec. ’83)
"Evidence of a new species of a “very agile” small bear has been found in Nepal by an expedition from the Woodlands Institute of Spruce Knob, W. Va. In a telephone call Saturday from Nepal to Woodlands Institute headquarters Dr. Daniel Taylor-Ide, the institute’s director, and Dr. Robert L. Fleming Jr. reported finding “substantial” evidence of a new species of small bear, workers at the institute said.” (UPI)

500 Are Detained by Nepal
(5 Nov. ’84)
"About 500 people were detained today for taking part in a meeting organized by the outlawed Nepali Congress Party in Bharatpur, sources in the party said. More than 150 were still being held late today, the sources said. All political parties are banned in Nepal.” (AP)

Carter Vacationing in Nepal
(18 Oct. ’85)
"Former President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, arrived today for a vacation that will include a trek to the Himalayas and possibly a trip to the base of Mount Everest. They are to spend 13 days in Nepal.” (UPI)

Note: The Carter Centre has accepted the invitation of Nepal government and the Maoists to observe the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections, which is to be held in June ’07.

Nepal Prince Warns Of Threat to Wildlife
(4 Dec ’86)
"The brother of King Birendra warned today that a paper mill that China helped build threatens rare crocodiles, dolphins and the fabled Bengal tiger.

"Prince Gyanendra, head of a non-profit trust to protect the environment, warned that the pulp mill could pollute the Nayrani River and endanger a nearby royal reserve – once a hunting ground for the British rulers of colonial India.

"Despite the warning, King Birendra is scheduled to inaugurate the plant Thursday in the presence of China’s Minister for Light Industry, Yang Bo.

"The Prince called on the Government to take “urgent appropriate measures before it is too late” to protect the Gharial crocodiles, Gangetic dolphins and Bengal tiger.” (UPI)

Transplanted Nepalese Rhinos Breed
(16 Dec. ’88)
"Tiny footprints recently led wildlife officials to a baby rhinoceros, the first calf born to a herd transplanted to this swampy area from another part of Nepal to preserve them.

"We had initially not expected a baby so soon here when we put the rhinos for the first time in this jungle,” said Krishna Man Shrestha, the jubilant warden of Royal Bardia Wildlife Reserve.

"Thirteen rhinoceroses have been transported to the Bardia reserve since 1986 from the Chitwan sanctuary, 220 dusty miles to the east, because naturalists feared it was too risky to leave the endangered animals in just one area where a single epidemic could wipe them out. The move was made with the assistance of the World Wildlife Fund.

"The reserve, 406 miles southwest of Katmandu, Nepal’s capital, is similar to Chitwan.” (AP)

"...When you want to eat, in the Green Zone you have to go through Nepalis...

- Robert Young Pelton, author, Licensed to Kill: Hired Guns in the War on Terror (Crown, 2006), giving examples of multinational workers of private security companies hired to run various aspects of war in Iraq. The Green Zone is the fortified palace in Baghdad where an American base is being built and much of the government and diplomatic work is conducted, amongst other things. Pelton was debating the issue of private security contractors in Iraq with Doug Brooks, president of the International Peace Operations Association (an association of private security contractors), on the Brian Lehrer Show on 31 Oct. ’06, on WNYC, New York Public Radio.

"The cost has been dear.

Thousands of innocent Nepali citizens have lost their homes, their families and their lives; all due to the conflict they neither caused, participated in nor ultimately understood. Now, there is a ray of hope.”

- America-Nepal Friendship Society, quickly looking back and ahead at the 11-year-old Maoist movement and seemingly its end after they agreed to a peace deal with the Seven-Party Alliance led government.

"We expresses its sincere gratitude towards the people of Nepal, the civil society, and all domestic and international political forces who endeavored to realize this historic signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord. Political leaders and the political forces of Nepal have proved that they are mature enough to settle any political differences through a peaceful dialogue.”

- Sanjaya Parajuli, President, Alliance for Democracy and Human Rights in Nepal, USA, referring to the popular April Uprising that brought to an end King Gyanendra’s failed coup and the agreement between the Seven-Party Alliance led government and the CPN (Maoist).

"We strongly urge the government and the Maoists to honestly implement the Accord. We would also urge the civil society and the international community to be vigilant, to monitor the progress, and to put pressure on the government and the Maoists to implement the Accord, in case they try to deviate from the provisions mentioned in the Accord.”

- Anand Bist, President, The Nepalese Democratic Youth Council in USA, warmly welcoming the peace deal between the Maoists and the Seven-party based Nepali government.

"Only by looking into our past mistakes and drawing lessons from them will we be able to carry on this light to a further height and make the light permanent and more powerful.”

- Tek B. Gurung, President, United Nepalese Democratic Forum, New York, on the recent signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accords between the Seven-Party Alliance led government and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist).

December 2006

In Quotes

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Nepalis on the move: Studying abroad

Kashish Das Shrestha

“Study Abroad” has become a social phenomenon in Nepal, an industry that thrives on sending Nepali students to foreign countries for higher education, primarily for undergraduate studies. But the industry and the flow of students severely lack oversight and monitoring; everyone knows more and more students are leaving the country, but no body knows how many are coming back. The political unrest in the country has largely contributed to the trend maturing into the norm, but perhaps an exodus like this was inevitable in any case for a generation that has grown up on satellite television.

Sometime in the beginning of this century, even middle-class parents and older relatives had decided that there is very little future in Nepal. So, the best option they thought, for the young ones were to leave the country for better education for a better job in a better country. Of course, you cannot undermine the Nepali student’s desire to compete in a global market and reach out for the best academic options they have. For these or whatever other reason(s), an increasing number of Nepalis have been traveling abroad for their higher education. Below is the trend in which Nepali students have been traveling to the United States, Australia and New Zealand. Figures from India is cited in the data below for reference only and not comparison.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:
In 1994, there were approximately 3 Nepali students coming to the US per day. According to Institute of International Education/ Opendoors Nepal ranked #19 in the list of leading countries from which international students came coming the US in 2005/06, i.e. approximately 16 students per day. India ranked #1.

2005/06: 6,061 students, approximately at the rate of 16 students per day. 1,200 students more than 2004/05. Ranked #19 in the list of leading countries from which international students come to the US. (From India: 76,503 students, or approx. 200 per day)

2004/05: 4,861 students, approximately at the rate of 13 students per day. Ranked #23 in the list of leading countries from which international students come to the US, 10.9% increase from 2003/04. The total number of international students in the US was 565, 039.

2002/03: 4,384 students, approximately at the rate of 12 students per day. The total number of international students in the US was 572, 509.

2000/01: 2, 618 students, approximately at the rate of 7 students per day. 1,892 of them came for Undergraduate studies, 609 for Graduate studies and 117 for others.

1999/00: 2, 411 students, approximately at the rate of 6 students per day.


1994/95: 1, 264 students, approximately at the rate of 3 students per day.

AUSTRALIA:
The visa process for Australia has become a bit difficult for Nepali students, since all the application documents have to be sent to Delhi. But the prospects of getting a good education, and perhaps more importantly a permanent residency in Australia has provoked many Nepalis to head down under.

2005: 1,271 students, approximately at the rate of 3 students per day. This was the second highest number of Nepali students to arrive in Australia since 1994. That figure is also only 7 students more than 1,264, the second lowest number of students from Nepal going to the United States in fiscal years between 1994-2006.

2004: 1,049 students (From India: 20, 716 students, approximately at the rate of 56 students per day)


NEW ZEALAND:
The number of Nepali students going to New Zealand has been relatively low, probably because many students continue to prioritize North America, the United Kingdom and Australia as their primary options (although several ”study abroad” institutions have been sending Nepali students to countries such as Cyprus). Of all the countries where Nepali students travel to for their higher education ever year, New Zealand probably still has one of the lowest influx rates.


Sources:
United States data: Institute of International Education/ Opendoors.
Australia data: Australian Government, AIE- International Education Network.
NewZealanddata: ManagingInternationalStudentNumbersatNewZealandPublicUniversitiesandPolytechnics.Reports toMinistryofEducation.2004,”Dr. Leanne Smithand Professor Allan Rae, Massey University.

Note: The approximate rate of students arriving in a country per day is the result of the total number of students per year divided by 365 and tabulated by Nepali Aawaz and not the sources listed above.
Nepalis on the move: A look at immigration trends

A recent report titled 'America at 300 million' published by TIME (30 Oct. '06), said that of the 300 million people in America, 13.1 million, or 4.4% are Asians. Of that 13.1 million Asians, its anybody's guess how many are Nepalis. It is believed that Ganga Bahadur Mali was the second Nepali to have come the United States several decades ago. But who was the first? Even the Nepali embassy was not able to provide that information. But Nepal's flag can be seen in a hallway in Berkley College in San Francisco, in a scene in the critically acclaimed movie "The Graduate," which was released in 1967 and presumably filmed in 1966. So perhaps one of more Nepali student had arrived in Berkley by the mid 60s, since it is common for colleges to display the flags of countries that make up their International Student body. It should be noted that in 1820, the entry of one immigrant from India was recorded. And while India’s immigration trend, published for general reference, might seem much higher than that of Nepal’s, its population is also significantly higher than that of Nepal’s. While we hope to collect and publish more detailed statistics on the Nepali community in our future issues, here is a glimpse at a recent immigration trend for the US.

**Nepali Immigrants Admitted to the US Per Fiscal Year:**

During our research for this data, we could not verify if the following numbers included the Diversity Visa a.k.a DV lottery winners.

- **2004:** 2,842 people, of which only 479, or approx. 16% of immigrants, were employment based preference. (India: 70,116, of which 38,443 or approx. 54%, were employment based).
- **2003:** 2,099
- **2002:** 1,138
- **2001:** 949
- **2000:** 617 (India: 42,046)
- **1999:** 453
- **1998:** 476
- **1997:** 447
- **1996:** 431
- **1995:** 312 (India: 34,748)

**Non-Immigrant Nepalis Who Visited the US Temporarily in FY 2004:**

During our research for this data, we could not verify if the numbers represent only individual visitors or if it also includes a single person’s multiple visits.

- **As foreign Government Officials:** 226 (India: 2,079)
- **As temporary visitors for business:** 1,468 (India: 116, 237)
- **As tourists:** 3,899 (India: 239, 632)
- **As transit aliens:** 821 (India: 19, 883)
- **As treaty traders and investors:** 5 (India: 260)

**Total:** 10,327 people (India: 611, 327. Asia: 7, 828, 316. Total: 30, 781, 330).

**Where Those Non-Immigrant Nepalis Entered the US from in FY 2004 (Port of Entry):**

- **New York:** 2,173
- **Miami:** 353
- **Los Angeles:** 2,007
- **Honolulu:** 111
- **Newark:** 265
- **Chicago:** 452
- **San Francisco:** 841

**Total:** 10,327

**Age of Those Non-Immigrant Nepalis Who Visited the US Temporarily in FY 2004:**

- **Under 15:** 450
- **15-19 years-old:** 565
- **20-24 years-old:** 1,259
- **25-34 years-old:** 2,626
- **35-44 years-old:** 2,374
- **45-64 years-old and over:** 2,644
- **65 years-old and over:** 2,644

**Number of Nepalis Granted Asylum in the US:**

Possible factors for a spike in the number of asylum seekers and grantees after 2000 can also be attributed to the fact that Maoist conflict in Nepal intensified at around that time. The number of political asylum seekers have jumped in the last few years.

- **1997:** 3, approx. 0.018% of the total number of asylum grantees. (India: 884. Asia: 8,664. Total: 16,221).
- **1998:** 17
- **1999:** 13
- **2000:** 17, approx. 0.07% of the total number of asylum grantees. (India: 642. Asia: 7,696. Total: 22,852.)
- **2001:** 19
- **2002:** 69
- **2003:** 143
- **2004:** 183, approx. 1.27% of the total number of asylum grantees. (India: 130. Asia: 2, 444. Total: 14, 359)

**Source:** US Department of Homeland Security.
Baag Chaal at Rubin Museum

A unique event took place in New York on 2 Dec. The Rubin Museum of Arts in association with the America-Nepal Friendship Society hosted a lifesize version of the popular Nepali board game Baag Chaal (‘Baag’ means Tiger and ‘Chaal’ move), a strategic game in which 4 Tigers and 21 Goats play against each other.

Several dozen children and adults arrived to take part, first cutting and coloring their tiger or goat masks, and listening to the rules. The goats win if they surround the tigers and the tigers win when they capture five goats. While 20 of the goats are placed outside the board at the start of the game, all the four tigers are placed in the four corners of the square. The goats can only be placed on one of the free junctions of the board and after all the goats have been placed on the board they may be moved from their position to any adjacent junction following any straight line. The tigers may be moved along any of the lines to an adjacent junction and may capture one goat placed on an adjacent junction by jumping over it and following a straight line and landing on the next junction adjacent to the position occupied by the goat. Two players move the goat and tiger pieces alternately like Chess. It is believed the games originated in the himalayas many years ago, when shepherds played it by scratching the game board on a flat surface to pass their time.

Participants were also given a complimentary pass to the fabulous exhibitions at the museum. Rubin Museum of Arts primarily focuses on arts from the Himalayan region and their collection also includes many ancient stone, metal and wood crafts and thankas from Nepal, Bhutan, India, Tibet, China and Mongolia. The 70,000 square-foot Museum is located at 150 West 17th Street, New York, and a must visit for Nepalis here in New York. You can visit the museum for FREE every Friday evening after 7PM. On other days, the admission fee is $10/adults, $7/Seniors, students and artists with IDs. For more information about Rubin Museum of Arts, Rmany.org.

Nepal Study Gourp formed in NY

Nepal Study Group held its first meeting on 19 Nov. at the New School in Manhattan. The recently formed group’s main idea is to “convene a regular forum on Nepal in NYC, to have serious dialogue on burning issues in Nepal and then share its deliberations with public at large,” said Ashok K. Gurung, Director of India China Institute and Faculty, The New School.

The first meeting focused on the subject of interim constitution in Nepal, with speakers Prof. Andrew Arrato and advocate Dinesh Tripathi. The group hopes to have similar meetings and forms every 6 to 8 weeks on burning issues in Nepal and then share its deliberations with public at large.
Diaspora

Nepalis run NYC and Philly

New York City marathon is perhaps one of the most well-known marathons. Not just in the US but all over the the world. Held on the first Sunday of every November, this was the 37th year for the 26.2 miles (42km) marathon that snakes from Staten Island to Brooklyn to Queens and then Manhattan, ending at Tavern on the Green in Central Park. Of the 37, 954 participants who finished the race this year, including the famed athlete Lance Armstrong, one of them was Nepali student Prerana Shrestha. Two weeks later, on 19 Nov., two more Nepalis ran another 26.2 mile route, Sworupa Khadka and Raksha Pant took part in the annual Philadelphia Marathon. The three participants were not merely testing their physical endurance, but more importantly raising funds for the Help Nepal Health Post project in Haripurwa VDC, Sarlahi, a conglomerate of villages with approximately 13,000 people that does not have a health post yet.

‘As a first time marathoner, participating in the ING NYC Marathon was a fascinating experience for me. It felt like I was part of a big celebration of life and the goodness in people.’ She further said, ‘I would urge everyone to take up personal challenges to support noble causes and not be discouraged by initial hurdles. With good training and discipline, any Nepali can achieve great feats and raising societal awareness about the Badi plight in western Terai. Sworupa works as an Assistant Operations Manager at Mellon Financial Corporation in its Consulting and Investment Solutions group. She graduated from University of Bridgeport, CT in 2001 where she served as a President of The Himalayan Club, a student organization. She is also the founding member of XMA (Xavier’s Mary’s Alumni Association). She has been actively involved in the organization of various social and fund raising events/activities in the New England and tri-state area.

The foundation fund for the health post was first raised during the Help Network’s MaHa US Tour during the summer. But the $10,760.90 was still $8,000 short for the construction of the proposed 13-bed Health Post. Through their efforts, Prerana, Sworupa and Raksha have managed to raise an additional $6,000. Contributions can still be made at Help Nepal Network’s website www.helpnepal.net.

Gambu on the go

Gambu Sherpa, an active member of the Sherpa Kyidug Scoeity- NY, and the United Sherpa Association, has been on the move lately. [Full disclosure: He is one of the founding members of this publication]. On 14 Nov. he represented Nepal at the 2nd annual event celebrating South Asian heritage in New York at the Gracie Mansion, the historical Mayor’s mansion of New York. He performed his fusion pop songs alongside other South Asian artists. Present for the event was Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg. On 28 Oct., along with Sangdorje Sherpa and several other local artists, Gambu Sherpa also performed at his ‘Sherpini Didi Night.’ The concert, organized and promoted by Moonlight Records [Full disclosure: Moonlight Records is the publisher of this publication], was the official launch party for his albums Saannani Vol.1 and Sherpini Didi. Guest singers included the poplar pop singer Meera Rana also, and present for the show was the Nepali film actor Rajesh Hamal and Ambassador to the Permanent Mission of Nepal to the UN, His Excellency Mr. Madhu Raman Acharya.
A conversation with Dr. Govinda Prasad Thapa

When police officers in Nepal retire, they are often well decorated. But perhaps not many are decorated the way Dr. Govinda Prasad Thapa was. 31 years ago, his Bachelors in Arts (1972) from a college in Daradhin, India, had enabled him to enter the Nepal Police force as an Inspector. When he retired in March this year, he retired as the Additional Inspector General of Police. And apart from the medals and honors, he had also earned a Ph.D (Department of Public Administration, 2002), Masters in Public Affairs (2000), Masters in Arts (English literature, 1984), Bachelor’s in Law (1992).

Dr. Govinda, now the Chairperson of Centre for Security and Justice Studies, Nepal, came to the United Sates on the invitation of United States Institute of Peace, Washington DC, to make a presentation during the launch of ‘Combating Serious Crimes in Postconflict Societies: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners.’ Other speakers at the event included Jacques Paul Klein, Former Chief of United Nations operations (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Liberia) and Major General David C. Ralston, Former Chief of Operations (KFOR) and one of the authors of the handbook. He had come to New York and participated in an interaction program with the Nepali community, an event organized by Langhali Association USA, in Queens. He also spoke to Nepali Aawaz.

You recently presented a paper on post-conflict situation for Nepal. Is it natural for crime to spike up like it has in Nepal post- April Uprising?

Yes, and its not a new phenomenon. We have to learn from other countries who have gone through similar times. We have to find things that are relevant and see how it can be adapted to our situation. For example, a post conflict situation with a weak government, a state of general confusion, is a breeding ground for criminal gangs and crime in general, and often the security forces themselves would be involved, as we have seen in a few cases in Nepal too. The background of the conflict might be different, but there are many similar trends in criminal psychology.

You were a police offer during the 1990’s people’s movement and you witnessed the recent April Uprising also. What do you remember from the movement in 1990?

I was posted in various district offices at the time, between 1988-1992, in Rautahat, Bara, Bhaktapur. And in 1990, I was an S.P at the D.I.G’s office in Morang, Biratnagar. You know, the movement then was for a multiparty democracy so crime rate after the movement was different. But this time, the situation is different, we have an armed insurgency, so the actors are different.

Yes, but what about the way the police handled the two movements, 1990’s and this April?

Oh, it was very high-ended this time, the use of violence I mean. Back then, in 1990, we wanted to use minimum force and ensure minimum destruction generally. We generally tried to be as least violent and forceful as possible. I mean, sure there were incidents back then also, but this time it was like the two sides, security forces and the protesters, were enemies. It was as if the security forces were trying to make sure that those who came to protest today should not be able to return the next day. Personally, I was not happy with what happened in the April protests. I even made a few public comments in the media about it.

What was the reaction?

There were those in the force who agreed and there were others who were disgruntled about a retired officer making comments. But I had said in my farewell event at the force, just because I retire as an active police officer wouldn’t mean I stop working in the areas of security forces, that I would be quite active in sectors related to policy making and such.

You were an active police officer during the government’s first reaction to contain the Maoist movement; Operations Kilo Sera and Romeo. Both of them essentially gave the security forces a bad name and scored sympathy points for the Maoists.

Conflicts like these are natural social phenomenon and we must recognize that. But we chose to reject those notions instead, not address the deep rooted causes they started. We thought we could quell it by using force, we didn’t take any lesson from countries that shared similar history, we acted haphazardly. And in order to hold ground, both sides went over board. Also, the police were neither properly trained and nor were there any solid policies to handle these kinds of situations.

State security can never afford to make mistakes because those mistakes kill. I was the S.P at that time and I had repeatedly said at the Police Academy that, like a game of soccer, we play to win but don’t play foul. Of course, this was an armed confrontation and people would surely be caught in the crossfire. Beyond that, any deliberate acts of framing, intimidation, and such only gives birth of more rebellion against the state. We must fight, but play by the rules. As far as Operation Kilo Sera and Romeo goes, we could have done better. We should have done more research and case studies. We are paying too high a price at the cost of lives, its been an expensive learning experience.

Why do policemen go on recurring arresting spree of guys with long hair and people of sexual minority groups?

[laughter]. When I look at policing in Nepal, I find it very regimental and army like, even the way they are made to look with the short hair cut and everything. And then they use the fear of psychology. So when they see someone of a different style, they get the wrong impression.

Do you think its possible that in the 70s, hippies in Nepal had long hair and were perceived as being trouble makers and so that psychology just stayed on?

Could be. We have not been able to police according to time. They did in my time too, round up guys and get their hair cut. And again, human rights is key to policing. Police don’t make the effort either, they look for easy ways out, you know, for example beat the first suspect and get a testimony. So there is still very little effort made in understanding things like human rights.

What about the repeated arrests and attacks on the ‘metis’, the sexual minorities?

Police has been blantly brute about this case. And the Blue Diamond Society (BDS) has time and again filed complaints about the brutality its members have faced at the hands of the police. One time, the valley D.I.G, Kathmandu’s S.P, and a few other officers went to the Blue Diamond Society and met with victims and spent time talking to them. So the relationship between the police and the BDS improved, and then soon enough the brutality repeated. And its not even in their jurisdiction to arrest homosexuals or others from sexual minority groups.

So what happens next?

A long term system, or policy has to be set. Its a vicious cycle right now. Even with prostitution. You can’t raid all the places all the time. And often, the house owners are untouched where are the people who are working there are victimized, you know, arrested and prosecuted. And they were victims to being with in the first place, that’s how they land up in brothels or as prostitutes.

You’ve drafted many policies and made many recommendations. Your presentation at the DC event was a setup-by-setp guideline on how to maintain security in Nepal today. But what impact do these things really make?

Well, you know its tough to get things done. I myself have made so many recommendations but nothing gets done ever.

How do you change that?

Well, the security councils in Nepal are monopolized by the Police and the Army. This also create a gap between civilians and the security forces. We have to introduce more academics into this group. We have to start offering security policy courses in colleges. Right now, academic qualifications hardly account for anything in the force. Anyone with a BA degree may apply for the position of an Inspector in the force, and while awards and medals account for 15 points or more while being reviewed for promotions, additional academic qualifications don’t account for even a single point. How can you have people who studied about the world 20-30 year ago heading a force for today? But if we have a mix of academics and members of the security forces, I believe it will make a huge difference in how policies are drafted and implemented.
Mandira Sharma receives Int‘l HR honor

Every year, the international organization Human Rights Watch honors three people for their commitment and contributions to defending human rights in their respective countries. This year’s honoree for this international recognition included Mandira Sharma, lawyer and co-founder of the human rights group Advocacy Forum, for her work in exposing disappearances and indiscriminate attacks against civilians in Nepal. Verónica Cruz, who fights for the right of rape victims to receive the safe abortion they are entitled to under Mexican law, and Arnold Tsonga, who takes legal action against the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of people in Zimbabwe were the other two honorees.

As state brutality against peaceful pro-democracy protesters grew in late 2003 and intensified in early 2004, volunteers wearing the distinct blue jacket marked “Human Rights Workers” dotted the streets of Kathmandu. But this sector had been growing steadily since the People’s Movement in 1990, fighting for social issues such as gender rights and clamping down on human trafficking, to name a couple. With the start of the Maoist conflict, the young sector found itself busy monitoring and documenting a bloody movement.

And on 1 Feb. 2005, immediately after King Gyanendra announced his coup on a televised speech, the roles of many human rights organizations dramatically heightened as Nepal’s status in various global freedom and rights index slipped. HR defenders like Mandira Sharma became perpetually busy.

Mandira worked for years with Center for Victims of Torture. In 1999, she went to University of Essex, London, on a scholarship and earned a Masters in Human Rights Law. It was there she realized how important international networking and pressure can be to prevent human rights abuse. In 2001, she started Advocacy Forum.

During the discussion program at Columbia university you talked about the impact that international recognition and notice can have in countries like Nepal.

I think there are several reasons this happens. First, there is the question of aid Nepal gets from the international community. Then there is the fact that government officials have to be answerable when they go on international visits.

Could it also be that sometimes they just don’t know what the organization is, but when they get a letter from an “international organization” it creates a psychological pressure? Yes, I think that also has a hand, it definitely creates a psychological pressure. And it helps us a lot in the sense that when a body like Amnesty of Human Rights Watch send a notice or a letter for the same cause we are fighting, it makes our fight more legitimate in a way.

So how have you managed to make the most of this?

When we attended a conference in Geneva in 2002, we were quite shocked that some state representatives actually didn’t even know where Nepal was, when by that time the Maoist conflict in our country had become quite bloody and dangerous. So I had resolved that we really needed to work towards making Nepal’s case in the international arena.

And how does one do that?

We decided that we would make sure Nepal’s case is heard so we filed at least 20 habeas corpus cases in the supreme court every day. And 10 cases of “disappearances” at the UN offices. And we weren’t making this up, there were enough such cases happening every day for us to report. We realized that was the best way to get the attention Nepal needed. By the way, not even a single case of disappearance has been tried in the Supreme Court yet. Not even one.

You met with senior US officials during your visit to Washington DC. What was your message?

The American government has a pretty good relationship with the Nepali army, it provides arms to them. So the American government can do a lot to ensure human rights in Nepal by implementing preconditions such as respecting human rights, investigating abuse of human rights, and just generally making a point that human rights is a key issue.

You are a married woman, and your work entails you to be on the filed often.

I know, its not easy, but it’s amazing how much women can do only if people don’t stop them from doing it. They don’t even have to do anything special for us, just don’t stop us from doing it, that’s all. I’ve been extremely lucky that I have a very understanding husband, and I am not sure this would be possible if we lived in a joint family. It does get a little tough with my son sometimes though.

How old is he? How does he handle you being busy all the time?

He is just 12. He has grown to be quite good at handling my working life although he has his occasionally fits about me not spending enough time with him. But he understands that my work is important. I take him to the field sometimes with me, so he has seen a lot. It’s funny, but when he talks he subconsciously makes social issues a part of his life, like when he talks about what he wants to do. And then he does small things like putting aside books and clothes he doesn’t need for donation.

What was your childhood like?

I grew up in a small town in the village of Banglung. It’s not easy growing up a girl child, I could just notice all these gender biases in my community.

Is that what triggered your current work?

Well, it was that too. But when I moved to Kathmandu, the people’s movement was just about starting and when that happened in 1990 I was working as a volunteer with a group of people who were creating help victims of state brutality during the protests.

Was there a defining moment when you realized you wanted to work as a human rights defender?

There was this really articulate student leader in our college, much like Gagan Thapa of the day, and he was just a fantastic leader and activist. He could mobilize people, hold mass meetings and you know, hold a lot of potential. But one time, the police arrested him and tortured him. And we met him when he was released and I was just devastated to see what had happened to him, his personality had completely changed, he seemed dazed and couldn’t quite do what he could before. And this just disturbed me, I mean it wasn’t just that his life was devastated, but the country itself also lost someone with a lot of potential, it was a loss for his family and the community. So I was quite certain that I didn’t want those incidents to repeat. I think that really pushed me to the path that I am on now.

You have been working in the human rights sector for almost 16 years. How has it transformed?

The changes have been quite distinct. Initially, in the early 90s, it was a lot of awareness raising, just about democracy and human rights and such. Then it soon moved into the area of reporting and monitoring, particularly when the conflict flared up.

And now?

Now we want to work towards getting justice and ensuring accountability. Of course these aren’t easy demands to make. But we can begin with smaller cases that have been well documented, we’re not even talking about going after big politicians and high profiled people. Let just start with delivering justice to cases like Maina Sunwar. We have all the evidences, a whistle blower even leaked army documents proving that she was in fact arrested and killed in custody. The case got much international attention. But again, not a single disappearance case has reached the court. Impunity, social and economical injustice feed rebellion. Justice and accountability are preconditions to democracy and we have to make sure they prevail now.
Nepali Aawaz now available online @ Nepaliaawaz.com and Digitalhimalaya.com
The Bhutanese refugee crisis is one of the biggest in South Asia. Over 110,000 of Bhutanese citizens, which accounts to approximately twenty percent of Bhutan’s then total population, have been living in seven different refugee camps. And a recent decisions by the United States to grant asylum to a portion of the refugees has sparked off a new debate.

The story of Bhutanese refugees is tragic in every way. Unlike the refugees from countries like Sudan, Rwanda and earlier Yugoslavia, these people did not flee their country to avoid armed conflicts or civil war. The refugees from Bhutan were forced to leave their country because of the government’s self-centered racist and ethnocentric policies. Bhutanese government responded with a negative attitude towards its citizens in southern Bhutan, where majority of these citizens, the Lhotshampas, speak Nepali language. Since 1990, Bhutanese refugees have been living in UNHCR funded camps in Nepal and India.

The conflict over the refugee problem is not new either. Dozens of rounds of multilateral talks between Nepal and Bhutanese government have failed, producing no consequences whatsoever. “Bhutan does not show any interest,” said Teknath Rijal, Bhutanese refugee leader who has been constantly advocating for repatriation of the refugees. “They have tried to avoid the problem for too long now.”

The Bhutanese and Nepali delegations have failed to reach any conclusions in fifteen rounds of talks in last 16 years. In the midst of rise in the conflict, the United States recently proposed to absorb 60,000 refugees over the period of three or four years. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Population Refugees and Migration Ellen Sauerbrey made the resettlement offer while attending the United Nation High Commission for Refugees’ (UNHCR) Executive Committee meeting in Geneva.

“After 15 different governmental-level consultations between the two governments,” Sauerbrey said at a briefing, “the United States has come forward and said we are willing to resettle a very significant part of this population.”

But the Bhutanese are not solely happy about the offer. While many think that the offer is an opportunity for them to better their lives, other think that the offer jeopardizes the Bhutanese democratic movement. According to Rijal, more than 30,000 refugees live in northern Indian states and Bhutanese government is planning to deport more Lhotshampas.

“Bhutan does not show any indifference in solving the refugee crisis. Rijal, who currently chairs the Bhutanese Refugees Repatriation Committee, based in Kathmandu, has been continuously advocating for the respectful repatriation of the refugees. Nepal’s efforts have stopped distributing rations and started playing politics.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister KP Sharma Oli had made it clear that Nepal will hold foreign minister level talks with Nepal next month to resolve the crisis. Oli has stressed the need for the respectful repatriation of the refugees, as he said that, Nepal will consider resettlement options only after Bhutan disagrees to take back its citizens.

TALKING POINTS:
Refugee Teknath Rijal has stayed a harsh critic of the Bhutanese indifference in solving the refugee crisis. Rijal, who currently chairs the Bhutanese Refugees Repatriation Committee, based in Kathmandu, has been continuously advocating for the respectful repatriation of the refugees. Aawaz’s Anup Kaphle spoke to Rijal about his views on the issue and the current scenario and the future of the refugee problem.

What is your comment on the recent indefinite sit-ins started by some 40 refugees?

There is a division in response among the refugees about the recent developments in the refugee crisis. One group is open to the option of staying in Nepal or moving to America while another group strongly feels that they should be allowed back into Bhutan. America’s proposal to take in refugees has been welcomed by majority of refugees because in almost two decades, neither India nor Bhutan has shown any interest in solving this crisis. America has agreed to take refugees, but only 60,000 of them. There are 50,000 alone in India and Bhutan is preparing to banish more than 60,000 people. These people in the strike are anticipating some kind of response from America and the western governments relating to the situation of other refugees who will not be able to resettle abroad. They think resettlement of 60,000 in the US is not a durable solution; the only durable solution is repatriation.

Deputy Prime minister K P Oli recently met with Bhutanese Foreign Minister in Dhaka. Is Nepal showing eagerness for what has been called “fresh start” to resolve the refugee crisis?

Oli invited Bhutan to the table. But Bhutan refused the proposal and they never show interest. Nepal’s efforts have gone in vain because of Bhutan’s non-responsive attitude. Nepal is doing its best. They want to remove the refugee camps. They have also welcomed the
The refugees drafted a new constitution in July. What changes does it procure for the benefit of refugees themselves? The refugees believed that the constitution made by Bhutanese government should be amended in certain criterion. With a motive to make the minority voice heard and change some of the clauses that affected lower class and poverty-stricken people, the constitution has been adjusted as such.

The Nepali government assured you of some immediate changes to break your hunger strike few months ago. What was the communication between you and the government? The Nepali government supported my support and demonstration for immediate resolving of the crisis, in a written letter. They assured me that Nepal government would play a supportive role in solving the refugee crisis as soon as possible and help send the refugees back to Bhutan. They made numerous promises and assurances like this one in the past, but all in vain.

How do you analyze the role of UNCHR in solving the refugee problem?

The refugee problem has been lengthening for a while now. Bhutan does not want to sit in talks with UNHCR and the western powers continue to put Nepal in the rumor mill rather than applying pressure on India and Bhutan. In this context, UNHCR’s tireless efforts to identify options to resettle the refugees abroad or send them back to Bhutan are deeply appreciated. They would like to dismantle the camps after solving the crisis but Bhutan shows no interest. If there is any progress made in this scene, it is because of UNHCR. We can’t blame them for whatever is getting worse.

But we have perceived the resettling of refugees in America as a one-sided decision because we strongly feel that everyone should get to go home respectfully. There have been widespread reports that refugees have been threatened to have their relief packages discontinued and are forced to sign the resettlement forms under the rug, I hope that the world does not fail because of America’s disinterest towards the refugee problem. The Nepalese refugee problem escalated in a time when Nepal’s political situation was in no better shape either. The country was struggling in its own ways to stabilize their domestic problems. Nepalese were moving out of the country to take refuge or find jobs in India. Because of the political turmoil within the country and frequently changing government, Bhutan took advantage of this situation to avoid the problem. The world did not notice that. But we do appreciate their recent initiatives to come with options in resolving this problem.

Is there politics behind how were the refugee camps are situated?

Nepal did not take the situation seriously in the beginning. They are placed in the middle of the forest or in riverbanks, which in every way are dangerous to lives of people living in the camps. People die of being bitten by cobra snakes inside their huts, trees falling over their roofs, and coal [which they use to produce fire to cook] burning their houses. The laments and woes of these refugees cannot be exaggerated in any kind of writing.

Do you have a message to the US government, the UN or a specific lobbying group?

To all the people who adore democracy and human rights: we are determined to bring democracy to a nation where the monarch and his regime do not serve the interest of his subjects.

In a speech after winning the election in 2004, President Bush hinted that America would be committed in flourishing democracy around the world by removing tyrants from power. I was hoping that Bhutan would be in his list. I still have the hope that the world remembers Bhutan – a member of the United Nation that does not respect human right and freedom to its citizens. Jigme Sigme Wangchuk has committed a crime and he is being supported by the world by allowing resettling of the refugees rather than punishing the king. Bhutan’s democratic movement should not fail because of America’s interest in hastily solving the crisis.

Bhutan is a strong country – the people are able to flourish in their country, if given an opportunity. So, instead of taking a chunk of refugees to America, which would only be sweeping the dust under the rug, I hope that the world pressures on Bhutan to take in their people back. We should keep in mind those refugees who will not be able to benefit the resettlement package. Only then, it would be a long-term solution.
Scenes from some of the many films and documentaries that will be screened in Kathmandu over the weekend.

Entertainment

Anushil Shrestha

75-Hour Cinema

The first 75-Hour Cinema in Nepal opened in Kathmandu on November 11. The cinema is a unique concept where the films are screened for a maximum of 75 hours, with no fixed start or end times. The films are displayed on a large screen, with the audience choosing their own seats. This concept is meant to provide a relaxed and comfortable viewing experience for movie lovers.

Nepali Aawaz | 20 Mangsir 2063

Photo: DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

Nepal Film

The Nepal Film Council has approved 12 new film projects, including four feature films and eight documentaries. The projects include films on various themes such as social issues, history, and culture. The aim is to promote Nepal’s cultural heritage and raise awareness about important social issues.

Photo: DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

Entertainment

Nepali Aawaz | 20 Mangsir 2063

Photo: DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA
नया रूपमा द युनिटि

Dev Raj in Hong Kong

हडकडमा मन्त्रा मदन

हडकड नेपाली कला मनिर तथा पीके कलेज, हडकड नेपाली निमित्तको संगठनमा नेपाली विख्यातीय नेपाली भाषा र साहित्यको अध्ययन र संस्कृति प्रदेशको अनिवार्य झाँकिके उद्घाटनमा एक कार्यक्रममा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र छुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र छुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र छुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र छुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र छुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र छुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र छुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र छुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र छुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र छुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजका विशिष्ट छायापत्र छुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजका विशिष्ट छायापत्र छुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजका विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजका विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजका विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजका विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजका विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजका विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजका विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजका विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजका विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजका विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजका विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजका विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजका विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजका विशिष्ट छायापत्र �ुपाउर २००६ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजका विशिष्ट ।
Society

Murtysang Ladde, Chetana Chhre Baaiki Jeevan Araka Laggai

Dambar Krishna Shrestha

Few lines of text about the current events and the role of society in addressing them.

Nepali Aawaz | 20 Mangsir 2063

Photos: DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA
किरात प्रदेशमा किचलो

Dambar Krishna Shrestha

पत्रिकामा नेपाल संस्थागतीको भाव लागि सन्दर्भ भएको माथिलकोपाई पुस्तक पुनः जान्नी पाटिनेको "जाटिका" राने नकारको पार्श्वी भौटी रीजिस्ट्री गैर नियुक्त गैर राजस्वले केहि स्मूहकाई भएका दियुनुभाव जस्ता माथिलाई समाप्त गराउन मुख्य संगठन रामण्ड्रा।

जाटलाई सांख्यिकीय र आधुनिकतालाई विकास भएको पर्ने उत्कृष्ट झरेको राणाको पुनः प्रकाश जानाए भएको माथिलकोपाइ पुस्तक र विवरणको रीजिस्ट्री गैर नियुक्त गैर राजस्वले केहि स्मूहकाई भएका दियुनुभाव जस्ता माथिलाई समाप्त गराउन मुख्य संगठन रामण्ड्रा।

राणाको पृष्ठभंडारी अन्तर्गत भौटाल गैर नियुक्त गैर राजस्वले केहि स्मूहकाई भएका दियुनुभाव जस्ता माथिलाई समाप्त गराउन मुख्य संगठन रामण्ड्रा।

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देखाएका यस्तो भाषामा आफ्नो अन्तर्गत जातीय सुदूरपश्चिमी स्थलमा र अन्य जातीय स्थलमा काम गर्ने व्यक्तिको भाषा नैलाई मान्नुहोस्।

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A Red Nepal and a Crimson South Asia

SIDDHARTHA THAPA

Although war in one of the world's poorest countries makes little sense, the resurgence of leftist ideological warfare that epochs a quasi democracy dictated by the proletariat can only be seen to undermine the foundations of democracy in South Asia.

One of the dynamics of the late 20th century and early 21st century politics has been the import of democracy in third world countries. However, democracy (in the purest, most liberal sense) has succeeded in only a handful of countries around the world. The reasons behind democratic failure can only be evaluated by reviewing historical, social and economic factors.

Democracy is not indigenous to South Asia, however democratic principles have prevailed in South Asian societies for a very long time. One of the most important facets of a maturing democracy is the connection between public reasoning and development of democracy. As Nobel economist Amritya Sen argues:

Public reasoning includes the opportunity for citizens to participate in political discussions and to influence public choice. Ballot can be seen as only one of the ways – albeit a very important way – to make public discussion effective, when the opportunity to vote is combined with the opportunity to speak and listen, without fear.

In line with Sen’s assessment of democratic evolution, the Nepali Maoists waged their people’s war primarily aiming to re-engineer the roots of the foundation of an evolving democracy. Naxalites and other leftist rebel outfits in India have waged a bloody war aiming to topple the widely accepted form of democratic governance. The fact that India’s successful absorption of democracy has indeed had a remarkable impact in South Asia, the resurgence of a leftist movement can only be evaluated by reviewing the reasons behind democratic failure.

The leftist movements in South Asia have primarily concerted their effort to exploit areas of disparities – a viable political platform to ascend power but not necessarily sufficient to retain power. Likewise, the Maoists of Nepal, evoked the idea of ‘self determination’ for the mobilization of masses in their favor. However, such a fallacy can only instigate ethnic and communal violence that will eventually lead to the disintegration of the nation state.

Economic disparity has led to successive convulsions and the resurgence of leftist movements in South Asia. The ruthless leftist movements in South Asia, especially the Maoists of Nepal, have worked strenuously to dismantle the economic development achieved after introduction of democracy in 1990 – basically, the Maoist organization today but no practical knowledge with which to make a living.

Economic autonomy, a market based on competitive consumer choices and minimalism government regulation are the cornerstones of an emerging democratic economy. However, leftist ideology (by its very ethos) is designed to dismantle the cornerstones of democracy and challenge economic development through economic stagnation. The intentional deceleration of free market economic progress is part and parcel with both Maoist rhetoric and Maoist tactics designed to bring the state to its knees.

The Maoists’ have systematically uprooted local economies and devastated the supply of essential commodities. The lack of government response provided the Maoist guerillas the leverage and the audacity to run propaganda campaigns throughout rural Nepal, blaming the government for the poor state of the economy (while actively partaking in acts designed to run the economy into the ground).

The political implications of a possible Maoist victory in Nepal will inevitably alter the dynamics of South Asian politics. More importantly, democratic ideals and institutions will be challenged. Nepal will serve as the core state for leftist ideologues throughout South Asia and the world.

Although the BJP and Congress in India will continue to sustain their popular support through the Northern and Mid-Western states, states plagued with Naxalites and violent communist movements will continue to gain momentum posing serious threats to Indian national security.

As nation states throughout South Asia, particularly India, fails to acknowledge the seriousness of the threat posed by a resurgent leftist movement, democracy in South Asia will fall victim to a negligent counter insurgency policy.

Ancient social structures that have so far provided moral guidelines through which societies across South Asia have evolved harmoniously will come under increasing threat from a resurgent leftist movement. The idea of ‘self determination’, as envisioned by the Maoists’ in Nepal, aims primarily to warn India about the possible consequences that the Maoist can impose by destabilizing India’s security.

Minority groups (Kashmir, Assam, Telanga) which have for long battled with the Federal government in Delhi will see in a Nepal, a benchmarking model through which a violent movement succeeds in addressing the needs of minority groups.

As India has sustained an economic growth of over 8 % for the last six years, a leftist resurgence in South Asia will cripple markets for further economic growth.

Therefore, an immediate reversal in policy at the South Block and Race Course Road is required to contain the imminent threat posed by a leftist resurgence. The ultimate aim of leftist policies are to replace democratic institutions with proletarian setups, dictated by COMPOSA and PWG (amalgamations of South Asian leftist forces). The end result would be the erection of the Compact Revolutionary Zone (CRZ) – a red zone that will stand against any and every notion of liberal democracy and market based economies as we know them today.

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Coalition government to be formed soon

ANUP KAPHE

It was a decision possibly every Nepalese were waiting for to be made. A decade-long armed insurgency has finally come to an end after Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and the Maoist leader Prachanda signed the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) in a historic ceremony at Birendra International Convention Hall on November 21, 2006. The Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists and the seven political parties had reached an agreement, two weeks earlier, on both political and arms management issues. Baburam Bhattarai, the notorious Maoist genius arms management issues. Baburam Bhattarai, the notorious Maoist genius and second-in-command, has called the deal “the beginning of the end of monarchy.”

According to the preface to the accord, both parties – the government as well as the Maoists – are to strictly adhere to the provisions of the previous agreements and the desires of the Nepali people.

The CPA includes ten special provisions on issues such as human rights, civil and political rights, socio-economic transformation and most important of all, arms and army management. On November 7, the leaders of the seven party alliance (SPA) and representatives of the Maoists had signed a six point agreement, which includes a settlement to all litigious issues about the country’s political process and either side’s weapons management.

In an interview with BBC on November 9, Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal, who goes by no de guerre Prachanda said, “Our experience has shown that we could not achieve our goals through armed revolution so we have chosen the path of negotiation and formed an alliance with the political parties.”

With the negotiation, the Maoists guerillas and will be confined to seven military billets and 21 sub-divisions and their arms will be locked in designated billets only. Although the Maoist leaders will still have access to those locks, United Nations will have squads on duty on all seven stations, keeping a watchful eye through closed circuit camera and electronic sensor device. The Nepalese army has also agreed to have a watchful eye through closed circuit camera and electronic sensor device.

The Nepalese army is not going to break the cease fire agreement, a code of conduct and human rights accord, by November 21. However, the decision to build a new government will not be made until the guerillas are confined to their designated cantonments and both the Maoists and the SPA sign a Comprehensive Peace Accord that includes a permanent ceasefire agreement, a code of conduct and human rights accord, by November 16.

The interim government is hoped to have 23 members – five berths each for the Nepali Congress (NC), the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and the Maoists, and the remaining would go to other political parties. The total number of lawmakers in the interim parliament will be 330. NC, UML, NC (Democratic), Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), Peoples’ Front Nepal (PFN), Nepal Workers and Peasants Party (NWPP) and Nepal Sadbhawana Party (NSP-both), will have their respective berths in the existing parliament. NC has 75 (including Upper House), UML 73, RPP 8, PPN 5, NWPP 1 and NSP 5 seats in the current parliament. Maoists will get 73 seats in the interim parliament. Similarly, the remaining 48 extra seats will be divided among eight parties, including Maoists, civil society and other smaller parties. However, the distribution of extra seats will be decided later.

The Constitution Assembly elections, which are expected to be held in June, will declare the 425 leaders, of which 205 will be elected from the existing constituencies on the first-past-the-post system and 204 from the existing constituencies on the first-past-the-post system and 204 will be nominated by political parties in proportion to the popular votes they garner in the elections to the Constituent Assembly. The remaining 16 will be nominated by the Prime Minister.

The move has been welcomed by international community and the foreign agencies working in Nepal are expected to receive a clearance from their respective governments immediately. United States agencies working in Nepal need a license from the Office of Foreign Assets Control and a clearance from the US State Department.

However, the United States will continue to keep the Maoists on its lists of terrorist organizations even if they join the government, according to The Kathmandu Post.

Calling for the abolition of monarchy and establishment of a peasant regime, the armed insurgency started in 1996 from rural areas in the country. Although the country is yet to witness how much the Maoists will strive to benefit the poor working class people, it is evident that Nepalese people have not given up hope, yet.
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Digitizing and Distributing Visual Footage from the Himalayas

Dr. Mark Turin

The Digital Himalaya project aims to develop digital collection, archiving and distribution strategies for multimedia anthropological information from the Himalayan region. Based at Cornell and Cambridge universities, the project began in December 2000. The initial phase involved digitizing a set of existing ethnographic archives comprised of photographs, films, sound recordings, fieldnotes and texts collected by anthropologists and travellers in Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan and the Indian Himalayas from the beginning of the 20th century to the present.

The five collections involved in the first phase of the project make use of a wide range of original recording media and were chosen for their historical value and their coverage of diverse geographical areas and ethnic peoples of the Himalayan region:

(a) the Williamson Photographic Archive: 1,700 photographs taken between 1930 and 1955 by the British Political Officer Frederick Williamson in Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan. Williamson's collection is now held in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge, and includes a number of rare historic images.

(b) the Fürer-Haimendorf Film Collection: over 100 hours of 16mm film from various parts of the central and eastern Himalayas filmed between 1936 and 1980 by Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, Professor of Anthropology at School of Oriental and African Studies in London. The films are supplemented by Haimendorf's detailed field diaries.

(c) the Naga Videodisc: part of Haimendorf's film archive overlaps with a large ethnographic collection relating to the Naga peoples of north-eastern India and parts of Burma, principally collected by five different ethnographers and travellers. These materials were compiled as an analogue videodisc in the 1980s, and included some 10,000 photographs, a large number of film and sound clips, and original fieldwork diaries and notes in an associated database. The videodisc is now technologically obsolete, and we hope to re-release it in a digital format.

(d) the Thak Archive: materials from a study of the Gurung village of Thak, central Nepal, including over 100 hours of film, more than 3,000 photographs, and continuous censuses and fieldnotes covering the period 1968 to the present, collected by Alan Macfarlane and Sarah Harrison.

(e) the Thangmi Archive: digital video, photographs and ethnographic data from the Thangmi communities of Dolakha and Sindhupalcok districts in north-east Nepal collected by Mark Turin and Sara Shneiderman from 1996 to the present.

Of the above five collections, three are finite, historical resources, while the latter two are collections that continue to grow. Depending on the success of this initial phase, the project may expand to include other high quality archives.

The project has three long-term objectives: (a) to preserve in a digital medium valuable ethnographic materials that are degenerating in their current forms; (b) to make these resources available in a searchable digital format to scholars and the Himalayan communities from which the materials were collected; and (c) to develop a template for collaborative digital cataloguing that will allow users to contribute documentation to existing collections and eventually link their own collections to the system, creating a dynamic tool for comparative research.

In January 2003, members of the Digital Himalaya team travelled to Gangtok (Sikkim) and Mustang (Nepal) with the purpose of returning usable digital copies of archival footage from the 1930s and 1960s to the communities concerned. While we made use of laptop computers and high quality colour prints, it became clear during the field visit that DVD technology provided a powerful yet unexplored medium of exchange.

A DVD-based archive, functioning as a self-contained portable resource requiring neither Internet access nor a computer, is particularly suited to remote areas. Such an archive can provide access to non-literate users through controlled interactivity combined with high quality playable content using voiceovers in local languages. With the advent of small battery-operated DVD-Video players, it is possible to play DVDs in regions with no infrastructure or electricity supply, such as rural Nepal and Sikkim.

Challenges remain, however, since the viewership of any DVD is constrained by limitations on the physical distribution of discs. Moreover, the pace of technological change suggests that DVD, in its current incarnation, has but a limited life-span. These factors make DVD a risky choice as a long-term archival medium.

High quality compressed films from the 1930s onwards can be freely viewed and downloaded from the Digital Himalaya website. Broadband Internet offers exciting ways of making such an archive available to a geographically diverse audience. In large parts of the West, however, and certainly in the Himalayan region, the bandwidth necessary to transfer large digital files with ease is still unavailable. Even if the appropriate hardware and software were in place, many of those who might like to view images of their own communities are not literate in English or familiar with the basic computer skills needed to search an online database. While the construction of a multilingual search tool remains a challenge, Digital Himalaya has implemented Nepali Unicode on the website and is continuing to explore the use of Unicode Tibetan.

More recently, Digital Himalaya has branched out into the digitisation of journals, texts and newspapers from the Himalayan region. We started out with Contributions to Nepalese Studies and Kailash: Journal of Himalayan Studies, for which all back issues are provided free of charge in PDF format as downloads from our website. After positive user feedback, we continued the project with other journals, including: Ancient Nepal, the Journal of Bhutan Studies, the European Bulletin of Himalayan Research, Peace and Democracy in South Asia, Revue d'Etudes Tibetaines, the Journal of the Tibet Society, and the Bulletin of Tibetology. Limited back issues of all these important regional journals are now online and freely downloadable. Some of the most interesting collections from the Himalayan region are not academic publications but rather journalistic, so we continued by digitising back issues of Himal, Nepali Times, Nation Weekly, Midweek and the Regmi Research Series. Most recently we have agreed to co-host Nepali Aawaz on our website.

Please visit Digital Himalaya at <http://www.digitalhimalaya.com/> and make use of the resources. We look forward to your feedback and comments.

Dr. Mark Turin is a linguistic anthropologist based at the University of Cambridge. He is presently conducting a linguistic survey of Sikkim at the request of the local administration, and will return to Nepal in January 2006 when he will be working on the Chintang and Puma Documentation Project (CPDP) based at Tribhuvan University.
Himalayan Community set to go high places

Established in June this year, the Himalayan Community is a non-profit organization devoted to preserve Himalayan culture, religion, and promote better harmony within the various ethnic groups that originate from the Himalayas. The idea to first establish this organization was sparked by the idea of hosting an event with H.H. Dalai Lama in New York sometime next year.

"The people of Himalayan origin are one of the fastest growing immigrant communities in New York," explains Lobsang Thinley 'Salaka,' the umbrella organization’s president. Currently the Himalayan Community comprises of the United Sherpa Association, Mustang Kyidug, Walung Community of North America, Tamang Society of America, Yolmo Society of America, Gyalsumdo Sewa Sanstha, Manang Samaj, Gurung Community while there are on-going discussions with the Tsum Community, Dolpo Community and Nupri Association regarding their participation.

On 25 Nov. the Himalayan Community organized its first event, the 'Himalayan Live Concert 2006.' The organization had invited headlining Nepali pop stars Nima Rumba, Raju Lama (of Mongolian Hearts fame), Mingma Sherpa, Sindhu Malla, and the Tibetan sensation Tsering Gyurmey to perform at the event. Sure enough, the event held at a venue on 630 2nd Ave, New York, was a grand success. "The funds raised from this show will go directly towards the funds for our planned event with H.H. Dalai Lama," Lobsang explained.

In fact, the concert was so successful the Himalayan Community will be hosting a second round with more stars added to the bill; Nepali pop singer Sukmit Gurung and Tibetan singers Phurba T. Namgyal (from Minnesota) and Tenzin Woser (from New York). The concert will be held at the same venue on 23 Dec. In 2007, the Himalayan Community hopes to organize a grand event on Buddha Jayanti, which they hope will find the participation of H.H. Dalai Lama. And then another musical extravaganza in the summer.
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