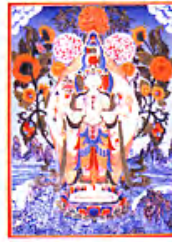


2 C.K. LAL
Déjà vu in Kathmandu



POUBHA

11



2 State of the State
3 Toni Hagen
6 From the Nepali Press

10 Desmond Doig
19 Off the beaten trek
20 Holy Cow

CONGRESS vs CONGRESS

EXCLUSIVE

Praveen Gurung



The death of 38-year-old musician, Praveen Gurung, shocked relatives, friends and fellow-musicians beyond words. Praveen's versatility and easy-going personality had endeared him to a large circle of Nepalis. His death in a hit-and-run crash has embroiled Paras Shah, the son of Prince Gyanendra, in another serious controversy that also has implications for the royal family.

page 5

\$ 185,000 missing

An ex-employee of Citibank in Kathmandu who had made off with \$ 185,000 from the New York account of Rastriya Banijya Bank has been arrested by the police. Madhu Aryal allegedly electronically transferred the money with the help of a fellow employee while working for Citibank. What is surprising is that the scam remained hidden for years because of delays in Rastriya Banijya Bank reconciling its accounts. Investigators are still not sure if the \$ 185,000 was all, or if there is more money missing.

page 8

Gods return

Another stolen religious figure is being returned to Nepal this month. A 900-year-old Uma-Maheswor stolen from Dhulikhel in 1982 is the latest piece of Nepali heritage to come back home. Last year, four statues stolen from Nepal were returned by an unnamed American collector and are presently housed at the National Museum. The Uma-Maheshwor will be kept at the Patan Museum. The question now arises: do we put the returned images inside museums or do we restore them to their original places of worship, and risk losing them again?

page 15

The chronic quarreling between Koirala and Bhattarai points to a larger power struggle among their sidekicks

BINOD BHATTARAI

It has become a predictable ritual in the Nepali Congress: hard-fought elections are won, there is a majority in parliament, within months the party begins to self-destruct as a dissident faction mutinies, a new alignment is set up and the same cycle is repeated.

This time, a crisis that started with a dissatisfied Khum Bahadur Khadka trying to oust his boss took a turn when the rebellious minister suddenly found himself sacked. Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala then moved swiftly to outflank dissidents by meeting their guru, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, and smoking the peace pipe. A cabinet reshuffle any day now will indicate how well the compromise works—the clue will be the number of Bhattarai men (and women) in it.

The cease-fire has now gone into force. In effect, this week's tussle was the preliminary round of the knock-out to take place at the party's General Convention originally slated for November in Pokhara.

Koirala is both prime minister and party president. Many dissidents, including Khum Bahadur, thought this made him too powerful. The convention will be a showdown in which Koirala is most likely to be challenged by another ambitious leader who has once tasted power: Sher Bahadur Deuba.

Deuba leans on Bhattarai a lot and will be banking on this support to counter Koirala. For his part, Koirala relies on his cousin, General Secretary Sushil Koirala, feared by both Deuba and Khum Bahadur for his politics, to get him the votes.

On Monday morning Koirala and Bhattarai met one-on-one for 25 minutes, and two versions were made public. Koirala's supporters said the prime minister repeated his commitment made at the 11 August Central Working Committee (CWC) meeting to meet two of Bhattarai's five demands: reshuffling the cabinet and the party's CWC, and not to play dirty

during the party election. Koirala is also said to have given his old friend a lollipop—rescheduling the party Convention, if needed. (Baluwatar sources say Koirala would prefer an early Convention to resolve the power struggle so he can get down to the business of running the country.) Bhattarai's version is that a team would be formed to "carry the talks forward".

On the key question of one person-one post, Koirala gave Bhattarai a blunt "no". Said one Congress insider: "Girijababu basically dared Kishunji to vote him out."

Meanwhile, Young Turks Deuba and Khum Bahadur are still plotting. But they have yet to get their arithmetic right. What worked in Koirala's favour this time was that even some ministers identified as being close to Bhattarai were fed up with the instability a signature campaign would entail. Sources said Bhattarai himself had approached some junior ministers to seek their support but they refused.

Khum Bahadur, who found himself in the eye of the storm after his sacking, is now backstage, an unfamiliar place for someone who has always been a high-profile minister in most Congress governments. Khum Bahadur was likely to have been

dropped in a cabinet reshuffle Koirala had planned before leaving for India.

Sensing the impending reshuffle, Khum Bahadur had pressed his earlier demand calling for the sacking of Inspector General of Police Achyut Krishna Kharel, a request Koirala had repeatedly ignored. Khum Bahadur told us he had not begun collecting signatures, but that he strongly believed it was time a younger leader like Shailja Acharya took charge of the party.

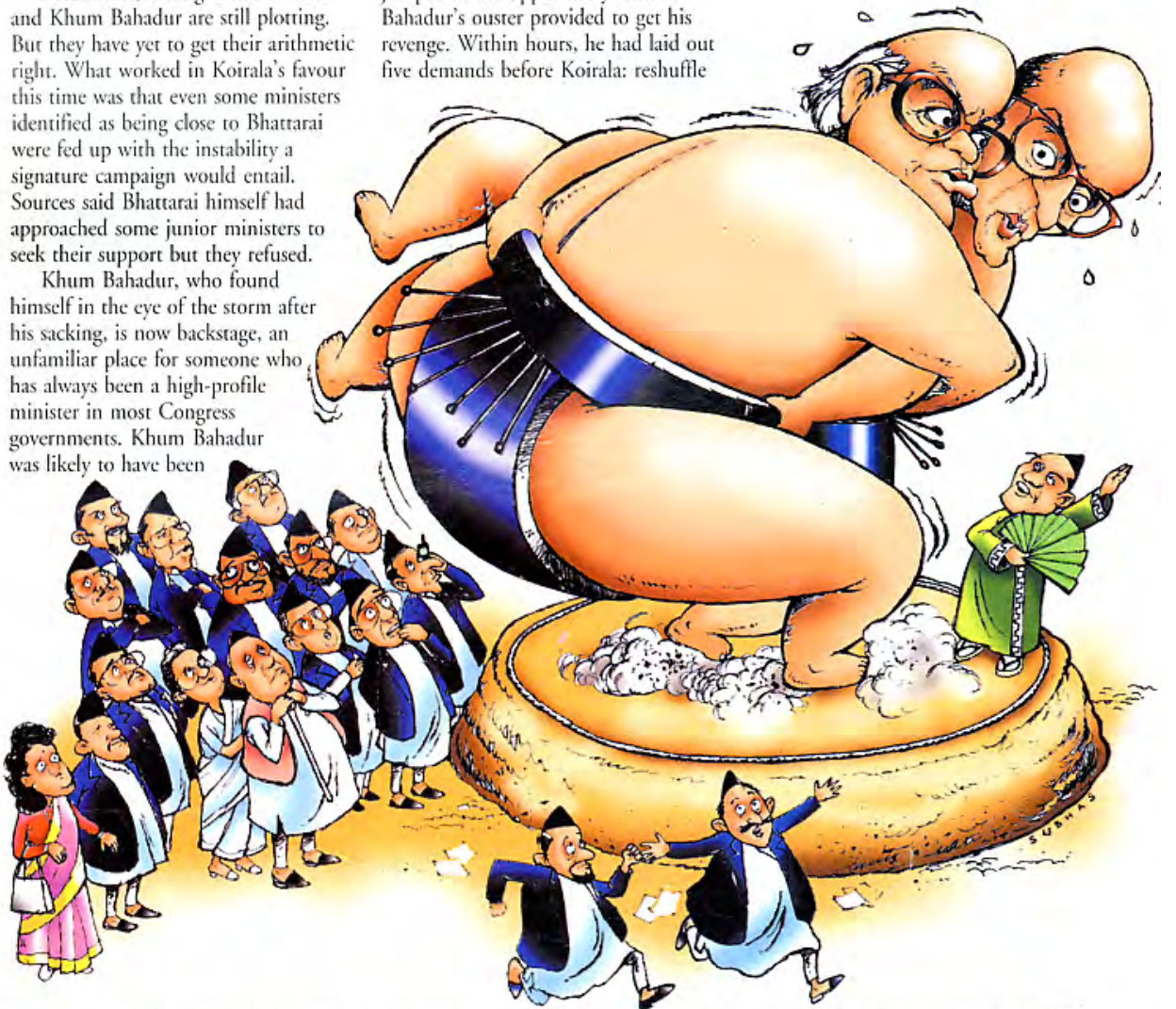
The Koirala side interpreted Khum Bahadur's support for Shailja, Koirala's niece, as a ploy to make it easier for Deuba to win in the party election.

Bhattarai, who had been in semi-retirement at his residence in Bhainsepati and seldom attended parliament after his ouster in March, jumped at the opportunity Khum Bahadur's ouster provided to get his revenge. Within hours, he had laid out five demands before Koirala: reshuffle

of the cabinet and the party CWC, step down from the post of party president, appoint someone like Deuba to take over, re-schedule the General Convention and not seek re-election as party president.

The lesson from all this is that if the two 78-year-olds had met earlier, the country may have been spared the spectacle that ensued. Actually, Bhattarai had agreed to go to Baluwatar on 10 August before the CWC met, but called it off at the last moment after talking to his protégé, Deuba. Bhattarai-confidante Ram Sharan Mahat sums up the present mood: "Peace will be durable only if the two sides keep their word."

CONGRESS CHESS
Editorial
page 2



Special Offer



Get NPR 968/- (15 hrs.) worth of Internet surfing CD FREE with every one year subscription of Nepali Times.

Subscription Rate
1 yr 52 Issues NPR 968

Yes! I agree to subscribe to Nepali Times for one year.

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____
(I wish to pay by cheque)

Cheque No. _____ dated _____ drawn on _____ bank

Or charge my

No. _____ Expiry _____ month _____ year

Fill in the details and call Parag Dhungana at 543333/523845 to leave your address and contact number. Our sales person shall collect this form from you. Note: Subscription offer open within Kathmandu valley only. Offer valid till stocks last.

Times
NEPAL'S TOP NEWSPAPER



News that matters to people who matter

NEPALI Times

NEPAL'S TOP NEWSPAPER

CONGRESS CHESS

Once more the Nepali Congress has stepped back from the brink of binary fission. Not that it is not already split for all practical purposes. The party's remaining veteran leaders, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Girija Prasad Koirala, behave like cranky old men poking each other with their walking sticks. The two actually get along pretty well, but their sidekicks loathe each other more than they detest the UML. All this would have been very funny if it didn't have such serious implications for governance and the polity.

Caught conspiring to oust his mentor, Khum Bahadur Khadka was expelled by Koirala from the cabinet as we went to press last week. Khum thrives in conspiracy, and many will remember how he ditched Bhattarai in his hour of need earlier this year to join the Koirala bandwagon. This time, Koirala didn't wait for Khum to make the first move, and sacked him on the spot.

For Khum, this expulsion should have been a part of the occupational hazard of politics. But he chose to react, and badly exposed himself. Speaking in Parliament, Khum proclaimed that he was not obsessed with power. For those who know him, this was quite a revelation. Khum has been a minister in every Nepali Congress cabinet except the one formed to conduct the last general elections. He is alleged to have set new records for wrongdoing in every ministry that he has handled: Transport, Water Resources, Civil Supplies and Home.

Khum has no regard for legal niceties. They cramp his style. But that is precisely why he was useful to the Nepali Congress, he was their fixer. Don't tell us how you do it, Khum, just do it. But to do things, he needed to be a minister, and now his own mentor has clipped his wings. Khum without a ministry is as useless as a gambler outside the casino. Perhaps this is the best way Khum Bahadur can serve his party and country: by remaining out of power. But given his ambition, and the clout he has amassed, he will continue to be a behind-the-scenes Congress kingmaker.



Bhattarai was all smiles on Monday as he left Baluwatar.

A sideshow of this non-event was the way Bhattarai supported the same fellow, who stabbed him in the back, in order to get back at his old foe, Koirala. Just goes to prove that intra-Congress politics is a cesspool.

In fact, it was the other player in this fascinating game of Congress chess, Sher Bahadur Deuba, who zigzagged through it all unscathed. He refrained from getting too close to Khum in public and salvaged some of his credibility, even though he was believed to have been conspiring with anti-Koirala forces privately.

Shailaja Acharya, whose name Khum used in vain, also did well by keeping out of this unseemly business.

On Monday morning, Koirala once again patched up with Bhattarai. Some Bhattarai cronies will be added to Koirala's reshuffled cabinet, potential foes will be defanged, loyal lapdogs will be rewarded. This will ease some of the tension of the past week, at least until someone else in the Congress decides to mutiny again. To be continued.

PARLIAMENT LOGS ON

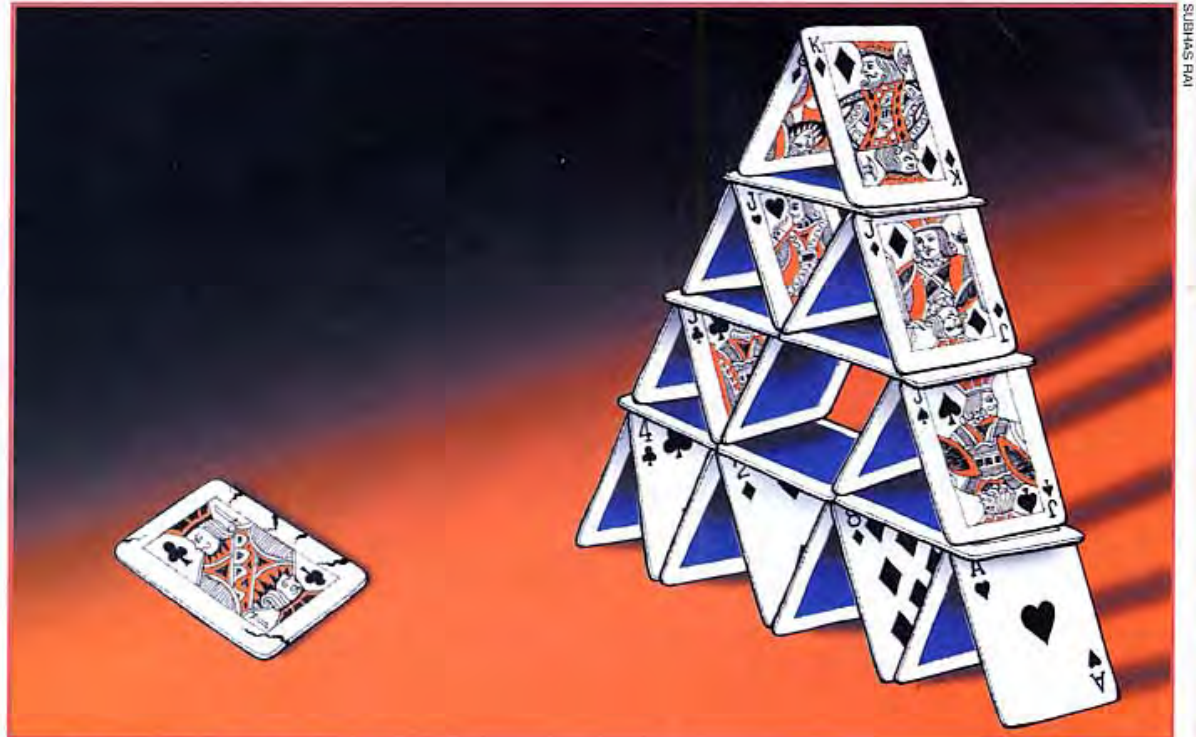
So our cyber-savvy Communication Minister has promised knowledge-hungry parliamentarians free Internet connections for a year. Considering that our hard-working lawmakers are also entitled to a certain number of free phone calls, one assumes that the traffic on the Net will now pick up. But one wonders, what will the MPs explore on the World Wide Web? The last time we looked, there were no portals offering lessons in hurling mikes towards the podium. The price of *lal mohans* in the canteens of other parliaments are not posted in real time for our lawmakers to compare them with Sharmajee's menu in Singha Durbar.

Is Minister Jaya Prakash Gupta trying to do a Cyberbabu Naidu? In that case, a fully online legislature would be helpful. But one question that should be explored is whether Internet access actually improves productivity, or are the honourable members going to be on Net2Phone chatting with relatives, playing solitaire or Mortal Kombat. The more committed could be given SimCity to hone their urban planning skills.

In a country where people grow old waiting for a land-line, one wonders whether MPs with Internet Explorer can send emails home to Olanchung Gola. And if they do, whether they will be satisfied with the bandwidth. And given their well-known extracurricular proclivities, maybe the minister should think of blocking some X-rated sites. And while he is at it, maybe install a spamguard.

Meanwhile, from all of us here, happy surfing.

Nepali Times is published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd
Mailing address: GPO Box 7251 Kathmandu Nepal
Editor: Kunda Dixit editors@nepalitimes.com
Marketing, circulation and subscriptions: (01) 543333-7 Fax: (01) 521013
marketing@nepalitimes.com www.nepalitimes.com
Printed at Jagadamba Press (01) 521393
International news in Nepali Times is provided through arrangements with The Guardian, Observer, dpa, IPS, The Asian Age, Dawn, SAPU, Die Welt, Sud Deutsche Zeitung and Gemini News.



STATE OF THE STATE

by C.K.LAL

Déjà vu in Kathmandu



The law must take its course, and the powers that be would do well to refrain from interfering.

One night last week, according to reports of eye-witnesses, Paras Shah, driving erratically after a row at a local disco ran over and killed a renowned singer. This is not the first time the problematic royal has been involved in something like this, and according to the police, it is at least the third time someone has been killed. Sooner or later, the law of the land has to be applied if the family that Paras represents is not to be sullied by his notorious reputation.

Technically, *Shahjada* Paras is not a "Prince". According to the *Nepali Brihat Shabdakosh*, the authoritative Nepali dictionary published by the Royal Nepal Academy, "*shahjada*" means the male offspring of a King, which in our case is either the Crown Prince or his brother. *Shahjada* Paras is neither. His father is a Prince, but he is not. A more appropriate appellation for this compulsive law-breaker could have been *Sahabjade*, the Urdu term of Persian origin commonly used to denote a spoilt brat. But even that seems to be too weak a tag for such a serious habitual offender.

In the past week, Kathmandu has been gripped by a feeling of déjà vu as efforts were on to brush the whole episode under the carpet, and pretend nothing had happened. In the eyes of Nepal's alert citizenry, however, this is now no longer a case of one lone offender. It now touches Paras' father Prince Gyanendra, it touches the royal family and it touches the institution of monarchy. This is a hard case, and as they say, hard cases make the law.

It is an indication of the public's disgust (and, in a sense, its helplessness) that the overwhelming reaction in Kathmandu when people heard of the incident on Monday morning was: "Not again!" Praveen Gurung, an up-and-coming musician, is dead. His family may be compensated, there may be an out-of-court settlement. But what of justice? Who is going to ensure that the Prince does not run amok again? Unless there is some admission of guilt,

some attempt to redress this wrong, some attempt to bring the guilty to justice, this man's actions sooner or later will further dent that pillar of Nepali nationhood: the Monarchy. It now seems that prosecuting Paras would be as much in his own interest and safety as in the interest and safety of the public. The law must take its course, and the powers that be would do well to refrain from interfering.

Tragic though last week's event was, and reproachful as the attempt to hush it all up has become, it did show that the Nepali press fulfilled its role of informing the public. Ten years ago such a thing would have been covered up easily. People would have pretended they heard nothing, saw nothing. The rumour mills would have gone into overdrive, but the matter would have ended there. Public outrage would have been expressed in private.

Those were the days when walls had ears. People used to raise eyebrows about the kind of business Prince Basundhara was up to, but none ever dared speak about it. In the seventies, it was the antics of ex-Prince

Dhirendra that would be the subject of whispers. Tales about him were legion. There may have been many reasons why Dhirendra's royal title was snatched away, but we commoners were not told what they were. There is a lesson in there somewhere for Paras. But since he does not seem capable of learning it himself, it is for his elders in Narayanbity to take action.

In England, the royalty has at least one function: provide cheap

entertainment for the masses through tabloids. Their posteriors and peccadilloes are recorded for posterity by the gutter press. Our royals, on the other hand, can't get into the press unless it is a press release read out on Radio Nepal, or unless they hit a policeman on duty, create a rumpus in a disco or actually run over an innocent person.

Our royals need a role, and they need role models. The Thai royalty which takes an avid interest in grassroots development could be one, or the Scandinavian monarchs who ride trams to work. Elsewhere, the royal family commands genuine popularity not by putting on airs, nor by remaining aloof and hiding behind dark glasses, but by trying to behave like ordinary citizens in their everyday lives, and by showing a passionate interest in the welfare and progress of their country. A lot of it has to do with the public's perception. And here, the public perception is turning iffy, something that the mandarins guarding the monarchy's image should take note of.

The superb human interest picture of King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya



walking to their daughter's house on Sunday got page one in *The Kathmandu Post*, but only because a photojournalist happened to pass by.

Members of parliament across party lines have raised a valid point: supremacy of the law must be established if it is to be respected by all. Let's get on with it before another innocent person on the street is killed, or before the monarchy takes another knock. ♦

Toni Hagen's Nepal



MINI 06/08/2000/ARVINDA

SALIL SUBEDI

Nepal's population was just eight million. There were no motorable roads to Kathmandu, although there were cars in the Valley that had been carried over the passes and they ran on petrol that had also been brought on porter back. The *char kose jhari* jungles in the tarai were still intact, and Mt Everest was yet to be climbed.

In October 1950, when Toni Hagen first arrived in Nepal as part of a Swiss technical aid group (his larger work in Nepal was as a UN expert), the country had a bright future ahead of it. Hydropower and tourism, properly utilised, could make the country prosper. In fact, many said Nepal could be Asia's Switzerland.

Things have not quite turned out that way. Nepal's population is now 23 million, the country has one of the worst development parameters in Asia, despite some progress hydropower has not been a bonanza, and tourism is stagnant because of muddled policy.

Kathmandu Valley, which, in 1950, was one of those idyllic faraway places full of temples, stupas and clean air, has changed into a grotesque caricature of Third World urban blight. But if you were expecting Toni Hagen to be full of nostalgia for Nepal's unspoilt past, you're in for a surprise. He has his sights firmly on Nepal's future, and contrary to the fashionable cynicism among Nepalis about their own country, Hagen is full of hope.

modernisation and change in Nepal. He first walked into Kathmandu Valley during the sunset years of the Rana regime, was here during Nepal's first experiments with democracy in 1960, saw the Panchayat years and the restoration of democracy in 1990. He had personal friendships with King Mahendra, B.P. Koirala, Ganesh Man Singh and Man Mohan Adhikari. He meets King Birendra almost every time he is in Nepal (and that is every few months), and has a host of Nepali friends.

"Nepal has not done badly compared to some of the countries in South America and the former Soviet Union," he says. "Democracy needs nurturing and time, it needs hard work and patience to strike roots. Yes, the transition is messy, but it is messy everywhere. Here it has been just ten years."

In travels through his beloved rural Nepal, Hagen is heartened by the difference that democracy is making. "It has to start at the grassroots, participation of people at all levels is vital for developing a democratic culture. I would say Nepal needs patience, needs time and it cannot be dictated. Democracy cannot be implemented through bloodshed and revolution."

Hagen is a great believer in pluralism, and he thinks it is only democracy that is ultimately going to make people tolerant of diversity. With its tremendous ethnic diversity in such a narrow physical space, Nepal has actually managed quite well to allow many

Fifty years after he first set foot in Nepal, if you were expecting Toni Hagen to be full of nostalgia for Nepal's unspoilt past, you're in for a surprise.

Hagen angry is to hear foreign experts say that Nepal is not mature enough for democracy. "It is a very arrogant comment because during the last elections everybody thought the extreme wings—either right or left—would win. But Nepalis very wisely chose the middle way which shows great democratic maturity."

At a sprightly 83, Toni Hagen still exudes the same charm, energy and passion that his friends remember he had when he first came to Nepal nearly 50 years ago. He is back in Kathmandu to complete a docudrama on his life, *Nepal: A Love Story*, which will commemorate the 50th anniversary of his first arrival in Nepal.

Hagen's book, *Nepal: A Kingdom in the Himalaya*, is a classic that has gone into four editions since it was first published in 1961. The updated fourth edition brings readers up to date with the problems of modern Nepal, contrasting it sharply with how they could have been avoided if the strategies of the 1950s had been followed.

In 1981, when his new book on the ecology and economic problems of Nepal came out Hagen got a message from the royal palace that King Birendra on his way back from an official visit to Washington was stopping in Switzerland and would like to see him. "We talked the whole morning," Hagen recalls. "His Majesty had read my book very carefully. He asked 'Isn't it too late for Nepal?' I said 'No. It's late, but never too late.'"

Hagen says he is very grateful to King Birendra for giving him the freedom to be critical. "I use my influence wherever to encourage young

Nepalis to fight centralisation, knowing the king is behind them. I believe in him."

Although he had worked in Nepal for almost a decade, Toni Hagen's first involvement in Kathmandu itself was in taking care of Tibetan refugees who were pouring into Nepal in the mid-1950s from across the Himalaya. He set up the refugee enclave in Jawalakhel and helped establish carpet-weaving units to provide refugees with employment. Little did he know then that the carpet industry would emerge as one of Nepal's major exports. Hagen credits both King Mahendra and B.P. Koirala for having the moral courage to stand up to China in accepting the refugees with open arms.

As a geologist, Toni Hagen's passion is the Himalaya and exploring the orogenics that threw up rocks formed at the bottom of the ocean to nearly nine km up in the sky. "During my schooldays when my father used to take me to around the Alps, I dreamt of being near to the Himalaya. I believe that it was my *karma* that brought me here," he says.

Hagen was perhaps Nepal's first real trekker, and there is no record of anyone who has walked as much through Nepal as he has: more than 14,000 km up and down the mountains and tarai right through the decade of 1950s. His early colour photographs of Nepal's mountains, peoples, rivers, festivals and towns are an iconographic treasure. Many of the pictures are in the book *Nepal*—including the famous centrefold of Pokhara Valley with the Annapurnas in the background. Countless oil-on-canvas imitations of this picture is sold to tourists to this day even though Pokhara has

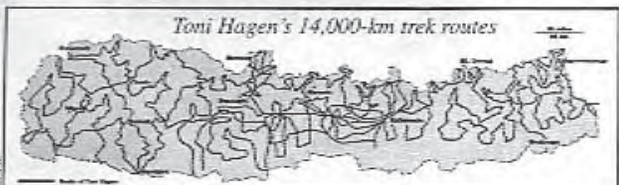
changed beyond recognition.

"As I went around looking at rocks, I found that the people, the culture and the history as fascinating," Hagen recalls. He remembers very well how King Mahendra reacted to a small slide show he had organised for the royal family in the early 1960s. Hagen's presentation showed it all: people crossed wild rivers without bridges, villages with no schools or health posts, dangerous mountain trails and the daily struggle for survival of Nepalis. Says Hagen: "After the slide show, there was a long silence. Then the king finally said, 'Now the time has come. I have to see my country myself.'"

Blunt and outspoken, Toni Hagen speaks his mind. His pronouncements on Arun III earned him the ire of donor agencies in Kathmandu. But he is glad that the project was scrapped because it allowed the development of medium-scale and small hydro projects. He sees Nepal's future only happening through

decentralised planning and grassroots participation through democracy.

Hagen is here this time to set up the Toni Hagen Foundation too. The objective of the Foundation is to work towards promote an understanding of Himalayan geography, economy, ethnography and culture among the people of the Himalaya. The Foundation will also support efforts to expand the knowledge base and target younger Nepalis. Its very first activity is the translation of his own book *Nepal* into Nepali. Toni Hagen is hopeful that the translation will help young Nepali professionals see their country's problems in historical and multi-disciplinary perspective. "I believe it is the younger generation of Nepalis that are the hope for Nepal." ♦



Over the years, this committed Nepalophile has emerged as an acute observer and sympathetic critic of the process of

languages, cultures and races to live harmoniously together, he says. One thing that really makes



King Birendra (extreme left), Queen Ratna (centre), Toni Hagen and King Mahendra at the opening of the carpet sales centre at Jawalakhel in 1961.

LETTERS

PARAS

Nepal Human Rights Committee-USA has been deeply saddened by the alleged involvement of Prince Paras in the tragic death of singer and musician Praveen Gurung.

In a democratic society where a nation chooses to be guided by the principles of equal rule of law, every human being is expected to be treated equally and fairly. Under a constitutional monarchy Nepal has decided to function under the rule of law, the committee strongly believes that no one should be treated above the law. NHRC-USA demands that thorough investigations be conducted in this matter and that perpetrator be penalised and brought to justice.

The Committee regrets

repeated similar tragic involvements of Prince Paras which continues to defame the much revered Nepali monarchy.

Dr Belaram Aryal
President, NHRC-USA

I was sorry to hear of the sudden demise of Praveen Gurung in an accident reportedly caused by Paras Shah. We cannot bring late Gurung back to life but his departed soul cannot rest in peace if justice is not done.

We hope the guilty is brought to justice, only then can we say that there is true democracy in Nepal. The rule of law should be applied to each and every citizen. Under the law everyone is equal.

Di Basnet
London

I noticed you covered Paras

Shah's hit-and-run in which musician Praveen Gurung was killed (#4). But why did you hold yourself back from calling the prince a killer? Is he or is he not? You guys have to be a little more brave, as brave as the student unions who seem to be taking up the case on the streets of Kathmandu.

Ramesh Shrestha
Bangkok

YOU DID IT

A few days back my imperfectly trained dog 'did it again' on the drawing room floor. I rushed with a piece of paper, realising too late that it was in fact a part of your excellent journal *Nepali Times*.

The disrespect that your weekly got in my household, I

must say, is entirely of your own making. The fault lies not with the content, but with the format you have chosen. There are several kinds of weeklies: the neat magazine types that are easy to stack are, once read, generally kept at the drawing room. The second kind, as stackable as the first, are kept, maybe not so neatly, in the bathroom. But the third type, the newspaper formatted journals can neither be kept in the drawing room nor are they the bathroom variety. They do not fold well and look messy.

I like your weekly. But because of its impractical format, I cannot give it a dignified shelf-life. Please do something about it.

Kalpna Ghimire
Kathmandu

My wife

made plans to do the laundry on Friday. In the afternoon, she challenged the rain gods and left the clothes on the line when she left home to go shopping, and collected the dry clothes late in the evening. She did all this because your weather forecast (*Nepali Weather* #4) had a nice yellow sun under Friday, 11 August.

I must admit I am impressed. In the midst of the monsoon and all the wet weather, it was a beautiful day that day, the warm sun defying meteorologists at BBC as well as CNN where Kathmandu's forecasts for the day had copious cluster bombs under huge clouds. It might not be the

best reason to buy the *Nepali Times*, but I think people might do well to subscribe to your paper just for the weather report.

Bhim Gurung
Lalitpur

Contrary to your correspondent (Letters #1) I believe we should learn to serve the home readers of English first. It is Nepalis who need to be educated on national goings and not just expatriates living here.

I found the item on Dharendra Shah (*From the Nepali Press* #1) interesting—it was an eye-opener to the Nepali tradition of reacting on issues without thinking it through.

B.N. Sharma
Godavari

Much, much more left to do



How will English slogans on billboards and T-shirts help these Nepali boys?

children in Nepal. This means that four in every 10 children between the ages of 5 and 14 are employed. The proportion of working girls is higher than that of boys—for every 80 boys working, there are 100 girls.

Appalling figures these, but agencies involved with child rights admit that Nepal has made some progress in the last one decade. "Child labour used to be treated as a non-agenda, today it is considered to be one of the most serious social problems," says Gauri Pradhan of Child Labour in Nepal Concerned Centre (CWIN).

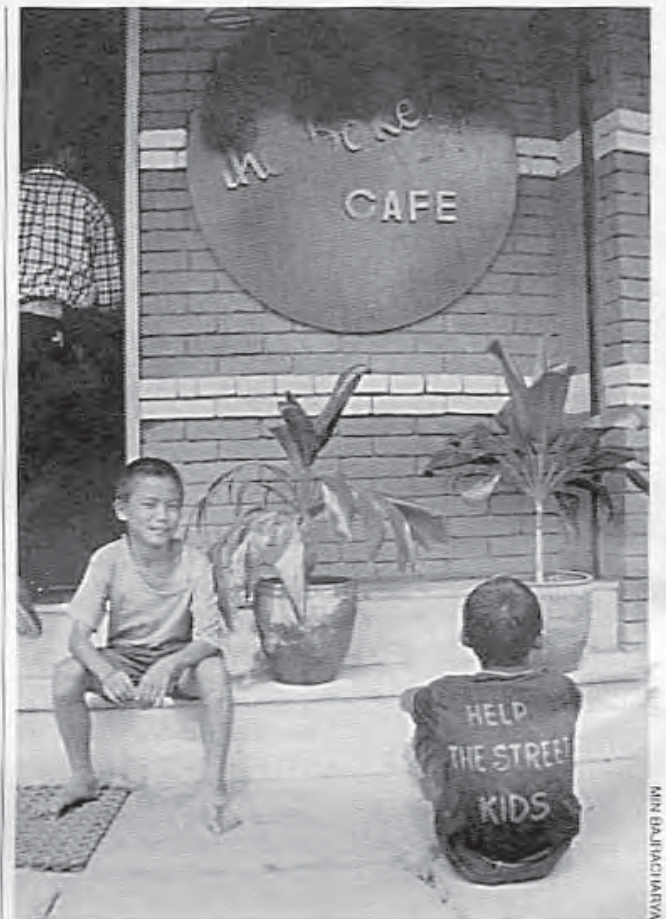
An evaluation team of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) which visited Kathmandu in January this year also agreed that Nepal's performance in eliminating the worst forms of child labour "satisfactory". "There is tremendous goodwill and determination in both the government and non-government sector to eliminate hazardous child labour in Nepal," says Leyla Tegmo-Reddy of ILO.

ILO has selected Nepal from among the Asian countries to be developed as a model nation towards the elimination of worst forms of child labour by 2005, and a master plan to attain that goal is in the process of being drawn up.

The government, NGOs and donor agencies say they have managed to reach an understanding in working together towards the progressive elimination of child labour. They consider increased awareness and success in removing children from organised sectors like carpet-weaving and tea estates to be highlights of what they have been able to achieve working in tandem.

The policies against child labour are more or less in place. The 1990 Constitution of Nepal clearly prohibits employment of a child under 14. Those above 14 can be employed with the consent of their parents but not in industries, mines or at hazardous works. The Labour Act 1992 and the Children's Act 1992 also prohibit minors from working in industries, mines and hazardous works (the last is not clearly defined but the proposed Child Labour Act attempts to do so).

However, the definition of "minors" is not clear—the Labour Act considers those between 14 to 18 as minors, while the Children's Act 1992 says it is children from 14 to 16. Both Acts limit the working hours for minors to only six hours a day, entitle them to equal pay for equal work at par with the adults, and grant them regular weekly days off. The Acts also prohibit children's engagement in works that are



likely to harm their physical and mental health and development.

Activists and government officials alike agree that it is not lack of policy that is the problem. "It is due to implementation weaknesses," confesses Dev Ratna Tamrakar, who heads the unit responsible to deal with child labour problems at the Labour Ministry. He pointed out lack of funds, shortage of human resources, overload of work and lack of incentives to government workers and incapability of NGOs as the reasons why implementation is not working.

But CWIN's Pradhan blames the "systemless system in the bureaucracy" and a lack of a clear definition of roles and duties the government agencies and NGOs are hampering the attempts to eliminate child labour. "When a situation arises there is no one from the government to shoulder the responsibility," he argues.

At the same time, all agree that a major stumbling block to ending child labour is that

awareness is still limited to the policy-making level only. The message has not reached the target group. This explains why children who earlier worked in the organised sector like big carpet factories shifted elsewhere after the carpet factories came under stricter vigilance.

"The key lies in compulsory and free education. Not all the children are working because they are very poor. Parents should be made aware of the link between education and a safe future for children," says Keshav Koirala at the Ministry. That should encourage parents into getting their children educated than sending them into the labour market early, he says.

But attitudes are hard to change. Even as he disputes that his life is in constant danger as he collects fares in the moving vehicle, tempo-khalasi Shyam nonchalantly says: "Smoke-belching Vikrams could have affected my health, the gas tempo I am working with now is safe."



HEMLATA RAI

Shyam Maharjan was 12 when he was taken away from his job as a *khalasi* with a Vikram tempo as part of a campaign by NGOs, employers, the police and the Labour Ministry to rescue children from hazardous work. Today, Shyam is 15 and

back to clinging to a tempo for a living.

It is examples like Shyam's that make government officials reluctant to talk about the 1996 Rawalpindi Declaration that binds the seven South Asian countries to abolishing child labour in forced or hazardous

conditions by 2000 (and to eliminate child labour itself by 2010).

A 1998 study by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Tribhuvan University (TU) estimated that there are approximately 2.6 million working

1. Electrical / Electronic engineer to work in production, quality controls and to assist in ISO 9002 and ISO 14000 documentation and implementation.

2. Diploma engineer to work as Mid Level Technician in quality, material and production management in the production floors.

No previous work experience is necessary. Interested candidates are requested to apply with their curriculum vitae and recent passport size photograph to the following:

General Manager

NBE Nepal Bayern Electric

GPO Box 1357

Kathmandu

em:info@nbe.mos.com.np

Only short-listed candidates will be called for interviews. Those who had applied earlier need not apply.



Praveen Gurung

(1962-2000)



"He was our inspiration, our guiding light."

Sambhu Rai remembers: "He respected the tradition of the *rosi ghar* a lot. Apart from being a good singer and a composer, he was versatile with all kinds of instruments. He was a cut above the rest of us."

Praveen was an all-rounder with highly developed skills at recording and organising musical and cultural events. He sang folk, pop and modern songs, and had mastered numerous instruments, including the piano, the accordion, and many traditional Nepali string and percussion instruments.

Praveen's memories now remain in the 500 recordings he made in Nepali and Gurung languages. His five major albums are the Gurung language *Gnouse Misa La Le Lhei*, a collection of Nepali folk songs called *Tbet*, *Smsime* folk tunes, *Sandesh*, and *Himalayan Feelings*, meditation music with folk influence.

Gajal singer Shiva K.C. remembers Praveen as a hard worker: "He used to work day and night. For what? For the music, for the band, for his friends, for his family and for his effort to present the Nepali music to the outside world."

Praveen's wife, Shanti Gurung, is herself a musician and is the singer and bass guitarist of the first Nepali all-female band, The Sparkle Girls. Their two boys, 8 and 11, also play string and percussion instruments. At the moment, the bereaved family is in Pokhara.

Praveen had recently sent a music track of modern Nepali songs to Japan, and he was planning a tour of the United States. He had also just returned from a series of shows in Singapore.

For Praveen's friends and fellow-musicians, the best way to keep his memory alive is to keep playing his music and performing his arrangements. ♦

It is difficult for many of them to talk about Praveen without breaking down. It's almost as if the words don't mean anything. Says close friend Sambhu Rai: "Working day and night with music, for the music and for those in music, he was a musician of immense dedication and energy."

All of last week, inside the recording studios, music classes and the cultural group back-stage, there was an eerie silence, even though some of the shows went on.

Praveen was born 30 April 1962 as Dev Bahadur Gurung in Lumle near Pokhara. He grew up with the music and dance culture of the Gurung community. He completed his high school and joined Pokhara's famous Danfe Kala Mandir at 18 as a folk dancer and singer.

He later migrated to Kathmandu, recording his first song for Radio Nepal in 1983, the year he also bagged Ratna Recording Corporation's Annual Folk Song prize for "Tesaita nabune ko dali".

Like many of his peers, Praveen had to struggle hard to get to where he was. Being a modest, easy-going man who liked to keep a low profile, Praveen was well liked in the music circles in Pokhara and Kathmandu. Some of the musicians he trained, like Devika Pradhan went on to become famous.

SALIL SUBEDI

Back stage at the Yak and Yeti Hotel the support team moves about purposefully, changing the sets for the next music number. The group plays a song from *Himalayan Feelings*, and the audience goes quiet immersed in the meditative folk blend of the music. Back stage, there are moist eyes. This is the music of their mentor and friend, Praveen Gurung who died on the night of 6 August in a hit-and-run incident involving the king's nephew, Paras Shah, just outside the Royal Palace.

"He was our inspiration, our guiding light. We can't believe he is no more with us, it's like a bad dream," says a young dancer, Manoj Shrestha. "He was generous and kind, and treated us like decent human beings, with respect. And he was thoroughly professional."

Many of Praveen's friends can't believe they are talking about him in the past tense. Someone they said good night to only a few days ago, not imagining that they would never see him again.

Every evening, Praveen's music troupe used to look after two cultural shows, one at the Yak and Yeti and the other at Hotel Vaishali in Thamel. His days were spent in the recording studios, mostly Namaste Cultural Studio doing music arrangements and also recording and acting as session artist for professional bands. Praveen had also been affiliated with the Nepal Cultural Corporation as a staff musician for the past 14 years.

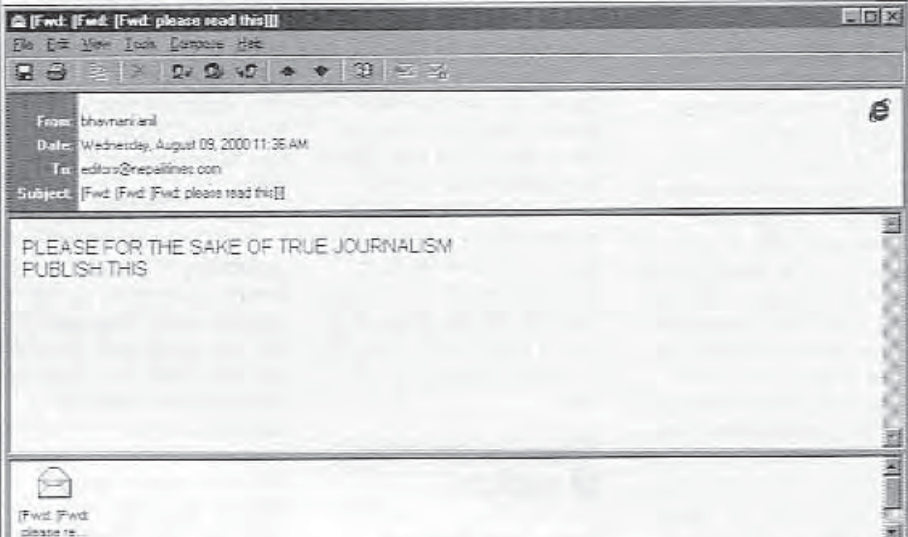
With all that energy he devoted to his music, Praveen's absence has left a void, and the shock of his loss has left his family, friends and colleagues speechless.



Praveen (centre) with Namaste Cultural Group members (l to r) Kbadga Buda Magar, Ishwor Gurung, Sovit Rana Magar and Krishna Lama.

"I WONDER IF ANY PAPER HAS THE BALLS TO PRINT THIS..."

The following is what looks like a farewell letter from Anil Bhavnani of X-Zone discotheque in Kamaladi which was emailed to Nepali Times. Parts of the note containing references to Prince Paras and what transpired at X-Zone on Sunday, 6 August, are reprinted verbatim to indicate the frame of mind of those present.



I AM ANIL BHAVNANI, 27 YEARS OLD, MY FAMILY, ASEEM RANA AND ME OWN A LARGE PART OF X-ZONE DISCO. MY GRANDFATHER WAS A POSTMAN IN SIND, PAKISTAN (THEN INDIA), MY FATHER CAME TO NEPAL ABOUT 36 YEARS AGO AS A MANGER OF A GERMAN PHARMACUTICAL FIRM, HE COULDN'T SPEAK A WORD OF NEPALI THEN. HE MET MY NEWARI MOTHER 30 YEARS AGO AT P.K CAMPUS, SHE FELL IN LOVE WITH A MAN 17 YEARS OLDER THAN HER. TILL TODAY SHE DOES NOT MEET HER FAMILY. I MET MY WIFE ON HALLOWEEN NIGHT, 31ST, OCT 1999, AT XZONE DISCO. I MARRIED HER ON JAN.17, 2000 AT SHANGRILA HOTEL. MY GRAND FATHER IN-LAW IS A RAI FROM KHOTANG. MY FATHER IN-LAW IS ACTIVELY INVOLVED WITH CONGRESS I. IN ASSAM AND IS THE HEAD OF AN ASSOCIATION THERE THAT REPRESENTS OVER 3 MILLION NEPALI'S THAT LIVE IN ASSAM.

MARRIAGE CHANGES ONE'S LIFE DRASTICALLY AND I FEEL IT WAS THE BEST THING THAT HAPPENED TO ME AND THE GREAT PRINCE OF NEPAL.

ABOUT PRINCE PARAS SHAH.

I KNOW PRINCE PARAS SHAH BECAUSE HE FREQUENTS OUR CLUB, AND MORE SO BECAUSE MY BEST PAL ASEEM LOVE'S AND RESPECTS HIM EVEN MORE THAN HIS OWN FATHER. PRINCE PARAS HIS FAMILY MEMBERS AND HIS PALS HAVE ALWAYS TREATED X-ZONE AND US WITH LOVE AND RESPECT. HE HAS PAID IN CASH TO ASEEM TEN FOLD FORWHATEVER DRINKS HE AND HIS FAMILY HAD AT XZONE.

ON THE NIGHT OF AUG.6TH, 2000, MY WIFE AND ME WERE DJ'ING INSTEAD OF ASEEM RANA. AROUND 11 PM, A PARTNER OF MINE CAME INTO THE DJ BOX AND TOLD ME THAT SOME FOOLS HAD BEATEN PRINCE PARAS ON THE LOWER DECK OF XZONE. I SHUT THE MUSIC OFF, I GOT HOLD OF THE MIC. AND STARTED TO ABUSE THE CROWD IN NEPALI, I TOLD THEM THAT TODAY WAS FRIENDSHIP DAY AND I HAD BEEN DEDICATING ALL THE MUSIC FOR ASEEM, I RANTED AND RAVED ON THE MICROPHONE, IN TEARS AS MY WIFE TRIED TO CONTROL ME. I PUSHED HER AWAY, AND AGAIN ABUSED THE CROWD IN NEPALI, I TOLD THEM TO THAT THEY WERE ON ROYAL PROPERTY AND ASKED THEM ALL LEAVE AND SAID THAT THEY COULD COLLECT ALL THE MONEY THEY HAD SPENT ON THEIR WAY OUT... AS SOME OF THE CROWD BEGAN TO DISPERSE, PRINCE PARAS APPEARED ON THE COPPER FLOOR AND SHOUTED TO ME, "PUT THE F.....G MUSIC ON", I DID SO AND LEFT WITH MY WIFE AND SISTER AT AROUND 11.20 PM. I CALLED THE AREA POLICE FROM MY CELL AND NOTIFIED HIM. HE ARRESTED FIVE OF THE GOONS INVOLVED AND ASKED THE MANAGEMENT TO SHUT THE DISCO IMMEDIATELY. HOWEVER PRINCE PARAS REQUESTED THAT WE REMAIN OPEN, AND SO XZONE ONLY CLOSED AT AROUND 12.45 AM.

MORE THAN 15 PEOPLE DIE ON THE ROADS OF NEPAL EVERYDAY, WHY HAS'NT THE MEDIA WRITTEN ABOUT THIS. IF I AM DRIVING BACK HOME LATE AT NIGHT IN MY JEEP, AND ON AN INTERSECTION A DRUNK OR SPEEDING MOTORCYLIST HITS MY VEHICLE, IS THEN TAKEN BY THE POLICE AND OUR BOUNCERS TO HOSPITAL AND DIES AN HOUR LATER, WHY DON'T THEY PUBLISH MY NAME ON THE FRONT PAGES????

WHY THE HYPE AND SLANDERING OF A PRINCE OF NEPAL WHO ENJOYS HIS LIFE???????????? IS IT BECAUSE THE PUBLIC LOVES THIS KIND OF NEWS OR IS IT BECAUSE THE RICH OWNERS OF THESE PUBLISHING HOUSES THRIVE ON THIS, BECAUSE OF THE HUGE MONETARY GAINS...I AM SORRY TO PRINCE PARAS AND HIS FAMILY THAT ONE OF THE SO CALLED "PILLARS OF DEMOCRACY" IS NOTHING MORE THAN A MONEY PRINTING MACHINE.

IN CONCLUSION . I AM GIVING THIS LETTER TO EVERYBODY WHO WANTS ONLY THE TRUTH— AND TO ALL THE MEDIA AND PUBLISHING HOUSES OF KATHMANDU—I WONDER IF ANY PAPER HAS THE BALLS TO PRINT THIS—BUT I WILL — WHEN "HINDU" LAUNCHES IN 2 MONTHS TIME—

I BELIEVE IN GOD, THE KING AND THE TRUTH ONLY...I AM SORRY IF I HAVE HURT OR OFFENDED ANYONE BY THIS. PLEASE FIND IT IN YOUR HEARTS TO FORGIVE ME...

YOURS HUMBLBY,
ANIL BHAVNANI (CEO- XZONE DISCO)

bhavnani@mos.com.np ♦

Maoists not to talk with Government

Asan Bazar, 12 August
The Maoists engaged in a "People's War" for five years have said they will not talk to Koirala's government. That was said by Maoist leader Prachanda in a reply to a letter sent by Sher Bahadur Deuba, who heads a commission to hold talks with the Maoists. With that statement from the Maoists, it has become clear that the Koirala government has failed to resolve the Maoist problem through talks.

The statement signed by Prachanda says that instead of creating an environment conducive for talks as approved by human rights groups and the larger population, the Koirala government has increased the killings, arrests and disappearances of Maoist supporters which is why it cannot hold talks with the present government. The statement adds that a team can still be sent to talks if the government stops the killings and creates an environment conducive for dialogue.

The statement repeats that it would send a team to the talks provided a "minimum atmosphere" is created. Otherwise, it adds, if the Girija government continues its policy of repression, then it alone would be responsible for what happens next.

Why an ATR?

Nepali Patra, 11 August
On 8 August the Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation decided to purchase an ATR 72-500 for its domestic services. The aircraft is being purchased on the recommendation of a committee formed to evaluate the purchase of an aircraft for international flights.

The RNAC management says that different committees formed for the purpose recommended the ATR 72-500. The

corporation had begun studying the possible purchase after its competitive position in the domestic sector began to weaken. The choice was between the ATR and de Havilland's Dash-8 400.

Now de Havilland has been saying that the selection has not been impartial and that RNAC's decision is designed to serve the interests of a certain group. It has also charged that kickbacks worth Rs 300 million was involved in the decision.

Any commission received in this way reaches the Prime Minister directly. It is also said that a directive has been issued from the Prime Minister to decide on the ATR. And the tourism minister is also said to have put pressure RNAC to decide in ATR's favour. Sources say there was also pressure to buy the aircraft which costs Rs 1.1 billion a piece at Rs 1.25 billion.

'There is anarchy in all sectors'

Narayan Man Bijukchhe, president of Nepal Workers and Peasant's Party in Bimarsha, 11 August

Today, the nation's politics is going through a state of confusion. The ruling party has not given thought to making everyone happy and the promises made in its election manifesto. There is favouritism in every sector. In short, the country is bogged down by problems and confusion. The government does not know how to rule, and there is chaos in every sector. Not one sector is doing well, there is no reason to be satisfied about anything. Go to any hospital, there are no doctors. Teachers are not to be found in schools. There is corruption everywhere. The Ministry of Forests has become a den of corruption. It is the same with the Department of Roads. A road under construction begins to fall apart even

before it is completed. This is the situation in every sector.

Agriculture is the backbone of the economy. But the fertiliser entering the country is of poor quality and expiry date is not checked, but there is no agency to deal with that. That has led to a drop in agricultural production. With agricultural production down, it is natural for the income of the people to drop. As result we have been forced to import rice from India. This shows what our agricultural policy has been. Twenty or thirty years earlier we used to export food grains. This also shows how the government is functioning.

There are several reasons for this. The leaders of parties participating in elections and forming governments do not have any vision. They have no idea how to formulate policy and run departments. We have had many education ministers but each time a new bill has been presented. The Nepali Congress has come to power several times but every time the leadership has changed, so has the bill. Why is that happening? Isn't the Nepali Congress one party? Shouldn't it have a single vision? That is why the party has a lot of people, it has a crowd but no ideology. If you go to see a minister you will find his office crowded by those coming from rural districts seeking help, transfers and promotions. No one talks about policy there. That is why the party is run as you would do with a crowd. In truth, Nepali parties is not run by brains or ideology.

You cannot have one principle and act in some other way. For example, all say there should be no favouritism. But it is found everywhere. First the government should stop favouritism. If it does that the same spirit will percolate to lower levels. Is giving jobs to only Nepali Congress workers fair? It isn't.

Paras Shah

Nepali Patra, 11 August
Prince Paras Shah, infamous after committing dozens of excesses, killed an innocent son of the people by running his Pajero over musician Praveen Gurung. This is the third time someone, who, as member of the respected Royal Family gets an annual allowance of Rs 300,000 (his wife, Himani, gets Rs 75,000), has killed a commoner.

Earlier, in 1997, a Pajero driven by Paras hit and killed taxi driver Sanukaji at Putali Sadak. A year before that, a drunk Paras driving his jeep caused a similar accident in Bharatpur, Chitwan.

The people have also not forgotten the other excesses of Paras'. In 1996 Paras assaulted a traffic police officer who had gone up to him to inquire about the lights used in his vehicle. About a week later, after hitting a motorcycle near Hattigauda he went around beating people assembled at the site of the accident. The same year, he drew out a pistol and spread terror at Hotel Soalte and then drove to the Everest Casino where he fired several rounds in the air. A year later, he drove to the police headquarters and beat up a sentry on duty. Again in 1999 he struck a police officer with the butt of his gun and drove away after threatening him with a machine gun. A month later he went to the Durbar Marg police station and thrashed the policeman standing guard. On election day in May last year he went around driving his car threatening all police officers he came across.

These are but some examples of the exploits of Paras Shah. The crimes committed by him are so grave that had he been a commoner, he would have been jailed for attempted murder four years ago. But because he is a member of the royal family, Paras Shah is not in jail but in the palace and still goes around driving his Pajero over people. Even five days after the accident the government has not yet taken any action against someone who should have been stripped of his royal privileges and jailed five years ago.

The government may have been reluctant to act against Paras Shah, but this time the people's representatives have been demanding that strong action be taken. For the first time since the establishment of constitutional monarchy, this week a rally was organised to protest the actions of a member of the royal family. And lawmakers have been saying no one is above law.

After protests against Paras both on the streets and in Parliament everyone is now waiting for the King to act.

Everyone is hoping that His Majesty will strip the title of "Prince" from Paras, in accordance with the expectations of the people. Punishing someone who has wronged, will not only be respecting the people's expectations, but it will also help restore the prestige of the institution of monarchy.

Bimarsha, 11 August

The murder of well-known singer and musician Praveen Gurung could prove to be costly for the Royal Palace. What has been described as a murder committed by Paras Shah, son of Prince Gyanendra, has agitated the entire country. No MP speaking in Parliament disagreed that the musician was killed by the vehicle driven by Prince Paras. All had one voice: this incident should be investigated seriously.

Jan Astha, 9 August

For the first time in Nepal's history the residence of a member of the Royal Family is to be surrounded today by the student wing of the CPN-ML, which has invited everyone to participate. Traffic will also be blocked as part of the protest. The house in question, Nirmal Niwas, is owned by Prince Gyanendra. And Paras Shah is his wayward son.

Even though the atrocities of Paras Shah had crossed the limit a long time ago, this is the first time that anyone has gathered the courage to oppose his misdeeds by taking to the streets. The protest being organised today should be a reminder that those who think they are all powerful and can get away with anything—whether they are from the Royal Palace or from Singha Durbar—will be challenged and opposed.

According to legal experts, in accidents such as these if it is proved that someone was killed because of the carelessness of the driver, the driver can be sentenced for up to 33 years in jail. That people have to abide by law and certain others don't have to face the consequences is unacceptable in a country that goes by the rule of law. Will the institution that commands great prestige and is also seen as the guardian of the law take action and let it be known to people that the rule of law will prevail or will this incident be allowed to further tarnish the image of the palace? Because Paras' excesses have crossed the limit, and in order to pacify the people who are ready to come out on the streets in protest, it would be wise for the Royal Palace to take action against him. The Royal Palace should be aware of the high moral standard shown by the prime ministers of New Zealand and Britain. The two prime



ministers had said that the laws of the nation would apply to them also and sent payments for their parking tickets.

Paras' family was not unaware about his tendency to create problems for both ordinary Nepalis and for the police on duty to maintain law and order. But Nepalis have not been assured that anything was being done to stop that. If he had been controlled, the nation would not have had to lose a capable musician and the Royal Palace would not have had to go through this disgrace. Paras' misadventures should have become unpardonable not only to the Nepali public but also to the Palace. But it does not seem so yet.

On the Sunday on which the accident took place, Paras had gone to the X-Zone Disco and drunk hard. While the disco was still open, he had switched the lights on and off several times, following which others there said that they too were customers and asked him not to do what he was doing. At which he boasted that he was Paras and threatened them. The four or five young men then pushed him out. In this way, Paras, who was always used to beating others, was at the receiving end that day. Then in search of those youth he had circled the Royal Palace in his Pajero several times.

While he was looking for the people he hit the motorcycle of musician Praveen Gurung.

Naya Sadak, 12 August

The controversy that had erupted after Prince Paras' vehicle killed singer Praveen Gurung outside the palace gates on 6 August has ended in an agreement between the two sides.

Neither Praveen Gurung's wife, Shanti Gurung, nor any of their relatives wanted to make any comment. But police sources say that Prince Paras will provide compensation of Rs 1 million, will take responsibility of Praveen's two sons and will find employment for Shanti.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"There used to be corrupt people in our party before and there are some even today."
—CPN-UML General Secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal, quoted in Himalaya Times, 6 August



Jana Bhawana, 14 August

Yesterday and today: "Keep quiet! Your problems are not as important as our coming to an understanding."

Sexuality and Nepali women

RAJENDRA SINGH KHADKA

"It is in the very nature of women to corrupt men," declared Manu unequivocally in *Manusmriti*. He does not stop there and also provides guidelines to control this supposed wantonness in women: "In childhood a woman should be under her father's control, in youth under her husband's, and when her husband is dead, under her sons... She should not have independence."

The Hindu lawgiver's observations come to mind when reading this very provocative collection of essays by Sita Pandey. The very title suggests salaciousness, and images of drooling men flipping the pages for "hot" parts invade the mind. Unfortunately for them the book does not dwell upon sexual acts. Instead it boldly, frankly, tenderly and, above all, wittily explores the subject of sex in all of its maddening manifestations. And since sex does involve individuals, usually of the opposite sex, the book is really about the often unequal and infinitely intractable relationship between men and women. Using sex (among other topics) the book also highlights the ongoing tension between the traditional Nepali society and its emerging, modern self.

Pandey describes herself as a *bhadra*, a rebel. Even as a little girl growing up in Jhapa, she says she was conscious of the inequality between the sexes and the oppression and suffering it caused. At home and within the family, the men lorded it over the

women, regardless of their age or status. It is apt, therefore, that her opening piece, "Make Mine Like My Younger Brother's", talks of the special importance given not just by her parents but also her sisters to her brother. The little boy, just two years younger than her, was indulged upon and all his excesses were laughed away because he was the only son born after three daughters. "I [constantly] competed against him," writes Pandey. She carried the competition to its logical—if unrealistic—conclusion when she recalls that she demanded that her mother make her the same kind of "wee wee" that her brother has so that she will not wet her underpants when she pees but will be able to "shoot" out far.

This passage is typical of Pandey's views as they come through in this 49-essay collection: a mixture of outrage at gender discrimination, provocation, sociological observations, and humour. Some of the titles themselves are enough to make male chauvinists see red—"Why Should Only Men Be on Top?", "To Have a Child", "A 'Husband' Is Not Essential, a 'Man' Is Enough", "Sex: Necessity or Pleasure?", "Woman's Beauty Is Not Her Jewellery", "On Top of My Sister," and so on.

Besides her reminiscences on sexual awakenings during childhood and adolescence, some essays reach out to deal with romantic yearnings (and spurnings), travels in Bangladesh, India, China and Thailand, literary influences, human rights, women and gender issues, and especially the contrast

between the public expression and the personal hypocrisy of the men in their dealings with women. She writes: "In our country, one meets and hears of many men who support women's rights and equal opportunity for them in speeches, seminars, conferences, but one meets very few of them [in private]."

Elsewhere, reflecting upon *Wine, Women and Wealth*, she fantasises: "If I too had beauty and wealth, I would very happily marry a dozen men. I would give them golden necklaces and bracelets. I would provide them with refrigerators and televisions...and leave decks of cards so that they could play 'Poker' and 'Marriage'. Then I would lock the gate behind me, put the key in my purse and saunter off whistling a romantic tune...How wonderful that would be!... Later, I would return home when I felt like it and without much fuss, tell one of the men. 'Your turn today' and go into another room. But how would the others feel...?"

Pandey is a bold adventurer, a quirky seeker who wants to take the road less travelled. In Beijing, she is curious to try to sauna room, and when she does after much hesitation, she is almost traumatised to see so many naked women, completely at ease with their nudity. In Bangkok, she visits the infamous red-light district of Patpong; and in India, when she is told that vast multitudes of people are born, live and die on the streets and in open public places, she wonders: "How do people 'do it' in the open, surrounded by people...?"

While the author never misses a



Youn ra Anubhuti: Shrinkhalahin Bicharharu (Sex & Sensibility: A Collection of Random Thoughts) by Sita Pandey Pravesh Publication, Kathmandu, 1999 147 pp, Rs 70

moment to expose men's hypocrisies and their exploitation and oppression of women, it would be wrong to conclude she hates men. In essays such as "All Night We Walked Up and Down the Stairs", "It Was An Invitation Card to His Wedding", "A Secret Letter to Kano-san", and "I Could Not Do What I Wished To Do", she writes about her attraction towards and her tender affection for men at home and abroad.

Pandey exhorts women to seek equality and freedom, not to take themselves merely as decorative pieces for men. In "An Unwritten Act" she exults in the uniquely feminine joys of pregnancy and motherhood: "We can consider this state [of pregnancy] lucky as well as pleasant because the kind of joy that women experience is such that no man or father will ever experience it in his entire lifetime, even if he has sex a thousand times. Tell me, can a man, by merely fondling his wife's or a woman's breasts, ever achieve that feeling of satisfaction a mother derives when breast-feeding her baby? Of course not!"

An English novelist once wrote, "Being a woman is a terribly difficult trade, since it consists principally of dealings with men." Pandey's essays makes it very clear just how difficult it is being a woman in a Nepali society. This book not only lobs a Molotov cocktail into the Nepali literary arena but also asks our prudish, hide-bound traditional society to take a fresh look at itself.

Sita Pandey has written a very courageous book. But the question is do we Nepali readers have the same mature courage to read it without sniggering? ♦



Nepal Literature

by Manjushree Thapa

The face I seek in a crowd

Story and essay writer Sita Pandey has earned fame (or, among orthodox flanks, notoriety) by writing frankly about sexuality—a topic still deemed unseemly for Nepal's women writers, and even for "respectable" men writers. Eschewing convention, Pandey does not flinch from the dark aspects of human desire. Her most memorable characters include a married woman waiting for her lover in "Nandabeer", a husband abetting his wife's prostitution in "Tok", a teenaged girl threatened by men's sexual interest in her in "Jwaro", and in "Sundariya", a young woman who supports her family by selling her only possession: her body.

The story translated below focuses broadly on the search for connection in an anonymous, maze-like city. The gender of the verbs in the original Nepali story indicates that the narrator is a man. He teeters dangerously at the crossroads of an intensely volatile desire, which might just as easily lead in wholesome or unwholesome directions. It is this unpredictable and untamed desire, in my view, which motivates the characters in Pandey's most evocative stories.

I've known this city for about ten years now. I know its every alley and crossroad, its every temple and shrine. I've placed myself amid each of its festivals, gatherings, and crowds. I too have started the journey that everyone must take; yet I still feel I have another new journey to start, and I think, "The path I have to take, the path leading to my destination must be another path, not this one." Then I stop walking old roads and start taking new ones. But when I walk all day and still don't find my destination, I think, "This isn't the path I'm looking for either." I've switched many paths in order to find the one I'm looking for.

This relates to a time when I first entered this city for my studies and had nothing to do but study. I would study all morning. So, ordinarily, my whole days were free. But this free time wasn't really "free", since I didn't need a job, or, even more time-consuming than that, I didn't have to work at finding a job. Yet I'd be searching for something. I'd walk a lot, and always keep myself busy. My father and mother had sent me to the city to study, and I was staying with a relative's family. They had office work,

and they were so busy with their own concerns that other than on holidays, they never knew how each other was—maybe they didn't want to know.

Each morning, I'd leave the house shortly after they left for their offices. I'd walk briskly on the roads, feeling that I too had somewhere to reach soon, I had some new journey to begin in a car that was about to leave, somewhere. But that course of reaching and rushing would break, snap and finish before five in the evening, let's say before the end of office hours. In this way I'd go out in search of something each day, and after roaming all afternoon, I'd return alone and empty in the evenings, broken, snapped, shattered and finished within. Still, I'd think: maybe tomorrow I'll find something.

In this course there is another matter. In this city there are many roads which look very similar, and new faces to the city who can't figure them out can easily get muddled. At that time I too was new to this city, or rather, this city was new to me. But I never thought, "Maybe I'll lose my way if I walk this road." The place I had to go could be anywhere. The path I needed could be any path. In this way I walked through many

places and roads without ever knowing them. Another reason I could walk, without worry, through unknown roads and places was—time. "Time" was abundant for me then, so I could walk anywhere, I could even stand a while at any crossroad and wipe away my sweat.

But now I'm employed. This whole course has broken. Now there can be nothing for me to read but newspapers. These papers, too, I read only for one reason: I'm anticipating some news which might appear in them any day. After reading each headline, I realise the news wasn't printed today. Again I start anticipating the same news in tomorrow's newspapers...I've been doing this, I'm still doing this.

Many people say, "I feel anxious in crowds." Yet they remain apart. But each crowd is an excitement for me. A stimulation. Excited and stimulated, I plunge into the hordes. Studying each face I examine these hordes, turning over everything. In each horde, I feel that I'm looking for a face. This face can belong to any ethnicity, age, sex, or individual. This is why I've spent so much time and effort to recognise it. But when the crowds start to

thin, I slowly become agitated—won't I meet that face today? Then, the next moment, I wonder—is it that I haven't been able to recognise the face that I've been looking for all this time? At this point I want to grab each person by the arm and shake him, asking, "Where's the face I'm searching for?"

Even now I'm looking for some face in the crowd; at the sight of the hordes I am filled with the same curiosity, excitement and sense of stimulation. Excited and stimulated, I study each crowd. I study everyone: the boys and girls, the young men and women, the old men and

women of the crowd.

These days I've also started to wait, each morning and evening, at the gates of schools. I feel that the face I'm looking for might even belong to one of these small schoolchildren. I've also begun to think that along with that face, I'll have to create the path I've been wanting to take all these years. And if I never find that face in any crowd, I'll also have to create it within myself. ♦

Pandey's short stories can be found in her collections *Asajila Khushiharau*, *Bandhaki Khushiharau*, and *Sita Pandeyka Kathaharu*.

BIZ NEWS

Ex-Citibank staffers make off with \$185,000

Last week's arrest of an ex-employee of Citibank Kathmandu has revealed an elaborate electronic scam to steal money from the New York account of a Nepali bank.

Madhu Aryal, former assistant representative of Citibank in Kathmandu, is charged with taking \$185,000 from a Rastriya Banijya Bank (RBB) account in New York, aided by another staffer, Tashi Chering Sherpa. (Aryal quit Citibank in July 1998 and to become the Standard Chartered representative in Nepal and Bhutan.)

Police arrested Aryal and Sherpa last week, and during interrogation stumbled upon another discrepancy: Aryal had drawn \$500,000 from his account at Himalayan Bank and Nabil Bank and was preparing to fly to the United States on 13 August.

Both banks have asked American Express to stop payment on Aryal's traveller's cheques. Sources said Aryal had been advised at the banks to use a bank draft or credit card rather than carry the pile of TCs, but he is said to have insisted on them. Aryal told the police he had already sent the travellers cheques abroad by express mail.

Meanwhile, the police have also discovered a locker in Aryal's name at the Bank of Kathmandu, but the contents are being examined.

The scam remained unknown for two years because of delays in RBB to reconcile its accounts. It was only during a routine reconciliation exercise in April this year that RBB staff found out that statements from Citibank for 22 May and 19 June 1998 did not match its records.

Closer scrutiny showed that unusually large sums had been paid from the RBB New York account to one Pratima Agrawal at a United Overseas Bank account in Singapore. This payment, however, was not recorded in the daily statements issued by Citibank Kathmandu.

The RBB had asked Citibank to furnish details of the suspect payments as soon as it became known. The clarification from Citibank stated that the transfer to Agrawal was made as final payment as asked by RBB's Supermarket branch at New Road. When the RBB re-checked its books it found discrepancies with the Citibank statement. A month later RBB wrote to the bank asking for the specific payment authorisation documents.

Citibank in Kathmandu has so far refused to make any comment, but said a team from New York is here for further investigation. It has meanwhile agreed to deposit the missing cash into RBB's account.

Police say the investigation will be completed in another 15 days. RBB has formed a task force to quickly reconcile all its dealings with Citibank. Until then it will not be known exactly how much money was siphoned away.

Airfare hike imminent



After remaining unchanged for the last seven years, airfares in the domestic sector are in for a hike. The Ministry of Tourism is preparing a detailed route-sector fare revision proposal to be ready next week. The final decision will, however, depend on how the political leadership responds to the plan. Aviation fuel prices have gone up several times, price of spares and customs duty has also increased, says Yagya Prasad

Gautam, joint secretary at the Ministry. These have made it necessary to change fares, he says.

Talk about raising domestic airfares has been on since the recommendation made by the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) last December. The CAAN proposal included a new mechanism for cross-subsidising flights to remote destinations.

According to the plan, airlines flying profitable routes—mountain flights and those charging 'tourist' fares—were to contribute a portion of their earnings toward the creation of a special fund that was to be used to subsidise flights to remote areas. Airlines were to provide five dollars on each mountain flight ticket and two dollars on each tourist fare. The sum thus collected would pay the difference between a plane's operating cost and the ticket price.

But this plan fell apart after some private airlines—including those that do not fly to any remote destination—disagreed on the contribution plan.

A possible dry operating cost (DOC) for a Twin Otter, which provides the basis for ticket prices, is \$ 660, including the cost for maintenance. (Without major maintenance, that would be \$ 720.)

By that reckoning each ticket on the hour-long flight from Nepalgunj to Simikot would have to be priced at around Rs 3,900, an amount far beyond the reach of locals. But even if the present fare were doubled to make it Rs 1200 no plane carrying 16 passengers would be able to do business. That's where the subsidy comes in.

Arun III survey licence

Eurorent, the American Investment Banking Company, formally applied for a survey licence to build the Arun 3 project on 10 August but that does not mean that the project is 'on'.

Ron Nechemia, the company's managing director, who was in the capital last week said the final decision to invest would be taken by his board, based on the rate of return the project would offer. He, however, did not specify what rate would be good enough. That would depend on both the project cost and the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) it would be able to negotiate in India.

"We have an existing relationship in India where we are involved eight or nine projects already," said Nechemia. The PPA would be crucial for the project but it won't come easily, as is evident from the experience with the West Seti project—another foreign venture that has been waiting for just such an agreement for years.

He added that the company had set aside money for investment in Nepal two years ago. But that money would be committed for the 402-MW Arun III project only after detailed studies are complete. In its application Eurorent has asked for a year's period for survey, likely to be approved within a month. For a survey licence it would have to deposit Rs 42 million—at the rate of Rs 100 per kilowatt of installed capacity—as a guarantee of performance.

The company plans to proceed in four stages: begin initial exploration on the possible PPA in India; conduct confirmation survey of project data (detailed design was completed with World Bank support); carry out environmental analysis; and then construction. The initial work is expected to take up to 11 months, including the negotiation of multilateral insurance against political and other risks involved. Eurorent expects to complete the project in seven years after beginning actual construction—two years for road building, one for procurement and transport of equipment and 3-4 years of actual construction. The company estimates the Arun III project to cost about \$1.3 per megawatt, which Nechemia claimed was the industry average for hydro projects. That comes to \$ 600-800 million, which includes the road component.

Though Eurorent is little known in this part of the world, Nechemia says his company was working on 30 or so power and other infrastructure projects in China, including two hydro-electricity development schemes, worth US \$ 3.5 billion (3000MW and 1500 MW).

ECONOMIC SENSE

by ARTHA BEED



Privatise privatisation

The economy bleeds as it props up badly haemorrhaging public sector units. Public discourse about privatisation seems to occur in inverse proportion to political instability. As soon as governments get a bit shaky, there is less talk about privatisation. You can expect the same thing to start happening now.

Have the ambitious privatisation plans been shelved, or are politicians just too busy saving their political skins to pay much attention? Probably both.

But one wonders at the silence from the Ministry of Finance. The Ninth Five Year Plan lists 30 state-owned enterprises to be privatised between 1997-2002. Two more years to go, and only one enterprise has so far been handed over to the private sector. I guess you could argue that things could have been a lot worse. In the past 10 years since the government began divesting public enterprises, only 17 have gone. At this rate it will take another 20 years to privatise all the enterprises in the Ninth Plan list and 30 years before all state-owned enterprises can be sold off.

According to our bureaucrats and politicians, privatisation is the panacea that will cure inefficiency and reduce state expenditure. But despite successive commitments in the annual budget, nothing suggests privatisation is taken seriously. Part of the reason could be that the privatisation efforts are

supported by grants from donors and foreign consultants set the agenda.

Not that there is anything new in all this. In fact, it would be surprising if even half of what is planned was achieved. With privatisation, like everything else, there is no coherent strategy and there are no targets. Everything, it seems, is left to fate, and the delay costs the economy dearly as it gives transfusions uselessly to the badly haemorrhaging units. The privatisation process now resembles the state enterprises themselves—no accountability and no process of penalising non-performance. Nobody is hauled up if no progress is made. Of the three enterprises that were put up for privatisation in 1998 only one, the Nepal Tea Development Corporation, has been handed over to the new owner. But because of the way it was handled, people don't even trust the privatisation process itself. It is done at the whim and fancy of the politicians who happen to be in government at the time.

Out of the total investment of more than Rs 100 billion, last year's returns were only Rs 1.8 billion. In the last decade alone the exchequer poured in over Rs 40 billion to prop up state enterprises. Of the 43 public enterprises, more than half of them have not recorded profits in the past five years.

It takes no genius to figure out why: they are badly

managed, they are saddled with a huge cumulative workforce of about 50,000, and there is incessant government interference in management. Some of these companies have not had their accounts audited for more than six years. The indication is that since the government itself is the problem it has no business keeping them under its control.

It has been proved the world over that privatisation is the best way out for the national coffers to stop pouring money into these black holes. However, the process of disinvestment also needs to be really given serious thought. What is the point of it all if the process itself is so fraught with corruption that it makes the enterprises sicker, and the investor is not really interested in the company but the real estate where it is located.

Identification of enterprises and the process of privatisation needs to be made more timely and effective, there should be no political interference, although that's easier said than done. The privatisation cell in the Ministry must be made more powerful as well as accountable. Privatisation should be treated in a business-like manner. May be the first point to start off would be to privatise the privatisation process itself. ♦

Readers can post their views and discuss issues at arthabeed@yahoo.com

Grindlays Gazette

INTEREST RATE UPDATE

NEPALI RUPEE	CURRENT%	PREVIOUS%
Call Money Avg.	5.25	5.25
61 Days Tbill	5.17	5.22
91 Days Tbill	5.38	5.41
365 Days Tbill	6.18	6.18
Repo rate	5.95	5.91

Average rate of 91 days Tbills came under pressure due to aggressive bidding from banks. Market liquidity is expected to remain adequate in coming weeks due to T/bills maturity of secondary market. Expected range for next week of 91 day T/bill average 5.25 to 5.50 percent range.

FOREIGN CURRENCY

	USD	EUR	GBP	JPY	CHF
LENDING	9.50	6.25	6.00	1.36	5.00
LIBOR (1M)	6.62	4.41	6.06	0.10	3.18

The Federal Reserve is to meet on August 22 to decide whether to raise interest rates again for what would be the seventh time since June 1999. Recent British data suggests that there is definitely a chance of a UK rate hike in September. Bank of Japan Governor made strong declaration on Monday saying that he wanted to abandon the zero rate policy as soon as possible.

BANK RATES(DEPO/LENDING)	Mkt	Hi/Lo	Mkt	Avg
S/A NPR		6.0/3.5		5.32
F/D 1 YR		7.5/6.0		6.81
OVERDRAFT		15.5/12.5		13.54
TERM LOAN		14.5/13.0		13.49
IMPORT LN		13.0/10.5		11.52
EXPORT LN		13.0/10.0		10.96
MISC LOAN		17.5/13.5		15.13

Due to present unattractive investment rate on T/bill, most of the banks going for cut on their present savings rate. This is expected to continue further if present trend continues.

CURRENCY UPDATE

AG/USD	CURRENT *	WK/AGO	%CHG
GOLD(Ounce)	272.60	277.50	-1.77
OIL(Barel)	29.99	28.10	+6.73
EUR	0.9059	0.9236	-1.95
GBP	1.5030	1.4997	+0.22
JPY	108.73	109.48	-0.69
CHF	1.7079	1.6765	+1.87
AUD	0.5854	0.5815	+0.67
INR	45.55	45.00	+1.22

*Currency bid prices at 1.30 p.m. on 7/8. Source Reuters

Oil: Crude oil prices remained higher driven by concerns over lower U.S. inventories and OPEC production levels. Gold: Gold remains under pressure unable to move higher as a continued lack of interest in the yellow metal fails to garner any investment demand.

The dollar remained mixed after a soft U.S. jobs report showed fresh signs of slowing U.S. economic growth. The US dollar, which had a very inflated value against almost all currencies, is starting to give some of that back because people are starting to back off from the perception the Fed will raise rates in August. Euro recovered some ground after touching 10 week lows near 0.8990 on softer than expected US payroll data. Sterling that rose at the fear of higher UK rates has supported the currency.

INDIAN RUPEE OUTLOOK:

The Indian rupee closed at 45.55/56 per dollar, off a lifetime intra-day low of 45.58. It is expected to weaken further unless the central bank intervenes aggressively to improve supply of the dollar. The absence from the market of some state-run banks, widely viewed by currency traders as the RBI's surrogates, had affected importer sentiment and led exporters to hold back their dollar repatriation.

INTERNATIONAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR NEPALI TIMES

	6 months	1 year
SAARC countries	US\$25	US\$48
Other countries	US\$40	US\$75

marketing@nepalitimes.com

Blooming industry

SALIL SUBEDI



HEMLATA RAI

When Kathmandu used to be known for its hippy-era flower children, the few blossoms that could be found grew wild, along hedges and the sides of paddy fields. They were collected and strung into garlands to adorn deities and people during festivities.

Today, the city has switched to flower bouquets wrapped in plastic. And it is the spread of this new fad that is feeding the blooming industry. Where and how the business took is hard to tell,

but florists trace it to five years ago when some Nepali and Indian entrepreneurs stumbled on the market almost by chance.

"Competition has increased, but so has the market. If planned properly, the flower business can reach any height," says Jyoti Pradhan of Women in Floriculture (WIF), a group of five women entrepreneurs who got into the business in 1996.

In four years, the business has blossomed, and they manage a monthly turnover of more than Rs 50,000. The most

popular varieties are gladiolus, rose, tube rose, "zerbera", lily, carnation and orchid. Business has grown so fast that WIF now grows its own flowers in nurseries in Narayanghat and Khaireni. Their clients now include five-star hotels.

Ruku Basu of Topha Gift Shop is enthusiastic about the potential of the flower business. "There is profit here, the flowers move very quickly," she says. Basu's shop is only one year old, and her flowers are outselling cosmetics. She has now contracted a Kirtipur farmer to grow special flower varieties exclusively for her in the coming year. "If only we could offer more varieties," Basu says, sizing up Kathmandu's vast untapped flower business possibilities.

Sunil Tamang of Daffodil Flowers adds that assured year-round supply is a must for business growth. "I got opportunities to work for big hotel clients but failed to satisfy their demands throughout the year

and lost the business," he says. Tamang now depends on daily customers for business, which limits his profit potential. During the flower season, monthly business hits Rs 120,000, and dips to half that in the lean winter months.

Prasant Manna came to Kathmandu from Calcutta to start a cut flower shop at Tripureswor four years ago. Today, he owns three such shops and business is growing beyond his wildest imagination.

In order to overcome the supply problem, some Indian shops like Manna's import flowers from South India in the winter with a precarious supply line that runs across 2,000 km. But Tamang and Pradhan tap the semi-tropical lowland valleys around Kathmandu where flowers bloom even in winter.

Kathmandu may soon be able to meet its cut flower demand through the wholesale market managed by the Floriculture Association of Nepal. ♦

How does your garden grow



BASANTI PRADHAN

After a tedious afternoon's work at the traffic island at Tripureswor, a taxi driver's off-hand remark made our day. "The city looks prettier with these flowers and greenery, we should protect these gardens," he said, before launching into an angry diatribe against vandals who stole flowers and trampled the carefully laid-out beds. We were encouraged, at least there were people who care, and appreciate the hard work that goes into setting up and maintaining these verdant islands.

It is obvious Kathmandu people are getting sick of concrete, glass and brick and yearn for a soothing patch of green by the roadside, or at home. Even congested middle-class apartment balconies are now draped in greenery as more and more people take to gardening as a hobby.

A home garden is a practical and beneficial option to turn your home green, splash it with colours and even (as my medical friends tell me) turn gardening into an anti-stress therapy. So, on doctor's orders, if I may say so, you should take up gardening as much as you can. Open your personal space to admit plants that exude charm, pleasure, beauty and, yes, oxygen. The benefits of gardening are priceless, what you get in peace-of-mind, stress relief and aesthetics cannot be measured in rupees.

Unless you are a horticulture fanatic, gardening can be quite time consuming and take up most of your leisure. So better be sure about it, and do it seriously from the outset, looking strategically at nitty-gritties like compost heap, hedges, ponds, rock gardens and how these fit with your other requirements such as driveway, garage or even barbecues.

Some of the golden rules of gardening are self evident: a garden is an extension of the house. A visual link must exist between the house and garden in order to combine outdoor entertaining and family meals, and make the most of internal and external space.

A split-level garden may look daunting, but with imaginative treatment, it will literally give your garden an added dimension. An artificial slope adds variety and drama to an otherwise dull flat area.

Proper drainage is always underestimated. Soil that is too wet retards plant growth (roots need to breathe too). The soil must then be broken, topsoil spread over for grass after which fertilisers and plant food are applied before the final setting.

Planting has to be worked out very carefully. It is helpful to consider the planting design at three levels: trees, shrubs or

hedges and other smaller plants.

Trees are necessary to give a vertical backbone to any garden. Trees can be decorative, and serve to outline a garden's structure and add colour, and shades.

Shrubs, for their part, can fill the awkward gaps between the tallest perennials and the smallest trees. With shrubs, you will also notice a richer biodiversity, especially birdlife in your garden. And if the shrubs are integrated with shallow ponds, birds will find it even more irresistible.

Some people get carried away by colour, or are surprised when flowers start blooming all over the place in a splash of primaries. Foliage plants can be indispensable in preventing colour clashes. Spectacular colours need quiet companions to show them off. When choosing plants for colour it is a good idea to select one base colour and build upon it, experimenting with harmonies and contrasts in a continuous stream of colour grouping. Such a monochromatic scheme can be very tasteful.

Different shades of the same colour with tiny traces of another brighter one can also have an interesting effect. Hotter colours should be placed in the front with the cooler ones at the back. If you reverse this order, you reduce the visual width of the border. Always place the tallest upright plants first, and then arrange the larger ones down to the smallest at the front.

If your budget is tight let your garden grow slowly to its form even if it takes several years. A garden gets better with age. ♦



E C H O



United Traders Syndicate Pvt Ltd.
Sinamangal, P.O. Box: 233, Kathmandu
Tel: 478301 to 478306, Fax: 977-1-471195
e-mail: uts@voith.com.np
Website: <http://www.toyota.com.np> • <http://www.global.toyota.com>

Access: UTS/Toyota/0000/2000

The stupa of a million dewdrops



One of Desmond Doig's favourite spots in Kathmandu was Boudhanath, "a shimmering beacon of faith".

I can remember a time when Boudhanath was a single jewel in the lotus of its encircling houses, with not an irreverence of concrete anywhere; when a flacid white-washed gateway spanned a narrow entrance so no disturbing vehicles could intrude. There was only one monastery then, rather a chapel-beside-the-home of the Chini Lama, a rotund jovial man whose first concession to the modern world was giving audience from under a golf umbrella. It was he who supervised the ritual bathing of the stupa and the offering of votive flags that hang in strings from the high finial to the surrounding wall like the spokes of a great wheel.

Then in 1959 came the Tibetan refugees and with them a reincarnate lama known as the Mongolian Lama who began to set up a fine monastery, a chant away from the Chini Lama. Both claimed to represent the Dalai Lama and both suggested, not always discreetly, that the

other was a lesser lama. Time has changed all that.

Undoubtedly, the stupa is very old: some believe older than the Buddha himself, others that in the heart of the stupa are enshrined relics of the Buddha brought from India by his beloved disciple Ananda. Perhaps the Emperor Ashoka who is believed to have visited the valley in the footsteps of his master, added to a stupa already there.

Over the centuries Boudhanath has been embellished, fallen into disrepair, and again added to by saints and kings. One of the last well-known donors to the stupa was the first maharaja prime minister, Jung Bahadur, who had a high prayer-wall built around the stupa where hundreds of copper prayer wheels are still turned by the pious.

Whatever its origin, whoever built it, there is a tranquillity, an other-worldly beauty about Boudhanath that no one fails to notice. Some claim cosmic

forces or psychic vibrations, other the centuries of faith built into the stupa. Whatever, there is a wondrous sense of peace, contentment and well-being that surrounds the stupa.

The voice of legend requires a hearing. An early king of Kathmandu constructed a pool near his palace but no water poured from the three stone fountains carved with dragon beads. Deeply perplexed, the king consulted his oracles who advised that a man possessed of the thirty-two virtues should be sacrificed at the spot. So the king summoned his son and commanded him to go to the spring at dawn and sever the head of a shrouded person he would find sleeping there. Dutifully the son carried out the king's request, and even as water gushed from the fountains, he realised he had slain his father.

So great was his grief that he left the court and sought seclusion as an ascetic in a distant temple, but his penance alone was not enough to relieve the drought and plagues that befell his kingdom. When it seemed the whole valley was doomed, the prince had a vision in which the goddess Bajra Yogini told him to build a great shrine to the Buddha where a white bird would settle.

So severe was the drought that there was no water with which to mix the clay and sand. So for twelve long years white sheets were spread upon the ground each night to be saturated with dew. When wrung out, the sheets provided the necessary water and so was built the stupa of a million dewdrops.

Peace and plenty returned to the land. ♦

(Excerpted with permission from *In the Kingdom of the Gods*, HarperCollins, 1999)

One of the most fabulous places in the fabled valley is the great Buddhist stupa of Boudhanath. Its huge white dome, surmounted on three enormous tiers, shaped like mandalas and supporting a gilded tower and golden finial, create an image as restful as it is vast. It can be seen from all over the valley, a shimmering beacon of faith.

The all-seeing eyes of the compassionate Buddha gaze cobalt, white and scarlet from the gilded sides of the tower, above them a *tikka* and between them, where the nose should be, a question mark that, no matter what it means, for me enhances the riddle of the eyes. Perhaps when they were first painted, when the valley was young and there was a settlement instead of a sprawling city, those eyes looked down on everyone, reaching into their homes, their fields, and into the passing phases of their lives like an insinuating presence. Even today it could be a reflection of one's own mood, or cloud shadows racing across the stupa, that make the half-closed, lotus-shaped eyes sometimes frown, blaze with anger, enquire, or smile.

Pressing upon the stupa and

separated from it by a paved perambulatory, is a circular wall of houses in which those connected with the stupa, pilgrims, traders and craftsmen, live. On their ground floors are tourist shops filled with instantly attractive trinkets and curios and presided over by Nepali or Tibetan shopkeepers endlessly jovial with bargaining on their brains.

A plump Tibetan lady who years ago made me her brother, sews and embroiders Tibetan boots. A man who used to call me Apala, or father, before he married and had four children, presides over a modern shop with wall-to-wall showcases and cupboards. Once he displayed his wares jumbled together in a dark cave of a room. The old houses with their

An aerial view of Boudhanath today, showing new construction encroaching upon the sacred stupa. Most of these buildings were not there when Desmond Doig did his drawing (top) 23 years ago.

thatched or small tiled roofs are giving way to modern concrete, a great sadness since the atmosphere of the place is changing with each new building.

Beyond the circle of shops, which contain a Buddhist chapel and a Buddhist monastery, there grows a town of monasteries, chapels, houses, lodges, shops, and chang houses which sell local liquor. Some of the monasteries, all in the Tibetan architectural styles, are grandly enormous, but none impose upon the stupa. It soars above them all.



Poubha

SALIL SUBEDI

The swirling blue waves evoke Japan's paintings, the billowing white clouds on an azure sky look like Tibetan thangka, the mandalas and the tantric positions of deities are motifs straight out of Himalayan Buddhism.

But the images are all from Nepal's poubha school of devotional art, and this underrated and overlooked art form all originated here, in Kathmandu Valley at least 1,200 years ago.

Although there are no records of the original poubha because of the fragility of the medium (vegetable and mineral pigments on canvas) there are many art historians who believe that the poubha art form was the precursor to the Tibetan thangka.

As with many other architectural and artistic skills that travelled from Kathmandu

Valley north to Tibet, China and even Japan in the middle of the last millennium, poubha was taken to Tibet by their Newari masters.

In the past 50 years, the thangka gained immense popularity worldwide, particularly because of its linkage to Himalayan Buddhism. But the poubha has largely remained within the private confines of the Valley's bahals and temples. Even Kathmandu's art dealers and young Nepalis seem unaware of the devotional richness and artistic genius of this indigenous art form, although a few recent exhibitions have started featuring poubhas.

Poubha artists work in private, their studios have a tranquil ambience. The act of painting itself is a form of meditation, linking the human painter with the spiritual and



SALIL SUBEDI

divine. The artists are taught to be humble, meditative and detached from the materialistic world, and they carry immense patience and devotion. The sacred Buddhist texts say: "The painter must be a good man, not given to anger and laziness, holy, learned, who is a master of his senses, pious, benevolent, free from avarice."

Before starting to paint, the canvas has to be blessed and the outlines approved by a Vajrayana priest. If it meets canonical injunctions, the master inscribes three syllables: *Om, Ah, Hum* (for body, speech and mind) at the back of the canvas. The canvas itself is a cotton sheet stretched across a wooden frame and covered with a layer of buffalo glue and white clay.

The artist uses sable-hair brush of a variety of thicknesses. The water-based colours of poubhas come from Himalayan stones like tourmaline and copper sulphate crystals, indigo from south India to give five basic colours: red, blue, yellow, black and white. A rich red dominates Newari paintings and this sets off the bright blues, greens and gold. There is a strict code for the colours representing

various deities.

The subject of the painting itself follows guidelines for philosophical themes and iconometric principles. There isn't much left for the artist's imagination, the rules are governed by records of meditative visions of early sages passed down from generation to generation. The eyes of the deities are always painted at the end, and this is the holiest

moment in the entire two months or so it takes to complete the poubha.

Painters can bring in their own individuality only in the decorative patterns. And once painted, the canvas is always kept rolled up and not shown to strangers since they are considered a mirror that reflects the painter's soul. In recent years there has been some revival of interest in the poubha, mainly

because of the popularity (and a certain commercialisation of thangka). There are only a few masters of poubha art in Kathmandu Valley. Among them are Lok Chitrakar (see box below), Siddhimuni Shakya and Prem Man Chitrakar. Pokhara-based Mukti Singh Thapa, originally from the Newari hilltown of Bandipur, also paints poubha.



SALIL SUBEDI

Chitrakar

Thirty-eight-year-old Lok Chitrakar is a self-taught poubha practitioner who has been painting since he was 12. Today, with assistants Komal, Santosh, Sanjaya, Bijaya, Amogh, Kishor, Rajendra Lok Chitrakar runs his Simrik Atelier in Patan. Chitrakar's repertoire runs from ritual geometric tantric designs like the Shri Yantra to the Vajrayana pantheon, including Saraswati, Ganesh, Tara, Manjushree and Avalokiteswar. Chitrakar has been working for the past five years on two huge poubha murals for a temple in Japan.

Lok Chitrakar follows the iconic traditions of his forebears, but does experiment with his trademark Chinese rocks, Tibetan clouds and Japanese mountain landscapes as well as silky transparency in shawls or a deliberate lack of symmetry in some forms. "I have tried to remain true to the ritualistic requirements as far as deities are concerned, but on occasion I have added

supportive elements in a manner that artists centuries ago also did," says Chitrakar.

Poubha art is now also developing a select following, and Chitrakar himself has held exhibitions in Kathmandu, Finland and Japan.



SALIL SUBEDI



The 500-year-old history of the most ubiquitous sign of the Internet era

based on the terracotta jars used to transport grain and liquid in the ancient Mediterranean world.

The first known instance of its use, he said, occurred in a letter written by a Florentine

merchant on 4 May 1536. Sent from Seville to Rome by a trader called Francesco Lapi, the document describes the arrival in Spain of three ships bearing treasure from Latin America.

"There, an amphora of wine, which is one thirtieth of a barrel, is worth 70 or 80 ducats," Lapi says, showing the amphora with the now familiar symbol of an "a" wrapped in its own tail.

The Spanish word for the @ sign, *arroba*, also indicates a weight or measure, which was equivalent, at the end of the 16th century, to 11.3 kg

or 27.2 litres.

"Until now no one knew that the @ sign derived from this symbol, which was developed by Italian traders in a mercantile script they created between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance," Prof Stabile said. "The loop around the 'a' is typical of that merchant script."

The professor unearthed the ancient symbol in the course of research for a visual history of the 20th century, to be published by the Treccani Encyclopedia. He said the sign, known to modern Italian cybernauts as *la chiocciola* (the snail), had made its way along trade routes to northern Europe where it took on its contemporary accountancy meaning: "at the price of". Having hopped on to English typewriter keyboards in the early 20th century, it was selected as a rarely used symbol to separate user names from domain addresses by the American internet engineer Ray Tomlinson. Prof Stabile believes that Italian banks may possess even earlier documents bearing

the symbol lying forgotten in their archives.

"The oldest example could be of great value. It could be used for publicity purposes and to enhance the prestige of the institution that owned it," he said.

Internet users of various tongues have adopted metaphors ranging from an elephant's trunk to a monkey's tail and even a cinnamon roll to describe the now-ubiquitous squiggle. The inventors of the "snail" would doubtless be proud to learn that they were the progenitors of such a successful sign, also known, somewhat unromantically in English, as "commercial at".

"No symbol is born of chance. This one has represented the entire history of navigation on the oceans and has now come to typify travel in cyberspace," Prof Stabile said. "Venice is the maritime city that continued to use the amphora weight unit the longest, but Florence is the foremost city of banking. The race is on to see who has the oldest document." ♦

(The Guardian)

PHILIP WILLAN

The ubiquitous symbol of Internet-era communications, the @ sign used in email addresses, is actually a 500-year-old invention of Italian merchants and is actually based on the shape of ancient Greek amphoras.

Giorgio Stabile, a professor of the history of science at La Sapienza University, claims to have stumbled on the earliest known example of the symbol's use, as an indication of a measure of weight or volume. The @ sign represented an amphora, a measure of capacity

Online Cheats

"The dog ate my homework," need not be an excuse anymore. At www.cheatweb.de students reveal 59 different tricks for cheating and 173 tried-and-true excuses for incomplete assignments.

JUTTA PILGRAM IN MUNICH

Alex is running short on time. Just three days to go until he has to hold an oral report in biology class, and the student has yet to read a single sentence on his topic.

"Could you guys tell me something about wasting natural resources? A complete report would be best," Alex writes to the Internet homework service www.biologie4u.de.

Tim, a student at a state-funded college preparatory school, is in even more of a hurry. "Why does oxygen content decrease as the depth



of a lake increases? Please help me fast, my head is bursting," he begs. Tim promptly receives the correct answer, along with a few Internet addresses for further reading thrown in for good measure.

The biology forum is just one of several dozen German-language homework pages on the Internet. "Whether you're simply too busy to complete a homework assignment, want to do some research or need help from competent teachers, we're there for you, completely unselfish and free," advertises, for example, [www.hausaufgaben\(homework\).de](http://www.hausaufgaben(homework).de).

A total of 4,517 reports are available for downloading at www.fundus.org. The site also offers surfers a glimpse of the duller side of student life. Great works of German-language literature—such as Max Frisch's *Homo Faber* or Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*—are dutifully dealt with in countless variations. Under the subject of English you can find reports on such perennial favourites as George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. A look at the reports on offer, however, reveals that the pages apparently have no quality control process in place.

"Knowledge has no prestige value to speak of anymore for young people," observes Professor Klaus Boeckmann, a specialist in teaching methodology at the University of Klagenfurt in Austria. Proud public confessions by pop culture icons—like the recent one by German reality TV overnight sensation (and real-life unemployed car mechanic) "Zlatko" that he had never read anything by Shakespeare—are excellent examples of this mental shift, says Boeckmann.

"The person who is considered 'smart' is not the person who has crammed his head full of knowledge, the clever one is the one who manages to obtain what he needs just in the nick of time," says Boeckmann. At least, though, the homework service pages attest to a lot of hard work on the part of the high school and university students who run most of them.

The people behind [www.referate\(oral exams\).de](http://www.referate(oral exams).de) were quite industrious in collecting their information, offering a neat list of Internet sources for reports with the exact contents noted for each website. Their so-called hotbox feature offers overworked students the opportunity to have other Internet users complete their assignments for them, or to have them explained at special discussion forums.



At www.cheatweb.de students reveal 59 different tricks for cheating and 173 tried-and-true excuses for incomplete assignments—most of them presumably better than "the dog ate my homework." Yet cheating and copying other people's work are not the only things the Internet-savvy kids are interested in. Tim's question, for example, caused quite a stir in the biology forum by provoking a general debate on photosynthesis and underwater oxygen levels. ♦

(Sueddeutsche Zeitung)

The \$200 Simputer

NEW DELHI - In an effort to bring the Internet to the masses in India and other developing countries, several academics and engineers have used their spare time to design a sub-\$200 handheld Net appliance, writes Bangalore-based John Ribeiro of IDG News Service (23 June).

The Simputer, or SIMple COMPUTER, will enable India's illiterate population (some 48% of the country of one billion) to surf the Web. The device was designed by professors and students at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) at Bangalore, and engineers from the Bangalore-based design company Encore Software. A prototype of the appliance will be available in August.

The Simputer is built around Intel's StrongARM CPU, with Linux as the operating system. It will have 16 MB of flash memory, a monochrome liquid crystal display (LCD) with a touch panel overlay for pen-based computing, and a local-language interface. The appliance will have Infrared Data Association and Universal Serial Bus interfaces, and will feature Internet access and mail software. Its designers expect the Simputer to be used not only as a personal Internet access device, but also by communities of users at kiosks. A smart-card interface to the device will enable the use of the device for applications such as micro-banking. "We expect to change the model for the proliferation of information technology in India," says Professor Swami Manohar. "The current PC-centric model is not sustainable because of the high cost of the PC." ♦

PURE & NATURAL

HEINZ
ESTD 1869
TOMATO KETCHUP
Pure & Natural
500g

The ketchup the world loves. Now in Nepal.

No preservatives.

No artificial colouring or flavouring.

No limits to how much you can eat.

For further trade enquiries contact:
E-mail: banka@mos.com.np, Pager: 9672-25168 (Message only)

Times AVAILABLE WORLDWIDE IN HARDCOPY

Nepali Times is now available on PEPC Worldwide vending machines at major airports and hotel chains. Receive 40 pages of the latest editions of Nepali Times and selected material from Himal South Asian and Himal Khabarpatrika in 70 cm x 70 cm x 150 cm format in high-quality paper printed while you watch a commercial video content on the monitor. Price: US\$ 2.50, all major credit cards accepted.

The Buddha isn't smiling

The likelihood of a war between India and Pakistan that could erupt into a nuclear conflict has increased significantly

JUDITH MILLER AND JAMES RISEN

Behind President Clinton's blunt warning last spring that South Asia was the world's most perilous region lay an assessment from American intelligence agencies that the likelihood of a war between India and Pakistan that could erupt into a nuclear conflict had increased significantly, according to US officials with access to the secret intelligence.

The officials said that the Central Intelligence Agency and the nation's other intelligence organisations had reached their consensus after examining the nuclear capacities of both countries and the growing tensions between them, in particular over the disputed Himalayan territory of Kashmir.

The assessment, known as a National Intelligence Estimate, began late last summer after Pakistan-backed militants crossed over the high mountain pass of Kashmir into the Indian-controlled area of Kargil, setting off weeks of heavy fighting that included airstrikes.

At that time, the administration grew fearful that the conflict could escalate into a nuclear exchange, officials said, citing both states' relatively poor intelligence about each other's intentions and movements and their lack of direct communications.

"The Kargil episode really got everyone's attention," said George Perkovich, deputy director of the W. Alton Jones Foundation and the author of *India's Nuclear Bomb*, published last year by the University of California.

Several analysts who took part in drafting the assessment

said the report had succeeded in underscoring the importance of working to ease political tensions between two rivals that have fought three wars in the last 50 years. In the past, the administration had focused mainly on trying to stop the development and spread of nuclear weapons on the subcontinent.

Last week, for instance, President Clinton talked by telephone with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee of India, who is due on a state visit next month, said Samuel R. Berger, the national security adviser. Berger added that he himself talks with Pakistan's military leader, Gen Pervez Musharraf, as part of the dialogue with Islamabad.

President Clinton received the intelligence assessment shortly before his first visit to South Asia in March. And he clearly reflected the report's conclusions when he twice called the Indian subcontinent "the most dangerous place in the world." India's president scolded Clinton and called the description "alarmist."

After the Kargil episode, the assessment, which remains secret, concluded that there was a sharply increased chance of a non-nuclear military conflict between India and Pakistan, possibly erupting into a nuclear

exchange. The chances of such a non-nuclear conflict, one White House official said, were put in the "50-50 range".

"The likelihood of a nuclear conflict goes up and down," said another official. "It's less important to assign a probability to it than to warn senior officials that there is a serious threat here that demands immediate and focused attention and action."

The assessment contained no specific guidance on what the administration could do to reduce tensions, according to those familiar with the document. But Clinton and other top officials have urged senior Indian and Pakistani officials in public and private meetings to open a direct political dialogue and give up their nuclear programmes, warning them of the growing peril of an accidental or deliberate nuclear exchange.

While administration officials agreed that Clinton's visit helped ease some tensions, neither country has signalled that it intends to halt development of the arsenals the two countries revealed to the world by exploding nuclear devices in quick succession in 1998.

India continues to see its nuclear arsenal as necessary for its status as an emerging power and to deter not only Pakistan but also neighbouring China, a

Pakistani ally. Pakistan sees its nuclear force as essential to counterbalance its rival's larger conventional forces.

Additionally, analysts have warned that if American plans for a missile defence prompt China to build up its nuclear arsenal, still more momentum will be added to the arms race across the region.

Given the Kashmir dispute, diplomats and arms control experts see nuclear weapons on the subcontinent as particularly dangerous. India and Pakistan, unlike other nuclear powers—for example, the United States and Russia—share a common border, have had no sustained dialogue and lack even a framework to hold serious negotiations.

After Pakistan moved into Kargil, Pakistan's rhetoric grew increasingly harsh and India prepared to mobilise a significant force that could have led to a dramatic escalation, experts say.

"Kargil proved that having nuclear weapons would not deter new conflicts," Perkovich said. "It also showed that unless such conflicts themselves were prevented, the possibility of an accidental or deliberate nuclear exchange would also increase given both states' relatively poor systems of intelligence surveillance and nuclear command and control."

While neither private experts nor the American government has firm estimates of the size of the Indian and Pakistani nuclear arsenals, Perkovich estimates that India has produced enough plutonium for 60 weapons.

But he said he believed that India had far fewer actual bombs, "in the neighbourhood of 35 weapons". In the event of a nuclear war, these would be delivered by aircraft. Pakistan has enough highly enriched uranium for roughly the same number of bombs, he added, and it could deliver them by a combination of bombs and missiles.

Stephen P. Cohen, a South Asian policy scholar at the Brookings Institution in Washington, called the risk of nuclear conflict "serious" and "increasing." But the president's trip, he said, had succeeded in engaging Washington in the region, a development that was particularly important to India, which has long desired to be seen as an Asian power. "The president should have gone much earlier," he said.

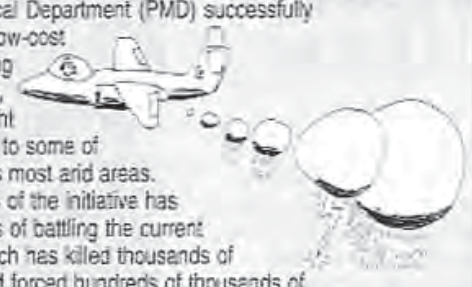
Robert Oakley, a former ambassador to Pakistan, said that Washington may have inadvertently helped fuel Pakistan's nuclear ambitions and reduced American leverage over Islamabad by failing to resume economic and military assistance to Pakistan that Congress cut off in 1990 because of the Pakistani nuclear programme.

(The New York Times Service)

Parched Pakistan seeds clouds

Karachi - The residents of Pakistan's arid Thar region, who had not seen rain for nearly a year, were overjoyed when it poured briefly last month. But this was no natural rain.

The rain in Thar, like in some other parts of Pakistan's southern Sindh and Baluchistan regions, was the result of a government initiative to make up for the acute scarcity of rainfall. During six weeks ending late July, the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) successfully carried out low-cost cloud seeding experiments, which brought artificial rain to some of the country's most arid areas. The success of the initiative has raised hopes of battling the current drought, which has killed thousands of livestock and forced hundreds of thousands of people to leave their rural homes in Sindh and Baluchistan.



Of the 24 experiments in the Thar and Cholistan deserts, and in parts of Baluchistan, 15 were successful. Between 30 to 45 mm of precipitation was recorded, which lasted between one to three hours. For the last three years, these areas had not got any rain, which is the main source of water for drinking and irrigating farms for the people of Baluchistan and Sindh. An estimated 21 million hectares of farm land in Baluchistan has been parched by the drought. The affected farms met 70 percent of the food needs of the province, which is Pakistan's largest. To add to the misery, the water table in these areas is also falling so fast that ground wells have to be sunk to a depth of 200 m. Not long ago, water could be found just 30 m below the ground surface. In early June, the weather office gave a presentation of its cloud seeding plan to Pakistan's military ruler Pervez Musharraf, who authorised the experiments. These were carried out using army aircraft. The cost of each experiment was a mere \$ 100. (Ipsa)

India upset by UN figure on AIDS

New Delhi - Stung by criticism from opposition lawmakers in Parliament, who cited HIV statistics for India put out by UNAIDS, Health Minister C.P. Thakur has accused UN agencies of mis-reporting facts and creating confusion.

"I am at a loss to understand how there can be so many different estimates by different UN agencies," an anguished Thakur said. The National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO), which is supervised by his ministry, generates epidemiological data from field studies and it would be "advisable" for UN agencies to use these figures, he said.

The government's main objection is to figures in the latest UNAIDS report on the global HIV/AIDS epidemic, which show that 310,000 Indians died of AIDS in India in 1999. However, the report did not explain how the figure was obtained. Six years ago, NACO officially questioned the basis on which UNAIDS calculated that India then had 1.75 million people infected with the AIDS virus. The Indian AIDS agency also objected to the latest UNAIDS finding.

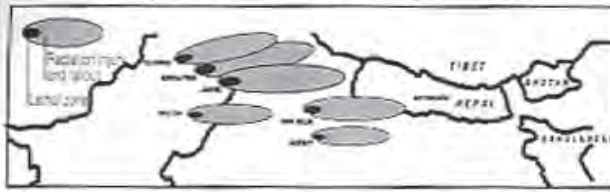
"We arrived at the number of 3.1 million using an internationally accepted model based on experience in various parts of the world," said Gordon Alexander, a senior UNAIDS official in India. While there was room for discussion on the figures, the idea was to "emphasise the need for prevention and support and a care system for HIV patients." Official Indian estimates for the year put the number of AIDS deaths to a modest 11,000, though some experts have questioned the reliability of this figure. The health minister admitted that these were projections. "We have to develop a proper model for estimation of AIDS deaths based on the number of infections in the country," he said. (IPS)

Xinjiang gas pipeline protest

Beijing - A giant energy project, crucial to President Jiang Zemin's crusade to revitalise western China, is likely to become a new battleground for activists worldwide.

The West-East natural gas pipeline—to link the gas fields in Xinjiang province of western China with the port of Shanghai in the east—was thrown open to foreign investors in July. When completed in 2005, the 4,200-km gas pipeline will use gas from Xinjiang to meet demand in energy-hungry Shanghai.

In a surprise decision that yielded state monopoly, Beijing announced that the \$ 14.5 billion project would be open to foreign participation. Investors will be allowed to take a controlling stake in gas exploration, construction and operation of the pipeline—realms previously under the control of domestic petroleum companies. Beijing hopes that the scheme would tap the abundant energy resources of Xinjiang, and that the resulting economic boom would help quiet the province's ethnic unrest. Xinjiang province is home to the country's Muslim Uighur people, a minority Beijing sees as restive and one that harbours separatist ambitions. (IPS)



Lethal damage and radiation fallout from the detonation of 15KT to 1MT warheads above major Indian and Pakistani cities. Early March, prevailing westerly winds 80-120 km/h at 7,000m over the northern Subcontinent.

TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES ★ TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES ★ TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES ★

Personal
accountant

Business Accounting Software

Features

- Multi Company Business Accounting
- General Ledger, Receivables/Payables
- Flexible Invoicing/ VAT Billing
- Stock Management
- Exhaustive reports with Export Facility
- Support for Dot Matrix Printing

Friendly and Flexible

- Graphical User Interface
- Code less Accounting
- Smart Folders for Customer/ Supplier/ Item Tracking with Drill Down Facility
- No month end procedures of Closing routine
- Online edit facility for transaction - online help

Reports

- Balance Sheet/ Trial balance/ Profit and loss
- Journal/ Ledger/ Account Balances
- Stock Ledger - Sales Purchase Register
- Customer/ Supplier
- Outstanding and payables

**Special Offer
NRS 12,000 only**

For Further Detail Please Contact:
Kathmandu - 250780, 251638; Narayanganj - 20655; hetauda - 21007
Pakhar - 22263, 21756; Biratnagar - 21294; nepalguni - 21576

software that keeps pace with your business

★ TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES ★ TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES ★ TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES ★

Milosevic has more surprises

Another autumn of crisis in the Balkans

When you live in the same house as Slobodan Milosevic, the president of Montenegro, Milo Djukanovic, said recently, be prepared for surprises. Needless to say, Milosevic's surprises are always unpleasant, as Djukanovic found when the Serbian leader earlier this summer rigged the constitution to allow himself two more potential terms as president of rump Yugoslavia and to demote Montenegro in the changed federal institutions. The ruthless survivor in Belgrade has created in Serbia an atmosphere of paranoia that is even more irrational than that which prevailed 10 years ago as Yugoslavia's wars were germinating. Serbia is under constant attack, he gives his nation to understand, just as he himself, as their leader, is physically threatened.

Serbs may not altogether believe in this picture of the unrelenting hostility of most of the outside world, but it nevertheless plays to their vulnerabilities. "Their fears," a recent report by a Bulgarian institute concluded, "are... for their biological survival because of the collapse of the health system, of environmental pollution and radiation after the air raids, of civil war, of political repression, of isolation." Again and again the investigators were



told that the nation is "sinking to the bottom". The report suggests that both the educated elite and ordinary people are involved in a process of self-examination leading in many cases to deep regret over the events of the last decade and to a repudiation of Milosevic.

That regret does not rule out, of course, blaming the Nato countries as well as Milosevic. The irony is that people are so cast down that many still respond to his politicking, even while knowing or half-knowing that he is both responsible for their ills and has no solution to them. Life in Serbia, with its frequent assassinations, its criminalised economy, its utter lack of political transparency, is a dangerous mystery for most ordinary folk. When people are unsure of everything, they are often ready to accept the most outrageous conspiracy theories as explanations for their condition.

On this basis, anyway, Milosevic proceeds with his dismal career. In order to maintain the illusion that the

world, or at least Nato, is bent on Serbia's destruction, he has this year actively attacked the independent media, whereas in the past he had been content to manipulate them and limit their influence. No critical questioning must be allowed to break through the paranoid fog.

In order to remove any hopes that there would be a constitutional limit to his rule, he pushed through changes to the constitution mandating direct elections for the presidency, lifting the one-term limit, and reducing Montenegrin representation in a new federal assembly. At home in Serbia the intention was to create what all repressive regimes need, which is the sense that there is no end in sight. In Montenegro, the purpose was to gain advantage in his duel with Djukanovic and to discomfit the Nato countries.

The result in Montenegro is that the elections under the changed constitution will be held there next month without any help from the Montenegro government. Polling booths will

be in Yugoslav army camps or in the municipalities controlled by the Socialist People's party, led by Momir Bulatovic, Djukanovic's rival and supporter of Milosevic. Elsewhere, in areas where Djukanovic's party holds sway, there will be no voting arrangements, for the Montenegrin government has declared that the constitutional changes are illegal and invalid. This half and half election is bound to increase the polarisation of Montenegro between those who want to maintain the Serbian connection and those who want to limit or cut it. In June, local elections in two key towns showed how finely balanced the two forces are, with one going to the government and the other to Bulatovic's people.

Milosevic is tactically very shrewd. A war between cousins might test the loyalties of both his and Djukanovic's troops to destruction, and lead to grave further disillusion in Serbia. It is not necessary, since the Djukanovic government is more of an irritant than a real challenge to Belgrade. The chances are that he will keep away from war, but it cannot be ruled out. A relatively easy victory, with fighting kept to a minimum, could buttress Milosevic's rule and sustain his myth. America's preoccupation with its own elections might seem to Milosevic to provide an opportune moment. It is going to be another dangerous autumn in the Balkans. ♦

(The Guardian)

Cyprus-size iceberg snaps off Antarctica

SYDNEY - Two summers ago scientists at Australia's Antarctic Cooperative Research Centre noticed that small icebergs from the continent of ice were drifting much closer to home than usual.

Ships began spotting bergs, too small to be detected by satellites, as far north as 40 degrees south. This is about 1,100 kilometres further north from the usual berg-line in the stormy Southern Ocean according to the Centre. But while the satellites may have missed these smaller mavericks neither they nor the rest of us will miss the massive islands of ice that are due to lumber out of the polar night next spring (autumn in the northern hemisphere).

Scientists now believe the largest icebergs ever recorded are currently riding through the dark south polar

winter. The biggest, B15 is about the size of Cyprus at 295km long by 37km wide. The next in size is A43A, which is twice as big as Luxembourg at 211 by 33 km and it is accompanied by A43B, 85 by 37km and by A44, 65 by 32km.

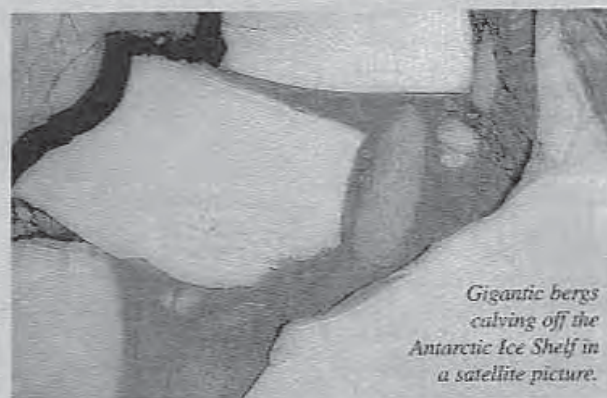
The letters refer to quadrants, B being closest to New Zealand, and A due south from South America. These gigantic tabular icebergs vary in thickness between 200-350 metres, of which up to 60

metres rises above the ocean.

As the nearly sunless polar winter set in, automatic weather stations were put on their surfaces by small landing parties or dropped from aircraft. Now they are gradually, massively, drifting north, to threaten the sea lanes around the bottom of South America.

Ice inside the giants, that originally accumulated thousands of years ago, will have warmed from as low

as -35 degrees C to -15 degrees C and rising. For a short while B15 is predicted to grow thicker, as it freezes the snow out of moist air blowing across it. As it warms, reaching the temperature of the air above and the sea below, it will become thinner, comparatively fragile and begin to fracture. Dozens of icebergs the size of London or Tokyo will turn into tens of dozens of ice islands the size of Manhattan Island, then crumble tens of thousands of giant icebergs which will in turn multiply into myriads of 'growler icebergs'. These are too small to be easily seen by radar in rough seas, but big enough to rip out the side of a ship. None of these vast tabular bergs will add to sea levels, since they were already floating when they cracked off the side of the ice continent. Roland Warner, a researcher at the Antarctic Cooperative Research Centre, says: "There is no known mechanism which links the industrial emission of greenhouse gases and their contribution to global warming to the episodic growth and historic calving of very large icebergs from the ice shelves." ♦



Children in armed conflict

NEW YORK - The UN Security Council has issued a "strong condemnation" of the deliberate targeting of children in armed conflicts and called on governments to do more to protect them. The council voted 15-0 to adopt a resolution which aims to raise awareness about the plight of children in war zones.

It said states have the responsibility "to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes". It also called on parties in armed conflict to respect international law protecting children—particularly protocols barring the involvement of children in war.

The resolution was adopted after months of debate by the council on the issue of children used as combatants and exploited by armed groups in civil war. It said the exploitation of children, including through prostitution, is a violation of their rights and international law.

It called on regional organisations to implement their initiatives for the protection of children by setting up "children protection units" and by curbing cross-border activities aimed at recruiting and abducting children among other measures.

The council has in the past urged governments to raise the drafting age of young people to 18 in an effort to protect the exploitation of children. (dpa)

Skinhead trouble

BASEL - The Swiss government is considering revising its anti-racism legislation in the face of an increased number of right-wing attacks.

Justice Minister Ruth Metzler expressed concern on 9 August about the difficulty of making a decision regarding the difference between freedom of expression and racist propaganda, and said that Bern would be looking into the laws dealing with racism on account of the extreme right's increased activity. The minister also stressed the need to deal with neo-Nazi activism at an international level as a complement to any amendment to Swiss laws.

Metzler will meet with German Minister of the Interior Otto Schilly at the beginning of September in Constance to discuss the issue. According to Hans Stutz, an expert on the Swiss extreme right, the number of Swiss neo-Nazi skinheads has at least tripled in the last three years, and now stands at about 1,000.

Stutz points out a clear difference between the Swiss and German far right movements. Swiss skinheads concentrate their attacks more on left-wingers than on foreigners. (Frankfurter Rundschau)

Vigilante victims sue paper

LONDON - Innocent victims singled out by vigilante mobs in search of paedophiles to attack and harass are to begin legal proceedings against the News of the World, the sensationalist British Sunday newspaper that initiated a "name and shame" campaign against child molesters last month.

The Independent on Sunday reported that three men subjected to attacks by anti-paedophile demonstrators had taken legal advice and intended to seek "significant compensation" from the newspaper. "They will be able to show that the mob looked at the pictures and identified them, however wrongly, from the paper," a lawyer for the men said.

"There is no doubt that this is defamation because they have been shunned by the public as a result. The paper should have carefully identified specific individuals so there was no confusion," she said. Sarah Payne, the eight-year-old girl whose abduction and murder triggered the anti-paedophile campaign, was buried on Sunday.

William Hague, the leader of the opposition Conservative Party, called on Saturday for automatic life sentences for repeat child sex offenders, restrictions to prevent offenders living near their victims, and tighter supervision after release from prison. (dpa)

IT specialists for Australia

SYDNEY - Australian computer companies need skilled temporary immigrants to remain world competitive and visa rules need changing to ensure they get them, Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock said.

"What business is saying to us, is that we want to be able to more flexibly move our employees in our organisations in and out of Australia," Ruddock said. "And in the IT area what we are finding is that we are in competition with other countries for people with high levels of skill."

The settler programme currently favours permanent migrants rather than temporary workers and Ruddock said there ought to be consideration for changes taking place in the world of business. (dpa)

Return of the gods



STOLEN IMAGE © JRFM

SUJATA TULADHAR

In a few weeks, if all goes according to schedule, a 12th-century stone sculpture of Uma Maheshwor stolen from Worol in Dhulikhel in 1982 will be returned to Nepal. The figure was sold to several art dealers and museums before ending up on a lonely pedestal in the Museum für Indische Kunst (Museum of Indian Art) in Berlin.

The return of the Uma Maheshwor is part of a new trend in which religious and historical artefacts are being returned to their rightful owners in Greece, Egypt, Cambodia and Thailand by museums and private collectors in Europe and North America.

The 62-cm-tall limestone sculpture showing Shiva Parvati and attendant deities in Mount Kailash had been bought by the Museum of Berlin in 1985 from a reputed art gallery in Wiesbaden for DM 100,000 (then \$ 50,000). The museum's Director Marianne Yaldiz, who is bringing the figure back to Nepal, said in Berlin last week that the art dealer who sold it to the museum has disappeared.

As in the case of earlier sculptures which have

been restituted, this figure was also identified as the stolen Uma Maheshwor from Dhulikhel after activists drew the museum's attention to the book *Stolen Images of Nepal* by Lain Singh Bangdel, the eminent Nepali artist and art historian (far right).

The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation has decided to temporarily place the stolen figure in the newly renovated Patan Museum which specialises in displaying stolen religious figures and idols that have been recovered, but the question this decision raises is whether or not the idol should be reinstalled at its original place at Dhulikhel.

Many stolen idols recovered and reinstalled in Nepal have been stolen again due to poor security provisions. A bronze sculpture of Mani Ganesh at Patan serves as a telling example: while in the process of being exhibited at Patan Museum, the locals discovered it to be the lost idol of the nearby Ganesh temple. The idol was returned and placed back at the temple only to be stolen again. Fortunately, the idol was re-recovered and reinstalled at its shrine. Recently it was decapitated, and the head is probably on its way to the

Nepal's stolen religious images are coming home. But do we put them inside museums or restore them to their original places of public worship and risk losing them again?.....

hands of Western art dealers.

Returning an Uma-Maheshwor to its original mount is even more tricky since it seems to be a particular favorite of the collectors. It therefore becomes even more important to check and recheck the security provisions at Dhulikhel.

Wolfgang Koellisch, a German architect at the Dhulikhel Municipality comments: "If the locals agree, the best thing to do will be to have a replica of the idol at Dhulikhel while the original is exhibited at the Patan Museum."

A good idea, but will the locals worship a religious object they know to be fake?

The Uma-Maheshwor was being worshipped by hundreds of Dhulikhel devotees when it was stolen in 1982. In Berlin it was just a piece of sculpture admired by connoisseurs for its artistic finesse. And if it is tucked away in a glass case in Patan Museum, Uma and Maheshwor will be safe, but there won't be much difference between being in Berlin and being in Patan.

Lain Singh Bangdel himself feels that it is the devotion that gives these figures life. He says: "The stone idols are not mere objets d'art but pieces made 'alive' by veneration. Till the day they were stolen those idols were being revered."

Agrees Kanak Mani Dixit, writing in *Himal South Asian*: "(T)he smuggled Valley images were part of a living culture rather than merely part of archaeological heritage."

In Dhulikhel's Worol, the locals have no doubt that they want the real thing. "Do everything you can to bring it back, please," said 75-year-old Nanimaya to a journalist when she was

offerings on it show that even the spot is regarded as sacred by local people.

Bangdel's 1989 book, *Stolen Images of Nepal* (Royal Nepal Academy, 1989), has been used by Nepali and Western activists to secure the return of other Nepali deities. In 1999, four other religious pieces were returned and they are in safe-keeping at the National Museum in Chhauni. An unnamed private American collector returned the decapitated 12th-century Veenadharini Saraswati stolen from Pharping, the ninth-century Buddha stolen from Patan, a 14th-century Surya stolen from Panauti and a 10th-century Garudasana Vishnu from Kathmandu. All were stolen in the 1980s.

Bangdel's book includes photographs of ancient statues and religious objects in their original states as well as the condition of the places after the plunder. Bangdel said in an interview last

year: "I felt it was important to provide strong and authentic photographic evidence of sculptures which were stolen from the valley and surrounding areas".



AIN SINGH BANGDEL

Most of the religious objects in Nepal were stolen during a decade of accelerated plunder in the 1980s. Some researchers, like Juergen Schick, believe that the only reason the thefts declined was that there was nothing left to steal, or what was left was too heavy to lift and smuggle out. Schick has worked closely with Bangdel, and his own book has recently been translated into English: *The Gods Are Leaving the Country* (White Orchid Books, 1999). Even so, there have been a rash of thefts in the past two months of friezes and *toranas* of temples, where small pieces are wrenched out of larger ones.

It is because of the work of Schick and Bangdel that it has now become impossible for a collector with a conscience or a museum in the West to keep religious objects that were stolen from Nepal. There will be more gods returning home, but what we have to decide is whether we stick them into well-guarded museums or restore them to the places of public worship and risk losing them again. ♦

In Berlin the Uma-Maheshwor (above, left) was just an objet d'art. And if it is tucked away in a glass case in Patan Museum, there won't be much difference between being in Berlin and being in Patan.

shown a copy of Lain Singh Bangdel's *Stolen Images of Nepal* with the original image of Uma Maheshwor at Dhulikhel. The mount where the Uma Maheshwor stood is presently occupied by a piece of rock, but the vermilion and flower

COLUMN

By SUMNIMA UDAS

Fleeing for their lives

Nepali men who never dreamt of picking up their own mess find themselves doing other people's dishes



MINI BAJRACHARYA

Bidesh—the very word conjures up visions of countless opportunities, harvests of dollars, and the indispensable Green Card or its European equivalent. Scores of Nepalis give up their 'possessions'—wife, children and jobs—merely to acquire that honourable designation *bidesh bata ako*.

"Ke garne Nepalma?" is the usual question. Certainly a point worth considering, but then it also leads one to wonder how it is that so many outsiders manage to find so much to do in this "scopeless"

country. They even call it the land of opportunity, but we Nepalis, the privileged ones, find it hard to accept.

Never mind what living abroad entails or what concomitant sacrifices are needed to get there. But under the delusion that it is as simple as hopping on a plane, spending a year or two abroad, and coming back with bagful of money, young Nepalis are doing whatever it takes to go abroad and stay there. And that means selling off property, begging, borrowing or going on a world tour to end up at the desired destination.

Once there, they begin their

desperate search for jobs even as they try to acclimatise themselves to an alien atmosphere. But things are not so simple and that is when the culture shock sets in. People who never dreamt of picking up their own mess find themselves doing other people's dishes. Those who seldom tolerated a harsh word from their parents now have to put up with a much more from any and everybody. A lesson it is, and perhaps that will make them better capable of understanding their wives or mothers or servants who slave away for them. But what a miserable path to enlightenment!

Sure, this exodus of Nepalis to the West has its bright side. People are being exposed to the outside world and learning new ways to help their country (although it has also given them reason to gripe about the situation at home). Most of them fantasise about coming back and making a difference. If only they would.

A few years become a few more years and in due time...forever. Most of them end up settling there, doing this and that, just existing—which was probably what they were doing in Nepal in the first place.

By no means do I intend to trash everyone for yearning to get out into the wide world. There are the young ones who certainly have valid reasons for seeking a better education in foreign shores.

They leave with hopes of expanding their horizons and becoming somebody. A few lucky do manage to live and not just survive, but for the most

part it is bad news. Every time I come back to Nepal I meet more and more youngsters trying desperately to flee in the opposite direction. All for the most honourable intentions, but what good does it do for Nepal if they never come back?

Nepal is now facing a critical problem—a deficiency of bright, young people. Perhaps the now-not-so-young students should consider what most of them would have written in their college applications: "I want to come back and help my country...blah...blah...blah..."

They say the youth are our future. Hopefully there will still be enough of the bright ones around to witness a future. And while they're at it, they could even help build a better one—at home, where they are needed most. ♦

Whoosh get-together

ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY

Imagine a hall packed with none but the best Nepali exponents of martial arts, and all shouting "Whoosh" in unison. There is but one word to describe it: intense. That is exactly what it feels like to enter the auditorium of the Verge Inn Leisure Club in Tahachal, where a month-long Kickboxing and Kobudo Conference is underway.

Some 100 martial arts instructors from all over Nepal are participating at the Conference. Most of them are themselves black belt holders in various forms of self-defence and are receiving further training in kickboxing as well as in the Japanese art of kobudo, which involves using various weapons such as *bo*, *tonfa*, *sai* and the famous *man-cha-ku* under the guidance of Enrico Ciampoli.

Ciampoli, a much renowned Italian master of various forms of martial arts who is also the Chief Instructor of the Martial Arts Federation of Italy, has been coming to Nepal every year for the last 10 years and has regularly trained Nepalis in different martial arts forms. In fact, it was with his help that Nepal was able to join the World All Style Combat



ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY

Organisation (WACO) in 1995.

Speaking of the possibility of Nepalis making it to the upcoming WACO World Championship, Ciampoli says, "Nepali players have the mental stamina, the problem is technical. The lightweight players stand a chance though."

Thaneswore Rai, the equally well-known figure in the world of Nepali martial arts and founder of Shitorio Karate in

Nepal, feels that with regular training opportunities such as this, Nepalis may be able to get some medals at the 2004 Olympics in Greece.

Verge Inn is providing free space in the club for the month-long conference which is expected to go on till 24 August. Not surprising, since the owner Subodh Pradhan is himself a 3rd Dan in Shitorio Karate. ♦

RUN-UP TO OLYMPICS

Free passes

Some 420,000 free passes will be distributed to people without tickets for Olympic events to allow them to soak up the atmosphere at the Sydney Games next month, Olympic Minister Michael Knight announced Sunday.

Olympic organisers made the move to prevent a large number of non-ticket holders visiting the Olympic Park alongside some 750,000 ticket holders expected on peak days. Organisers feared transportation nightmares and heavy congestion around the venues.

Knight said that a total 370,000 passes will be given out for the Olympic Park on nine not so busy days during the 15 September-1 October Games. The other 50,000 are for admittance to the Botanical Gardens for the triathlon events.

Easy doping

Illegal doping substances are available in abundance at gyms in the Olympic host city of Sydney just five weeks before the start of the Games, the *Sunday Telegraph* newspaper said.

The report said a journalist approached dealers at a local gym with a shopping list and walked away with 710 dollars worth of banned anabolic steroids and assurances more was available without any problems.

The trade is allegedly made with Australian firms using licences to export animal steroids to countries like Mexico and then recycling them back to the black market. Bodybuilders, the report said, acted as the frontmen to inform prospective clients of the availability of steroids.

Undeterred by crackdowns, those involved in the trade are confident that plenty of steroids and other performance enhancing drugs will be on offer to supply demand through the Olympics.

Military force

Human rights activists in Australia and abroad condemned Friday a proposal to give the military supreme power during the Olympics.

The legislation would give soldiers the power to open fire in a civil emergency and the authority to stop, search and detain civilians.

Australian Council for Civil Liberties spokesman Terry O'Gorman said a major concern was the absence of a provision for the powers to be dismantled after the Games.

"If the parliamentarians are fair dinkum that they only intend the army to be used in extreme circumstances, then what have they got to fear from a sunset clause? Why won't they insert one in the legislation?" he said.

Jeanette Fitzsimons from the New Zealand Green Party echoed concerns across that once in place the legislation would be hard to dislodge.

"These powers include the right to search premises without a search warrant and to detain people without arrest," Fitzsimons said. "I am particularly concerned that this legislation is being shepherded in because of fears about protest at looming controversial events but once it is introduced it is there for good."

Outrage over Olympic food fare

Sports fans and consumer groups on Friday blasted the beefy profit margins that McDonald's and other caterers can expect at next month's Sydney Olympics.

Bottled water for sale at Olympic venues will double in price for the 16-day sport extravaganza while the cost of ice creams will shoot up by half.

"These prices are outrageous," said the Australian Consumer Association's Louise Petschler. "People will have a perception that they are being ripped off."

Organisers defended the hikes, saying that the mark-ups would have been greater if officials had not played hard ball and bargained caterers down.

"I believe the prices listed are justified," said catering manager Hugh Taylor, arguing that the erection of marquees, Olympic uniforms and sundry other items had to be taken into consideration.

A "sundry item" Taylor failed to mention was the 4-20 percent that organisers will cream off a catering turnover expected to top US\$ 58 million.

Aboriginal fury

New setbacks for Australian aborigines on 11 August have raised fears they may stage violent protests after all at the upcoming Sydney Olympics.

"The deals no longer count. Black Australia will rise," said local Aborigine activist Lyall Munro in the wake of a police raid on five houses in a predominantly aborigine area named "The Block".

"This is an attempt to get rid of a site of shame. Anyone who says this has nothing to do with the Olympics is making fun of us. We will now march, stage blockades and set up signs in each park in town," Munro added.

New South Wales Prime Minister Bob Carr swiftly denied the raid, during which 16 alleged heroine dealers were arrested, had anything to do with the Olympics.

"That is ridiculous. The raids were part of a programme directed against drug dealers," he said.

Up to now aborigine activists had promised peaceful protests to inform the world about their social status during the Games. Earlier this week they asked for permission to demonstrate at Sydney airport, but have been denied any protests at the Olympic venues.

Local organisers and the International Olympic Committee have a big interest in a peaceful Olympics and IOC boss Juan Antonio Samaranch announced he planned to meet with aborigine leaders soon after his 4 September arrival in the host city.

While some inhabitants of The Block did welcome the police raid and said they were happy that measures were taken against drug dealers and addicts, the aborigines did suffer a real setback from a court ruling in Darwin, Northern Territories.

Two Aborigines taken from their parents 50 years lost a test case brought against the Australian government arguing that the state had failed in its duty of care by separating them from their families and bringing them up in white institutions. (opa)



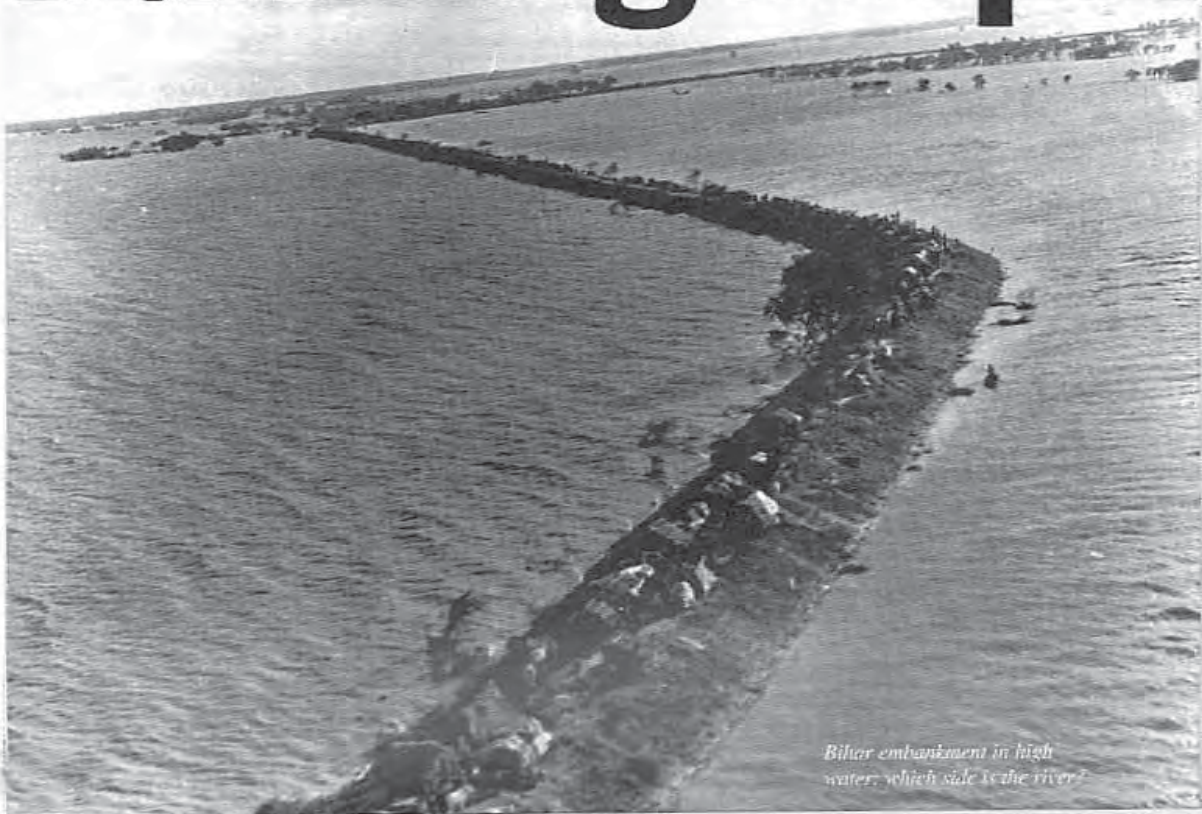
Journalism Without Borders



Feel good about being South Asian.
Watch documentaries • Read Himal

Himal South Asian, GPO 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: +977-1-543333-36 Fax: 521013 email: info@himalmag.com
http://www.himalmag.com

Damning Nepal



Bihar embankment in high water, which side is the river?

AJAYA DIXIT

Every monsoon a political ritual takes place in the Mithila and Awadh regions of the Indian states Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Departmental functionaries visiting the flooded areas in these cow belt states point to the north and say: "All the flooding comes from there, and there is very little that we can do". Even Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee could not remain immune to the finger-pointing, during his 1998 tour of the flooded eastern Uttar Pradesh, remarked in Lucknow, "The flood [in Eastern Uttar Pradesh] comes from Nepal."

So it is not at all surprising that the yuppies of the Indian electronic visual media too have picked up the chant. Last week a popular TV channel, covering the Assam floods, did not once mention China, Bhutan, or Arunachal Pradesh upstream of the Brahmaputra Valley for the increased flow in the river, but when reporting on the floods in the northern Ganga plain thought it fit to state: "Nepal released 350,000 cusec water from its dams."

For anyone who does not know better it could easily sound like Nepal had opened the floodgates at the height of the monsoons. But the fact is the spillover from Nepal's only reservoir, on the Kulekhani, is miniscule compared to the swollen monsoon flood of the Bagmati River into which it drains. The other two regulating structures are the barrages at the Kosi and Gandaki rivers on the Nepal-India border. A barrage does not store floodwater, and in any case, the state Government of Bihar maintains control over both.

The politics of blaming Nepal started back in the colonial era. In 1941 Sir

Claude Inglis, the director of the Hydrodynamic Research Centre at Poona, attributed floods in the Kosi River to the hill farmers cutting trees. Even though the theory of deforestation-triggered flood stands debunked today, the legacy it left behind still makes it convenient to lay the blame on Nepal for the floods in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

A corollary to this view is that dam-reservoirs in the river valleys of Nepal are consistently shown to be the panacea to control lowland flooding. The *mantra* of the Bihari establishment is—build the "Kosi High Dam" at Barahachhetra (just before the Kosi exits the mountains) and all of Bihar's problems, including floods, would vanish. It is a different matter that no one mentions that storing floodwater would turn a seasonal natural event into a permanent feature in the hills and nobody is willing pay the cost of submergence.

There is an inherent contradiction in the philosophy of flood mitigation through reservoirs. To attenuate floods, a reservoir needs to be kept partially empty, or to put in technical terms it has to provide for a "flood cushion". An empty reservoir, however, cannot be economically justified, and in all likelihood electricity and irrigation benefits will be dovetailed in the design of the dam. Which further means that in order to optimise the latter two objectives, the dam will have to be kept full.

Even if these inherent contradictory purposes of the dam—energy (full) vs flood control (empty)—were to be reconciled, it is doubtful that the annual flood disaster in the Ganga plain can be minimised. This is because a large number of rivers of North Bihar and

Nepal is not responsible for the floods in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh

Uttar Pradesh originate in the Siwalik (Chure) Hills. These rivers are ephemeral in nature and have no storage sites in their basin and neither can dams be built to control them.

In the months of July and August the low-pressure monsoon trough shifts north of the Gangetic plains and stations itself over the hills for a few days in a phenomenon called "break monsoon". During this period the skies can release almost two feet of water in a 24-hour period. The Siwalik rivers, which are no more than drainage channels, then have to transfer the incoming water to the sea and can do it only by flowing downstream.

The resulting flood hits all communities in its path. It cuts across political boundaries without distinction. The high stages of river become disasters due to political, social and institutional failures, made worse by poor governance, exploitative social formation, and inappropriate selection of

technology for flood control. The real issue is not what is stored upstream but what drainage congestion has been avoided downstream. Over the last 50 years, Bihar's embankments, stretching over 3,000 km, have made more land susceptible to floods than what they were meant to do—provide deliverance from the annual inundation. And the reason is simple: embankments prevent the natural backflow of rain and small streams into the main river channel after the monsoon has expended its fury.

Failures remain unacknowledged. And inefficiency is ceremonially transferred elsewhere—upstream to Nepal. The most distressing aspect of this political ritual is the total lack of scientific or historical depth and its appeal to pseudo-universals. Ultimately, it ends up trivialising the complex specificities of flood disaster. ♦

(Water management analyst Ajaya Dixit edits *Water Nepal*.)



Note the maze of Siwalik rivers flowing down to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Unions, government lock horns

NEPALI TIMES REPORT

Even in a country where lockouts and strikes are a regular feature, the ongoing shutdown by the public enterprises has made everyone sit up and notice. This is because it has succeeded in inconveniencing people.

Striking employees of Nepal Rastra Bank forced shut the gates and hounded anyone entering the bank premises. At the Agricultural Development Bank, the strikers squatted at the entrance. You could walk into the Rastriya Baniya Bank some distance away but only to be questioned at every step.

That people were not able to withdraw money for the *Janai Purnima* and *Gai Jatra* festivals did not seem to bother the strikers. And neither were their counterparts at the Nepal Electricity Authority and Nepal Telecommunications Corporation concerned that people were making futile trips daily to pay their bills.

The organisations on strike together employ over 70,000 people, of whom about 55,000 are organised. The battle-lines were drawn after the government ordered all PEs to adjust the take-home pay packets of employees to bring it at par with the salary of government servants.

The basic salaries in both services are the same, but there is a great difference in allowances. Let's take the example of peons. Until the beginning of this fiscal year, government peons received Rs 2,000 as basic salary and an allowance of Rs 300. Their counterparts in NRB got the same Rs 2,000 but their allowance was Rs 3,500.

According to the new pay structure, government peons now receive a flat Rs 3,000. The government wants to implement the same pay in PEs also, but by adjusting it against the hefty allowances

that are currently paid. In the case of NRB peons, their basic salary would now be Rs. 3,000 with allowances reduced to Rs 2500. In effect that would mean PE workers would take home no less than what they did before the changes.

No way, say the strikers. They demand that allowances be maintained at previous levels and also be given the salary hike.

The government may have done right by sticking to its guns because except for the NRB and monopolies like the Nepal Oil Corporation, no other PE can afford to meet the demand. But rather than making clear its position, it responded by pretending it did not know of the strikes.

It does have the option of invoking the "essential services" laws and banning union activity. This move is possible if the talks between the managements and unions don't lead toward a solution.

Given the antagonism among the various unions, a resolution is not likely anytime soon. When the unions are not fighting the management they are busy politicking against each other. The pro-UML union does not want the authorities to even talk with that affiliated to the ML, while both dismiss the "Congress" union to be too close to the government to negotiate on behalf of workers.

On 11 August the government ordered the managements to negotiate with the unions. But by the 13th, the unions were already tiring of the talks saying that the government's pay adjustment plan was unacceptable.

Besides the pay scheme, the unions are also fighting the government's order that temporary workers be fired and contractual employees be hired, if needed. The unions also oppose privatisation even as they don't want government interference. ♦

འབྲུག་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་ཡོད་པའི་ལྷོ་ཕྱོད་ལྷོ་ཕྱོད་

Looking for a nice,
clean three-star facility that's quiet
and peaceful with authentic Tibetan
decor and within ten minutes'
walking distance from the tourist
shopping area of Thamel?

What better choice than Hotel Tibet!

འབྲུག་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་ཡོད་པའི་ལྷོ་ཕྱོད་ལྷོ་ཕྱོད་

**HOTEL
TIBET**
PVT. LTD.
Lazimpat, Kathmandu, Nepal

For reservations
Tel: 00977-1-429085/86/87/88
Fax: 00977-1-410957
e-mail: hotel@tibet.mos.com.np
http://www.hotel Tibet.com

ABOUT TOWN

Films
 ♦ Foreign
 Down to You - Kathmandu Mini Vision (226169, ext 512)
 ♦ Nepali
 Dharmaputra - Bishwo Jyoti (221837)
 Mailee - Krishna (470090), Guna (520668), Nava Durga
 Sukumbasi - Ranjana (221191)
 ♦ Hindi
 Baagi - Ashok
 Bir - Kumari (414932)
 Dhadkan - Tara (476092)
 Har Dil Jo Pyar Karega - Manakamana (225284), Padma Jung - Shiv Darshan
 Jungle - Guna (520668)
 Krodh - Heera Raine
 Kunwara - Gopi (470090)
 Titanic (in Hindi) - Jai Nepal (411014)

GET LUCKY!
 Delicious way to Sydney
 Dine at any restaurant at the Scatee Crown Plaza from 10 August-14 September and win a two-way air ticket to Sydney Olympics 2000. Tel: 273899

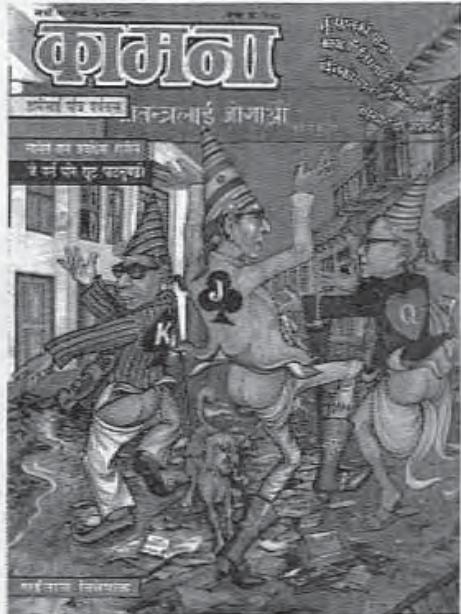
ART
 ♦ Charcoal Sketches
 A fine art exhibition of charcoal sketches by young artist Rohan Chitrakar at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited. Exhibition till 20 August. Gallery hours: 11 am to 6 pm. Sunday-Friday. Proceeds from the sales will go to the United World College Nepal Fund. Tel: 411122
 ♦ Live Poubha Painting
 Observe the walls of a medieval Newari Buddhist monastery being painted in the style of the Poubha, a traditional spiritual art based on the Vajrayana philosophy using the age-old procedures, by a team of Newari artists headed by renowned Poubha artist Lok Chitrakar. Every week day from 7pm to 10pm at Kwa Baha (Golden Temple) in Patan. This is a community initiative not meant for the public. Special permission is required. Contact 528810 (Lok Chitrakar)

MEDITATION/RETREATS
 Mandala through Meditation
 Every Monday from 9:30-2:00 pm guided by Charlyn Booh, renowned meditation instructor and Mandala specialist at the Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre. More meditation and other 'spiritual journey' programs are on the offing. Contact: 221875

FESTIVALS
 ♦ Mata-ya. The Festival of Patan, 17 August
 A day-long ancient festival of Patan city, where locals clad in traditional Newari attire, carrying lighted tapers and joss sticks, pay homage to shrines tossing coins, flowers and rice in hundreds of Buddhist courtyards around the town. The procession is led by a traditional musical band. The people of Patan make it a point to participate in the festival at least once in their lifetime.
 Entry to Patan city: Rs 200 for foreigners and Rs 25 for SAARC nationals. Free map of Patan and access to eight historical sites provided.

Krishnasthmi, Birthday of Lord Krishna, 22 August
 A shova yatra—festive procession—is taken around town with idols of Lord Krishna placed on chariots constructed on small jeeps and vans. Devotees, especially women, clad in red and colourful saris dance and celebrate the lover god's birthday. From early morning, most of the Krishna temples are packed with devotees.

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors@nepalitimes.com



Before and after. Panchayat era cartoon showing Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand leading a Gaijatra procession (left) and the more lurid post-democracy cover of Kamana magazine depicting in-fighting in the Nepali Congress (right).

Free-for-all

SALIL SUBEDI
 Back in the days before offset presses, the dull regularity of the black-and-white Gutenberg-era Nepali media would come alive with a splash of colour once a year. The letter press days were also the days of the Panchayat and its accompanying press controls, so readers looked forward to Gaijatra to enjoy a brief day of freedom. Journalists

looked forward to Gaijatra as the only day they could let off steam that had built up over the year. Newspapers came out with Gaijatra Specials and these were snapped up by a voracious public.
 The origins of the "cow festival" are buried in legend: the attempts to make a queen forget the death of her child by come up with funny antics. It is the very frivolousness of the

festival that the newspapers picked up to lampoon political characters and make people laugh. And the fact that it was tolerated by the authorities on the day of Gaijatra had special significance in an era when freedom was restricted.
 Interestingly, although media curbs have now been lifted, the tradition of Gaijatra lampooning continues. But somehow, it's not the same anymore. It could be that the post-1990 freedom press has taken away the zing of waiting for the satire and the cartoons that made you gasp with the sheer audacity of challenging authority.

Now every day is a Gaijatra day. The ways of the leaders is made fun of every day that there is nothing different for the magazines to print for the Gaijatra issue," says satirist Charyang Master.
 The tradition of Gaijatra Specials began in 1960 when the weekly, *Naya Samaj*, under the editorship of Bal Mukunda Dev Pandey, came out with an

edition that shocked and amused readers with its satire against the then oppressive political atmosphere and conservative social mindset. After it was picked up some years later by the other papers, people began identifying Specials as a way to express their angst.
 The early days Gaijatra contained high-quality humour and satire. But after 1964, the press went for vulgarity. A favourite motif was to show political figures in various transsexual avatars, ministers with mammaries and exposed backsides. Subtle humour and biting political satire rapidly gave way to the direct portrayal of sex and of women as objects of ridicule. The slide continues to this day.
 One example of the changing taste of the audience is the fact that this year's Gaijatra will not see *Bhandbhaislo*, perhaps the most acclaimed Gaijatra magazine of all time. Explaining why they had to close down after 18 years of publication, Rajan Kalle of the Young Artists

A favourite motif was to show political figures in various transsexual avatars, ministers with mammaries and exposed backsides.

Group, the publisher of *Bhandbhaislo*, says: "There is no market to support us. People demand cheap thrills. We tried giving them quality humour, but especially after the advent of democracy, more of our artists and writers chose to turn professional. They do not have time to volunteer anymore. It seems the charm of satire is lost to everyone, even to cartoonists and satirists."
 As readers' taste veered towards sex and slapstick, cartoonists found themselves responding to the demand: and they mixed politics with pornography. "It signifies the conservative view of women as symbols of cowardice. Androgyny is considered the weakest point in men. The bizarre forms the characters are given shows that Nepali humorists are up to their necks in a pool of patriarchy," says Arun Gupto, a teacher of English at the Tribhuvan University.
 Charyang Master hasn't given up trying to make Nepalis laugh at themselves and has even set up an organisation devoted to satire called *Sinau Pani*. And despite all the problems in Nepal there still seems to be plenty to laugh about, he says. "In fact laughing about our problems seems to be one way to keep our sanity." ♦



The Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) called the press last week to talk about its achievements in the past year. At the podium (l to r) Rajendra Khetan, Divakar Golobha, Ravi Bhakta Shrestha, Pradip Shrestha, Bhaskar Rajkarnikar and Budri Ojha.

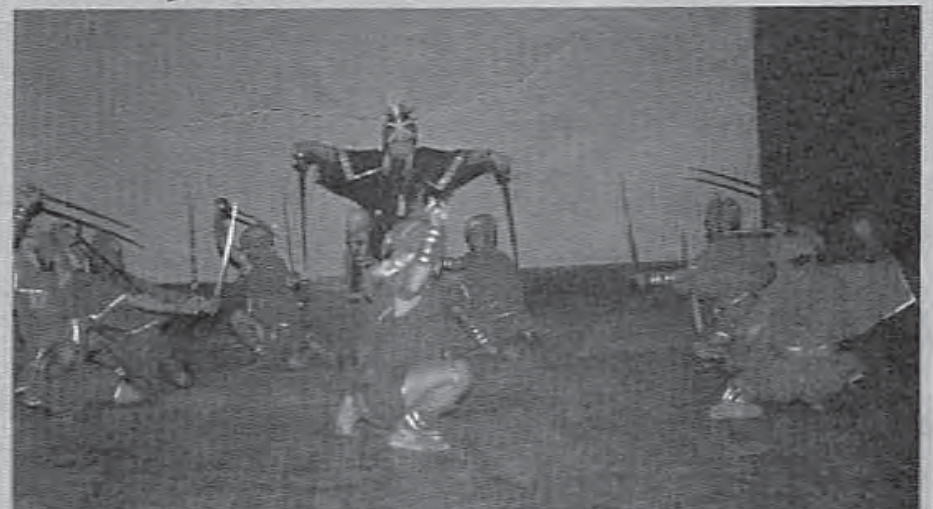


Chief of Army Staff, Prajwal SJB Rama speaking to trainees at the 8th Batch of the Royal Nepal Army Command and Staff Course at Shivapuri last week. The General called for an activated National Security Council.



Sri Lanka's Dilmah Tea launched its product at a ceremony last week. Malik Fernando of Dilmah hands over a plaque to A.K. Agarwal of Maruti Traders.

Chakravyuha



For the first time in Nepal, audiences in Kathmandu were lucky to enjoy the only theatre company from India's northeastern state of Manipur. The Chorus Repertory Theatre of Imphal staged Chakravyuha, a play based on the Mahabharata. The theatre works under the direction of renowned choreographer and dramatist, Ratan Thiyam, and has won many Indian and international awards. Chakravyuha was brought to Kathmandu by the Indian Embassy to mark India's Independence Day.

YOUR WEEK by KARUNA MAYA

- ARIES** 21 March-19 April
Favourable conditions ahead to make forceful decisions. Monetary gains likely. Try to overcome inconsistency lingering around you. You will receive strong support from friends.
- LIBRA** 23 Sept-23 Oct
You are likely to lose concentration at work. Keep track of events around you. Long-awaited news likely to come mid-week. Be relaxed. Avoid over expenditures. Be relaxed. Avoid over expenditures.
- TAURUS** 20 April-20 May
Think positive. It is best if you take advice from elders for long-term ventures this week. Energy levels will be high. However, remain practical in expenditures.
- SCORPIO** 24 Oct-21 Nov
You need to clear your mind from insecure feelings. Renew connection with old colleagues. Good offers coming your way. Don't lose patience over small causes. You have to remain contemplative this week.
- GEMINI** 21 May-21 June
It is time to share experience. Concentrating on work will help you overcome confusion. Take your time for outdoor activities. Pay attention to your health.
- SAGITTARIUS** 22 Nov-21 Dec
The week starts with some trouble. Later part of the week will offer moments of tranquility. Keep yourself at ease dealing with friends. Money will happen late this week.
- CANCER** 22 June-22 July
Unpredictable changes might occur at work. Rely on team-work. Remain emotionally strong to face new circumstances. Money is likely to happen later in the week.
- CAPRICORN** 22 Jan-18 Feb
Soothing days ahead. Don't be too harsh in taking new decisions. Liven up your days with social interaction. Being in public places will do good in renewing contacts. A festive atmosphere will enliven your week.
- LEO** 23 July-22 August
Friends and colleagues are likely to put you through emotional distress. Take it easy. Creative endeavors might be met with sarcasm. Make use of all the positive energy you have.
- AQUARIUS** 20 Jan-18 Feb
Avoid haste. At work, place yourself in a position of self-control. Creative thoughts need to be channelised. Seek inspiration from nature. Take care of health.
- VIRGO** 23 August-22 Sept
New ideas will surface. Wait for favorable conditions to start new ventures. Concentrate on finishing pending work. End of the week will be filled with work pressure. Domestic affairs likely to be messed up.
- PISCES** 19 Feb-18 March
Avoid unnecessary entanglements with people and irrelevant issues. There may be some emotional stress. Remain contemplative. Concentrate more into work.

LIFT THE BEATEN TRIP



Mother at Num

The gorgeous Arun

The vertical difference between the bottom of the Arun gorge (barely 1,500m where it enters Nepal) to the top of Makalu (nearly 8,500m) within a horizontal distance of barely 15 km must make this one of the deepest scars on the earth's surface. It is also remote. The nearest highway is at Basantapur, a three-day walk to the east. There is an airport at Tumlingtar, about 10 km downstream.

The Arun project will change the entire character of this area. The locals here and in Tumlingtar were disappointed when the World Bank pulled out in 1995, although environmentalists rejoiced. Now the tables have turned. There is something to be said in favour of opening up: who are we to tell the locals what they should do? Life without the road is hard, everything (kerosene, salt, textiles) has to be carried in and bartered. If someone is seriously sick, it is a death sentence, since the local health post is inadequate and the plane ride to Kathmandu is too expensive.

But going by what has happened in other parts of Nepal where the road has arrived, like Jiri or Gorkha, the locals need to be prepared for the transformation. The road brings in outside world with all its ravages. It does not necessarily make kerosene and grain, or cigarettes any cheaper. It provides an easier access for local goods, but does not always offer a proper price.

The project itself will bring jobs, and the government is trying to ensure that locals benefit from the royalty that foreign investors pay. Here again, the track record from some other "development" projects is not good.

by PADAM GHALEY

So, go to Num before it changes forever. The neat inclined village of Khandbari and its *rato rato*, the serenely soothing ridgetop town of Chainpur with its cobblestone streets and its vibrant market days. A little further east, the fabulous town of Taplejung. Thick forests drape the steep slopes of the Arun near Num, where there is a suspension bridge over the narrow, roiling waters. It is hard to imagine here in this noisy valley floor that this narrow 20 m neck of the Arun at Num is the only outlet for all the water from the mountains south of Tsang Po, north of Everest and Kangchenjunga.

From here, at barely 600 mtrs above sea level the trail climbs up to 4,000 mtrs on Shipton La. And beyond lies the mystic land of the Barun Valley.

NEPALI WEATHER



Monsoon precipitation in most parts of Nepal this year has been higher than average. And there is no sign of a let-up. Clouds are still massing up all along the monsoon corridor from the Bay of Bengal. There will be a short spell of relatively dry weather this week, but by the weekend another trough which at present is located over Bhutan will have moved in over the Valley. Temperatures will be lower, but there is more rain on its way. This is bad news for the massive rock slide that is blocking the Prithvi Highway.

KATHMANDU	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
	☁	☁	☁	☁	☁	☁	☁
	27-19	30-21	28-20	28-20	27-19	27-19	30-20

Personalized Tours to Tibet

We provide also:

- Package Tours
- Hot Air Ballooning
- Mountain Flights
- Royal Chitwan National Park
- White Water Rafting
- Domestic & international Air Ticketing

HILLARY
HIMALAYAN TOURS & TRAVEL

Hotel Garuda Building, Thamel
GPO Box 6266, Kathmandu, Nepal.
Tel: 426551 (Four lines) Fax: ++977-1-413614
Email: hillary@garuda-hotel.com
URL: www.garuda-hotel.com

South Asia's Home Page
log on to www.himalmag.com

Daily news from all across South Asia, culled from newspapers of the region

Read all of Himal online, or subscribe to hardcopy online

Our archive takes you back to 1996 when Himal became South Asian, and to 1987 when Himal began as a Himalayan magazine.

HIMAL SOUTH ASIAN

ISSN 1605-9266

Latest issue June 2000

Commentary Point of view from the editors of Himal

Cover

- The future of our region?
- Tamil Nadu, Tamil Eelam and Greater Eelam

Southasian Kiosk

June 27, 2000 Updated Daily

J&K Assembly thumbs nose at Centre, votes for autonomy
(The Times of India, New Delhi)

APHC terms proposed ISLAMABAD: Chairman (APHC) Syed Ali Shah
autonomy is a drama starring ruling over the Kashmiris
(The News, Lahore)

Osama bin Laden now calls for jihad against Jews, Christians
(Deccan Chronicle, Hyderabad)

Government acting against Supreme Court order
KATHMANDU, June 27- Media reports say the government is acting against the order of the Supreme Court by barring entrepreneurs from trading in salt to maintain the monopoly of a semi-public enterprise.
(Kantipur Online)

South Asia is not unified, resolves Indian subcontinent:

Pope takes up Christians issue with Vajpayee
(The Hindu, Madras)

South Asian kiosk updated daily, Magazine section updated on the first of every month

Over 200 people migrate to PoK from Poonch
(The Indian Express, Bombay)

State must remain unified, resolves Kannada meet

and as you scroll...

- Every issue, an in-depth, look at a pressing South Asian issue or trend
- VOICES Interesting readings from all over
- OTHER RESOURCES Links to important South Asian sites
- MEDIAFILE Personalised review of South Asian media
- South Asian Literature, original and the best

Journalism without Borders

© Himalmedia Pvt Ltd, Kathmandu-based publisher of the first and truly South Asian magazine.



Funny Side Up

by Kunda Dixit

Q. Write an essay on a domestic animal that you like the most. (25 marks)

A. The international animal I like mostly is Kangaroo. But domestic animal I like all most is our cow. There are many holy cows in Nepal. One of them is our armed forces. The other is lying dead at the Tripureswor Roundabout because it ate 350 plastic bags. Kathmandu Metropolitan Council finally brought a big crane to remove it to kingdom come.

This animal is a mammal and is full of many uses for man throughout our ancient history. She is giving curd for eating, and also turd for burning. Every thing cow does is useful: cow urine is healthy drink for some prime ministers. Cow patty is full of antibiotics and hormones, and can be used as disinfectant inside household. Under cow are four udders, which is the most useful component.

Because it is holy, cows are also good for worshipping. We really like to worship a cow. One day in every year we put marigold necklace on cows and pray for their long life. Cows love to eat marigold necklace, it is their favourite snack. They like the strings attached.

Another day every year, in Gai Jatra, we like to make fun of all holy cows. It is a very funny day in Nepal. Nothing is sacred to us on this day! We can poke fun at everyone and everything, we can even call our principal a Cow. Sometimes, if we become very brave and foolish on Gai Jatra,

we can make funny pictures about Prime Minister like drawing him in newspaper without any under wear, so you can see his private sectors. Hahahahaha. But many VIPs today not having sense of humour, so it is very boring.

In Rana days, Gai Jatra was allow because rulers want people to let off gas so pressure will not build up. Now-a-day, because of this new democracy thing every day is becoming just like Gai Jatra.

Kathmandu street is made for cows, because their favourite food is to eat the garbage. They like newspapers mostly because newspapers contain a lot of roughage which is good for their digestive system. But like above mentioned, plastic bags are not good for cow's digestion. Also not good for cows is eating non-veg food, this is why in England many cows are turning mad. It is Nepal's good luck that cows are strictly vegetarian, so no cows are mad here.

Another useful thing for cows to do is to become traffic islands. Cows in Kathmandu regulate traffic by sitting on middle of road and serve as bovine road dividers. Without cow,

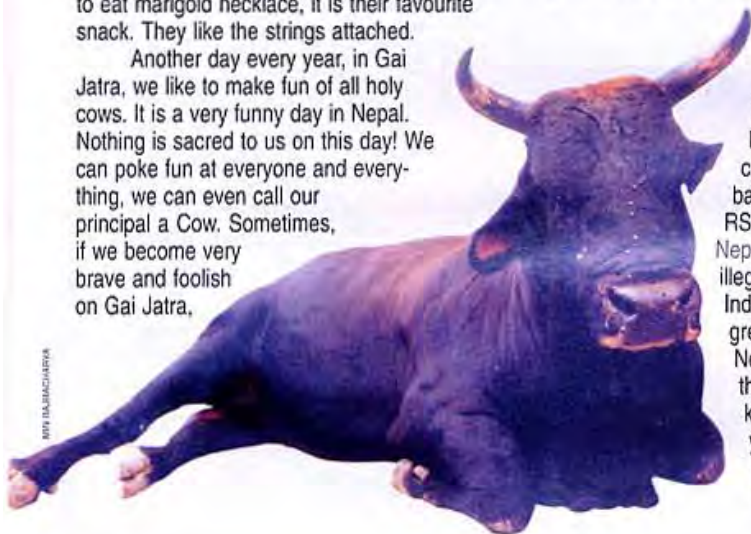
traffic would be chaos. Kathmandu Metropolitan Council is paying strict attention to this.

Holy Cow

A boy cow is called Bull. He is very useful in our agriculture society to pull hoe and for locomotion. Without bull, tarai region will grind to halt. Even on bandh days in tarai,

bullock carts are allowed, so they are most important for public transportation.

Nepalis like very much bull sheet, because we can make fire from cow's backside. According to RSS news report, many Nepali bulls today migrating illegally to Bangladesh via India. The grass always greener on other side, but Nepali bulls don't know that Bangladesh is kingdom come. Listen, you bulls, "mother and motherland are dearer than heaven." ♦



NEPALI SOCIETY



Mayor

Kathmandu's Mayor Keshav Sthapit comes across as someone with a thick hide. A politico who calls a spade a spade and someone who doesn't suffer fools. But few know his softer side, that he composes poetry and if he is in the mood breaks spontaneously into verse in the middle of speeches, and likes to listen to Kitaro. His favourite Nepali song, which he hums on the way to work at the back of his chauffeur-driven metallic green Mercedes, is Gopal Yonzon's patriotic ballad "Nepali Nepalko maya chha ki chhaina?"

At home, Mayor Sthapit is an avid cook and is often busy in the kitchen rustling up a meal for his guests. In the mornings, the mayor goes out to the terrace or his lawn to try out a few Tai-Chi movements. He says it keeps his mind focused on getting things done.

The mayor has had his political ups and downs, and his present down is that he belongs to a party (the Communist Party of Nepal Marxist-Leninist) which doesn't have a single seat in parliament.

Many make the mistake of asking the Mayor about the city's garbage problem. If you do, be prepared for a long lecture on how the government has messed things up by not keeping its promises, and how his political enemies are out to embarrass him by letting the rubbish build up. Sthapit is also criticised for listening only to sycophants around him, for flashes of temper and unsavoury language.

Sthapit's vision for Kathmandu is to regain its past glory as a vibrant centre for cultural and economic renaissance. "I want this to be a city where the citizens are happy, relaxed and proud to say they live in Kathmandu."

That perhaps explains why the Mayor has started a new campaign "Plant a Tree for Kathmandu" to make the Valley truly green again. He got Kathmandu-based diplomats down to work last week planting jacarandas around Tundikhel. Next will be offices, companies and schools. The Mayor has two more years to go, but that might change if the government announces early elections. ♦



Jacaranda-planting diplomats (l to r): Kim Dae Jung (South Korea), R. Frank (USA), R.P. Noh (UK), M. Kojima (Japan), P.K. Kapur (India), A. Lubbjans (Denmark), C. Petersen (Denmark) after repositing Tundikhel on Friday. Deputy Mayor Bidur Marnali and Mayor Keshav Sthapit (second and third from left).



In US\$	Dal-Lentil 1 kg	Bhat-Rice 1 kg	Petrol 1 Litre	Diesel 1 Litre	Kerosene 1 Litre	Electricity 1 Unit	\$ Rate
Bangladesh	0.74	0.37	0.40	0.22	0.37	0.04	53.85
Bhutan	0.65	0.31	0.56	0.33	0.18	0.02	44.46
India	0.65	0.37	0.58	0.29	0.14	0.05	45.89
Maldives	0.25	0.28	0.40	0.30	0.42	0.21	11.82
Pakistan	0.45	0.47	0.56	0.24	0.13	0.04	53.30
Sri Lanka	0.77	0.38	0.64	0.25	0.20	0.03	78.30
Nepal	0.66	0.39	0.55	0.33	0.18	0.08	72.55

All prices are in US dollars, collected from informal sources, and are only indicative.



It's the most delicious route to the Olympics ... at **G. Himalchuli • M. Fresco • Garden Terrace • Roti Bar • BUKHARA**



Dine with us Soaltee Crowne Plaza presents the **and win a round-trip air ticket to Sydney!** Olympic Lucky Draw. At Fresco, Himalchuli, Curkha Grill, Garden Terrace, Roti Bar and The Bukhara. Dine at any of our five restaurants and you could win a round-trip air ticket to Sydney, the seat of the Olympics this year! All you have to do is just place an order of Rs. 500 or more to enter into the Olympic Lucky Draw to be held on September 15. And if you are the lucky winner, off you fly to the city of Olympic 2000! So just drop in between Aug. 10 to Sept. 14, 2000. And take the most delicious route to the first Olympic of the millennium!!

SOALTEE



KATHMANDU

Tel : 977-1-272555, 273999, Fax : 977-1-272205
E-mail : crownplaza@shcp.com.np
www.soaltee.com