No ISI in Nepal: Musharraf

New Delhi’s intelligence agencies seem to be in no doubt that Nepal is being used as a forward base by Pakistan’s Inter Services Intelligence to foment trouble in India. So what is a Nepal journalist to do when he finds himself at the ‘head table’ of a banquet of a South Asian media summit in Islamabad in 2 July, within proximity of Gen Pervez Musharraf, Chief Executive of Pakistan?

Why, ask him about it.

And so Kanai Lal Chatterjee, editor of the South Asian magazine Hindu and publisher of Hindu Khoborparshobho, interrogated Gen Musharraf whilst the soup course was still on, and held the following conversation:

K-LC: General, saab, you may or may not know this, but Indian intelligence is accusing Pakistan’s ISI of using Nepal to spread terror in India. What is your reaction?

G-Musharraf: No, nothing like that has happened. Some people in our embassy in Kathmandu have been wrongly accused, which is regrettable.

K-LC: But, General saab… a small country, that too a member of SAARC, would be destabilized were something like this to happen. Could it be that one or more of the Pakistan government does not know what the other does?

G-Musharraf: No, this has nothing to do with China. Shimla has this habit of tergiversating, which is regrettable. We are here to maintain bilateral relations as to know each other.

K-LC: Yah, but it seems that feeling can be transmitted across the border.

G-Musharraf: Yes, but there you have your answer. We are here to maintain relations as to know each other.

Novel Kishore Rai

As Nepal ambassador to Germany, Novel Kishore Rai spent four successful years promoting Nepal trade, tourism, and Nepal-Germanfriendship. Little did he know that upon his return to Kathmandu, instead of a sense of fulfillment, he would be greeted with a petty accusation intended to destroy his reputation. The former ambassador is too modest a man to even respond to the charges, which appear to have been leaked to a Kathmandu newspaper by officials at the embassy in Bonn.

Scandal at UNFPA

For six months, no one outside a select group of donors in Kathmandu knew of the suspension of one of the senior-most officials of UN agencies in Nepal on charges of embezzlement. The chance to keep scandals like these hush-hush.

But this month, the plot thickened, with the suspension of four UNFPA staffers after an internal investigation found evidence implicating them as well. The investigation showed systematic corruption in contracts to build family health posts throughout Nepal.

Bankrupt

The government knows that Nepal Bank Limited and Rasriya Banjyang Bank are seriously sick, but it doesn’t seem to recognise that remedies are needed urgently. The banks are heavily indebted, and addressing the problem would need a political consensus which has not started.

5-point checklist:

I have a 5-point checklist:

Kalapani, border delineation, Bhutanese refugees, the 1950 treaty, and Laxmanpur barrage.

Kumjep Dutta

Giita Pradip Koulia leaves for a five-day visit to India next week to try to sort out the degrading relations with the big southern neighbour, but he is not too optimistic.

Given the degree of mistrust between the two sides in the aftermath of the border crisis and the failed Indian intelligence report, he has a tough trip ahead. The most challenging part will be to change Indian public perception that Nepal is a security threat to the Indian homeland.

I do not expect much from my visit,” Koulia told us in a pre-departure interview. “I think a lot of the expectations have already been disappointed. My trip has been well-calculated and I have already been told how to play my cards to win the Indian public perception.

In New Delhi, South Block officials, according to sources, think it’s time for the Indian public to accept that Nepal is a friendly country.

What remains to be seen is that feeling can be transmitted through the mail to India’s Northern Block, which is the Indian Home Ministry. But New Delhi’s media circles believe that there is no backlash in the Indian Home Ministry under UUP’s Krishna Bhatta, supported by bureaucrats in the Prime Minister’s Office, who are calling the shots on Nepal. One Indian journalist in Delhi put it bluntly on phone: “Look here, this has been one major miscalculation. Nepal used to be Himalaya, Punjab, and Himalaya, now it’s a New Delhi. You have killed your own security concerns, the Bhutanese refugees. India used to address your security concerns, and you should address ours.”

Indian journalists in Nepal have continued in the Indian press over the past month reports about Nepal’s “sowling” on a proposed extradition treaty, or a bloodless invasion on the Nepal-India border issue, blaming it on India for the Muslim population.

In the absence of an agreement to share the border between the two countries, India has been accusing Nepal of supporting the Laxmanpur barrage. The Laxmanpur barrage is strategically located near the India-Nepal border and has been a bone of contention between the two countries.

Nepal’s Intelligence chief, Adhikari and Vajpayee

Koulia’s visa extensions, Adhikari and Vajpayee
A SIGN OF THE TIMES

At last count, there were 1,300 newspapers registered in Nepal. There is no shortage of newspapers in this country, and ironically that is why this newspaper has become necessary. When there is so much to choose from, a law must stand out, they must become must-reads. Nepali Times is an idea whose time has come.

Arthur Miller once said that a good newspaper is a nation talking to itself. Talking leads to understanding and awareness which in turn can spur action. Without understanding and public debate, actions taken may be inappropriate. We agree that things in Nepal are not quite right, we agree that the problems are serious and solutions are required urgently. Then, because we are a democracy, we have to start with awareness and understanding to achieve change.

Change, however, has magnitude as well as direction. There can also be uncontrolled change, a heading plunged into an abyss. Change has to be understood and calibrated, otherwise there will be a change for the better, improve peoples’ lives and bring progress.

Great newspapers point the direction as well as record the speed of change in society. They are the essential elements of a feedback loop that constantly informs rulers and citizens about the immediate effects of public policy so corrections can be made.

Newspapers then, do more than hold a mirror to society. They become the mirror itself. Journalism is called history in a hurry. It is also culture, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and philosophy in a hurry. Nepali Times will aspire to be a true reflection of our times—a journal to record the life and times of Nepal’s in the decades ahead.

There is a belief that literature is generally not read, and journalism is often unpalatable. This newspaper will be different. It will seek to be informative, lively, clear and direct. Literature is serious business. It should not be confused with frivolity. Don’t be fooled by the tabloid format; this is also a serious paper that tackles serious issues head-on, as this issue perhaps proves.

A newspaper cannot thrive by merely reporting. Collecting facts does not make a newspaper. Facts are expensive and opinions cheap, but a balance of comment fosters debate and expands the public sphere. A newspaper also needs a set of noise to sustain itself. It is a society cursed with extreme inequality, some of those values are fairly obvious: to speak for the last, the lost and the least. We will be fair, and we will protect our independence intensely. This is a modern newspaper for a new Nepal.

A sign of the times.

WHY ENGLISH?

In the heyday of the Panchayat in the early 1980s, we were often asked why we worked for The Rising Nepal. Our stock reply: “Because His Majesty needs it.” Those were the days when few Nepalis outside the charmed circle of Kathmandu expats and locals read English. In some ways, that is still the case. Only two percent of Nepal’s 25 million people can read, write or speak English. So what has changed, and why a newspaper in English? Firstly, although literacy rates are barely keeping pace with population growth, the number of people who read English has grown. There are also signs of a budding middle class exposed to and using English.

More Nepalis than ever before are confident and comfortable with English. An increasing number of ‘boarding schools’ and colleges are churning out graduates more conversant in the language. Globalisation is turning English into a global lingua franca. It is the language that you need to surf the Net, follow English programmes on cable, or go abroad for further studies. There has emerged a class of Nepalis who want more than just make-do English, they want to be fluent in it.

English has another advantage over local languages: It is easier to be rational in it. One is expressive and effusive in one’s mother tongue, feelings are stronger in the colloquial, and it is easier to be emotional. In a language that is learnt formally, and among readers of an international language, there is less tolerance of irreverence.

Through English, we will take the concerns of those who matter to those who matter. Issues raised by the English press is taken more seriously in the wine and cheese circles of the Kathmandu elite. We will talk about us in a language they understand.

Enough said. Now to work.

Deputi hargai hir as basal exhaus in Kathmandu: Nepali nobba of nevratim bal bihale in their nag- randoing ree: “To Nepali An”, they tell anyone who cares to listen, “nothing is going to happen here.”

Cynicism is at least a reflection of an exaggerated sense of self-worth. Deputi is much worse, it is a state of having lost all hope. It is a self-fueling prophecy. The answers are ready even before the question is asked. If no one believes anything is going to happen, no one has any motivation to make something happen.

The Upharad chant Nei Nei (“Not this, not that”) seems to have become Nepal’s present mantra. Originally, the chant was perhaps meant to put one into a questioning frame of mind. It taught insiders one to accept any apparent reality at face value. It was maybe because of this that persistent questioning came to be called bristinski cynicism. But today we seem to have lost even the ability to ask the right question.

There is a paradox here: we resist, but we do not have the will to reject. So we end up accepting whatever we initially rejected. Be it the Maoist insurgency, the issue of market economy or the bias of our relationship with India, we seem to be trapped in bubbles of our own making. Among all the challenges facing the nation, the most important for now is to come of owning faith, making Nepal believe that it is better to trust your hopes than rely on your fears.

Corruption is endemic, poverty is pervasive and persistent, politicians are self-serving, the economy is sick. But instead of news of hopelessness, Nepal has lost hope in themselves. But look around: with very little effort you can see signs of positive change. I’m not talking about government data of so many kilometres of roads built or so many schools and health-points opened. They are important, but do not mean anything by themselves. If you no longer have money to ride a bus, no time to attend school or no means of getting to a health post then those numbers have no relevance.

Is it the structural changes in Nepal that should interest us? To start with, we have peacefully voted two sets of parliamentarians out, and three in. Let us put this in context. Our legislature, so confined for so long, is slowly but surely finding its feet. Law-makers are showing signs of accountability, they are becoming assertive, not merely rationally aggressive.

The executive that had been cumbersome is now learning to be accommodative. The opposition is finding creative new ways, rather than shutting down the nation at every opportunity, to influence policy. From it is in our public consumption, the government has shown its willingness to talk to the Maoists who have fundamental differences with our constitution. The Prime Minister Kumar has agreed to visit New Delhi to talk over rather than air his apprehensions through the media.

From being self-consciously important, the past is now learning to be more reflective and genuinely concerned. Even other countries’鳟鱼 strategies seem to have realised that a less parlourable is effective by keeping it to themselves rather than get contention. Simultaneously, a new world order is by crying for more aid, rather than be more.

The media’s growing professionalism has been most welcomed. We have more newspapers, television channels, and vibrant debates new private FM stations. The newspapers’ exposure to the prospect of building a rebuilt Nepal hasput the media in a position of facilitating the progress of building a new Nepal. The media has started attracting the world’s interest and a new, more co-operative media is being created.

Yes, our public is of a mind to continue to be a society, it needs to be re-oriented to become a facilitator. Our professionals and intellectuals have done precisely little to justify the respect accorded to them by society. Education lies in shambles, agriculture in utter neglect.

But what is important to remember is that even if we are laggards at the point of departure, as long as we are on the right track (flanked by socialism on the left and democracy on the right) there is reason for hope.

There is another relevant Upharad mantra. Chauvati, Chetrauchi, which means “keep going, keep going.” More than either unrealistic hope or deep despair, Nepal needs the courage, confidence and strength to cope with the future.
"We have reports that the Maoists are getting arms from India."

“Mr. ‘Maoist’ in the palace”

Chakra P. Bastola
Foreign Minister

"We have to work out the border problem because it is a serious and sentiment issue, and also because it has a bearing on many other things also."

The 1990 treaty

There again is a common agenda of the political parties: the 1990 treaty. We have to take it up seriously. If we want a review of it we have to be serious about it. It has been a sort of a ritual. So let us get into concrete things. The treaty has a provision that each of two countries can give a one-year notice to end the treaty. We are not to use that provision if we want to come up with something. That those who say we don’t want the treaty would come up with suggestions, we are willing to take them seriously.

India’s concerns besides ISI

We have to find out what are those three. We have seen with our security arrangements, because during our visit to Delhi or during their visit here I have not been informed of new concerns.

Priority on hydropower

I think we can divide the whole issue into two. One is hydro-power, commerce and economic issues. The other is the political side. On the political side we don’t have many immovable issues. The water resource issue is going to prove tricky. The Indian side is not essential, but for the execution of the project there is a language that the two sides meet and brings you closer.

Lives of immediate concern

The prime minister’s visit to China should focus on all issues raised to a level where implementable. Our new mandate must be done on some issues that have emerged and all other matters should not be a problem.

During my last visit, India suggested that we start a 500-600 MW run-of-river project and finish it. They want us to go for a project for the future. The treaty has a provision that each of the two countries can give a one-year notice to end the treaty. We are not to use that provision if we want to come up with something. That those who say we don’t want the treaty would come up with suggestions, we are willing to take them seriously.

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Breeding ground for greed

A senior UN official in Kathmandu was secretly suspended six months ago for embezzlement. Now, four more staffers from his office have also been suspended.

Six months after he left, Thapathali sign still shows Alok’s house.

The official had been based in Kathmandu for over a year and was known for his efforts to combat corruption. He was also involved in several high-profile investigations, including the embezzlement case.

The suspension of Alok and his colleagues is a significant blow to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which has been working to combat corruption in the country for several years.

Grassroots democracy delivers health, education and other services.

HEMALATA RAI

Nepal is not getting any poorer, according to the United Nations, but the country is not becoming any more prosperous either. It seems to be stuck.

The Human Development Report 2018, released last week, shows that Nepal now ranks 148th among 174 countries. It is already at the bottom of the heap, even among South Asian countries.

An average Nepali lives for 57.8 years, 4.4 years less than the average South Asian. And Nepal is the only country in the world where men live longer than women—an indicator of serious gender disparity. Poor and disadvantaged groups and areas in Nepal live on an average of 46 years—full 15 years less than the ‘upper’ castes.

The poorest 20 percent of Nepalese earn less than 8 percent of the national income. The richest 20 percent pockets almost 50 percent. Income disparities are worse in Nepal compared even to Pakistan and Bangladesh (see table).

The good news this year is that Nepal didn’t fall any further down the ladder, and our human development index—a measure of average

nals, bridges, agriculture and employment, and even pay partly for them from locally generated revenues.

“The houses in Kathmandu don’t want to give away their economic, political and administrative authority. Electing local bodies are more accountable to the people and they are more transparent in their functions,” says Sapkota. “In many ways, there is probably more self-determination in European times.”

The main problem is that older laws clash with provisions in the Local Self-Government Act of 2017. For example, the existing laws give line agencies responsibility for health and education at the district level whereas the 1999 legislation assigns the onus on local elected bodies.

If not amended to comply with the newer legislation, these laws could force local bodies to keep on functioning as the command discretion of the Centre.

“Decentralization is the great hope for Nepal,” says UNDP’s Mirror. “But for decentralization to function, the center has to re-invent itself.”

As the Local Development Minister, Udaya Kishor Sinha has the government’s focus on decentralization, he has to give a new impetus to local government’s thinking and allocation of funds to local bodies. “It has been a gradual process, but we are electing groups at the district and village level becoming increasingly capable, and asserting their decision-making authority.”

The push for the Centre has been weakened by a small, closely-knit group. They are afraid to let control go to others.”

JUST HOW POOR IS NEPAL?

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<th>Country</th>
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<th>Rich-poor quotient</th>
<th>Adult literacy</th>
<th>Female literacy</th>
<th>Male mortality</th>
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<td>38%</td>
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<td>Bhutan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
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<td>Sri Lanka</td>
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<td>Nepal</td>
<td>53 9.3 67%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15% 60%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Bad Lenders + Bad Borrowers + Bad Politics = Bankrupt Banks

Endless political ping-pong between the Nepal Rastra Bank and the Ministry of Finance threatens to prolong the suffering of two seriously sick banks.

A NEPALI TIMES INVESTIGATION
Nepal’s largest banks, Nepal Bank Limited (NBL) and Rajbati Bank Limited (RBL), are in dire trouble and may not be able to recover from the crisis. While the government continues to hedge its bets, the need for action is urgent.

Directions from the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) and the Ministry of Finance (MoF) are causing confusion among bank officials and customers. The banks are facing a liquidity crisis due to a lack of regulatory and monetary support.

The Ministry has not only failed to provide any assistance but has also increased the pressure on the banks by demanding additional capital. This has led to a deterioration of the banks’ financial health and increased their vulnerability to market forces.

The situation is dire, and the banks are in need of immediate assistance. Without it, they risk becoming non-viable entities.

Inflation and economic instability have further compounded the banks’ problems. The high interest rates and volatile currency have made it difficult for banks to maintain profitable operations.

The banks’ balance sheets are not in good shape. Non-performing loans (NPLs) have increased significantly, and the banks are facing difficulties in recovering these loans. This has led to a decrease in their capital base.

The banks are also facing challenges in meeting their operational costs and maintaining their assets. The need for additional capital has been emphasized repeatedly, but the government has not provided any assistance.

The banks are in a dire situation, and further action is needed to save them. Without immediate intervention, the banks may be forced to declare bankruptcy, leading to a loss for the government and the country.

The government must take decisive action to ensure the stability of the financial system. This includes providing capital assistance, implementing measures to reduce NPLs, and ensuring that the banks have access to liquidity.

In conclusion, the banks are in a precarious position, and urgent action is needed to save them. The government must take responsibility and take decisive action to ensure the stability of the financial system.

Source: NEPAL TIMES, May 2020

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Union banner outside the Nepal Bank head office: “We will not allow the bank’s reputation to be played with.”
No question of taking it lightly

By (Kosala) woods nice clothes, he looks clean, and goes around well-dressed. But because I haven’t worked with him closely, I can’t say if he is clean or not.

- Bal Bahadur KC, Nepali Congress MP in Ghatantra vs Bichar

Buddhadev weekly, 12 July 2000

Sign says: “The Metropolitan City is doing its work. How about you?”
- Kathmandu Metropolitan City.

Maist dam-busters

Janakpur, 11 July 2000

Nepalgunj—Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) District Organising Committee Bande-Bardia has released a press communiqué asking the Government of India to dismantle the Lalakumpur Barrage immediately as it has the submergence of more than half a dozen village development committees (VDCs) in that region. In addition, the communiqué warned the Prime Minister of the danger to the lives of thousands of people in Bardia, as the section of embanked levee has yet to be bolstered and pledged support for the forces of Bardia engaged in the movement to abolish it.

Of human bondage

Based on report by Pushpa Sharma in Kathmandu, 16-30 July 2000

The situation has not improved. But there are still human beings in slavery and in need of rescuing. It is the duty of every human being to help the victims of slavery and to work towards their freedom.

Prachanda’s Indian passport

Bardia, 11 July 2000

The Indian government has not denied the rumour that Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) Secretary-General Prachanda used an Indian passport to attend the international meetings of the communist exiles. RM Revolutionary International Movement (RIM), held in London in the month of April. According to a high-ranking diplomat of the Indian Embassy, the Government of India has initiated an investigation after that news was published. Secretary General Prachanda probably used a passport under the surname Jha which he could have obtained through a naturalised case. Claiming that the records of passports issued by Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are checked, the highly placed source said. “It’s not difficult to get an Indian passport, but the operation is to curb Maoist activities from spreading to neighbouring villages for which the police are setting up mud-blocks and conducting random checks. The police have been deployed in large numbers in the district, headquarters and other base camps have been established in the main areas. Sources say that lightly armed tribesmen村庄 have been going around the main Maoist-affected villages armed.

In this operation, the police are using the SLOs (self-helping groups) given to them by the army. Policemen going to the districts have been instructed that they are going to build an environment for the army to step in.

Bhattarai silent

Dhakar, 9 July 2000

Former Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai seems to be getting nervous these days, as he is looking for an excuse to return to his position. On Friday, he branded all-party men held talks with the coalition of 12 left parties, and said the Nepali Congress (M) has taken an astray. In response, the coalition leaders held talks with the coalition leaders, and the government has raised some questions. It appears that the Nepali Congress (M) was working in consultation with the government parties in the past few days.

The government has raised some questions. It appears that the Nepali Congress (M) was working in consultation with the government parties in the past few days.

“SILENT KS-3”

Jai Shebar, 12 July 2000

The Maoist released former minister Bishnu Prasad Subedi to create a conducive environment for talks with the government. But, according to various sources, the Prime Minister, the Home Minister, the Minister for Communication and Information, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Chief of Police, the Chief of ID and members of the body have not been consulted ahead of another offensive named “silent Kilo Sierra 3.”

According to a source close to the Home Ministry, there are 3,000 plainclothes policemen and 4,000 armed policemen involved in this operation. It has been learnt from a Nepali Congress source that 3,000 cadre of the Nepali Congress were recently arrested as plainclothes policemen, and another 300 were also taken from the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party, UML and Maoist parties. A highly placed source said that the main aim of the operation is to get reliable information about the Maoist rebels. The Indian officials involved in this operation intend to take over villages which are rebel-held and reunion of the Home Ministry has ordered the police to kill as many rebels as possible. This operation is a threat to the people who live in the villages where the rebels are active. The situation is very tense in these areas. The home minister, along with the chief minister, has ordered the police to take necessary action to control the situation.

The operation is to curb Maoist activities from spreading to the villages and to reinforce the government’s position in these areas. The government is also taking measures to improve the situation. The police are working in consultation with the army to control the situation. The police are working in consultation with the army to control the situation.

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“I did not believe that anyone would believe that our country’s ambassador would stoop so low.”

KANUK MAHI BHUT

When Nwini Khishre Rai returned from Bonn after serving a much-anticipated—and celebrated—term as Nepal’s ambassador to Germany, the last thing he expected in Nepal was a petty accusation intended to destroy his reputation.

A leak to a Kathmandu newspaper earlier this month, most likely from officials in the Nepal embassy in Bonn, accused Ambassador Rai of leasing his apartment in Germany without paying credit card dues of a little over DM 1,500 (about NPR 20,000).

Foreign Ministry officials at Shital Navis deny having played any part in the leak, but seem strangely reluctant to speak up for an envoy who had served the country well, Dr Rai’s replacement, Balram Singh Magal, could not be reached by telephone for comment because the embassy is in the throes of moving to Berlin.

Because the process of credit card billing (where payment is made after presentation of monthly bills) is not well understood in Nepal, the newspaper story carried a credibility among the Nepali public, already predisposed to believing the worst of their representatives abroad after one was caught sleeping books in Washington DC some years ago.

The untold amount was actually billed to the credit card of Dr Rai’s wife, Nwini Rai. Besides the fact that the unpaid sum was very small in German marks, Ambassador Rai says that most of the charge was actually the result of a billing error for a train fare to Paris that he had already paid in cash.

Diapositive insiders say that, by all indications, this was a motivated leak meant to taint the image of someone with a suspiciously clean reputation. But it was a tragic blip in the four-year ambassadorial stint of this Tribhuvan University alumnus (B.A. Ram Thapa), the Cologne-based President of the German-Nepal Friendship Association (GNFA), “This is an incredible insult for someone who did Nepal so proud. A simple credit card oversight has been used as a smear campaign,” Indeed, the accusation needlessly tarnished the untainted image of a non-career scholar and much-acclaimed diplomat.

Nwini Khishre Rai was appointed ambassador to Bonn by the UML government of Man Mohan Adhikari, and was unique in that a serving academic was given a posting which had earlier been the preserve of expatriate, retired bureaucrats and royal palace appointees. At last Nepal had an ambassador in Bonn (plus his wife) who spoke fluent German, which added to his effectiveness in a pivotal European country. Being a political appointee (though he is not a party member), there was a fear among those German professors that he would be recalled when the UML government fell in Kathmandu. They therefore hedged their bets and succeeded in paving the way for the new foreign minister to maintain Ambassador Rai at his post. That initial political hurdle has now been overcome, Dr Rai was able to complete his full term in November 1999, even as the country saw six prime ministerial changes back home.

This was an ambassador extraordinary, as demanded by recent charts made by UNO from Germany, Austria and Switzerland in a special GNFA testimonial published when he finally left Bonn. Karl Kirchhoff, Head of the South Asia Division of the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, writes of how Ambassador Rai’s “loyalty to Nepal was enormous and motivating for us” and how he admired his “outstanding, charming, warm and expertise.”

Former UNDP Resident Coordinator in Nepal, Manfred Kukles, writes of how not since the days of the great Sanitar [Shin Bahadur Paudel] had Nepal seen an envoy to Germany as effective as Dr Rai. A German-based Nepali doctor who has worked for long to provide ambulances and medical equipment to Nepal wrote, “We had nearly forgotten over the previous years that we could get support and interest from the ambassadors of Nepal. With Dr Rai a new era started.”

Tom Hogen, the noted Swiss geologist of Nepal, said that Dr Rai belonged to the new generation of “open-minded, well-educated and unpretentious young Nepalis with a sense of compassion for the whole people without reservation.”

Perhaps the best accolade came from firebrand German activist and former Secretary General of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) Kirti Bhandari, who said, “I did not believe that anyone would believe that our country’s ambassador would stoop so low.”

Village activists are finally sending a powerful message of resistance against girl traffickers.

At a meeting, with planting rice and all, I had to come to this.

They are not playing an active role in controlling gambling and the sale of alcohol in the villages.

Donations benefits are being used seriously, and anyone involved is cuffed up all night on the street.

Parul Tamang isn’t worried that men are stronger. “Eight women are always stronger than one man,” she says laughing. Local youngsters sometimes help the women keep village drunkards under control.

The committees are not actually doing some of the work of the police by resolving local problems in areas where there are no police posts or where they have been removed because of the Maoist conflict.

A young college student from Thangali, Tashi Lama feels that more and more villagers now know about trafficking, and are determined to stop it. But Tashi is worried about the vulgarity and decay of the culture after they are handed over to the police. “We catch the pimps and hand them over to the police, but the next day we see them walking free. It is frustrating,” other committee members echo. They say trafficking can never be stopped until the collaborators between pimps, politicians and capitalists are curbed.

Sta Bartha of the activist group, Saneey La, Lagi Saneey La, Singhra, Smokey, United Forum for Social Reform is blunt about the nexus: “Political parties help pimps get out of jail. They had filed a case against a man who sold a girl and put him into jail but he was released soon after with the help of money and corrupt politicians.”

Braun villagers

Despite this, speaking to villagers in Sindulpokhichowk, you get the feeling a solid stand has been made. People have know exactly who the corrupt politicians are and which politicians are helping the pimps. Now, with the help of the brave villagers in the committees it is easier to identify and catch the crooks. Because of increased vigilance, the pimps have “gone underground” and although it has not been proven by statistics, local activists are certain that trafficking in Sindulpokhichowk is down. Threats to their lives are not as frequent as before, and some are even considering going public with their stories.

Ambassador Rai

Ambassador Rai, who was recently appointed as the new ambassador to the United Kingdom, has been lauded for his efforts in fighting human trafficking in Nepal. His appointment has been seen as a step towards combatting the issue in the country.
If power projects were horses, beggars would ride

Once again, a flurry of news stories with cut-rate attention to the nemesis of late Arun III and other hydroelectric projects has given rise to another bout of blood racing. The euphoria misses the main point: projects are only a means to an end, which is to provide Nepal's industry and commerce cheap and reliable electricity that gives them a competitive edge. Neither the proposed projects nor the manner in which they are being dealt with will lead Nepal to that goal.

If projects were horses, beggars would ride. At $3000/AW (four times higher than the going market rate) the late Arun III was a bad project. But it was, and continues to be, a good site that can be developed wisely to produce cheap electricity. Had the Nepal power bureaucracy and the World Bank consortium succeeded in stemming civil society's protest against this project, we would not have seen the half-hearted alternative projects, some of which remain complete and others nearing completion, that are presently providing more megawatts at almost twice the price than the Arun III path. Still twice as expensive than it should be, but better than four times.

Nepal rivers, because of good dry season flow and high inflow that is effectively a nature-provided high dam, have the potential to provide cheap and clean electricity. That is, only if the political and administrative environments do not find these projects and the Indian market plays the trade characteristic of being a fickle entity in supplying Nepal villages. The question is: do the Government and the private sector have the capacity to all at one?

As the Government of Malaysia - the last of this breed of foreign-aided projects nears completion, Nepal is entering a new path of hydropower development, one led increasingly by the private sector. One wonders what this society's capacity is to successfully negotiate the route ahead.

Nepal's power bureaucracy came to maturity as a non-seeking facilitator in the periphery of international aid. The requirement of a new age is a professional civil service capable not just of understanding the engineering but also of navigating through the thicket of international finance, legal fine print and riparian politics. This track record to date is not good.

Arun III was an example of Nepal's water bureaucracy's sinewy ignorance of its responsibility to surrendering to the World Bank. The Mahakali Treaty, on the other hand, is an example of its inability to read legal fine print and advice project officials political masters of the day in their international negotiations.

Even though Article 3 of the treaty mentions Nepal and India both having "equal entitlement in the utilization of the waters of the Mahakali without prejudice to their respective existing consumption uses," clause 3(b) of the Lohari-Mukhjerjee letter exchanged with the treaty does not reflect Nepal's right over its equal entitlement and also allows India to make exorbitant claims regarding existing consumption uses. Nepal's bureaucracy failed to see this, and the Parliament's stricture passed the treaty are unable to rectify the mistake.

The West Setl is another example of Nepal's water bureaucracy's insensitivity to negotiate a fair deal on a commercial multi-purpose project with water rights implications from storage benefits created by the dam that would, under current arrangements, lower riparians free-rider returns. The initial agreement on 7th July 1994 gave "free of cost to HMG Nepal quantum not less than 10% of the generation." By the time the MOU-11th May was signed, the price to pay for effect a royalty - had been changed to "10% of power or an amount equivalent" and even that would be "deferral till SIMC has sufficient funds to make payments" after paying of other debt participants and operating expenses. Nepal's power system will have a surplus in the immediate future with the completion of the alternatives to Arun III. However, they too are run-of-the-river projects. Nepal's power system sorely needs storage projects in the 100 to 400MW range that can sustain the dry season slack. West Setl should therefore ideally have been developed for Nepal's use and not for export. Even if exported, Nepal should have insisted that it receive its "not less than 10%", i.e. 75 or more megawatts, as peak power for its own use.

Nepal's current hydropower policy is simple: hard to please private sector and let them export to India. That is to protract intractable conflict is not difficult to see, and the slow of new export projects will make it worse.

A more sensible policy path would be to first utilization of the power facility to generate an intensively competitive market, much like domestic airlines, and open the space for civil society to question these projects for the justice issues inherent in them.

Export should be based on the back burner till such a time when the monopoly Indian market gives up its "cost plus" policy in favour of a tax "feeder" device that is willing to share some of the market surplus generated by Nepal hydropower. And when that happens, all export should be only through the national grid.

Dipak Gyawali is with the Nepal Water Conservation Foundation. idwaterkamp.com
Seven New Private Hydro Projects

The government has opened the floodgates to investment in hydrogeneration with the recent approval of seven private companies to build medium-sized schemes worth more than US$2 billion.

EuroInvest bid for the 442 MW Anam Choti scheme, which was expected to cost US$1.8 billion in 1995. Other projects approved:
- Bird Ganga, 298MW (US$750m in 1995) Cemnet Coordination and Planning Cell (India/Britain).
- Dudi Khola, 201MW (US$660m in 1998) ASTO Holdings (Canada).
- Kanchi 650MW (US$680m in 1995) Cochin Electric Sector (France).
- Anam Choti.

"The companies may now apply for construction licenses if they have firm Power Purchase Agreement commitments and finances," said Angra Acharya, a senior engineer at the EDC. They would also need approval from Environmental Impact Assessments and a tax credit of US$0.75 per kilowatt for 25 years.

Nepal began licensing hydro projects in 1996. Khimti 1, the first private venture, is already selling power to NEA. Khimti's owner Himal Power Limited has an agreement to sell 360MW of installed capacity for 25 years at US$0.6 per kWh, which is pegged to the US Consumer Price Index for adjustments.

The 390MW Bird Ganga project—promoted by Nepal's Himal International Power Corporation and backed by US companies, the Dallas-based Panda Energy International, Inc. and Chicago's Hein Engineering Company International—was expected to come on line later this year. Under a 1993 law the 300MW project is expected to come online in 1993 with a 15-year income tax holiday, a 10 percent import duty on equipment, machinery and parts and exemption of sales tax and heritage fees. The Navarun Farim, a power company in India, has also been awarded a license for a 200MW hydro project in the Mahakali river valley.

The government has set a target of 3,000MW of installed capacity in the next 15 years. This means that a total of 6,900MW of installed capacity needs to be built to meet the target.
When Indian film stars Rani and Aftab shoot with each other on a flower-filled mountain pasture, millions of Indian movie-goers think the scene is in Kashmir.

But the cow on the periphery of the screen is not a holy one, but rather a Swiss Alpine cow, the pasture belongs to the farmers of the town of Briburg, and the background panorama is made up of the Swiss Alps of the Bienne region.

No matter. More and more Indian film directors are discovering Switzerland as an ideal place to make their movies. "I love Switzerland. It has a pleasant climate, good lodgings and nobody staring," says Rani Mukherji, who is already a big film star though she is only 22. She says that when she does a film in India, dozens of police have to surround her off. With the five or six new films each year seen by hundreds of millions of people, almost everybody knows her. On top of this, there are beautiful sites for filming in India, there is seldom a lack of hotels where the film crews can be lodged.

By contrast, Rani has her peace and solitude up in the Swiss Alps, except for maybe the boy whose only job is to follow her around with an umbrella to protect her from the sun.

Rani's films are the stuff which the dreams of the poor are made of; with movie director Vikram Bhatt saying "films are the only entertainment for the masses." They want to escape their misery for two hours and dream."

It is Jakob Tritin's job to see that operations go smoothly in Switzerland. The big company operator has gone over completely to working with Indian filmmakers. He gets his visas and arranges their hotel, takes over the transportation logistics and has acquired a lighting vehicle and electricity generators. Then there is the mobile kitchen in which Indian cooks serve up dinners of rice and chicken to the film crews up in the Swiss mountains.

Tritin also take care of the arrangements with the Swiss farmers on whose pasture the scenes are filmed that make

"Among the future markers, India is one of the most interesting," comments John Cesare, a marketing manager for the Swiss tourism industry. But for the Indian film-going public, the mountain pastures in which Rani and Aftab look with deep eyes into each other's eyes must certainly be Kashmir. The story takes place in 1947 and the plot is like this: The Hindu maidens, in the confusing aftermath of the division of the Indian subcontinent, must flee to India from Pakistan. Her entire family gets killed in the process. During her flight, she gets to know a Muslim youth. The two fall in love despite their religious barriers. The youth runs his life on the line in order to deliver

Switzerland already is well known in India as a heaven on earth for honeymoons and dream sequences. This means dividends for the Swiss tourism industry. The number of overnight stays by Indian guests has doubled since 1995 to almost 166,000 per year.

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Vino nirvana in Kathmandu

The search for truth has brought many to Kathmandu. But, for Bruce Owens, the truth included the Valley’s secret wine stash.

It was a joy to find. If, indeed, much is to be found in wine, Kathmandu has become famously more available in the Kathmandu Valley since I first began to pursue it in this land over a decade and a half ago. The search for much in this particular form always becomes particularly painful during what Americans and Europeans rather charitably refer to as “the holidays,” for Christmas is a time in which the most asceticized American, regardless of her faith, grows noetic for the season’s gastronomic indulgences. Though buffalo brain soup and stuffed goat lungs became my favorite foods shortly after my arrival here, I never became immune to the weakness of this season.

Thus, as a lover of the aged fruit of the vine, I found myself in mid-December of 1983 astounded by a miraculous vision one day at my favorite Dahlakar “tuk tuk” drive in which, paradoxically, one could find only food that had either been rinsed or frozen. There, adjacent to one of the stores that reigned supreme in this environment, was a display of bottles: Russian Chaliprecht, Vodka, and a bottle of Baracu. All were available at the handsome price of 600 ruppes each, the equivalent of about 9,500 ruppes. This was the extraordinary sum for someone who counted each rupee spent as a fraction of an hour that could be spent in Nepal.

But this was Christmas, and this was Baracu. Baracu, by the way, is a special appellation from the Laurance region in France, a place famous for its exquisite yet refined dessert wines, which are desserts in and of themselves. A bottle of Baracu would be the perfect gift for my Christmas feasting companions. I felt compelled to negotiate with the sajji, who somehow managed to extract these goodies from some long-standing Rsaas seller, and who was actually placing himself at some risk by displaying such merchandise without license to sell it.

This particular wine was too strong to the peculiar impulse that arises in bikinis at this time of year, having worked as a research assistant to a British anthropologist for some time. Though I knew that he knew he had me at a disadvantage. I was driven, so I pointed

out that, given the 1958 date on the bottle, the odds were 50/50 that its contents would be good only for dressing a salad.

After some discussion, a price of 100 rupees was settled upon. Not one drop of this Baracu was spilled on us. In fact, it was probably the finest Baracu (if not wine of any kind) that I will ever have the pleasure of drinking. Though I can never know if, in fact, this particular bottle was as odesk as I recall it to be, the drinking of it was extraordinary. Wine at that time was simply not available in Kathmandu if one was neither a diplomat nor rich. I had heard stories of bottles found in godowns somewhere, but also understood that extensive documentation of wine rust or another was required for the purchase of buying it. Occasionally one would be offered “wine” by well-meaning Nepalese while on trek, only to find that the preserved beverage was made of pineapples or some other mildly fruit, and gloved in the dark in some miniature shade of yellow or orange. The genuine article was mostly seen displayed in a Balikisager supermarket window, cheek by jowl with an enormous bottle of mineral water, a French perfume, and a short-wave radio, all priced about the same.

My how times have changed. Though an assessment of the history of the beer situation in the valley warrants another article, it should also be mentioned that in the early eighties there was only one local beer available, and it was a matter of good fortune if the particular bottle one acquired had bubbles in it. This only exacerbated the niceties of the wine situation. Now, of course, all beer has bubbles, and most restaurants serve at least one kind of beer at dinner. (I sometimes wonder if occasional water shortages are due to the demand at the numerous breweries that have sprung up in the valley). But back to wine. The problem has shifted from its rarity to its provenance.

On a recent desperate search for a bottle of vintage Gamay last one Saturday afternoon, I found wine at every supermarket and grocery store (but, alas, no connoisseur). It now seems easier to find wine in Kathmandu than in Paris. But, the question arises, would one want to drink it, and at what price? I have been heard into the role of a friend during my visits to Kathmandu, I am pleased to say that “drinkable” bottles are readily available. The mystery has shifted from how it is that wine appears in stores next to mineral water and frozen fish to how it is that one need pay only a few dollars more for the privilege of drinking the same fruit of the vine here as one does in the countries that actually grow it.

(Dedicated to the memory of Shamsa Man Singh, occasional purveyor of fine spirits and constant friend.)
Time to junk your desktop?

Notebooks have advanced technologically and have become a true alternative to desktop computers for many users.

VENK PIERO QUINQUE

In the age of the Internet, mobility and speed can add up to a critical competitive advantage. Add to this the necessity of having information at one’s fingertips at all times and in all places, and the importance of a good notebook computer can hardly be overstressed. It’s no surprise, then, that notebook PCs have become the one indispensable tool for many information junkies.

The first portable computers were clunky and had poorly lit monochrome displays, little memory, and relied on a floppy drive as opposed to a hard drive. But the later high-end models are not only smaller - they’re also often as well equipped and more powerful than most desktop models.

But “high-end” notebooks, according to Mark Thorne, business notebook product manager with Dell Europe, are defined differently by different people. “High-end is defined either according to performance, according to the price/weight ratio, or based upon the size weight relationship,” says Thorne. U.S.-based Dell products and configures some of the most popular portable computers on the market today. Dell’s secret to success is the degree to which it allows consumers to customise portable PCs to meet their needs. Users can log in to Dell’s website to put together the portable of their dreams. The basic Dell model, Inspiron 5000, targets private users with high performance demands, as well as business users in small and medium-sized companies. The Inspiron 5000 is equipped with an Intel Pentium III processor of up to 650 MHz. The chip comes with Dell’s new SpeedStep technology, which lets the CPU lower the weight of the computer is connected to an outlet or a battery. The model also comes with a choice of two 15-inch displays with resolutions of up to 1,440 x 900 pixels. The hard drive comes in sizes between six and 18 gigabytes (GB). The cheapest Inspiron 5000 model is priced at around $1,400, whereas the Inspiron 8000 may be out of the price range of many home users, but it’s priced perfectly for the small office or business user.

Apple’s Powerbook is also aimed at the professional market. According to Apple, the computer, which weighs in at only 2.8 kilograms, can serve as a complete Amarine film studio as well as a traditional notebook. “Movie makers can edit their videos while shooting,” says Apple’s Georg Albrecht. “All you need to do is connect a DV camcorder or an external hard drive to the Powerbook.” The Apple software Final Cut can then be used for editing and creating video. Apple is positioning its Powerbook to fill the market niche for creative applications, as Apple has its own desktop computers and the desktop publishing service. “We are targeting customers who are doing mobile business and need a powerful computer,” Albrecht says. The Powerbook is priced from $2,500.

Computer expert Henry Wanghsbre advises potential notebook owners to determine what the computer’s main function will be before purchasing. “To use standard office applications such as word processing or spreadsheet, a standard model is sufficient,” says Wanghsbre, who works for a technical publication. “To run more time-consuming applications on the road, powerful features are important,” Wanghsbre adds. Information provided by manufacturers about battery life is not always reliable, the expert says. If possible, customers should arrange to see a trial model with the vendor. “With the more expensive models this is possible, and many vendors will do it,” says Wanghsbre. “Another possibility is to rent a computer, or pay more, to see what the computer can do.”

The time to junk your desktop is now. With the advent of notebooks, the traditional desktop computer is no longer the only option. Whether it is for business or personal use, notebooks are becoming an integral part of our daily lives.
Millions face preventable AIDS death

Thanks to the advent of new drugs, dying of AIDS-related conditions is a thing of the past for many people living with the virus in western countries. But John Madedley in London reports that for those living with the virus in the developing world, where only one per cent of sufferers can afford treatment, the future still looks bleak.

LONDON - Ten years ago, HIV AIDS appeared to be a death sentence. But today in industrialised countries, hundreds of thousands of people with HIV survive and live long, healthy lives because they can access to cutting-edge, antiretroviral therapies. But the same cannot be said for the rest of the world. 

Drugs and treatments are expensive and require access to a healthcare system, which many people in the developing world do not have. Even those who do have access may not be able to afford the costs of treatment. This is where the need for antiretroviral drugs comes in.

ARVs are important in the fight against HIV/AIDS, as they help to suppress the virus and prevent its replication. However, the cost of these drugs is prohibitive for many people in the developing world.

Institutions such as the UNAIDS and the World Health Organization (WHO) have been working to make ARVs more affordable and accessible to people in need. They have also been working to increase awareness about the importance of early and regular testing and treatment for HIV/AIDS.

Institute in London has run an ARVs programme for many years.

According to the WHO, about 34.5 million people worldwide are living with HIV/AIDS. Of these, 1.4 million people die each year. The cost of treating one person with ARVs for a year is $2,000.

Small is useful

WASHINGTON - New micro-power technology, solar or nuclear power plants, could provide the key to solving the world’s growing energy needs, according to a new report released today by an environmental think-tank.

Fast fuel, microsats, and solar-on-the-roof systems, are as small as one-millionth the scale of today’s coal and nuclear plants. But these small-scale energy sources are ultimately more efficient, cheaper and environmentally friendly than traditional large-scale power plants, according to the Washington-based Worldwatch Institute.

“Only a tiny fraction of the power needed for today’s economy can only be based on a new generation of micro-power devices now coming on the market,” said Seth Dunn, author of the report called Micro-Power: The Next Energy Era. Dunn said the new technologies have the potential to bring power to the poorest and most vulnerable, and help to address the growing energy needs of the world.

In countries where people lack access to electrical services, small-scale systems are already being used to power homes and small businesses. In addition to being economical when mass-produced, small power systems can be adjusted to match the scale of demand and installed far more quickly than a central station. The report said.

S. Asia worse than Africa

BANGKOK - South Asia has made large gains in human development in the past four decades, but its record of taking care of its children is worse than many impoverished sub-Saharan African nations, according to the U.N. Children’s Fund. Three out of every four children in the world who are uneducated — shorter than other children their age — live in South Asia, said the report.

The report also notes that in South Asia, the issue of child labor is severe, with children working long hours in hazardous conditions to support their families.

In addition, many children in South Asia do not receive adequate nutrition, leading to stunted growth and development.

The report calls for a shift in policies and investments to prioritize the well-being of children in South Asia.
Medicines for the masses

Ill health keeps people in poverty. Investing in health is a measurable and effective way to reduce poverty.

WHO and support will signiﬁcant measure that will enhance access to all essential pharmaceutical products. Today's picks in access to a giant market failure. If we succeed will need broad partnerships between governments and pharmaceutical companies to make the leap. In June, this year, a major event to reinvigorate universal access to health is a key strategy to improve health in a measurable and effective way to reduce poverty.

There is a single universal element that features in every economic transition over the last 20 years. It is clear that health services need to be comprehensive and clearly oriented to ensure population-wide access to health services and pharmaceuticals.

In Brazil, for example, given the emphasis on scaling access to medicines, the National Drug Policy highlights generic drugs and includes a roadmap for public sector purchases of generic medicines.

Promoting generic drugs can help meet the objectives of reform by improving affordability, increasing competition and rationalising the selection and use of pharmaceuticals.

The European Union has agreed on major policy actions regarding pricing and reimbursement of pharmaceuticals in an effort to contain spending increases, to enhance competition by making the market more transparent and encouraging public acceptance for the concept of "equity pricing", especially for new essential drugs that are vitally important to public health.

Blame it on Mom

PARIS - Those troubled by jet lag may have their mother's genes to blame, research into the biological clocks of female salmon fish published in Science suggests. The so-called internal clock which regulates human behavior throughout the 24-hour day is inherited from the mother, French researchers announced in the American monthly.

The findings of scientists at the Molecular Biology Laboratory in Lyons and the Institute of Genetics and Molecular Biology near Strasbourg showed that the female salmon fish "ate" the genes of state young before birth. If the same is true of mammals, as scientists suspect, rats would be engaged in seasonal genes may influence the way people adjust to changes in the day and night cycle. The researchers also discovered that the Circadian clock begins to "tick" at the very moment the embryo starts to form, not at birth, as previously believed. It could explain why many individuals suffer strikly from jet lag while others are hardly afield.

LONDON - Miss World's return to terrestrial TV was such a success in the UK last year that Channel 5 is bringing it back after a gap of many years. The next event will be held in the Millennium Dome and be accompanied by Jerry Springer. But even this post-feminist age when women are allowed to be girls if they choose, the pageant favourite associated with the world of 1970's male chauvinism has had to make concessions to political correctness.

This year, to mark its 50th anniversary, Miss World will have a higher purpose. Perfect teeth and a love of animals will now be the main criteria for the world's most beautiful girl, according to its ageing founder, Eric Morley. The 21st century Miss World is all about "social awareness and an understanding of broader issues in the world". The overall winner will be the contestants who ask to be paraded in bikinis in the end of the year. The overall winner will be an environmental activist or someone who has done something for the world.

The pageant has become a must for hotly tipped Miss World hopefuls. The winner will be chosen from among a shortlist of 80 candidates who will be named as finalists in the competition. The final will be held in London in September, and is expected to attract a huge global audience. The winner will then go on to promote a range of environmental causes worldwide.

The pageant is a global event and the contestants are expected to come from a variety of backgrounds.

Morley said: "The pageant is all about taking over from the world's leading environmental charities. My role is to promote awareness and encourage people to get involved in the cause."

The pageant is expected to raise awareness of important issues such as climate change, biodiversity, and conservation. The pageant is also a platform for Miss World hopefuls to raise awareness of their own personal causes and to promote positive change in the world.

The pageant is expected to attract a global audience, with live coverage on TV and online. The pageant is also expected to raise funds for charitable causes, with proceeds from ticket sales and sponsorships going to support environmental causes.

The pageant is expected to be televised worldwide, with coverage provided by a range of broadcasters and media outlets.

The pageant is expected to be a major event, with a global audience of millions expected to tune in to watch the competition. The pageant is also expected to be a major fundraising event, with proceeds from ticket sales and sponsorships going to support environmental causes.

The pageant is expected to be a major media event, with coverage provided by a range of broadcasters and media outlets. The pageant is also expected to be a major fundraising event, with proceeds from ticket sales and sponsorships going to support environmental causes.

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This temple was first built by the great Nepali prime minister and army commander Bhim Sen Thapa. Gyan Chandra's valourous Suppose during the Anglo-Nepal war of 1814-15. He planned it to be a building of singular magnificence, but the foundation stones had to be. When Bhimsen was forced to commit suicide. In accordance with popular belief of the time, it was considered inauspicious to complete an undertaking begun by someone who had died. So the temple never should have been completed. Thus it is said to have been built in the memory of his uncle, Mathabar Singh, and the iron coffin in which thousands of Nepali elite were set down at a real audience in a single day. Apparently the victims' bodies were cremated on the spot. Today, the temple stands. True, it is on the outer edge of the town, but it is a temple of great significance.

The temple is situated outside the walls of the city of Kathmandu. It is a single-story structure with a sloping roof and a gabled entrance. The entrance is flanked by two lions, and the roof is decorated with ornate carvings. Inside the temple, there is a large statue of Lord Shiva, surrounded by smaller statues of other deities. The temple has a small courtyard with a pond, and there is a small shrine dedicated to Lord Vishnu. The temple is surrounded by lush greenery, and there is a small garden in front of it.

In the courtyard, facing the front door of the temple, there is a large statue of Lord Shiva, seated on a throne. The statue is made of bronze and is highly polished. The ground in front of the temple is covered with fresh flowers, and there are several lamps lit around the base of the statue. The temple is surrounded by lush greenery, and there is a small garden in front of it.

In summary, the temple of Shiva in Kathmandu is a beautiful and well-maintained temple. It is a popular destination for both locals and tourists, and visitors are welcome to come and see the beauty of this sacred place.
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Chinese swimmer barred from Olympics

Lausanne - Wu Yangian, the Chinese world record holder in the women's 200-metre individual medley, tested positive for a banned substance and will not be allowed to compete at the Sydney Olympics, announced swimming's ruling body FINA last week.

The 22-year-old world champion from Perth 1998 was banned by FINA after it was determined she had taken the anabolic steroid nandrolone.

The Chinese swimming federation had already suspended the swimmer, who faces a four-year ban from international competition as a first-time abuser of steroids.

Wu set her world record on October 17, 1997 with a time of 2 minutes 0.72 seconds.

Italian TV caused Euro 2000 scuffle, court says

The Hague - A Dutch court ruled last week that an Italian television crew caused the scuffle which broke out between journalists and police ahead of the Euro 2000 final in Rotterdam.

Dutch Interior Minister Rita de Vries said the magistrate determined that charges from Rome that Dutch police were guilty of assault and battery, extra use of force and unlawful detention were unfounded.

A seven-member crew of the Italian state television channel RAI were detained on July 2 after reacting angrily to officers who prevented them from filming police questioning a group of disabled Italians from their wheelchair to their seats inside the Krup stadium.

"The reason for this incident rests first of all with the arrival of large group of disabled fans with tickets for seats which were not the assigned seats," the magistrate said.

He added that 50 seats were reserved for disabled fans, eight issued to Italy. Two days before the European championship final, Italy said some 150 disabled fans would be arriving to watch the match.

Italian media sources said Mario Mattoli, one of RAI's leading sports reporters, was beaten and bleeding. Two more well-known reporters, Daniele Simoni and Ignazio Scandola, were also detained until after the match.

Maurizio Brizzi, one of the organisers who accompanied the group of 140 disabled Italians - 100 of which in wheelchairs, said the group was searched, stripped of its water bottles and carried up eight flights of stairs.

De Vries said the stadium stewards and police acted properly and followed the rules at the football tournament. He said the journalists should have heeded the police request not to film their actions.

De Vries added however that one of the stewards was wrong in possessing a nightstick and using it against one of the journalists when he attacked a policeman.

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Bill to bar hooligans

London - On 14 July, the House of Commons backed emergency legislation to crack down on football hooliganism abroad, despite civil liberties concerns on all sides of parliament's lower house.

Although there remain several stages to go before the Football (Disorder) Bill becomes law, Home Secretary Jack Straw hopes to have the bill passed before the summer recess in two weeks.

Both the Conservative Party opposition and the Liberal Democrats want to see changes made in committee before the bill passes to the House of Lords, where strong reservations on civil liberties grounds are certain to be voiced.

Labour backbenchers are also concerned over the proposal to give police officers the power to stop suspected troublemakers from travelling abroad during key matches.

The bill is a direct response to the rioting by English fans in the Belgian town of Charleroi during the Euro 2000 championships last month.
New Gag Act?

The government has proposed a new law that will give government officials the power to close down the public domain.

The amendment, introduced by Minister of Information and Communication Jaspalprakash Prasad Gupta, contains provisions that would allow the government to close down websites and social media platforms.

The government claims this law is needed to control the spread of false information and to protect national security.

But critics argue that the law is too vague and could be used to suppress free speech and limit freedom of expression.

The law has been met with widespread criticism and has been described as a threat to freedom of the press and freedom of information.

The government has defended the law, saying it is necessary to prevent the spread of false information and to protect national security.

Critics have pointed out that the law is too vague and could be used to suppress free speech and limit freedom of expression.

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Bowled over by Kathmandu

The craze among Valley residents for throwing balls around gave us skimmer. Now its bowling.

SALIL SUREDI

The scene a narrow Kathmandu street, a bunch of boys are poised to strike a pile of stones stacked one atop the other. A sly, powerful throw of a ball aimed at sends the stones flying in all directions and the game of Senm Suthe begins.

Fast forward to the year 2000: fluorescent backdrops, coloured pins, shiny synthetic floors, digital screens flashing instant scores and state-of-the-art full automatic equipment — bowling in Nepal has sure came a long way since medieval Kathmandu.

Not since the sneaker craze hit Kathmandu Valley some five years ago has there been a fad that is spreading as fast. Bowling has come to Kathmandu, and it is giving the city's entertainment-starved citizens a new pastime. The Phanths played in it, Mr. Walter Raleigh waited till be knocked off the lane pin before rushing off to hunt the明白. Now, Nepal has their turn.

The game is simple: take a round ball, roll it down a long, narrow lane and see how many pins you can knock down. That is the basic rule. Technically, the angle of the ball varies from 8 inches to 16 pounds. The lane is 60 feet long and 42 inches wide. And there are 10 pins.

There are 20 balls and 10 frames in a game. Two chances for knocking all the pins down is called one frame. In Kathmandu, the game costs between Rs 200 and 500 for an hour.

Super Bowl is located in Basuwa just to the left before the steps entrance. There are other bowling alleys in Kathmandu. Walk inside the Fun World at the Sunset Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza anytime, any day. Or take a short ride to Hotel Shechenlal in Basuwa.

"Chances are likely that within the next one year, Kathmandu will see more than 10 new bowling centers," says Tsering Nepal, manager of Super Bowl.

Finanically, Kathmandu's bowling revolution is on a higher plane than the scooter fad. What a cycle of kids would buy you a scooter park, a single lane in a bowling alley costs anything up to US$ 32,000.

Say a staffer at Fun World: "So far the crowd are well-to-do. But anyone able to pay for billiards or pool can easily afford bowling as well. But so far Kathmandu's billiard and pool aficionados seem to be oblivious of this alternative pastime. The newly opened 8-lane bowling alley at the Scooter has a delightful atmosphere. Indian tourist Sunser Singh is waiting impatiently for the automatic pin-setters to start. "I am very happy that I am not going to miss my bowling while in Kathmandu. It is a very good alternative for those who are tired of visiting the cafes," he says."

Established in 1999, Super Bowl organised Nepal's first Open Bowling Tournament in March. It will be hosting another tournament soon.

Super Bowl's high-tech interior with electronic score displays.

Happening

Tourism as Development: Case Studies from the Himalayas edited by Pratambar Sharma (2000, pp. x + 304)

Everything you wanted to know about the two central Himalayan districts of Garwhal and Himalilianchal. This book is history, geography, politics and culture all rolled into one. The result of a nine-year-long research by a team of French social scientists—published for the first time in English.

A Bibliotheca Himalayana book

Faces of Nepal by Jan Salter and Harka Gurung (1998, pp. vi + 99)

The second and completely revised edition of this acclaimed picture book-cum-ethnograph study by a British artist and a Nepali scholar. The new edition deals with three additional populations groups and comes with more colour plates and sketches, and an additional logistic map of Nepal.

Deputy prime minister Ram C. Poudel presents the Trench Environment Award to Biogas activity Hose Ram Bhushan, looking on are Japanese ambassador Kojiya Matsudra, Himalayan Bank chairman Himmatula S. Rana and Gurukunda Vaidya of Trench Nepal.

Kathmandu: Hotel chairman, G.D. Shrestha chairs with journalists Ram Prakash of MSL, Rina Banjarn Joyce of People's Review and Devendra Gautam of Naya Kurrum at a party organised to thank it's corporate clients for their support.

Buddhist Hotel chairman, G.D. Shrestha chairs with journalists Ram Prakash of MSL, Rina Banjarn Joyce of People's Review and Devendra Gautam of Naya Kurrum at a party organised to thank it's corporate clients for their support.

The panel of judges and supporters of the Miss Nepal contest with the winner: Disha Khadgi.

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Monsoon progress across the subcontinent has been strong. A large low pressure build-up over the Bay of Bengal will close in on Eastern Nepal by July 24, bringing a fresh pulse of heavy rain. Cloudbursts over Western Nepal last week brought flooding across the western terai, making it the second time this season that the wheat has been deluged. In the rest of the midlands, this year’s monsoons have been characterised by localised showers with occasional bursts of rain, but nothing sustained.

Kathmandu will remain humid during the day with temperatures 30-32°C and right temperatures dipping to 19-21°C. Pokhara will continue to be hot and humid at least till July 26, with maximum 33-35°C and minimum 25°C. High mountain towns like Namche Bazar will continue to have heavy afternoon showers with maximum of 20°C and minimum 13°C.

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OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

I am indeed a dilettante. Now I can’t write about a beautiful, isolated, out-of-the-way place, for that thousands of tourists will swamp us there and spoil it. Remember the idyllic island in the Andaman Sea where Leonardo di Caprio played in The Beach. Once it became famous, it ranked on borders of backpackers and the lagoon lost its beauty. Or, I could follow the Vali’s example. Long before he became famous for Canasta, Vali wrote a book called Tainted. In the preface, he says the name of the place was fantastic, and he gave no idea as to where it actually was: all you could tell was that it was in Nepal and inhabited by the Tharu-Burman people.

But, no, I will tell you about Punch Pokhari, although I am worried that you will grab your gear and head out the door as soon as you finish reading this. I have to have you by your beauty, and I can only hope that the difficulty of getting there will prevent it. If there is one place that is in the fine-sight of my house in Patan and totally remote, this is it.

You start early morning at the northeastern end of the valley at Sundarijal, and make the climb up to Bhat Bhungyung, keeping the oak-covered ridges of Shivapuri on your left. You cross the Melamchi at Talamang and follow it for the whole day until you come up to the monastery town of Tarkeshwar. Now the entire vista to the north has transformed itself the craggy of the Gosaikunda Lake are so close you feel like you can touch them.

Avoid the trail that takes you up to Ganju La towards Langar Valley, and take the right fork down to the Lalsi Khola to Yatang. Thick pine and rhododendron all the way, and a steep ascent of one and a half days will finally take you to your destination—Punch Pokhari, the five divine jewels of Jagal Himal. You feel holy enough to take a dip in the freezing waters. Up here at 4,100 meters, the air is thin and crisp, and at your feet to the southwest is the haemorrhaged Kathmandu Valley.

On a moonlit night Dorji Lakpa glows with an inner radiance above you, and you can sense the peak as you would sense the presence of a god. Phurbi Ghyachu looks like an albino but about to take flight. Far off on the eastern horizon, I spot Gauri’s shoulder of Gauri Shankar.

You can continue on north from here and trek up behind Gang Chenpo to cross Tilman Pass into Langar Valley, but this is a difficult glacier traverse and only for those fit and well-equipped.

The walk down from Punch Pokhari towards Chaukundi is one of the most spectacular ridge walks in Nepal. Dzunhee is steep and glide pulsed to the slopes, and in this vertical world you feel as so thick you have to part the branches to find the path. And there it suddenly in bits: you ever since you left Tarkeshwar, you haven’t seen a single wanderer.

Still walking along the ridge, under the omnipresent gaze of Dorje Lakpa and Phurbi Ghyachu, you camp at Hille Bhairinjir. Here the first yak herders come into view. You have reached the outer boundary of Langar.

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by PADAM GHALEY

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Nepali Times

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PSYCHOLOGICAL ADVICE

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The reason for sudden high blood pressure has been identified. The blood pressure
is affected by the stomach in the body. The stomach has a high
blood pressure.

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YOUR WEEK
By now we have tried just about everything to stop corruption. First we passed laws against it. That didn’t work. We tried sending officials on governance junkets to Singapore, they just came back with electronic consumer items and bribed their way through customs. We doubled their salaries and started five-day weeks so they could moonshine on weekends, but the honky-panky got worse.

There are three industries that show major growth as a country gets poorer: the tobacco industry, the distilleries and the pharmaceuticals. Some would even argue that people get poorer because those industries prosper. In any case, since government pays for development by taxing vice, there must be a way to levy a surcharge on grift and grog.

But first we must legalize corruption. And when we do, every time someone from the Ministry of Poultry and Livestock pilfers from the coffers, or a tycoon passes out a hefty kickback, they will be slapped 10 percent VAT on the spot. Corruption can then actually contribute to Nepal’s GDP. International investors lean to start joint ventures in Nepal can be given a one-year tax holiday on all revenues they have to pay to lubricate their way through the labyrinthine of officials. Foreign diplomatic missions and international agencies, will of course have duty-free status, since their presence in our country is governed by the Geneva Protocol.

Legitimizing corruption will have other multifarious advantages: there will be no need anymore for frequent seminars and workshops on “Accountability, Integrity and Governance in the Context of the Civil Service.” Donors will no longer have to devote a large chunk of their budgets for projects like “The Enabling State”, and precious resources will be freed for drinking water schemes.

Because corruption will have been legalized, all transactions will be transparent, and above board. By being able to fund development through the Draft Surcharge we can have another round of salary hikes for the civil service. Integrity will then be contagious and unless the forces of development so that Nepal can achieve the Asyali Mapdana by December 2000. 

Chromosome 5

Let’s legalise corruption

Grindlays

The British painter has made Nepal her home for the past 20 years, drawing Nepali faces. A collection of these paintings and drawings came out in the book, Faces of Nepal, which has gone into a second edition. Recently, Jan put up an exhibition of her “Faces of Nepal” series of paintings along with another called “All Our Daughters”. The latter represents her departure from being a pure artist to an activist. And the exquisitely fine

Paintings of Nepali women reflect her concerns about girls being sold to India. “I wish to highlight the issue through my paintings,” says Jan, who strayed throughout the exhibition, guiding and explaining the issues to visitors.

The other case that Jan has taken to heart is the plight of Kathmandu’s street dogs. She has campaigned strongly to stop the municipality’s poison campaign to get rid of dogs, and foreseen care and support for the stray animals. No wonder, Jan’s home is full of cats and dogs that she has rescued from Kathmandu’s streets over the years.

Jan is one of the rare artists who can capture the humanity, compassion and tolerance that shine on Nepali faces. It is perhaps her understanding of these very characteristics that came through as well in her paintings that she doesn’t sell them. She says they are pure of Nepal’s heritage and that they should not leave the country. Her wish is to donate these paintings to a Nepali institution which will put them up for permanent display.

**SURYA**

Lazy-King

**Inspired by Nepal**

All prices are in US dollars, collected from informed sources, and are only indicative. BDTC ($)51: USN$: 1,44.65, BD: 1,44.65, MB: 1,31.85, NBP: 70.75; PVR: $55.15; SLR: 1-578.75