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EXCLUSIVE

50th anniversary of 1950 treaty

Was it coincidence, or planned? Prime Minister Koirala chose 31 July to embark on his trip to India. It was exactly 50 years ago on this day that the infamous Indo-Nepal Peace and Friendship Treaty was signed. The treaty with a newly independent India was entered into by the last Rana prime minister, Mohan SJB Rana.

Renegotiating a treaty Nepal thinks is "unequal" is one of the points on Koirala's agenda. The others are: border delineation started 20 years ago, and still ongoing, to the more recent Laxmanpur barrage and everything in between, Bhutanese refugees to the Special Additional Duty affecting Nepali exports to India, and from Kalapani to Kodak.

Before the visit, Koirala said he's even open to fencing the 1780km open border. "It is impossible for Nepal to close the border," he told *The Times of India* last week. "But if India wants the border fenced, we have no objection. It will also serve Nepal's interest."

Koirala will have to appease India's increasing security demands—including a recent proposal seeking extradition of Nepalis or foreigners committing crimes in India for trial. This is a heavy bilateral baggage and it bulges with issues that have accumulated in the four years that leaders of Nepal and India have not met. Koirala will fly to Bangalore from Delhi on 3 August to take a peek at the IT industry. His itinerary includes a *dharma* break at Prasanti Nilayam, Sai Baba's ashram, for an hour-long spiritual session.

Stinking politics

What is at the bottom of the garbage crisis in Kathmandu? Nepali Times digs through the rubbish to come up with the stinking truth: politics. The mayor and the minister don't see eye to eye, local politicians score points by doing the populist thing: stoning garbage trucks. And a desperate government ministry has made the blunder of dumping rubbish along the holy Bagmati River between Gokarna and Guheswori.....page 7

Bhutan's other crisis

The presence of ULFA militants in Bhutan is raising hackles in the neighbouring Indian state of Assam and threatens to overshadow the plight of 100,000 Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. Recent Indian intelligence reports suggest that high-level Bhutanese foreign ministry officials are involved in helping ULFA leadership move in and out of Bhutan and also to pass on money and documents. page 13

Guns 'n' aid

The Ministry of Finance has prepared the draft of Nepal's new aid policy which lays out the country's strategy for selecting and using foreign aid. So, Nepal finally has a policy but what of donors?

As Nepal's military imports grow to meet the Maoist crisis, many donor countries are also the ones supplying guns and ammunition to the Nepali police and army.

Austria is one country whose falling aid package for Nepal is now equal to the guns and bullets it sells to Nepal.....page 15

Who is a Nepali?

BINOD BHATTARAI

For years, Nepalis living in the tarai plains with ethnic and linguistic affinity to north India have found it difficult to obtain Nepali citizenship. But a law that finally states who is a Nepali is generating a chauvinistic backlash in Kathmandu corridors. Once again, fears have been raised that Nepal will be swamped by Indians.

The Nepal Citizenship Act, 1963, Amendment (1999/00) Bill fulfils a promise all mainstream politicians have made to the large population of madhesi voters from the plains. The tarai-based Sadbhavana Party actually wants nothing short of a constitutional amendment to resolve the issue.

Supporters say without the Bill, tarai Nepalis will become even more alienated and demands for secession, however naïve, could derail national politics. Critics respond that it will lead to the 'Sikkimisation' of Nepal through a quantum jump in the number of people of 'Indian origin' in the electorate.

After the Lower House first approved the bill in June, it was sent to the Upper House. But the king's appointees and UML members banded together to sent it back without even discussing it, or suggesting any changes. NC does not have a majority in the Upper House and had it gone into debate and sent back with suggestions, the Bill would have had to be taken to the committee again. That it was sent back without comment, some believe, speaks of UML's real intention to see it through.

Last week, after the ruling Nepali Congress rammed the Bill through parliament amidst a walkout by the opposition, who now have decided to use the bill to whip up latent populist xenophobia.

The fact is the Bill was a consensus document. The State Affairs Committee of Parliament held 16 marathon meetings to

The Congress and UML came up with a progressive Citizenship Bill, but the main opposition got cold feet and smaller parties are whipping up fears of an Indian influx

comb through the draft amendment proposed by the government. Almost every word in it was approved by consensus, says Committee chairman Homnath Dahal (NC).

Opposition MP Subash Nemwang (UML), himself a well-known lawyer, was among those who actively took part in the deliberations, as were Pradip Nepal, UML's firebrand spokesman, and K.P. Oli, deputy leader of the opposition. The Sadbhavana Party representative in the committee also went with the consensus.

Shorn of political rhetoric, it becomes clear that the fight is not over the Bill's content, which has adequate safeguards against foreigners (read Indians) getting Nepali citizenship. It also has tough strictures against fraud, misrepresentation and

contains provisions to penalise people obtaining citizenship illegally, including erring Chief District Officers. The powerful Left opposition is using it simply to deny the Nepali Congress any political mileage among the tarai voters. And so, the Left has made a strategic decision to ride the bandwagon of Kathmandu Valley populism.

The UML now finds itself between a rock and a hard place. Logic dictated the bill, but the breakaway ML and Panchayat-holdover RPP now threatened to make away with the all-important 'nationalist' platform.

The ML-led fringe Left groups are forcing a Valley shutdown to protest the bill on 2 August. The main point of opposition is a clause in the amendment that grants people citizenship even if their father

had not obtained Nepali citizenship, as provided for by the 1962 Constitution.

UML's Nemwang now speaks of the need for unity in the legislature: "While boycotting parliament on such a sensitive issue, we said division of parliament was not right. All we wanted was more time before passing it."

There is also a possibility that the bill will be challenged in court after it becomes law. Lawyer Bal Krishna Neupane, who has blocked five previous attempts to settle the citizenship issue, has already made his mind up to file his sixth lawsuit. "I will sue and this law will get quashed," he says.

Work to begin simplifying citizenship procedures began with an effort by the UML during its nine-month term in 1995. During its second stint in power, home minister Bam Dev Gautam (then UML, now with ML) went ahead and handed out citizenships through a committee headed by Jitendra Dev, a party colleague. Dev distributed 34,000 citizenships before he was stopped by a Supreme Court stay order, as demanded by advocate Neupane.

The good news is that the government and the main opposition worked together to come up with a draft that is forward-looking and likely to promote national integration across Nepal's hill-plain divide. The bad news is that it may take time for the ideologically-driven 'nationalistic' dust to settle before it can be implemented.

But the Bill is now a *fait accompli*, and it will one day firmly define Nepali citizenship so that one of the most consistent headaches to the Nepali polity—the role and place of the madhesi in the mainstream—will be removed. ♦

MIN BALACHANDRA

CITIZEN NEPAL
Editorial
page 2

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Times



NEPALI Times

NEPAL'S TOP NEWSPAPER

CITIZEN NEPAL

Citizenship is a contentious issue in India-locked Nepal. You are bound to feel insecure when there are a billion people living south of an open border. The fear of being swallowed up is so latent in the Nepali psyche that opportunistic politicians of every hue consider it worth their while to whip up jingoism.

Madhesis, the people from the plains, are at a particular disadvantage due to complex citizenship procedures. Ethnically closer to the people from across the border, they are not deemed to be citizens unless they have a certificate to that effect. It's Catch-22: they won't get a certificate because they are not considered citizens. The entire burden of proof lies with them. For the State, they are stateless unless they prove that they are not stateless. But they can't prove they are not stateless unless the State grants them the certificate stating that they have a state.

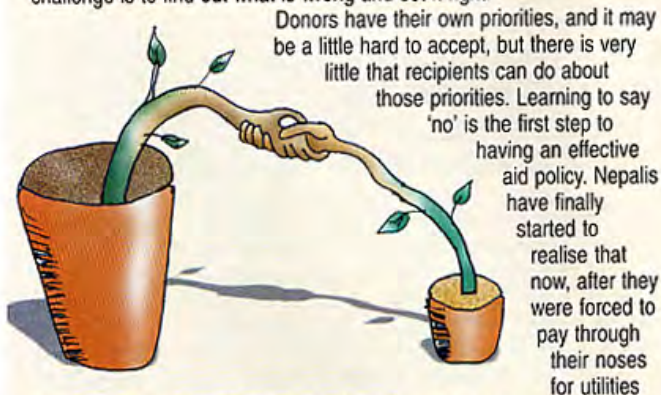
Under pressure from its own MPs, the Nepali Congress realised that it had to do something about it or face increasing electoral threats from the Sadhabhavana Party in the tarai. They drafted a bill that greatly simplified the procedure of obtaining a citizenship certificate. It sailed through the Lower House because it sought to do what every political party has been promising in its election manifesto, but had not done anything about for the fear of antagonising extreme 'nationalists'.

Opposition parties opposing the bill for political convenience will do well to remember that it makes more sense to have liberal laws implemented strictly than strict laws implemented loosely. Citizenship should not be confused with nationality in a multi-ethnic nation state. Doing so is bound to encourage secessionism.

PARTNERS, NOT PATRONS

In donor countries, the cynical definition of foreign aid is the flow of money from the poor in rich countries to the rich in the poor countries. In the recipient countries, there is an impression that donors send their rich to live like colonials in the name of poverty.

Both views are exaggerations, as most generalisations often are. And like all generalisations there is an element of truth in both. The challenge is to find out what is wrong and set it right.



Donors have their own priorities, and it may be a little hard to accept, but there is very little that recipients can do about those priorities. Learning to say 'no' is the first step to having an effective aid policy. Nepalis have finally started to realise that now, after they were forced to pay through their noses for utilities

that supposedly came in the form of 'soft loans' and bilateral 'grants'. There were strings attached to technical assistance and project financing, and Nepalis found out too late about them.

Having a policy in place, however, is quite different from getting it honestly implemented. Donors, long used to having their way, will need some convincing. Our own elite has benefited immensely from aid by passing the buck to donors whenever there was a backlash. They will not be very happy about these meddling guidelines.

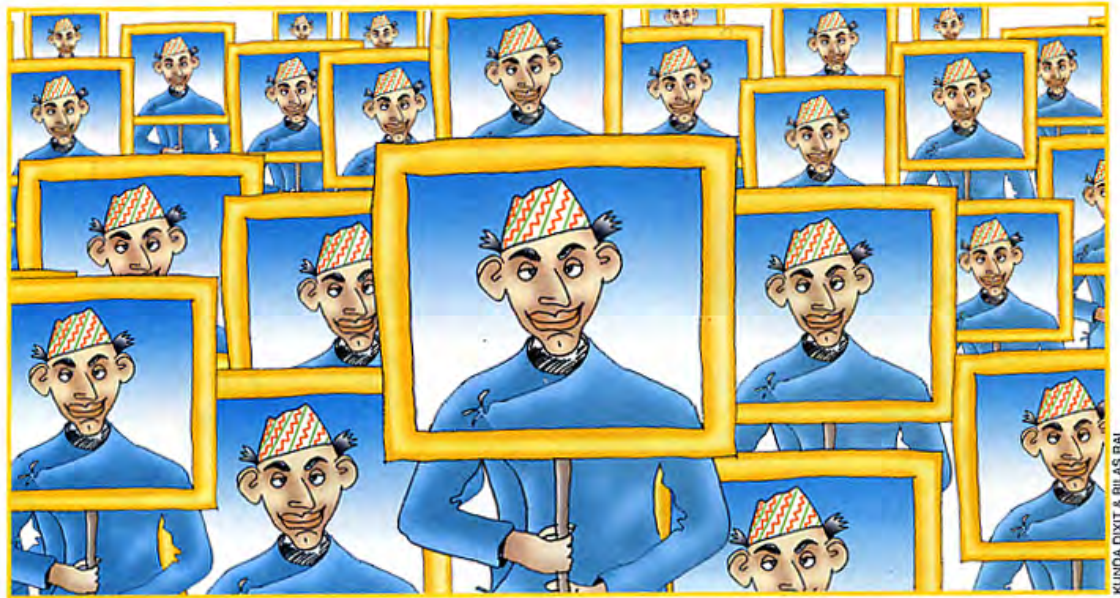
There is little doubt that substantial resource transfers from rich to poor countries are still needed to help alleviate poverty and save the global environment. But if it goes on like it has, the flow of easy aid money will increase dependency, erode self-help and foster corruption.

There is no denying that for a country so dependent on donors, Nepal's delivery of basic health and education would grind to a halt without aid. The success stories—community forestry, hydropower, decentralisation, human resource building—would not have happened without donor support. The foreign aid policy recently framed should help the mandarins in Bagh Durbar separate wheat from the chaff.

Worldwide, aid fatigue has hurt budgets. People are giving up on the laggards. Nepal must be pragmatic and sure about what it wants to do with aid. There is a need here, and aid can be a catalyst for development and sustained growth. Just improving selection, making implementation more efficient and plugging the leaks will go a long way.

Pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps has another advantage: donors will realise that they are partners, not patrons. Aid will then be a joint-venture, not charity.

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GUEST COLUMN

by M.J. AKBAR

The enigma of distance

India and Nepal are close because they are close, India and Nepal are also distant because they are close

The balance between dependence and independence is always a tricky one in any neighbourhood, but there is a second part to this particular paradox. Separate nations need reasons for separation, and language and culture have been considered sufficient denominators of identity and nationalism.

Of the nations of South Asia, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Maldives are overwhelmingly Muslim; Sri Lanka and Bhutan are Buddhist-majority. There is cultural and demographic overlap with India; but all five can claim an identity that is askance of India's secularism.

Nepal is not only predominantly Hindu, but a Hindu state. Its fear of being sucked into a larger idealism is heightened by what is common between India and Nepal. The geographical trap turns fear into dread. Access points are through India, for the North is blocked by the Himalaya.

Most of the problems between India and Nepal belong to the world of imagined fears. There can be no other explanation for their triviality.

Mention India in Kathmandu and you tread on a contradictory combination of need and sensitivity. As you walk, one foot steps on a charter of demands for the Indian government, the second on an aching sentiment that recalls wounds left by successive Lord Haw-Haw ambassadors. Of the latter breed, the first, Sir C.P.N. Sinha, sent by Jawaharlal Nehru, has now acquired mythical status.

There was everything wrong about him. He was landed gentry from Bihar, not the favourite region of the Nepalis, patronised his host country, and apparently decided that its foreign policy would be better served if left to him. Other envoys have made different mistakes, the most notable one being that they expected parity in behaviour, that is simply unreal.

Politics complicated an already difficult problem. The leaders of the Nepali Congress, who fought against the Ranas and ushered in popular rule, worried about seeming pro-Indian because of their long association with the democratic movement in India, and the great B.P. Koirala made it a point to chide the great Jawaharlal Nehru when the latter turned an embrace into a squeeze.

Nehru famously remarked that aggression against Nepal was tanta-

mount to aggression against India. Koirala replied that the two were different, and Nepal would look after its own defence, thank you. When Nepal's monarch, Mahendra, in a coup from above, drove out both democrats and democracy, and instituted the Panchayat system, the new establishment sought to justify its illegality by branding the Nepali Congress leaders and cadre as "pro-Indian" and therefore "anti-national" traitors.

India quickly became the prime enemy of Nepali independence. Kathmandu sought out China to "counterbalance" India. The theme has not disappeared from the country's politics, with an influential section of the system, particularly in the palace, media and bureaucracy still playing the old, if a little jaded, game.

China once played this role alone. As tensions between India and China began to ease, there was growing unease within this silent coalition of palace, media and bureaucracy in Kathmandu. They invited Pakistan to occupy some of this space which China had vacated, and Pakistan was happy to oblige. The shadow of China clouded India-Nepal relations in the Sixties and Seventies; the shadow of Pakistan has loomed in the Nineties.

The Indian reaction was multi-level. Delhi does not have one policy towards Nepal, but a cluster of attitudes that sometimes gel into policy, but more often have their independent play. Intelligence agencies by habit pick up a problem and escalate it into a crisis; this is symptomatic of their vocation anywhere in the world. It is up to the political class to place the restraints to smoothen the feathers that agencies love throwing into the air.

The latest is some "Nepal Gameplan" that sounds so sinister that many of the hate-India crowd in Kathmandu wish it were true. It is perfectly correct that the ISI has steadily spread its net in the last decade, the hijacking of the Indian Airlines aircraft from Kathmandu in the dying days of the last millennium is testimony to its new reach.

It is equally true that the number of madrasas has increased in Nepal,

encouraged by some overflow of Muslims from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar into the Nepal plains. But it is absurd to conclude that the ISI has taken over Kathmandu or that the Nepal government is under the intractable grip of Islamabad.

Nepal, to return to our opening metaphor, is simply too close to India to be closer to anyone else. Forget about India's interest for a moment, this is not in Nepal's interest. If General Musharraf became leader of Nepal he would have no option but to befriend India. Similarly, irrespective of which party is in power in Delhi, Nepal is too important for India to ignore or demonise.

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala insists that he is visiting India on a "goodwill" tour. One assumes that there is nothing in international relations called a "badwill" tour, although one cannot be too sanguine.

Even the Kathmandu intelligentsia, not the liveliest of India's well-wishers, has begun to see the disadvantages of a freeze. Which other country can bring in the investment, and technology, that fits in with Nepal's needs?

China's friendship is more political than economic, weighted by its need for Nepal's recognition of Tibet as a part of China. Pakistan's relationship with

Nepal is exploitative-friendly, as a base from which to pinch India. There is no depth in either equation.

Of course there will be gripes when the neighbours talk this week. Nepal will complain about the help that the Maoists who have taken control of at least five districts get from Naxalite or extreme Left elements in India.

The Indian side will have its own list of woes and worries, not the least of them being the ISI and Pakistan. There is a difference between talks between civil servants and a dialogue between Prime Ministers. India and Nepal need a shared vision for the next fifty years, and the moment to address the content of that vision has arrived. Prime Ministers Vajpayee and Koirala must leave the past to history, the present to bureaucracy, and seize the future. ♦ (SAPU/The Asian Age)





Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives Chitra Lekha Yadav was a teacher of English literature at Siraha Campus before being elected on a Nepali Congress ticket. Active in politics since her high school days, Yadav says it was B.P. Koirala's speeches, and not any ideology, that motivated her to enter politics.

Women in parliament

I've always had faith in women's inherent qualities: their honesty and commitment. These qualities have helped establish them in politics as well. Though our society is patriarchal and male MPs outnumber women in the House of Representatives, the contribution of my female colleagues is as significant as that of the males. Women do their best to make the House effective and fruitful, and they are more sincere about promises made to their voters. Still they need more exposure and opportunities.

Gender mainstreaming

For some reason it is only women parliamentarians who are expected to raise women's issues. I think gender issues should be the concern of the state as well as of lawmakers, irrespective of gender. I believe it is the responsibility of all the MPs to help boost the participation of the weaker members of the society in the process of democratisation and national development. Women lag behind males in various social fronts, and that should be a matter of concern to people's representatives. Both male and

"Male chauvinism keeps women from reaching high office"

female MPs should work together to make things better for Nepali women.

I would say some of my male colleagues are very sensitive to women's issues. Yet, there are others who are not so sincere when it comes to giving women equal opportunities. I feel that there should be a change of attitude in the House itself before we can expect that from the society.

Property rights bill

Parliament is divided on the proposed bill. Tremendous effort is needed to get the bill enacted. Girls and women are discriminated against from birth. They get fewer chances for education and other opportunities and are not allowed to decide anything for themselves either. I believe that inheritance and property rights will empower women to take their own decisions as it will help them achieve economic independence. Yet, I say our first priority should be education because knowledge and information empower people to decide for themselves.

Women as leaders

I come from a very backward community where women are still required to keep their faces covered in the presence of men. When I visit my constituency, I have to cover my head. Taking up politics as a career is a great challenge for any woman of my community. I would have been appreciated more if I had stuck to reaching. But I have this ambition to serve the larger community. But wanting to become an MP was not enough to win the election, so I lost the first time. Some of my male rivals spread the rumour that since I was a woman, I would not be able to raise the constituency's issues in the parliament. They convinced

male voters that it was against our culture to have a woman leader.

But, the second time around, I was able to convince the voters despite the efforts of my male rivals. Between the two elections, I had built a close relationship with the voters and they were convinced of my sincerity and commitment to their cause.

Performance

I have been able to do my best to serve my constituency. I have also been able to maintain my neutrality in the House. I would say that being the second woman Deputy Speaker I feel I have been successful in convincing everyone that women are ready to take up more serious responsibilities. I feel women MPs can easily take up responsibilities higher than that of a Deputy Speaker. In a multiparty system everyone should get a chance, but male chauvinism and the traditional attitude of people at the decision-making level are preventing women from reaching high office.

Keeping the voters content is a difficult task. Almost a hundred young people visit my residence every day asking for employment that I just cannot provide.

The opposition

I am not the right person to evaluate the performance of the opposition in the parliament. But, as a member of the ruling party, I would say that the opposition has not been able to do justice to their role in parliament. They seem to be opposing the ruling party just for the sake of opposition. Ideological differences apart, the parliament should concentrate on seeking consensus on issues of national importance. ♦



CPN-UML MP Urmila Aryal quit her job with an INGO to fight parliamentary elections and was successful only in her third attempt. Born into a non-political family, Aryal was influenced by communism during her school days when she began reading pamphlets distributed by the then under-ground communist parties.

Women in politics

I was convinced that social change was possible only if somebody fights with full commitment. It was only when my husband found a well-paid job with a UN agency, that I was finally freed from family obligations and could get into active politics. As Terai society is conservative, people are not ready to accept a woman as their representative.

When I stood for elections the first time, people, especially women, would come out to listen to me. I thought they were in favour of me but later I found out I was mistaken. They wanted to observe me because I had entered a male domain.

Even my party workers were dissuaded from supporting me because of the conservative attitude towards women. I was also mentally harassed by rival candidates and their supporters.

After I lost the elections, I plunged into social work. I began a literacy campaign, started income-generation activities for women and helped them organise. This helped change the attitude towards women, and my hard work and commitment gained me a seat in parliament.

"Male MPs can't accept women in leadership"

In the parliament

Comparatively, communist parties are more open to the idea that women are capable of holding decision-making positions.

Yet a woman needs to work hard to establish herself in the House. I have observed that women are not encouraged to take leadership positions in parliamentary committees, neither are they encouraged to participate in debates and discussions.

A lot of male MPs still can't accept that women are capable of taking up positions at the leadership level.

It is easier to convince communist party members, but tradition has such a strong grip on them that they too display their conservatism from time to time. Male colleagues from other parties are more difficult to convince.

I believe women MPs, especially from UML, have been able to perform well. Yet there have been weaknesses on our part also. We have been lobbying for the enactment of the proposed women's bill.

We have been trying to form a group of women MPs to lobby for the passage of the bill, but we have failed to convince colleagues from the ruling party. Some of them are even against women getting property rights.

A few male MPs are also keen to get the bill passed. Our party has already issued a whip to support the motion should the proposed bill be tabled.

Gender mainstreaming

We have been demanding the establishment of a national women's commission. We have also proposed that MPs become more active in taking gender-sensitising programmes to the district and gradually to the VDC levels.

As a party to international

conventions on women, MPs can play an active role in making the government realise its obligations for the upliftment of women in the country.

The international conventions and the Constitution both oblige the State to amend discriminatory laws. Parliamentarians have a major role in educating the people at the grassroots level about women's equality.

But the fact is many of them are not aware about international conventions ratified by the country. We also need a national-level committee to accelerate this process.

The ruling party

The ruling party has failed to make the parliament effective. They do not consult the opposition on issues that are likely to affect the country. And they have failed to generate consensus regarding various national issues.

Evaluation

I evaluate myself successful as an MP. I have done my duty well. But keeping the voters happy is not easy. They need to be educated that recommending them for employment is not the work of an MP.

By demanding such favours from MPs and all kinds of financial support when they visit the capital, they should realise that they make parliamentarians corrupt. Because without extra-legal earnings leaders will not be able to fulfill such demands.

The yardstick to measure the success of MPs should be their performance in the House, rather than how efficient that particular MP is in realising voters' personal demands. The voters need to be educated on role of parliamentarians. ♦

LETTERS

NOVEL KISHORE

I never visited Novel and his family in Bonn. I don't want to be a parasite, and I avoid friends' residences and offices while I am in their countries of residence.

But many common Nepali friends of Novel's and mine did, bragging upon their return of the great fun they all had at the Rais' residence. Nepalis are great freeloaders and take undue advantage of people, especially their "friends" in high places in foreign lands.

I just wonder where our mutual friends who repeatedly enjoyed the Rais' hospitality in Bonn are now. Why are they silent to defend Novel Kishore, his wife and children? Is this the way to repay their kindness?

Don't they have any

conviction yet that the Rais tried to do their honest best in their lives? Or do they actually believe the gutter press? These "friends" have ensconced themselves in safe silence. None of them has written a word to defend their friend Novel Kishore Rai.

Peter J. Karthak
Lalitpur

BEING FAIR

Congratulations on your second issue. I enjoyed in particular your editorial on Nepal-India relations as well as your coverage of the Kamaiya issue.

What I liked less was Monica Chand on the cover. Since NT strives to be "fair" as opposed to "objective", I

wondered what sort of message ads like this put across. Are we all to want to become "fair and beautiful" from now on, knowing that those in whose name we are trying to be fair, in not leading lives of comfort and leisure, tend to be darker-skinned? Ironic.

Shizu Upadhyaya
Kathmandu



Whilst everybody appreciates a beautiful girl, most of us take it as an insult to our intelligence when we turn the page only to find we have been conned. If this happens again, I for one will no longer subscribe to what I thought was going to be a good newspaper. There is a limit to how far I am willing to allow multinational

companies intrude into my privacy. A good newspaper becomes part of one's personal life.

Naïl Walton
Kathmandu

ONTA

As someone who abhors credit-seeking in general, I was embarrassed to read the caption under the photo in "Emergency relief for free kamaiyas" (#2). As one of the managers of the kamaiya dharna site, I invited and introduced several speakers.

I did not make any speech myself. Dilli B. Chaudhary, convenor of the Kamaiya Mukti Andolan Parishad Samiti, had asked Martin Chautari to manage the dharna in Kathmandu a few days before

the kamaiyas arrived in the capital.

It was in only in this way that we were able to contribute to the kamaiyas' search for freedom. My own participation came as a member of the Chautari team.

Pratyoush Onta
Convenor, Martin Chautari

MORE TIMES

As you said, "when there are so many newspapers to choose from, a few must stand out" and I hope Nepali Times will be a "must read". But isn't it too early to boast it is "Nepal's Top Newspaper?" Although with Himalmedia as publisher it wouldn't be too far fetched.

You said you will protect your independence intensely. Good. Please teach our present day corrupt law makers what

independence really means to us Nepalis.

Sayep A.B. Malla
Kathmandu

I am glad to read your newly launched newspaper. I hope this will usher in a new era in Nepali journalism and carry the spirit of the Nepali people into the 21st century.

Dil Basnet
London

Congratulations to Himalmedia for its new venture, Nepali Times. I hope you will not carry only tales of dirty politics like others. We also like to hear good things about Nepal. Please do not forget us Internet readers, and give us full accessibility.

Surendra R. Devkota
New York

CFIT

As the latest air crash proves, CFIT (Controlled Flight into Terrain) has now emerged as the deadliest acronym in Nepali aviation.

didn't prevent the crash of a cargo jet last year. The reason, according to the investigation report, was that there was no one at the radar controls when the plane took off because a change of shifts was taking place.

Nepal's domestic aviation is now averaging four accidents every year. Nearly all of them are technically "controlled flight into terrain" (CFIT), which means a perfectly good plane under full control of a flight crew flies into a mountain during poor visibility.

Nepal is one of the most vertical countries on earth, and flying here is regarded as challenging at the best of times. Along most domestic air routes, the terrain rises steeply from 1,000 to 8,000 meters within a horizontal distance of barely 20 km.

A Royal Nepal Twin Otter during a rapid turnaround at Dolpo's fabled airports amidst towering mountains.

It is during the monsoons, when clouds hide the mountains, that things get particularly tricky.

While being trained to fly in Nepal, rookie pilots are warned not to go into clouds because "they have rocks in them".

Pilots need to be extremely alert, especially when they are below the assigned safe altitude for that sector or while deviating to avoid weather. As the record shows, there is almost no chance of surviving a CFIT, and in most of the accidents everyone on board has been killed.

"During the monsoon, you better know exactly where you are and how high you are allowed to be," says one veteran Nepali pilot who started out with DC-3s in the 1960s.

"There is no room for error while flying in the Himalaya. It is unforgiving terrain."

It is when pilots are not trained properly on new routes, or when they do not follow guidelines for course heading and altitude that there is danger

of slamming into a mountain. Or, in some cases, a contributing factor is that overloaded planes are not able to maintain proper climb rates.

Pilots are extra careful at Nepal's most-infamous airports like Lukla, Phaplu or Dolpo, which is like landing on an aircraft carrier with a sloping deck. Ironically, very few crashes have occurred at those airports, and even when there are mishaps, there haven't been fatalities.

It is during cruise or while descending to land that planes have most often flown into mountainsides. The Necon Air crash that killed 15 last year



K.B. LIMBU

A NEPALI TIMES ANALYSIS

Another plane. Another helicopter-borne search on a steep mountainside. Another news bulletin that begins: "There were no survivors when a Nepali airliner on a domestic flight slammed into a mountain..."

It follows like a well-practised ritual: the grim task of

picking up the remains, the horrific wait of grieving relatives at the post-mortem ward of Bir Hospital, the condolence notices in the week's papers with pictures of the youthful crew in uniform, a vague investigation report one year later that blames "human error".

How long can this go on? There is no doubt that something is seriously unsafe

about flying in Nepal. That was evident after the double tragedy in the monsoon of 1992 when two Airbus 310s crashed into the mountains while preparing to land in Kathmandu within two months of each other. A total of 270 people were killed.

The planes were either seriously off course or below the assigned altitude. A radar was installed after the crashes. But it

CRASHES OF DOMESTIC FLIGHTS ATTRIBUTED TO CFIT

Date	Airline	Aircraft	Location	Result	Casualties
July 2000	RNAC	Twin Otter	Bajhang-Dhangadi	Hit mountain	25 dead
December 1999	Skyline Airways	Twin Otter	Simra-Kathmandu	Hit mountain	10 dead
October 1999	Necon Air	HS 748	Pokhara-Kathmandu	Hit telecom tower	15 dead
November 1998	RNAC	Pilatus Porter	Kathmandu-Syangboche	Hit mountain	1 dead
August 1998	Lumbini Air	Twin Otter	Jomsom-Pokhara	Hit mountain	18 dead
July 1993	Everest Air	Domier 228	Kathmandu-Bharatpur	Hit mountain	18 dead
December 1984	RNAC	Twin Otter	Tumlingtar-Kathmandu	Hit mountain	15 dead

St Xavier's at 50



MIN. RAJACHARYA

ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY

St. Xavier's School in Kathmandu, started by American Jesuits with the motto "Live for God, Lead for Nepal", celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. But half a century and nearly 3,000 graduates later, it is becoming

apparent that Xavierians have not shown a great enthusiasm for leading Nepal, nor are they as a group particularly religious.

Except for one Xavierian who fought and lost a seat in the 1991 parliamentary elections, there is virtually no one from St. Xavier's who has entered the rambunctious world

of Nepali politics.

Fr Lawrence Maniyar, the current principal of St. Xavier's Jawalakhel says: "The school's system of education emphasises on its students to be men of character who live for others. And there is no place in politics for such men."

Fair enough. But if the school's graduates are indeed so upright, then the Nepali politics and judiciary could certainly use more of them.

Achyut Gautam is one of the very few Xavier's graduates who has dipped his toes into the waters of Nepali politics as a leftist student leader during the Panchayat years.

He says: "St. Xavier's was a perfect rose garden. We only saw the real world when we came out of school. And that perhaps was one of the reasons why we couldn't do well in politics."

One Xavierian who became a powerful behind-the-scenes figure during the Panchayat is

King Birendra's principal private secretary, Chiran Thapa. He says St. Xavier's graduates were groomed to be professionals: doctors, engineers, journalists.

"And for 30 years, we had a different kind of politics. I have no doubt that with democracy, we will see Xavierians entering the fray."

Fr Casper J. Miller, former principal of St. Xavier's Godavari, thinks "The first part of the school motto, 'Live for God', means follow your conscience. This is precisely what Nepal needs: political leaders who follow their conscience."

But if the school hasn't turned out politicians, a list of illustrious alumni reads like a who's who of modern Nepal in other fields:

Dr Ashok Banskota, Nepal's foremost bone specialist, Prabhakar S.J.B. Rana, Managing Director of the Soaltee Group, Umeshwar Joshi, research analyst in particle physics at Fermi Labs in Chicago, Prajwal S.J.B. Rana, the Chief of Army Staff, Bharat Dutta Koirala, founder of the Nepal Press Institute, Shyam

Bahadur KC, the editor of *The Kathmandu Post*, the list can go on.

St. Xavier's today has changed so much that the founding Fathers would barely recognise it: the boarding school at Godavari has been turned into a school for local children, the day school in Jawalakhel has (good heavens!) gone co-educational. There are branches in Jhapa, and the staff is now made up mostly of Nepali teachers and Indian Jesuits.

During the early 1950's the Nepali elite was packing boys off to St. Xavier's in Patna in search of better education. All that travelling became unnecessary after King Tribhuvan requested the Patna Jesuit Society to open a school in Nepal.

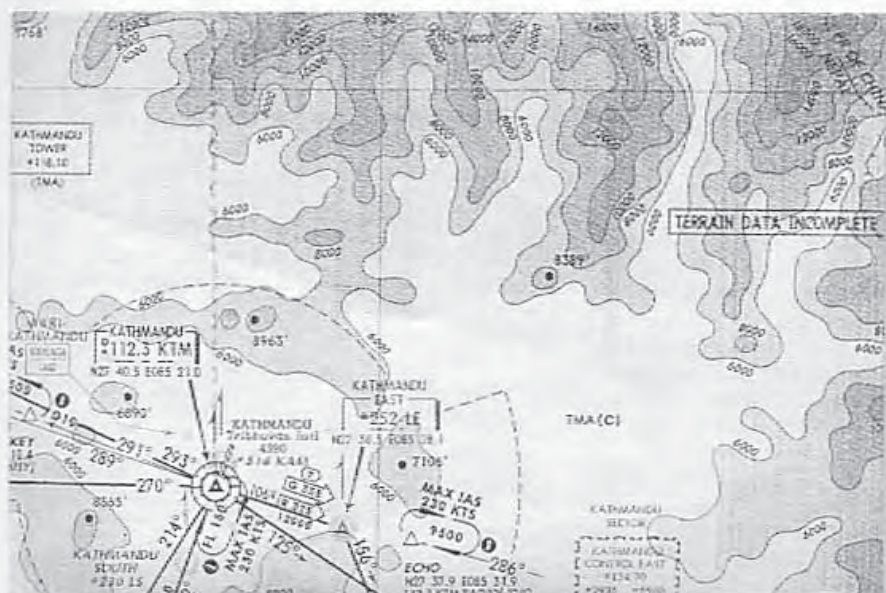
They agreed and Fr Marshall D Moran acquired a sprawling summer palace of Juddha Shamsheer at Godavari to set up the school. The Nepali boys in Patna were moved to Godavari and on 1 July 1950 the school began in earnest.

Today, St. Xavier's is a school that most parents want to send their children to. The fees here are a fraction of



Fr Casper Miller and (left) the first girls to enrol in St. Xavier's at play in front of the school.

other private English schools in Kathmandu, and the school has a student body of 960 with 38 new girls enrolled in Grade One. ♦



Pilot's air navigation chart for the Kathmandu area, showing terrain hazard. Charts like these need to be colour-enhanced to warn pilots about mountain elevations en route, according to a Flight Safety Foundation recommendation.

clipped a telecommunication tower at the western end of the Valley while flying through a cloud. The Lumbini Air plane took the wrong turn northwest of Pokhara and ended up hitting a cliff in cloud.

The pilot of the Everest Air flight to Bharatpur in 1993 thought he had cleared the mountains when he hadn't, and hit a last hill in cloud.

According to air traffic controllers in Dhangadi this seems to be exactly what happened to "Bravo Papa" last week.

The pilot radioed that he had cleared the last ridge and was coming in to land on runway 09, but he seems to have been off course and hit the summit of the cloud-shrouded Chure Hills. All the four crashes above took place during the monsoon.

In most other countries, such a high rate of fatalities per passenger mile flown would have been cause for alarm. In

Navigating in Nepal

Due to cannibalisation, many avionics systems of Nepal's domestic airliners are unserviceable, or don't have back-up systems in case the main equipment fails. Minimum Equipment List (MEL) rules are often flouted.

In a situation where even an operational cockpit weather radar sometimes becomes a luxury, adding a highly sophisticated piece of equipment like an Enhanced Ground Proximity Warning System (EGPWS) may be utopian. There are also questions about whether this expensive piece of gear would be foolproof, because pilots may tend to ignore it after a while because of false alarms.

A whole other dimension to air safety is ground navigation radio. Most Nepal airports do not have even the simplest beacons, although remote airports now have control towers to give weather information. Even important way-points like Janakpur and Bharatpur which lie on major international air ways out of Kathmandu don't have functioning navigation aids.

The non-directional beacons (NDB) at Bharatpur and Janakpur have not worked for the past three years, and have also hampered domestic flights to the two airports in bad weather.

Nepal, there is an almost blasé attitude about accidents. It is mostly blamed on *alau* (fate), whereas air safety planners should be looking at ways to minimise CFIT risk.

There is talk that the

government is considering making it mandatory that airlines install the Enhanced Ground Proximity Warning System (EGPWS), a sophisticated piece of equipment that gives a pilot a

While being trained to fly in Nepal, rookie pilots are warned not to go into clouds because "they have rocks in them".

20-second warning that he is about to fly into a mountain.

The EGPWS is a radar that integrates information from a global positioning and navigation satellite system. But this equipment costs US\$ 55,000 and may be beyond the reach of most shoe-string domestic airlines.

The US-based Flight Safety Foundation regards CFIT as the major cause of preventable air accidents and has put out a recommendation for EGPWS, colour-coded air navigation charts showing terrain, and an automatic cockpit instrument calling out altitude.

Back in Nepal after every crash, our tourism ministers have a new drill: first announce an investigation, then tour the crash site in the presence of TV. One minister even began a tradition last year of televised "surprise" checks of aircraft on the tarmac.

All air-crash stories end with the customary announcement of the investigation team's report after which everything goes back to normal: no heads roll, no negligent company or official gets disciplined.

No new lesson is learnt. ♦

Nepali radio in Britain

Gurkha soldiers based in northern England now have their own radio station that links them to Nepal. Called BFBS (British Forces Broadcasting Service) this is the first permanent radio broadcast in Nepal in Britain.

Gurkha soldiers stationed in the garrison at Catterick in North Yorkshire have a daily link at 6:30 every evening with the latest news from Nepal and a 10 pm link-up with Nepali radio journalist Kishore Gurung in Kathmandu.

The station on medium wave also provides music, news and requests. Some of the 500 Gurkha soldiers currently at Catterick Garrison took part in the launch of the station earlier this month, when a lunchtime link-up was made with the studio in Nepal.

Each year more than 250 new army recruits from Nepal arrive at Catterick for basic infantry training. This year saw the first intake arrive along with instructors and training staff.

Civil service cuts

Following the recommendation made by the Administration Reform Committee, the government has begun reducing the number of employees in government and semi-government offices. Last week's administrative restructuring of organisations under the Ministries of Finance, Agriculture, Housing and Physical Planning and Women, Children and Social Welfare did away with 1,045 positions, which included 153 gazetted and 592 non-gazetted officers, and 300 others.



Trade unionists organised a street meeting at Ratna Park corner on 27 July to press home their 11-point demand.

The government is also going to encourage civil servants with more than 20 years of service to opt for voluntary retirement. This comes with a lumpsum amount equal to seven years' pension which the General Administration Ministry hopes will prove attractive. The government has allocated funds to cover 700 such retirements. Meanwhile, more than 6,000 contractual and daily wage employees from semi-government offices are being given the boot, following a Finance Ministry directive not to renew their contracts after the new fiscal year that began on 16 July.

The workers thus affected are from the Drinking Water and Sanitation Corporation, Radio Nepal, Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation, National Sports Council and various district level offices. The General Administration Ministry estimates there are around 20,000 such contract and wage employees.

Farmer co-op doing well

A new study on the impact and institutional sustainability of small farmer cooperatives says that rural institutions promise to emerge as viable entities. A statement issued last week by the Agricultural Development Bank of Nepal (ADB) and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) says that farmer co-ops are doing well in terms of management capacity, decision making, member participation, resource mobilisation and communication.

The study had sampled 11 Small Farmers' Cooperatives Ltd (SFCLs) in the hills and the terai and assessed the perception of the farmers. The study concludes that "the SFCLs are clearly emerging as viable grassroots organisations".

The study found that both economic and social living conditions of co-op members had improved, particularly by reducing their dependence on moneylenders. Of the farmers surveyed, half of them said that their children could now go to school because of improved incomes.

An SFCL delivers financial and non-financial services to members in rural areas. It is member-owned and controlled and comprises of three-tiers—small farmer groups, inter-groups and main committee. At present there are 85 such co-ops, involving 50,000 members, in 29 districts.

Gag act gagged

The Development and Communications Committee of Parliament has scrapped a controversial provision in a proposed law that would have required annual renewal of newspaper registrations. Now, papers will have to inform the government upon stopping publication within a year. MP and journalist Raghu Pant had strongly opposed the gag act.

VACANCIES

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Ecotourism policy

The country's 15 protected areas are soon going to be guided by site-specific tourism policies. Tourism experts have already drafted individual policies for the Bardia National Park and the Kancharjanga Conservation Area which will deal mostly with tourism management and development.

Besides Nepal's first national park in Chitwan set up back in 1972, none of the other national parks and

conservation areas established since have been guided by an appropriate plan.

According to an official at the Wildlife and National Park Management Department, the new policies will grant executive authority to park wardens and encourage community-based tourism to provide alternative employment to people living around the protected areas.

The guidelines are likely to be welcomed by conservationists who have for long been decrying the unchecked exploitation of national parks by tourism entrepreneurs. "The short sightedness of the tourism authority is pushing the conservation areas to degradation and breaking the community cohesiveness," says a tourism expert.

Records show that half of the 500,000 or so tourists coming to Nepal visit one or the other conservation area in the country. The new policies are expected to stop overexploitation of the accessible parks and conservation areas and help explore the tourism potential of the others so far neglected by the tourism industry. ♦

Wishlists

Sambodhan, 28 July

The Communist Party of Nepal (UML) and the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party have come up with charters of demands they want the Prime Minister to consider during his talks with his Indian counterpart.

RPP's 11 points

1. Review 1950 Treaty and draft another one that reflects changed times.
2. Remove Indian army from Kalapani.
3. Prepare DPR for Mahakali since it has already been four years since the Treaty was signed.
4. Control misuse of open border between the two countries.
5. Speed up work of committee formed to demarcate border.
6. India help solve the Bhutanese refugee crisis.
7. Talk to India about its tendency to construct dams that affect Nepal adversely.
8. India help Nepal in tapping its water resources.
9. End India's levying extra taxes on products exported from Nepal against the spirit of the Nepal-India Commerce Treaty.
10. Raise the question of the safety of Nepalis living in India.
11. India take up its concern about ISI activities directly with the government and not resort to smear campaign through the media.

UML's 16 points

1. Review 1950 Treaty.
2. Demarcate border area once again.
3. Remove Indian Army from Kalapani.
4. Refuse to keep any kind of Indian security force in the country.
5. Scrap all unequal treaties which are a threat to national sovereignty.
6. Introduce ID cards in border areas.
7. Stop construction of the dam at Purnagiri.
8. Prepare detailed project report (DPR) for Mahakali.
9. Both countries help each other in the use of water resources.
10. Talk about Laxmanpur barrage and pull it down.
11. Stop construction of Laxmanpur embankment.
12. Get 36 acres of land according to the Tanakpur Treaty.
13. India help solve the Bhutanese refugee problem.

Other points concerned with the good of the government.

FREEDOM

Kamaiya (bonded labourer) family at the crossroads. The signs together spell the Nepali word for "Freedom". *Himal Khabarpatrika 31 July 2000*



QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Women should not be given property. If property rights for daughters is established, they will turn promiscuous."

—Taranath Ranabhat, Speaker of the House of Representatives ruling on UML MP Kamala Pant's demand that the Property Rights Bill under consideration in the House be passed in this session itself. Quoted in Ravibar, 30 July



Budhabar weekly, 26 July 2000

Vajpayee, I am coming over to further strengthen our friendship

Dictatorship of the majority

Editorial in *Chhathpal*, 30 July
The Nepali Congress and its government do not discuss anything in the parliament, do not accept changes in any bill suggested by the opposition, do not listen to the opinions, advice, criticism or comment, and do not care for the welfare for the country. This was proved when the Nepal Citizenship Act (Sixth Revision) was passed by the dictatorship of the majority on 26 July. Proof that the bill is not in the interest of the country lies in the fact that it had been returned by the Upper House.

This bill had earlier been passed by the House of Representatives unanimously on 1 June. The Upper House returned it on the grounds that it needed to be revised. To realise a mistake is a sensible thing; it would have been wise to correct it. Human failings can occur anywhere. Sometimes, one doesn't see them, but others can point them out.

All opposition parties, including the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), felt that the bill needed to be passed with amendments, but the Nepali Congress, in order to please someone, passed it, ignoring the voice of the opposition completely. This bill is sure to turn true citizens into non-citizens and non-citizens into true citizens.

Sikkimising Nepal

Jan Aushan, 28 July
Despite opposition from the Nepali people, the Nepali Congress used its majority to pass the anti-constitutional Citizenship Law Reformation Bill in Parliament on 26 July. This bill turns Nepalis into a minority in Nepal. People see this as a step towards the Sikkimisation of Nepal or the making of another Fiji.

On 13 July, the parliament passed the bill without opposition. Two days later, the National Assembly rejected it and sent it back to the House of Representatives. If such an anti-national bill that is hostile to the constitution of the kingdom can be passed, it is being said that should a bill to integrate Nepal into India be proposed tomorrow, it will not come as a surprise.

With the passage of the Citizenship Bill and the Mahakali Treaty by the House of Representatives, there is a strong representation of Indian interests in the parliament.

Upper house irrelevant

Asan Bazar, 29 July
After the Citizenship Bill (Sixth Revision) that had been rejected by the upper house was passed again by the lower house, the question being asked is: Is the

upper house of any use?

The National Assembly lost some respect when it returned a bill passed by the lower house without considering it for discussion and without suggesting any changes. Had the upper house returned the bill with suggestions for improvement, it would have gained respect. The role played by the elders in this episode has not only raised questions about their competence, but it has even led people to question the very relevance of the upper house.

Deuba—Maoist spokesman?

Drishiti, 25 July

The Nepali Congress does not have a clear viewpoint on the Maoist problem. Both Girija Prasad Koirala and Sher Bahadur Deuba are trying to use the Maoist issue to score political points before the party's tenth convention.

Deuba has been asking the PM to provide him with authority to hold talks with the Maoists whereas the PM claims that as he (Deuba) has already been granted that authority, it cannot be given him again. It is not clear what kind of power Deuba is seeking. A source close to the PM said that this matter had already been decided by the Central Working Committee.

"I had given the letter concerning talks sent by Maoist leader Prachanda to the PM a month and a half ago, but the PM is still silent on this," Deuba has been saying this both within his party and publicly. At the meeting of the Congress' working committee he was accused of being a spokesman for the Maoists.

Despite being warned not to make public statements since it could create more problems, Deuba has not paid heed. At a recent programme, Deuba said that until the PM shows interest and the urgency to start the talks he would not be able to do anything. He also said that the PM should realise that the matter of talking to the Maoists is a serious one and not like chatting over tea.

After this, the gulf between the two leaders has widened. Koirala called Deuba to Bulewatar the same day and warned him that if he went on this way the PM would dissolve the committee formed to hold talks with the Maoists (which Deuba heads).

Monkey Business

Gorkhapatra, 30 July

The angry farmers of Rasuwa and Nuwakot districts are getting ready to drive away their sworn enemies, the monkeys, to the Raniban forest at the northern end of Kathmandu Valley.

The farmers are suffering huge losses due to the ravaging monkeys which destroy crops and damage harvests. The "Chase the Monkeys" campaign to be coordinated by the Bhadaure Social Reform Committee and assistance is being sought from Bidur Municipality, village development committees and social organisations.

Hordes of monkeys living in the Bhorle village neighbourhood and the adjoining villages will be driven off their habitat in mid-November this year. They will be directed towards Tupche village and then to Bidur municipality from where the local residents would also help drive the monkeys further south to Kakani, Okharpauwa and finally to the Raniban forest in Nagarjun hill.

Although villagers hate the monkeys, the Reform Committee has decided not to harm them but to chase them to a better environment where they can live without fear.

The Committee has also issued a press release asking for any form of assistance from those interested.

Police case against Baburam

Budhabar, 26 July

Bhaktapur's District Police Office is getting ready to register a case against the underground Maoist leader Dr Baburam Bhattarai for planting a bomb in an attempt to blow up Bhaktapur's District Land Revenue Office on 17 June. The bomb was recovered at 9:30 in the morning the same day on the fourth floor of the office building and was defused with the help of the police.

According to sources, the police intend to charge Dr Bhattarai and his associates with "attempted murder" at the Bhaktapur District Court.

Maoists kidnapping young girls

Himalaya Times, 26 July

Sixteen-year-old Ansara Kathayat who went missing on 20 July appeared at the Area Police Office in Kalikot the next day with head half shaved. The District Police Office of Kalikot said that she had been kidnapped by Maoist rebels.

In their attempt to increase women's involvement in their rebel campaign, the underground Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) is reported to be kidnapping young girls under sixteen and forcing them to take part in the guerrilla training by force. The girls are beaten with rifle butts and have their heads shaved when they refuse.

In this month alone, more than 20 girls are reported to have been kidnapped from Achham, Dailekh, Surkhet and Kalikot.

After her release, Kathayat told the police that before her abduction seven Maoists beat her up in the Bahunlekh, accusing her of spying. She was told that since she was the daughter of a crook, she should take up arms along with them. "When I refused, they dragged me to a forest three hours away from Bahunlekh and again beat me. That was where they shaved my head. Luckily I managed to run away," she said.

Kidnappings have increased after the results of the School Leaving Certificate examination were announced, with those who got through being targeted by the Maoists. ♦



Rubbish politics



"Unless politics is taken out of garbage, and garbage is taken out of politics Kathmandu's waste problem will never be solved."

HEMLATA RAI

Nothing in Nepal is what it seems. This is also true for the rotting piles of rubbish on the sidewalks. This is no ordinary trash: someone is letting it pile up to make a political point.

During his first tenure as a Local Development Minister back in 1991, Ram Chandra Poudel, embarrassed by public outrage over trash piling up on the streets, promised an end to Kathmandu's chronic garbage crisis.

Today, Poudel is back as Local Development Minister (and Deputy Prime Minister to boot) and the garbage is still here. And once more, just as in 1991, the heaps of rubbish

signify the tussle between Poudel's ministry and the office of Kathmandu's mayor.

Kathmandu's long-suffering citizens are fed up. For them, the garbage is symbolic of everything that is wrong with politicians and their petty fights that is ruining the country.

Communities are taking care of their own garbage collection, some are beginning to recycle and compost their waste (see box).

Kathmandu Metropolitan City and the Local Development Ministry are too busy blaming each other to find a lasting solution to the crisis. Added to this are local UML leaders who are leading irate villagers to prevent garbage disposal at present and future landfill sites.

The government's search for a new dumping site began when the Gokarna landfill filled up. New sites on the outskirts of the city were proposed to replace Gokarna: Ramkot, Syuchatar, Thankot.

As an interim measure, the government started dumping garbage two weeks ago along the 8 km stretch of the Bagmati river between Gubeshwori and Gokarna where city waste is being used as filling material.

Locals are incensed. "The big fellows made deals, nobody asked our opinion. If they had, we would never have agreed," says Budhi Devi Upadhaya of Kumarigal.

Her neighbour Sabitri Upadhaya doesn't believe a word the government says. "They promised to spray disinfectants.

I will only believe it when I see it."

There have also been vehement protests from experts who say the garbage will not just pollute a holy river, but seriously contaminate ground water. Garbage is never meant to be construction material for roads, and the refuse is creating bird hazards for the nearby airport. "Unless the government learns to listen to professionals for technical advice and stops political interference, the problem will never disappear," says an irritated Bhushan Tuladhar at the Mayor's office in the Kathmandu Metropolitan City. This is not the first time that the government has refused to listen to professionals. In September 1995, a committee decided to develop Ramkot west of the city as an interim landfill, and Okharpauwa in Nuwakot district 21 km northwest of Kathmandu as a long-term landfill site.

The German aid group, GTZ that has been involved in helping Kathmandu's urban management for the past 30 years, concluded that both sites were geologically and technically inappropriate as well as too expensive to use because of the distance.

This did not deter the government, which pushed ahead with the two sites, spending Rs 50 million on a road to reach Okharpauwa. But money ran out, and the site was never prepared. Another Rs 20 million was spent on Ramkot, but even this was left unfinished.

"This is what happens when the government is not sincere about solving the problem," says Mayor Keshav Shapit, who sees a government conspiracy to make life difficult for him.

In April 1998 the government decided to hand over responsibility of waste management to the KMC, and in return it was to arrange for the landfill site. KMC proposed compost manure factories to recycle biodegradable waste at future disposal sites, arguing that this would generate income and prolong the lifespan of

sites. KMC also called for waste management bids from private parties, and 13 firms responded. Six were shortlisted, but everything is hanging in the air because the government has not fulfilled its part of the bargain by deciding on a site.

Says KMC's Tuladhar:

"Kathmandu's garbage is not a big problem, it is just made to be so. KMC needs only a piece of land and a government signature to solve the problem in an environmentally sound manner."

The men at the ministry appear defensive. "We are working full swing to work out a long-term solution to the garbage problem," says Kul Prasad Marhatta, who is the co-ordinator of the impressive-sounding Solid Waste Management National Council at the Local Development Ministry.

The stink of Kathmandu's garbage seems to have become unbearable, even in the national Parliament. Poudel told the House that the government was "thinking of" developing a landfill site in the area between Okharpauwa and Chhatre Deurali by changing the course of river.

He also said Syuchatar was still an option, and the government was trying to acquire land there. The selection process for national and international bidders to establish a garbage recycling factory had started, he claimed.

Poudel's promises has a ring of *deja vu* about it. People have heard it all before, and for now they have given up on national-level politicians ever solving the problem.

Environmental activist and KMC adviser Anil Chitrakar has observed the problem at close quarters for years, and says with an air of finality: "Unless politics is taken out of garbage, and garbage is taken out of politics Kathmandu's waste problem will never be solved." ♦

Bunds, dams and lies

The disputed claims on the Indian border bunds tell one truth: someone is lying

A barrage built by India on the Rapti River near the border at Laxmanpur that has inundated parts of the western tarai raised hackles in Kathmandu last week, poisoning the atmosphere before the Prime Minister's India visit.

A Nepali parliamentary committee report demanded that the afflux bunds leading to the barrage be knocked down. Less than 24 hours later, the Indian Embassy responded with a press release refuting every point in the report.

Nepal: The flood protection embankments and afflux bunds are too close to the border, within 300 m and 650 m from two border pillars. India: The right afflux bund is located well within Indian territory... (and) the alignment of the afflux bund is more than Lacey's Perimeter (see box) at every place. (The barrage and the embankment

are not interlinked, although there are eight Nepali villages located between the embankment and the Rapti River.) Nepal: The embankments obstruct natural drainage from high ground towards the lower reaches.

India: Admits this in the case of a local drain at Santaliya, but says a "toe drain" is under construction.

Nepal: The Laxmanpur Barrage, of which the bunds are part, has been built within 5 km of the border.

India: It is 8 km away and that the submergence it causes is within Indian territory.

Nepal: The barrage has constricted the flow of the Rapti River to 284 metres at the border, leading to back-flows.

India: The barrage is a structure for diverting non-monsoon flows and not a storage reservoir. Since the barrage is not yet operational, the question of submergence does not arise.

Nepal: These points were raised at the Standing Committee on Inundation

Problems (SCIP), but they were ignored by India.

India: All queries raised by the Nepali side have been responded to. Inundation in Nepal is not the result of anything India has built.

Nepal: Inundation has affected 2,579 households, or 15,174 people, and about 3,900 hectares of land is now under water.

The Indian Embassy statement then moved on to another river, the Mahakali, where it says Nepal is building a 19.5-km embankment without "concurrence" of the Indian government. It says "the embankment constructed so far is, at many places, very close to the river bank, if not on the river bank itself."

It adds: "Due to the construction of this embankment, there has been disturbance in the river regime in its downstream reaches in Indian territory."

There has been no response from Nepal on this so far, although the Nepali embankments on the Mahakali (Sarada, in India) are being built to protect Nepali villages which happen to be on the other side of the river.

The issue of the flooding of these villages goes back to a possible shift in river course in 1920 after India built the Sarada Barrage to protect the Banbasa power house, say Nepali experts. In any case, comparing Rapti to Sarada is like comparing apples and oranges, they say. ♦

P=2.67 √Q

If there is one example of where geopolitics and empirical hydrology meet, it is in the Indian Embassy's press statement on Laxmanpur. Nepali Times has got the following explanation for Lacey's Perimeter.

Lacey's Perimeter is $P=2.67 \sqrt{Q}$. It is based on a constant coefficient design equation to approximately define cross-sectional shape of alluvial streams at dominant discharge. Lacey developed this method on Indian canals in the Punjab during the colonial era based on data characterised by narrow range of sediment transport rates, exclusion of bed material transport, and sediment size.

It is not applicable to all stages of river flow, and also neglects the importance of the nature of bed and sides of channels. The Froude Number, a dimensionless parameter influencing open channel flow, is affected by sediment concentration, bed material size and Manning Rugosity Coefficient 'N'. But these are not included in the concept of Lacey's Perimeter pointing to its severe limitation.

BIZ NEWS

Calcutta strike ends

The Indo-Nepal Trucks and Trailers Association (INTTA) has ended its 15-day strike which had held up Nepal-bound imports at Calcutta port. The strikers were protesting against rates which cargo clearing agents—taking advantage of slack imports—had managed to bargain down. A strike by the same group about six months ago, had disrupted Nepal-bound imports for three weeks, when the INTTA and Nepal Cargo Clearing Agents Association had agreed on a 25 percent increase in cargo transport rates.

Exports continue to rise

Nepal Rastra Bank said Nepali exports grew by 42.4 percent in the first ten months of fiscal year 1999/00 to Rs 41.7 billion, up from Rs 29.3 billion in the corresponding period last year. Imports grew by 27.3 percent to Rs 78.8 billion (\$1.24 billion). The total trade deficit reached Rs. 46.1 billion. The deficit with India grew by 5.8 percent to Rs 15.7 billion while that with other trading partners grew by 16.5 percent to reach Rs 30.3 billion. The central bank said that export earnings could sustain 47.5% of imports. The total foreign reserve in mid-June (11 months) was Rs 91.76 billion, which the Bank said was enough to sustain imports for 10 and a half months.

The figures for ten months (up to mid-May) show that readymade garments did the best in the overseas export category (Rs 11.8 billion) by surpassing the 12-month total of last year (Rs 9.70 billion). Vanaspathi ghee—hydrogenated vegetable oil—still tops the export to India even though there was a 25.8 percent decline compared to the 10-month total of 1998/99 (Rs 2.87 billion). Woolen carpet exports remained at about the same level at Rs 8.18 billion.

Return of Dragon Air?

Cathy Pacific subsidiary Dragon Air is negotiating to resume flights to Nepal in September, industry sources said. The Hong Kong-based airline used to have twice-weekly flights via Dhaka until it cancelled services following a tariff dispute with the government. The airline will fly Airbus 320s direct from Hong Kong two times a week. Meanwhile Qatar Airways is adding a Doha-Paris connection which will give another European point besides Munich and London for Nepal-bound tourists.

Transavia increases capacity

Transavia, the Amsterdam-based charter subsidiary of KLM, is to double its weekly flights from Amsterdam to Kathmandu from 21 September, at the start of the tourism season, according to a company press release. The Boeing 757 flights fly to Europe from Kathmandu on Mondays and Thursdays, with a refuelling stop in Sharjah, the United Arab Emirates. The added flights will mean the airline will bring a further 430 people a week to Nepal flying direct from Europe.

More Taragaon shares

Taragaon Regency Hotels Limited (TRHL) plans to issue more shares to cover cost overruns, The Rising Nepal reported. Accordingly, shares worth Rs 185 million are to be offered only to existing shareholders. The cost overrun is attributed to expansion of hotel size—from 271 to 300 room and investments in interior design and equipment, the paper said, quoting Director Suresh Lal Shrestha.

The hotel had sold preference shares worth Rs 80 million and ordinary shares of Rs 120 million last year. The promoters are said to have underwritten Rs 135 million worth of shares for the new issue. TRHL's promoters are the Taragaon Development Board, the Sharaf Group (owner of Yak and Yeti hotel), and the ICTC group, which has interests in banking, insurance and infrastructure projects. The Asian Development Bank has equity participation in the Rs 2.84 billion project, which is planning for a "soft opening" in time for the autumn tourist season that starts in September.

Grindlays Gazette

INTEREST RATE UPDATE

NEPALI RUPEE	CURRENT%	PREVIOUS%
Call Money Avg	5.30	5.50
84 Days t/bill	5.20	5.08
91 Days t/bill	5.43	5.32
365 Days t/bill	6.18	6.16
Repo rate	5.93	5.82

NSBs worth NPR 800m floated three weeks ago by the Central Bank remained open for individuals. Last week the 91 days T/bill rate moved slightly upward due to tight market liquidity. Present market liquidity seems to be adequate and it is expected that the 91 day T/bill rate will remain in the 5.35 to 5.50% range.

FOREIGN CURRENCY

	USD	EUR	GBP	JPY	CHF
LENDING	9.50	6.25	6.00	1.37	5.12
LIBOR (1m)	6.62	4.41	6.06	0.11	3.22

The Fed rate setting committee, which raised the federal fund overnight bank lending rate six times since last June to keep inflation at bay, meets next month. Market expects the Fed to leave the rates unchanged. Japan's Central Bank Governor Masaru Hayami kept the hope of higher interest rates alive, reminding investors that the economy was recovering enough for the Bank to consider raising the rates.

BANK RATES (DEPOSITING)	Mkt Hi/Lo	Mkt Avg
S/A NPR	6.0/4.0	5.37
F/D 1 YR	7.5/6.0	6.81
OVERDRAFT	15.5/12.5	13.58
TERM LOAN	14.5/13.0	13.53
IMPORT LN	13.0/10.5	11.56
EXPORT LN	13.0/10.0	11.00
MISC LOAN	16.5/14.0	15.17

CURRENCY UPDATE

AGI/USD	CURRENT *	WK/AGO	%CHG
GOLD(Ounce)	280.00	283.10	- 1.10
OIL (Barrel)	28.50	31.40	- 9.23
EUR	0.9342	0.9374	- 0.34
GBP	1.5194	1.4976	+ 1.46
JPY	108.87	108.15	+ 0.67
CHF	1.6645	1.6527	+ 0.71
AUD	0.5871	0.5851	+ 0.34
INR	44.74	44.71	+ 0.07

*Currency bid prices at 4:30 p.m. on 24/7 - Source Reuters

Oil: Prices declined sharply amid mounting confidence that Saudi Arabia is quietly pumping more crude to cool overheated energy markets.

Currencies: The dollar pushed higher against the Yen and Euro buoyed by investor's concerns about Japan's spotty economic recovery and fresh demand for dollars amid a wave of transatlantic corporate tie-ups. Euro rally could finally be on the cards as it came under pressure, amid doubts about the growth outlook for Europe. Growing pessimism about the Japanese economy backed by weak share prices was seen to be hurting the Yen. It is expected that selling interest from Japanese exporters will rein in the dollar's upside.

INDIAN RUPEE OUTLOOK

Indian rupee firmed sharply on Monday, from Friday's closing low of 45.02, following the Central Bank's monetary package to support the rupee. The Reserve Bank of India raised the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) of banks by 50 basis points and the bank rate by one-percentage point. The Central Bank also reduced limits available to banks for refinancing facilities by 50 percent. Foreign Exchange Reserve fell to \$36.572b from \$36.667b a week ago.

The information is only indicative. Compiled and made available by Nepal Grindlays Bank Limited.

ECONOMIC SENSE

by ARTHA BEED



Save shares from the tax axe

If you are one of those pessimists who thinks that the Nepali economy is a big black hole, take heart in the optimism of the share markets. In the land of the holy bull, Nandi, the stock market is firmly a bull's best friend at the moment.

How else do you explain that shares for a hotel that is yet to start operation commands such a high price that promoters are floating a rights issue? The logic of giving an opportunity to existing shareholders to buy yet more shares is that Nepalis still treat share certificates more like lotto tickets than as investments.

The mad scramble for forms in the issue of shares by another new hotel in Kathmandu shows that in Nepal you can sell ice to an abominable snowman.

Your future financials may be in dire straits but as long as your offer paper covers it, your issue sells like hot pakoras. The upbeat share market has made some of us forget that the gradual slump in the market over five whole years has eroded millions from share values.

In the absence of opportunities for investment, Nepalis are

left with no choice other than savings, jewellery or buying the paper promises of new companies. The absence of diligence and certification of the offer papers provide opportunities for most companies to con the public. How else can offer documents get approved without even providing basic financial costs of projects?

The last time markets were buoyant was in 1994, and Nepal Rastra Bank brought in regulations restricting liquidity in the market. Then a few gyp share issues in the primary market dealt a blow that kept it sagging for many years.

Now, just as it seems to be lifting its head, the taxman has come with novel ideas to keep Nepal's capital markets down. The proposed new Income Tax Act seems to assume that the market is mature enough to be pruned with a tax axe on share investments and stock trading. Taxes are proposed on capital gains made on the sale of shares as well as on dividend income.

The fact that somebody can be made to pay tax on shares inherited makes one really wonder what kind of people are

making policy. The absence of tax on capital gains and dividend income was a major incentive for foreign investors. It was this difference from neighbouring countries that attracted the little investment so far to Nepal. The tax man seems to want to raze to the ground anything good that starts happening to the economy.

Why is there so much fuss to collect just Rs 7 billion a year? Why focus so much energy to realise money that is worth just 30 ropanis in Durbar Marg? Billions get paid under the table; companies and business people are at mercy of 'tax-pimps'; and the cost to the economy is more than what is collected.

It may be time to ponder abolishing such a law. The gains from transparent business and disclosures by companies would be worth more than the revenues that are collected now. The capital market, for one, would get a boost in the short run and also provide long-term stability.

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

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A NEPALI TIMES SURVEY

Contaminated water in taps, a scarcity of drinking water, higher urban living standards and the tourism industry have all combined to boost the production of bottled drinking water in Nepal. What's more, Nepal's budding hydro sheikhs are preparing to export Nepal's Himalayan water to Europe and East Asia.

Could "Gosainkunda" be as famous one day as "Evian"? Or, "Pokhara" overtake "Perrier"?

Bottled water is now an industry with a turnover of more than Rs 200 million a year. Six years ago, it was almost zero, and the market is still growing by about 50 percent a year. With new export markets being tapped it could one day have the same stature as the carpet industry once had, according to industry sources.

Nepal has one of the lowest figures for access to safe drinking water among developing countries. More than 32 percent of Nepal's 23 million people drink unsafe water, and one of the main causes of death among children is diarrhoeal dehydration caused by contaminated water.

Some would say that the water supplied in Kathmandu by the Nepal Drinking Water Supply Corporation is the real "mineral" water since it is contaminated with so much chemical and organic pollutants. It is the poor quality of tap water along with shortage of water that has led the people to start buying water.

Bottling water sounds simple: find a source, bottle the water and sell it. But it is more complicated than that: the source needs to be analysed for purity, a sterile bottling plant has to be set up, the workers need regular health check-ups, the output has to be continually tested for bacteria levels, and finally the product has to be sold in Kathmandu's increasingly copy-cat market and overseas buyers found.

An average investor interested in a state-of-the-art bottling water plant needs to put in as much as Rs 400

million, but the Nepali market today has about companies which began with investments as low as Rs 50 million.

In an industry that closely guards its sales figures, it is hard to compare performance. Sanjay Dugar, Managing Director of Aqua Minerals Nepal, says: "I'm not a large player in the market, but a respected one. We go for quality."

Sunil Malla, national sales



Not just bottled consumer packs, today even the 20-gallon water packs have become a common sight at every bhoj, office canteen and hotel kitchen.

manager of Thirst-Pi, claims his is the widest selling brand.

Thirst-Pi, which bottles water from a spring in Dakshinkali in a Rs 90 million plant, is also going for ISO 9002 certification within a year. Malla says exports to Europe are planned, but he may need to change the name of his brand before he does that.

There have been unscrupulous water companies which reportedly bottled and sold the water directly from the tap until the trick was discovered and the industry hounded them out. There is also some illicit re-bottling going on.

Now there are water companies that not only have the Nepal Standard certification but are also eyeing to market Himalayan water in Europe, Japan and Korea.

"It is technology that has made this possible," says Dugar, whose plant in Balaju cost Rs 370 million. "There used to be a time when the source of water mattered, now with the reverse osmosis technology widely

Nepal's water wealth doesn't just mean hydro-electricity any more, it is also bottled drinking water.

available, it has become less important."

As the market grows, it may be only a matter of time before distilled water begins to come in the "mineral" water bottles we are getting so used to.

Water is a growth industry all over the world, thanks mainly to increasing pollution of water sources and the health bug that has bitten those that can afford the drink. Evian, the world's leading brand, sells natural spring water tapped in the French Alps. The water is filtered through a natural process which, the company says, takes 15 years to reach the bottle after it falls on the mountain as rain.

One Nepali water bottler says it produces pure Himalayan spring water through a similar process. Nara International Himalayan Spring Water, the Nepali-South Korean venture, has set up a factory near Dhunche to tap water from a spring inside Langtang National Park.

Its 13,000 sq m factory complex is located near Dhunche, and is already producing bottled water for the Kathmandu market. Its launch last week was postponed because landslides blocked the Dhunche road.

"We'll be in the market in about a week," says Shankar Shakya of Nara. The company has plans to export the spring water to South Korea, where it is expected to sell at about one dollar a bottle.

The water source is fed by melting snow seeping through 3,000 metres of Himalayan bedrock, according to a company brochure. Since it is tapped from within a strictly controlled conservation area the water source is well protected.

The safety aspect of the water industry is also going high tech, and there are now standards for pH levels, permissible bacterial content (under specific testing conditions), etc.

Experts say even bottled

water may contain some bacteria but that is fine as long as it does not have harmful germs. The bacterial content in the water depends on many things including, testing conditions, the packaging material used and even storage and display environments.

There is no water testing laboratory in Nepal but given the sensitive nature of the industry—where sales could plunge the moment there are reports that the water is sub-standard—many companies try to keep their product within the parameters set by the International Bottled Water Association (IBWA).

Earlier this month an independent pathologist tested bottled water brands and released the bacterial counts in the media.

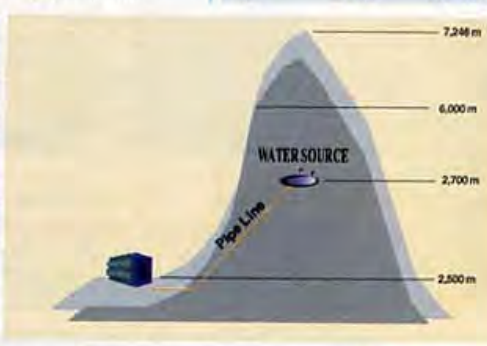
For lack of specific local standards, it was difficult to compare if that was good or bad.

Companies like Aqua have tried marketing Nepali water in India and Japan, but did not have much success. Indian sales were discontinued after customs hassles and the water did not sell well enough in Japan, according to Dugar.

Nara, with its South Korean partners, could fare better but that will depend on the marketing and distribution network. If it does well, Nepal could enter a new hydro industry for Himalayan waters. ♦

Water price

Aqua 100	1 litre	Rs 15
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	750ml	Rs 10
Bailey	1 litre	Rs 15
Bisleri	1 litre	Rs 12
LA 100	1 litre	Rs 12
Mt Peak	1 litre	Rs 15
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	1.5 litre	Rs 18
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Kids and brand loyalty

Ouch. If you're a parent, your purse will already have felt it



ANDREAS HEIMANN

It drives parents crazy, but retailers love it. When teenagers go shopping, they aren't happy with just any old brand. It has to be this make of jeans or that make of shorts.

When it comes to jogging shoes, only Nike will do, while if it's a jacket they need, it has to be a Tommy Hilfinger.

Concerned parents tend to react with perplexity: has the youth of today given in to mindless consumerism? Are they so brainwashed by slick advertising campaigns?

One thing is certain: nowadays children and adolescents in the developed world have a lot of spending power.

According to a market research carried out by the Institute for Youth Research (IJF) in Munich, approximately two thirds of all teenagers regularly receive an average of about 13 dollars pocket money from their parents.

Add to that 60 dollars worth of cash birthday gifts from various relatives and the same amount again at Christmas, and it is no wonder that in 1999, this age group registered a total annual "income" of 2.1 billion dollars, an increase of five percent over 1998.

Older adolescents boost this figure considerably through part-time work. The IJF claims that the 15 to 24 year age group earns a total of 48 billion dollars a year.

The advertising and retail industries long ago identified adolescents as a lucrative target

"Growing up is all about defining one's own identity. To feel you belong to a certain group, you need distinguishing features."

group. They do not focus on teenagers alone—junior school pupils also have an increasingly important say in what their parents buy when out shopping.

"Children are maturing faster and are allowed to spend money on their own at an earlier age," says Ingo Barlovic from the market research institute Iconkids & Youth in Munich. "When they are buying very expensive items, the mother will accompany the child to the shop but she won't buy anything the child doesn't want."

Clothes are the root of many a family argument. "With trends changing so quickly, parents tend not to be very understanding when it comes to satisfying their children's whims and fancies," explains Barlovic.

"Anyone who grew up in the Seventies and was used to wearing a pair of Levi's for several years on end cannot understand why retailers feel they have to bring out something new every five months."

On the other hand, Barlovic cannot understand why parents are often incensed by teenagers' stubbornness when it comes to picking out a pair of trainers: "It's completely natural for children to be so brand-orientated," he says.

Marianne Soff agrees: "Growing up is all about defining one's own identity," says the psychologist from the University for Educational Theory in Karlsruhe. And that process inevitably involves comparing and copying others. "To feel you belong to a certain group, you need distinguishing features," she explains, and that is where trendy brand names come into play.

Silke von Mueller-Schurig, a psychologist at the Institute for Youth Research, also believes it

is quite normal for children to want to distinguish themselves from both younger children and adults.

That would explain some teenagers' predilection for fashionable beers such as Mexican "Corona". The youngest in the family drinks lemonade while the father prefers a traditional lager.

Also typical is adolescents' tendency to want to "break the rules", as researchers into youth behavioural patterns describe the sudden desire, for example, to have themselves pierced. This also serves to shock the teenager's parents.

As they find it more and more difficult to distinguish themselves from adults, adolescents often adopt extreme tactics. Impractical platform shoes or unnecessarily wide flares are among the relatively harmless manifestations.

Of equally great importance is the need for involvement with one's contemporaries. "That starts with Teletubbies," says von Mueller-Schurig. "Any child who hasn't seen on TV what his friends have seen will feel left out of the conversation and will quickly assume the role of an outsider."

The older the children, the

more importance is attached to what their friends and other schoolchildren think of them, particularly of their clothes. The wrong jacket can become a source of considerable embarrassment.

Adolescent fashions are not decided by the toy industry and advertising agencies alone. "Some brand names used to be known only on the music or skateboard scene," says Barlovic, "and now they have become popular without much of a marketing campaign."

And fashion does not

necessarily have to be expensive, as witnessed by the success of the Swedish clothes chain, H&M.

When parents can no longer afford to indulge their children's fashionable

whims, it is important they assert themselves and ask their children if they think their desired purchase is really absolutely necessary, advises Marianne Soff.

A vital part of every healthy upbringing is learning to discipline oneself and sometimes simply to do without, she says.

♦ (dpa)

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Art of installation

MIN BAIRACHARYA



SALIL SUBEDI



SALIL SUBEDI

Two young Nepali artists come of age with breath-taking exploration of identity and space.

the projector of that dark Truth."

The Bhairav mask represents an inward experience. The symbol of the divine protector becomes a metaphor for the protected inner self which can either be false, evil, good, wise or a beholder of the truth.

This experiment recasts the traditional symbol but the deliberate use of the red mask, contrasted with the black (to symbolise the artist's self), represents the true self reflected by the 'truthful' mirror.

An interesting exhibit of Sujan's redefines 'gallery space'. A white room is used as a painting as a whole, and the deliberate use of colour to mark cardinal directions and the placement of masks on the panels form parts of that 'whole'.

The artist also experiments with modern technology (the use of a video monitor to capture the 'moment' and 'recreate' it, the use of photographs and the use of contemporary materials).

Another of Sujan's interesting works, titled "Which one shall I wear", had a man lying under a glass table propped up by beer bottles, the masks of nine colours atop the glass top representing the *navarasas* (the nine emotions of art, according to classical Indian tradition).

A friend confessed he "felt like a fool" when he looked into the "Room with a View", an exhibit that takes you back to that part of childhood (through a recurring metaphor—a paper boat) and yet invites you to look inward through the fractured

images of yourself in the mirrors and through the mask that stares back at you.

Its varied themes, drawing from history, myth and contemporary life, give this exhibition an added dimension. The first exhibit, titled "Fish, Pyramid and Sea", is an aquarium-topped brick pyramid with the sound of the sea in the background, combining an early Christian theme (the fish associated with both Christ and bio-history) with the pyramid as a symbol yearning to reach God.

Another, titled "Are you the betrayer: the Last Supper", has 11 'framed' moulds made of different materials, with Christ represented by an empty gold frame crowned with thorns. The exhibit is complete when the viewer places his face in the empty frame (making him the last disciple). The question then follows: Is he the betrayer?

Says Binod, "It is not the end product that matters...but the process...the process in which I develop a relationship with the surface, material and the subject."

This consciousness, from which emerges the sound that accompanies the pyramid exhibit, drew him to record the sound of the sea off the southern coast of India, and thereby imbue the exhibition with its recurrent theme of the paper boat—signifying experience, the fragility of a life afloat, of journeying and drifting.

This fine creative effort called for a refined artistic sensibility without being obnoxious. Its communicative strength, subtle and strong, marks an adaptation from the

Clockwise from below:

The Room of Disguises: Step in for a glimpse of your multiple identities.

The mask of Bhairav and the mask of inner self with artist Sujan reflected in the 'truthful' mirror.

The Last Supper: The viewer, looking through the opening, is framed as the twelfth disciple at the table. Who, then, is the betrayer?

Artists Sujan and Binod with the curator, Preeti, in between. A confluence of creative energies.

Posing in front of the mask and the string rain with boats, and flanked by mask panels.

SAMUEL THOMAS

Now, this was an exhibition with a difference. It departed from tentative attempts and was possibly Kathmandu's first effort at "firming the ground" for installation art. But above all it was an innovative exploration of ideas and interactive space that is so crucial to this genre.

The exhibition mirrors the assimilation of a varied artistic and human experience, tempered and filtered through a modern consciousness.

The artists, Sujan Chitrakar and Binod Shrestha, underwent formal training at Kathmandu's Fine Arts Campus before pursuing further studies at a couple of India's finest art institutes.

Confluence, as the exhibition

is aptly titled, mirrored this assimilation of a varied artistic and human experience, tempered and filtered through a modern consciousness. The themes draw inward (with that sense of drifting, of moving back in time, exploring questions of identity) and also looking outward at experience, at the morphing of ideas in the crucible of our time.

The core ideas in the exhibition dealt with experience and the search for one's identity. Both artists repeatedly use masks (365 in all, one for each day of the year), to explore the question of identity in time and space.

With Sujan, the masks that represent our multiple identities are innovatively presented to highlight the "phantasmal realm into which one plunges, on adorning the mask...the false reality one projects in order to hide the dark demons which lurk below, and the mirror as



MIN BAIRACHARYA

Imagine no computer

Perhaps our computer-heavy culture actually does do more harm to our work than good.

MEEROPE MILLS

He will probably be called backward and undoubtedly labelled a Luddite, but Mitsuyasu Ota, the mayor of Hirata in Japan, doesn't care. In a bold and highly unpopular move, the boss of the town's municipal offices has just imposed a one-day-a-week ban on the use of computer equipment at work.

In our hi-tech modern world, such a step seems like self-inflicted torture. To most of us, wiping out computer use at work would be inconceivable to the smooth running of the office. But perhaps Ota is right. Perhaps our computer-heavy culture actually does do more harm to our work than good. After asking a handful of people to jot down a daily computer diary at work, it is tempting to side with Ota. A database software tester who spends most of his days glued to a screen relays part of his day:

9am—Ease into the day with a strong coffee before booting up and checking emails in anticipation of some funny forwards to amuse me through my first half hour.

9:30am—Headphones go on. MP3 server is activated so I can listen to music while working at pace through a

report document in Word.

11.30am—Casual surf of the internet to find details of last-minute bargain flights for my summer hols.

2.30pm—Email attachments from friends start arriving. I have my work cut out playing with them and ensuring they are forwarded to appropriate parties. Gems include a "How naughty are you in bed?" quiz, the obligatory David Beckham joke and a string of cartoons about different nationalities' willies.

And so on. This wasn't how it was supposed to be. When computers were introduced into our working lives, they were seen as the key to a hyper-productive workplace. But the promised benefits of increased IT investment have failed to materialise. Theories abound as to why what economists call the "productivity paradox" exists, but most users will admit that alongside computational privileges come distractions. Perhaps the endless technical problems or sheer irritation of being stuck in front of a monitor all day begin to take their toll.

These days, many computer games come equipped with a "boss screen" that pops up to deter probing eyes. Such in-built paranoia is there for a reason.

Accountants Accpac International estimate that American businesses lose around \$100 billion per year to PC gaming.

Likewise, electronic mail has proved a mixed blessing in the workplace. As well as the time-consuming replies to friends and colleagues, experts admit that email exchanges at work are rarely as productive as face-to-face conversations. Interacting via computer involves a completely different set of social rules since people are more blunt and honest when they are not talking face-to-face. On the plus side, it can flatten the

hierarchy and improve communication between different levels in an organisation. But there is evidence that people don't engage properly because computers take away a lot of the characteristics you need for a job to be satisfying.

This feeling can bring problems of its own. Cliff Saran, technical editor of *Computer Weekly* magazine, describes the experience of being busy doing nothing in front of his PC. "People tend to be very reactive when sitting in front of a computer, so it's easy to find yourself just staring at it waiting for something to happen," he says. "If you deal a lot with emails, you might be avidly

awaiting one, but actually doing nothing but twiddling your thumbs until it arrives."

Robert Kling, professor of information science at Indiana University and author of *Computerisation and Controversy*, has been debating the productivity paradox for some time. "There has been a relentless promotion of computerisation as almost guaranteeing large productivity gains at work," he says, "but the economic evidence doesn't bear that out."

Kling adds. "Computer work can be very seductive, which

isn't necessarily a good thing. It's become a substitute for more active work because people tend to think they can get a lot done online or with spreadsheets or formal typed reports. It has the allure of making work seem easy when it actually puts managers less in touch with the realities of their own workplaces."

His advice echoes Ota's unpopular course of action. "Turn computers off for a few hours and work in other ways."

(The Guardian)

India's internet matchmakers

NEW DELHI - How does a Hindu living in Delhi find a bride belonging to Kurmi caste in the eastern state of Bihar whose surname or horoscope do not point to a common male ancestor?

At least educated and well-off Indian lonely hearts are now getting a helping hand from the Internet in finding a life partner. "There are so many parameters that it can take years to find a partner," says entrepreneur Rohit Tandon who runs the matchmaking website Jeevansathi.com with his brother Amit.

The site is one of the many in cyberspace for fixing weddings in India. The others include Matrimonialonline.com and Indiantrack.com.

Jeevansathi, which was founded six months ago, has registered 20,000 singles, two-thirds of whom are men. The website records 20,000 hits every day. "We have the cream of India," says Amit proudly of his website. Jeevansathi's service is free but there is a plan to charge a fee for displaying photographs or the automatic provision of information. The profits reportedly come from advertising.

"Marriages are made in heaven. Partners are found in Matrimonialonline" is the claim of the website of the same name. Advertising to seek a bride or a groom is quite common. "In cities 90 per cent of the couples find each other through newspaper ads," says Rohit Tandon.

Matrimonial websites mirror a changing scenario. "In newspapers, 90 per cent of the ads are by the parents. At our site, 90 percent of the people advertise themselves," says Rohit Tandon.

And strangely for India with its caste and religious divides, one-fourth of the users of Jeevan Sathi are ready to marry a follower of a different religion. For about three-fourths of the customers caste does not matter.

The websites also offer information about party services, beauticians, photographers and marriage consultants and even private detectives to get the full background of the future in-

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ULFA eclipses Bhutanese refugee crisis

The activities of Assamese rebels inside Bhutanese territory threatens to push the plight of the 100,000 Bhutanese refugees in Nepal into further limbo.

A NEPALI TIMES INVESTIGATION

There is mounting concern in India, especially in its eastern state of Assam, over the activities of rebel groups operating from Bhutanese territory and the underhand support they allegedly receive from high officials in Thimphu.

For the first time since the eviction of more than 100,000 people of Nepali origin from Bhutan began ten years ago, a bigger crisis involving an armed uprising in India threatens to spill over into the Himalayan kingdom and overshadow the refugee issue.

Heavily armed guerrillas belonging to the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and rebels from the indigenous Bodo group have been fighting for greater autonomy and a separate homeland.

When the Indian armed forces began cracking down on the ULFA eight years ago, the militants moved across the heavily forested border into Bhutan and established bases there. Today, there are an estimated 2,000 heavily armed ULFA guerrillas as far as 100 km inside Bhutan.

Sensitive to pressure from

Bhutanese government told the Indian media that it was "trying hard" to find out the culprits and implicated two junior officials for helping ULFA transfer money abroad.

Earlier this month, Indian intelligence agencies presented what they called concrete evidence of the connivance of senior Bhutanese officials, including Brigadier Vetsop Namgyel, "security in-charge" and ADC to King Jigme.

According to Indian reports, Brigadier Namgyel was "actively involved" in obtaining arms and ammunition for ULFA from foreign countries. Reports said help was rendered on one such

of Foreign Affairs. The two reportedly facilitated the use of diplomatic pouches to carry money and documents for ULFA leaders in Thailand and Bangladesh.

The Bhutanese authorities sacked two foreign ministry staffers, but the two were merely grade 15 and 17 employees assigned mailbag duties.

According to information leaked by Indian intelligence, a travel agency in Thimphu, Takin Travel Services, helps ULFA officials move in and out of Bhutan. ULFA chieftain, Padesh Baruah, is said to use the alias Kamruzzaman Khan, and regularly flies from Paro to Bangkok, Singapore and Dhaka.

The region where Bhutan, Assam, Bangladesh, Nepal and China converge is called the "chicken neck" and is of strategic importance to Indian defence planners, and any instability in this area would greatly undermine India's ability to control the north-east.

If Indian security forces fail to resolve the ULFA insurgency quickly, there is a danger of it escalating and engulfing the whole northeast. One of the keys to bring ULFA to heel would be to drive them out of their sanctuary in Bhutan.

Bhutan's National Assembly has been debating the crisis this month, and representatives have said that since requests have failed to dislodge the ULFA militants from their camps, military force may have to be considered.

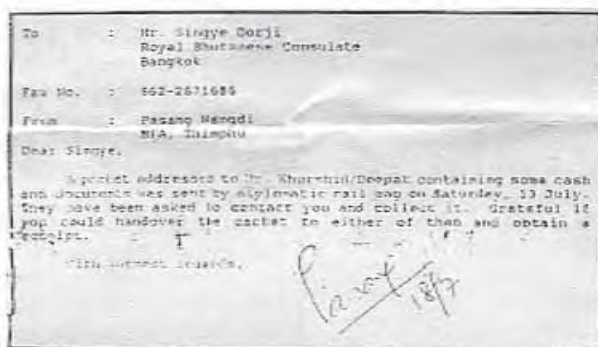
India has for long been asking permission to allow its troops to enter Bhutan to flush out the militants. But it has so far been refused because of the sovereignty implications such an action would have for Bhutan. Now there is now a strong possibility that Indian troops will be involved, overtly or covertly, in any anti-ULFA operation.

Assam's Chief Minister Prafulla Mahanta last week welcomed the Bhutan National Assembly resolution, saying: "In case Bhutan finds it difficult to launch an army operation on its own against the militants, they should not hesitate to take the help of the Indian Army."



Assam's Chief minister Mahanta addressing crowd

Meanwhile, in the past week, the Nepali media has carried stories of links between a radical faction of Bhutanese refugees in eastern Nepal and ULFA. The Gorkha National Liberation Front of Bhutan (GNLF) under Sampang Rana said his group is receiving training and support from ULFA inside Bhutan. ♦



Copy of note sent to Singye Dorji at the Bhutanese Consulate in Bangkok by Pashang Wangdi at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Thimphu in July last year. "Kharid", according to Indian officials is the code-name of a senior ULFA leader.

the King they would go back only after they got their own homeland.

Now, state authorities in Assam say they have concrete evidence that high Bhutanese officials have helped ULFA leaders with transfers of money, weapons, and also facilitated their travel through Paro airport to Bangkok and other countries.

Following these reports, the

occasion when a major consignment of arms for ULFA was allowed to pass through the Bhutan-Tibet border to Deothang in eastern Bhutan on 8 April 1999.

These reports, leaked to the Assamese media, also implicated the counsellor of the Royal Bhutanese Consulate in Bangkok, Singye Dorji and Pashang Wangdi of the Ministry

Taliban ban on poppy

Peshawar - The supreme leader of Afghanistan's ruling Islamic Taliban militia, Mullah Mohammad Omar, has issued a ban on poppy cultivation in the country. In a decree from the Taliban's headquarters of Kandahar, southern Afghanistan, the reclusive leader ordered that opium-poppy must not be grown in Afghanistan henceforth. Those violating the ban would be punished.

Mulla Omar also warned the opposition that poppy crops in their areas would be destroyed if the Taliban capture them. The opposition alliance of forces is mainly restricted to northern Afghanistan and is resisting the Taliban militia's bids for control over the entire country. The Taliban control more than 80 percent of the war-torn country including the capital Kabul.

The hardline militia spokesman Abdul Hayee Mutmain said in Kandahar that the Taliban's decision of banning poppy cultivation was not taken under any pressure.

The Taliban were under criticism by international anti-drug agencies for collecting taxes on the opium-poppy crop. In February this year, an official of the United Nations Drug Control Programme, Thomas Cronin-Zeindl, said in Islamabad that the radical Islamic Taliban received "a part" of the 180 million dollars that Afghan narcotic producers are believed to have earned from last year's crop. (dpa)

NZ raps Japan on whaling

Wellington - New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark condemned Japan for continuing to ignore world opinion by hunting whales in the North Pacific.

In a statement, she dubbed "deplorable" news that the Japanese whaling fleet was about to leave port to begin the slaughter of 100 whales in "a new programme of so-called scientific whaling" in the region. Clark said Japan's action defied a resolution condemning its whaling programme that the International Whaling Commission in Adelaide, Australia, passed recently with the support of top-level representatives of US President Bill Clinton and British Prime Minister Toni Blair.

She said the commission resolved that the research Japan wants to conduct does not justify the killing of whales. Reducing the target number from the original 160 to 100 meant nothing at all, Clark said. "There is no convincing scientific reason for the Japanese to kill any whales at all," she said. "It is well known that meat from the whales killed during these 'scientific' expeditions finishes up at Japanese dinner tables." (dpa)

Sri Lanka growth on track

Colombo - The good news for Sri Lanka is that economic growth is on track despite the ongoing ethnic conflict. But the bad news: growth would have doubled without the war.

The economy will grow faster this year, although the escalation in the battle between Sri Lankan troops and Tamil Tiger rebels is draining government funds, says the Central Bank governor, A.S. Jayawardene. Sri Lanka's gross domestic product is expected to grow by between 5 percent and 5.5 percent this year, against last year's 4.3 percent.

Yet the nearly two decade-old ethnic violence, which began in 1983, is driving investors away and hurting the country's growth prospects. Without the war, the growth rate of the Sri Lankan economy could have doubled and the country could have become a South Asian financial and manufacturing centre, he added.

According to Jayawardene, the war is expected to push up defence spending by up to 62 billion rupees (805 million U.S. dollars) this year, up from 49 billion rupees (636.4 million dollars) last year.

Overall, exports rose by 21 percent in the first five months of this year, with the biggest chunk of exports going to the United States, according to central bank figures. Sri Lanka is the world's biggest tea exporter, accounting for about 20 percent of total global exports. (IPS)

Child domestics banned for Indian officials

New Delhi - The Indian government has barred its senior bureaucrats from employing children below the age of 14 years as domestic servants. The direction follows a recommendation and insistence of the Indian National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). It quoted officials as saying the government has amended the service rules for its bureaucrats which bars children being employed as domestics.

The agency said any government official found violating the rules would be hauled up for misconduct as well as invite major penalty.

According to official statistics there were over 20 million child labourers in India in 1994 while figures by non-governmental organisations put it at up to 100 million. (dpa)

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COLUMN

by KOFI A. ANNAN



A coalition for universal values

is embedded in broadly shared values and practices that reflect global social needs, and that all the world's people share the benefits of globalisation.

That is why, in Davos, I proposed the Global Compact, based on nine key principles drawn from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Labour Organisation's fundamental principles on rights at work and the Rio Principles on environment and development—which were agreed at the Earth Summit in 1992 and enjoy universal consensus among the world's governments.

The essence of the Compact is that, to help make markets sustainable at the global level, enlightened corporate leaders of the new world economy will act on these principles in their own corporate management practices.

At today's meeting, the corporate leaders who are prepared to take this step will be joined by heads of international labour and civil society organisations active in the fields of human rights, economic and social development, and protecting the global environment.

They, too, are taking a bold step. Their joining this coalition doesn't mean they've abandoned whichever cause their particular group was set up to champion. It does mean they accept the need to place that cause in a broader context, because it is more likely to flourish in a free

and more prosperous world.

Some may say that business should stick to business, and leave wider concerns to government. Certainly it is true that neither corporations nor voluntary groups can replace the indispensable role of the state.

But we cannot wait for governments to do it all. Globalisation operates on Internet time. Meanwhile, governments tend to be slow moving by nature, because they have to build political support for every step. That is especially true in international affairs, where they also have to reach agreement with each other.

Over the last 12 months, many of the firms and organisations represented at the last week's meeting have been working with the United Nations to define their roles in the Global Compact.

Specifically, our business partners have agreed to do three things:

- They will become public advocates for the Compact and its nine principles in their corporate mission statements, annual reports and similar venues.

- At least once a year they will post on our website specific examples of progress they have made, or lessons learned, in putting the principles into practice in their own corporate domains.

- And they will join with the United Nations in partnership projects, either at the policy level—for instance, a

dialogue on the role of corporations in zones of conflict—or at the operational level, such as helping African or South Asian villagers link up to the Internet, or strengthening small and medium-sized firms in developing countries.

The labour and civil society partners will help build and deepen the Compact, and lend their expertise and support to designing and implementing its undertakings.

So, what do I hope the meeting will achieve?

First, I hope it will send out a clarion call for others to join us. We need to gain a critical mass among leading companies, and in their supply chains, so that the Compact can truly be called Global.

Secondly, I hope we can establish the Compact as a forum for ongoing dialogue among the three sets of partners—devising common solutions to common problems.

Thirdly, and most important, our new coalition for universal values must move swiftly to translate good intentions into concrete actions. The success of the Global Compact will be measured by its ability to make a real difference to the lives of real people. ♦

(The author is Secretary-General of the United Nations. Last week's meeting can be accessed at www.unglobalcompact.org)

Greens attack Global Compact

New York - Human rights and green groups denounced the joint project by the United Nations and the private sector in which a group of multinational firms pledged to respect human rights, labour rights and environmental standards.

The agreement—called Global Compact and signed last week at the UN headquarters in New York—included corporations that had violated those principles and therefore compromised the standards of the UN, the coalition of non-profit groups charged.

The international grouping—formed by organisations from Uruguay, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Brazil, India and the United States—said the collaboration is "threatening the mission and integrity of the United Nations".

Project participants like Nike, Shell, BP Amoco, Rio Tinto Plc and Novartis had in the past shown a lack of respect for human rights, labour standards and the environment, they claimed.

The non-profit coalition includes the Third World Institute in Uruguay, the Transnational Institute and Greenpeace International in the Netherlands and several institutes in the United States dealing with globalisation and policy studies. (IPS)

Gypsies want nation status

Prague - The main body representing Europe's 12 million Gypsies wants the Roma (Gypsy) people to be given recognition as a non-territorial nation, and says it will back this up with its own "floating" parliament and embassies in various countries.

It is the first time that the International Union Romani has made such a demand for international recognition since it was founded in London three decades ago.

The organisation's fifth world congress concluded in Prague last week with the presentation of a wide-reaching plan aimed at creating better living conditions for Europe's fastest-growing ethnic minority and increasing the Roma's power to lobby governments which discriminate against them.

In 1993 the International Union Romani was granted the status of an advisory committee at the UN, greatly increasing its lobbying power, but the congress document is its most significant political statement so far.

Sean Nazerali, one of the conference organisers said the time was long overdue to address one of the main Roma problems of the last 1,000 years—non-recognition of its nationhood by an international system geared to recognising states only. (Guardian)

US to miss greenhouse gas target

Washington - The United States is unable to meet the legally binding greenhouse gas reduction target it accepted at the Kyoto climate conference in 1998. Unless Europe gives way and allows the US unlimited rights to trade internationally in so-called "carbon credits", it will not fulfil "a large fraction" of its obligations, US under-secretary for global affairs, Frank Loy, said.



Countries can offset domestic carbon emissions by planting forests, buying credits from countries which have fallen below their own limits, or by helping to build clean power stations in polluting countries. But others want to limit America's ability to buy its way out of its domestic obligations.

The booming US economy of the 1990s had pushed up carbon dioxide emissions by 12 percent on 1990 levels. To achieve the reduction of 7 percent on 1990 levels by 2010, as promised at Kyoto, it would have to get emissions 30 percent below the projected level.

"We have not got a snowball's hell of doing this unless we use market mechanisms like carbon trading with other countries. The earth does not care where the carbon dioxide comes from. If we get more carbon cuts for each dollar in Kenya or China then the earth benefits more."

"There is only a certain amount of money available for climate change and we have to make the most of it."

Tony Juniper of Friends of the Earth said: "The US is doing tricks with arithmetic rather than deal with some of the fundamental problems of profligate use of fossil fuels." (Guardian)

Aus, NZ compromise on GM food

Canberra - Australian and New Zealand government ministers have adopted a zero-threshold standard for labelling of some foods with genetically modified (GM) content, a decision welcomed by activists as a step forward.

But they have also angered consumer and environmental groups by exempting from the regulations many additives, processing aids and food sold at restaurants and cafes.

The new standards, unlikely to come into force until mid-2001, were adopted by a seven-to-three vote by the Australian and New Zealand Food Standards Council (FSC).

While the standards adopted at the meeting in Wellington last week are tougher than the US ones, they are weaker in a number of important aspects than those adopted by the European Union. (IPS)

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More LDCs

New York - The world's least developed countries (LDCs) are increasing in number despite 20 years of international efforts to break them out of aid-dependency.

Of today's 48 LDCs, 33 are in Africa, nine in Asia, one in the Caribbean and five in the Pacific Region. Botswana is the only country to ever be removed from the LDC list and, according to the UN, Senegal, Congo and Ghana meet criteria to be added to the list this year amidst serious deterioration of their economies.

The number of LDCs has been rising dramatically—at a rate of approximately one per year—since the international community in 1971 recognised the existence of this category of countries.

Although LDCs constituted about 10 percent of the world's population in 1997, their share in the world inputs was only 0.6 percent and in world exports 0.4 percent. These represent declines of more than 40 percent since 1980 and are a testimony to the increasing marginalisation of LDCs. (IPS)

Aid policy is better than no policy



After five decades, Nepal is finally asking what it is we want from aid

BINOD BHATTARAI

Beggars can't be choosers, is the way Nepal has looked at foreign aid for the past 50 years. And that was the way aid has been given from the very early US, Soviet, Chinese or Indian aid programmes: as handouts.

Things may at last be changing so that Nepalis can see foreign assistance more as a partnership, and less as charity.

The government kept an important promise made last year by finally coming out with a draft of a new Foreign Aid Policy. It was released three days before the end of the fiscal year, nervously close to the government's self-imposed deadline.

It doesn't make any earth-shattering revelations. And for a country that is almost completely donor dependent, it doesn't overtly criticise aid or aid-givers. Nor does it go for the jugular by analysing aid utilisation and effectiveness. The Ministry of Finance (MOF) seems more concerned about regulating and controlling aid flows than in ensuring its efficient use.

Like all reports that are published in a hurry, the content is general and is full of holes. But at least Nepal now has a "Policy". The recommendations include:

- Local auditing of donor-funded activities
- Transparency in fund transfers through INGOs
- All agencies to inform government of aid transfers
- Donor-funded official activities to be reflected in budget
- Ministry of Finance to be focal point for all donor contact

In a country where donors and diplomats have become used to not-so-subtly dictating public policy, the draft

document may not mean much in the short term. But if followed faithfully, MOF officials say it could improve selection, monitoring, and efficiency of future foreign aid.

Nepal's reliance on aid is severely lopsided: 60 percent of this year's budget depends on foreign grants and loans.

The debt-serving bill (on an external loan portfolio that adds up to a hefty 54 percent of GDP) is now 34 percent of the regular budget. Nearly 70 percent of the money Nepal gets as aid are loans, up to US\$ 400 million annually.

The problems with aid are well known: it is donor-driven, fragmented, projects are half-baked and directionless, resources are wasted and duplicated. At best it creates dependency, and at worst much of it never gets to target beneficiaries. Why else, after US\$ 4 billion worth of aid in the past 50 years would Nepal be as poor as when it started out?

Nepal's decade-old democratisation has led to the growth of a new sector in foreign aid: NGOs. Seeing its sources of funds channelled elsewhere could be one reason the government is trying to regulate aid flows to NGOs. But it could also mean victimisation of genuine grassroots development groups.

The Foreign Aid Policy at least articulates a sort of a "mission statement" for what aid should achieve in Nepal: self-sustained high economic growth and self-reliance to mobilise resources needed to finance development.

The means to carry that out are also what they should be: enhanced transparency, uniformity and accountability, donors made to act more as facilitators and less as dictators. The policy tries to define priorities, although the one in circulation reads more like a wish list than a realistic inventory.

The document also recognises a well-known

problem in the foreign aid business that goes by the jargon, "capacity building". It says: "Excessive dependence on technical assistance has also not contributed to the development of institutional capacity." The Ministry of Finance is one entity that should understand more than any other what a "TA" is—two technical assistance projects have been underway there for about 10 years now with little tangibles to show.

A typical TA sets aside up to 80 percent of the budget to pay foreign consultants, another 10 percent for project vehicles (read: consultant's Pajero) and only the remaining 10 percent for actual operational activities.

"We now want to retain and use as much of that money as possible for the intended purpose," says a Nepali aid official. "That is not happening now, and worse, the technical assistance projects tend to be never-ending."

An economic liberalisation project funded by the US government in the early 1990s is still ongoing. In the beginning the project did provide valuable advice on how to set up Nepal's nascent stock market and go about privatising state enterprises. Today, even Finance Ministry officials are not sure what the project is doing, or even who runs it.

Such TAs can be found in every government ministry. Vehicles with blue plates in ministry parking lots testify how many donors may be working to build our capacity. Today, technical experts are even attached to NGOs.

"We now have TAs to prepare terms of references for consultants, report writing, even to tell us how to make our laws," an MOF official said. "The question is: do we really need them?"

Nepal may not be able to reject TAs outright since it is high on the donor agenda. TA budgets can be very high, as in the case of one NGO, where almost 35 percent.

"We've not been consistent with decisions because we never had a policy before," says

Finance Minister Mahesh Acharya.

The government discussed the draft with donors on 25 July. Only the World Bank came prepared for the meeting with written comments. Others commented on specific areas, but seemed less prepared, according to sources.

Overall, the Bank praised the government's effort but did have some "frank and sincere" comments. It said making a medium-term expenditure framework would help bring all public aid inside the budget envelope, which could encourage donors to move away from the general practice of financing new investments and not recurrent costs.

"Our main comment was about the missing link in the policy for getting from point A to B," says Rajib Upadhyay, External Affairs Specialist, at the World Bank.

Not all TAs are bad, said one donor pointing to the GTZ-funded Bhaktapur urban development. But another GTZ-funded TA for solid waste management has not gone well.

Several donors did raise questions about priorities, saying that the policy was infrastructure-driven and ignored the social sectors, such as female education.

The government took its policy to various political

parties, experts and NGOs. Most participants didn't look like they had read or were interested in the draft policy, they just listened silently as the speeches droned on.

Among the few that did comment, Rashtriya Prajatantra Party's Prakash Chandra Lohani picked on procedural lapses and suggested that the document should be "shorter and more focussed".

One of only two women at the discussion, Arzu Rana Deuba, was more forthright. She questioned why some donors were not required to disclose their contributions to different projects for listing in the government budget. "We need to make donors pay the TA costs through their administrative costs," she said. "They cannot factor them in the money that comes as aid." ♦

Guns 'n' aid

The government's draft aid policy does not even attempt to explore the emerging relationship between trade and aid. If foreign aid is now increasingly linked with trade or trading prospects, bilateral donors generally prefer the money they give be spent on buying goods produced by their domestic industry.

When British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook visited Nepal early this year he not only discussed bilateral projects but also put in a good word or two for Airbus Industrie, although he did not tie British aid with aircraft purchases.

This is worth close scrutiny because poor countries often end up paying more for purchases from donor countries than what they get in aid. Austria's aid to Nepal has plummeted to about US\$1.6 million last year, and may fall further. But last year Nepal purchased guns and ammunition from Austria worth US\$1.63 million, which makes the net balance of give-and-take about zero.

This year Nepal has more money to buy guns with—the Rs 1.8 billion budgeted for the proposed Armed Police Force. Wait and see where that goes.

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Resunga: The Mountain of the Horned Sage
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Everything you wanted to know about the two central Nepal districts of Gulmi and Arghakhanchi. This book is history, geography, ethnography and cultural studies all rolled into one. The result of a nine-year-long research by a team of French social scientists—perhaps the first study of its kind in Nepal.

A Bibliotheca Himalayica book

Tourism as Development: Case Studies from the Himalaya
edited by Pitamber Sharma
(2000, pp. xii+179)

Ever wondered why Pokhara's Phewa Lake area has become such an eyesore? Or, how the opening of Upper Mustang has benefited the locals there? This book has the answers, and more, as it looks at three other tourist destinations in the Himalaya and highlights the essential interrelationship between tourism and local progress.



Rs 1945/- (hardback)

Faces of Nepal
by Jan Salter and Harka Gurung
(1999, pp. vi+99)

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

Toni Hagen's Nepal: The Kingdom in the Himalaya
revised and updated with Deepak Thapa
(1999, pp. xvii+251)

When Toni Hagen first set foot in Nepal in 1950, he came as a development expert. Over the nine years that he walked 14,000 km across the length and breadth of Nepal, conducting its first reconnaissance survey, he grew to become a valued friend of the country.

This is the original book that introduced Nepal, both to Nepalis and outsiders. This fourth edition of this classic includes the original reports and photographs even as it brings the reader up-to-date with the changes Hagen has seen over the course of a half-century.



Rs 3800/- (hardback)



MUKUL HUMAGAIN

Yet another Olympics coming up, but the headlines after the Games can already be predicted: "Nepal comes back empty-handed again." With the Sydney Olympics just a month and a half away, all that the Nepali Olympians can hope for is to better their national performances and get

Sydney 2000

Not a chance

some international exposure.

The preparation has hardly been anything to write about; it is as if they are already defeated. The fact that with Sydney just some weeks away, the Nepali weightlifting team is anxiously waiting for a wildcard entry says it all. And as for all those who have already in—athletes, swimmers and shooters—it is just the honour of taking part in the world's greatest show that is driving them on. Hardly world-beaters, our players have prepared only for a mere 45 days to beat the world's best. "How can we perform well at the highest level with this kind of short training," asks sprinter Devi Maya Paneru.

Nepal has a dismal record in the Olympics. Nepal has not even once qualified for the heats, let alone win a medal. Even though winning medals is

a distant dream, the Nepal Olympic Committee is hoping something from Gyan Bahadur Bohara and Devi Maya Paneru. Gyan Bahadur is a versatile runner who has been running the 1500, 5000 and 10,000m distances. But this time, he is concentrating on 5000m only. Gyan Bahadur had a great run in the 8th South Asia Federation Games last year, winning silver in the 5000m in 14'50", missing gold by just one second. "As an athlete, Gyan Bahadur has improved a lot. His timing is now around 14'30"," says Biswa Thapa, chief athletics coach.

Devi Maya Paneru, undoubtedly the best female sprinter Nepal has ever produced, hopes to be the first Nepali woman to run the 100m under 12 sec. Though she failed to score in the 100m during the SAF Games, she bettered the



Bohara

national record with a timing of 12.17 sec. Delighted to be going to the Olympics, Paneru says, "It's like a dream come true."

Chitra Bahadur Gurung and Runa Pradhan will represent Nepal's challenge in swimming. Both are competing in their pet event—the 50m freestyle. Gurung's best time is 27 sec, while Pradhan's 31 sec is also a national record. It will be great achievement for them if they qualify for the heats.

Shooter Bhagwati K.C. is lucky to

be selected for the Sydney Olympics despite a poor performance in the SAF Games. Hers is a wild card entry because of the 377 points she scored in the air pistol event at the Bangkok Asian Games. Nepal may yet get to participate in one more discipline. Says NOC president, Rukma Shumsher Rana: "We're hopeful that we may get wild card entry in weightlifting. By early August, the picture will become clear." Initially, Nepal had applied for six disciplines of which two are mandatory—athletics and swimming. As for the rest, it had to go through the qualifying rounds. If Nepal gets to compete in weightlifting also, there will be six athletes from Nepal at the Olympics.

According to NOC, a 17-member Nepali contingent will head out for Sydney 2000. The team will include Crown Prince Dipendra, who is also the Patron of the Nepal Olympic Committee.

Hoping for medals may be too much to expect of the Nepali players, but their enthusiasm at the moment proves that Sydney 2000 won't be just a free tour of Australia. ♦

Asian Athletics Championship

Some hope

Having missed out the last two meets due to internal wrangling within Nepal Amateur Athletics Federation (NAAF), Nepal is taking part in the Asian Athletics Championship to be held in Jakarta from 25 August. Four athletes will be compete sprint, middle distance and track events at the 13th Asian Athletics Championship.

The NAAF has already selected Ram Krishna Choudhary (100m), Sita Ram Choudhary (triple jump) and Beena Shrestha (100m), while there is a tough fight between Rajendra Bhandari, Purn Singh Dhumi and Farsha Bahadur Rana Magar for the 1500m and 5000m events.

With Ram Krishna Choudhary and Sita Ram Choudhary establishing new national records in the Open Athletics Championship a fortnight ago, NAAF officials are hopeful of a decent Nepali performance at Jakarta. "We are definitely going to do better this time", says athletics coach Sushil Rana.

Ram Krishna bettered his own record of 10.71sec with a timing of 10.55sec while Sita Ram managed a 15.10m jump. Ram Krishna hopes to finish within 10.20sec in Jakarta. "Earlier we used to run on clay tracks and adjusting to synthetic tracks in international competitions used to be difficult. But as we have been running on a synthetic track for almost a year now,



it will be easier," says he.

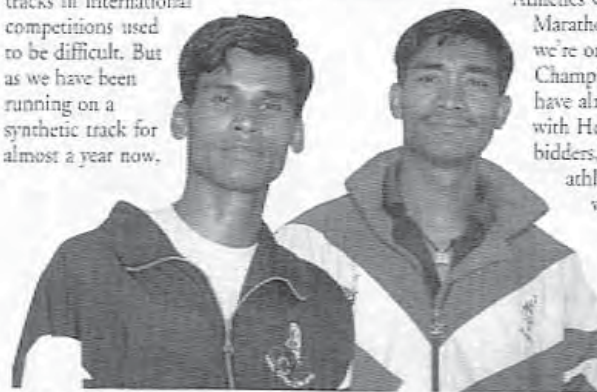
The Asian Athletics Championship holds a special place for Nepali athletes as it was in this meet that Nepal won its first-ever international medal. That was back in 1973 when Jit Bahadur K.C. won the bronze in the men's marathon. K.C. repeated the feat in 1975 when the Games were held in Seoul. That was the last time Nepal scored at this championship.

This Jakarta meet is also significant since Nepal plans to bid for the 2002 championship. Hence, a good performance by Nepali athletes would help its cause. According to NAAF president Rukma Shumsher Rana, the Asian Athletic Federation has already recognised Nepal as one of the bidders.

"We've earlier tried to bid for either the Asian Athletics Championship or the Asian Marathon Championship. But now, we're only bidding for Athletics Championship as it is the bigger. We have already reached an understanding with Hong Kong, one of the other bidders, that they will support us for the athletics championship while we would reciprocate by backing their bid for marathon," says Rana.

If Nepal gets to host the championship, it will be the first ever Asian-level tournament to be held in the country. ♦

—Mukul Humagain



Medal hopefuls: Sita Ram and Ram Krishna

Grotesque idea

Sydney - The Olympic Games should not be a contest to see which nation can win the most medals but a celebration of personal achievement, an Australian church leader said Friday.

Father Peter Norden, one of 10,000 Australians participating in the torch relay, said the tallying medals only served to highlight the gap between the rich and the poor.

"The Olympics has become dominated by a small group of wealthy Western nations. We've lost the plot by substituting the recognition of individual excellence and achievement with the suggestion that some nations are superior to others because they win more medals."

Father Norden said he offered himself as a torch-bearer to protest the "grotesque idea of national superiority". (dpa)

SNV/Nepal Vacancy Announcement

nepal

SNV

SNV/Nepal, a Dutch non-government development organisation, has been working in Nepal since 1980. SNV/Nepal's program focuses on local governance and social mobilisation, gender mainstreaming and advocacy, economic opportunities and natural resources. The Mechi Hills Development Program (MHDP) is one of the programs supported by SNV/Nepal, which covers three districts in the Mechi Zone (Ilam, Panchthar and Taplejung) and is coordinated from the Regional Office based at Kathmandu. MHDP III focuses on institutional strengthening of local partners.

SNV/Nepal invites qualified candidates to apply for the following posts

PROGRAM MANAGER (PM)

The Program Manager is responsible for Mechi Hills Development Program (MHDP) in Ilam district. The specific responsibilities include:

- Planning, implementation and monitoring of MHDP in Ilam district.
- Supervision of personnel, program and financial management at the district level.
- Facilitation of program with different stakeholders such as DDC, VDC, NGO, MHDP Regional Manager and SNV Director.

Requirements: Masters degree with specialisation in rural community development or related social science degree. At least 5 years experience at a senior management level with knowledge on participatory planning, community development, gender & development, financial, administrative and personnel management. Working experience with (I)NGOs is mandatory. Fluency in spoken & written English is essential.

ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS (ODO)

The Organisation Development Officer is responsible for planning & facilitating social mobilisation activities and mainstreaming of gender in the district programs. There are two vacancies – one for Taplejung district and the other for Ilam district. Please specify your preferred duty station, if any. The specific responsibilities include:

- Facilitating and coaching relevant district-based partners in the MHDP Ilam and Taplejung on social mobilisation of the rural women and men of program VDCs;
- Facilitating capacity building process of partner NGOs and through them the village (community) groups in the program VDCs;
- Ensuring gender mainstreaming in program as a whole and among the partners;
- Monitoring progress of social mobilisation activities, capacity building of partner NGOs and CBOs and progress of the Gender Action Plan.

Requirements: Bachelor's degree in social sciences with minimum 3 years working experience in the field of gender & development, NGO management and institutional development. Knowledge on institutional development is desired. Working experience with (I)NGOs is mandatory. Fluency in spoken and written English is essential.

An information package for the above positions is available for pick-up from Organisation Development Centre (ODC). It is also posted in our website www.odcentre.org under the category "recruitment". It can also be sent to you through e-mail upon request.

Organisation Development Centre (ODC),

GPO 8975 EPC 443, Jhamsikhel, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Phone: (977-1)-524540, Fax: (977-1)-522761

E-mail: odc@odcentre.org or odc@info.com.np

URL: <http://www.odcentre.org>

Applications are to be sent to the above address along with a cover letter with your latest curriculum vitae. Your day time contact number, and the names of two referees along with their contact address/telephone numbers, are essential for processing your applications. Telephone enquiries will not be entertained; only short-listed candidates will be notified.

The employment contract will be for a period until end of July 2001 with possibilities for extension. Applications will be accepted till 10:00 am on Friday, August 11, 2000.

SNV/Nepal wishes to increase its number of women staff, especially in higher positions. The organisation has a positive action plan, which favours suitable female candidates for any vacant position. Also, SNV/Nepal's working conditions are conducive for women staff.

SAVING FAITH

by DESMOND DOIG

Nepal Literature

by MANJUSHREE THAPA

The jewelled gift of a snake god

If one believes that fervent prayers must surely be answered, then the prayers of all Kathmandu must prevail.

The red god Machhendranath, is Padma Pani Boddhisarva or Lokeswar, protector and teacher of the gods themselves.

Always, at this time of the year, the chariots of the red god Machhendranath complete their rumbling journey through the city of Patan. Rain should fall on this last day of the festival as Machhendranath is, among many other things, the bountiful god of rain.

There are many, particularly among the farmers of the Kathmandu valley, who believe that if rain fails to drench the occasion, then a year of drought and hardship may result. Many are the foreign observers who are committed in writing to say that no one going to the Bhoto Jatra, as the last day of the Machhendranath festival is known, should fail to carry an umbrella, however bright the morning skies may be. (This year, the Machhendranath chariot toppled over and the Bhoto Jatra had to be postponed. Many believe some big calamity will befall Nepal. See #2 Nepali Times.)

This benign god was brought from Assam in the form of a black bee in a golden water vessel. He took up residence in a village called Bungamati where his five-foot, scarlet image, traditionally painted by a single family of Patan artists is kept until it is ritually bathed and enthroned on a great wooden chariot to be drawn through the streets of Patan once a year. The stout wooden yoke of the chariot with its gilded mask to which separate offerings are made, represents the snake god, Karkot, who helped to conduct Machhendranath from Assam.

The four massive wooden wheels of the chariot are believed to be invested with the spirits of the terrible Bhairabs who guarded the red god against the assault of demons on his journey to Kathmandu.

The tall spire of the chariot is a stunning construction of bamboo massively bound with cane: a tower so much larger than the chariot on which it rests that it appears to defy the laws of balance and gravity. Numerous ropes help to keep it erect.



Decorated with foliage and flowers and hung with banners of cloth and gilded metal, it is crowned with a bouquet of national flags.

The chariot of Minnath variously described as the son or daughter of Machhendranath, who is himself with numerous female characteristics, follows closely behind, similar in construction and apparently worshipped with equal fervour. Just when Minnath who is more popularly known as Chakuwa Dev became attached to the Machhendranath legend is uncertain.

He has no part in the entrancing story of Machhendranath's epic journey from Assam. Indeed, I had a *pajari* from the temple of Minnath insist that his beloved Chakuwa Dev is more ancient than Machhendranath, despite the popular belief that he is the child of the red god.

None of this really matters when one is part of the great throng that comes to make offerings to Machhendranath and ask his blessings on the final day of his festival. All Kathmandu fills the small space that was once a field where the god rested on his journey from Assam.

Many have camped out the entire night, beginning their devotions at first light and feasting between their spells of worship. The ground before the chariot is bright with thousands of votive lamps. And now, modern touch, ice cream vendors and *gully-gully* men selling brightly coloured geegaws like ribbons, balloons, hair clips and toys plough through the crowds offering earthly temptation. Continuous lines of devout scatter rice on the chariots, offer *thalis* of food, and feed the grimacing mouths of the snake gods.

In the afternoon, the Patan Kumari is brought in procession to view the chariots and shortly afterwards, the King and Queen arrive, members of the royal family, and ministers, come to pay homage. This is the moment everyone has been waiting for because it signals the display of the fabled *bhoto*, or jewelled waistcoat of Machhendranath. Old and wondrous is the story. The wife of the snake god suffered an incurable eye disease. Every doctor and miracle worker had tried to cure her, without avail. All hope of restoring her eyesight had been abandoned, when a farmer came forward and achieved the impossible. He cured the queen. So great was the joy of the snake god, Karkot, that he bestowed upon the farmer, a priceless jewelled waistcoat which stupidly, the farmer lost. One day, while attending the festival of Machhendranath, the farmer saw his precious coat on a stranger who insisted it was his. An unseemly argument ensued that would have ended in bloodshed had not the snake king, who was attending the festival in the guise of a human, intervened and given the disputed coat to Machhendranath. Rumour has it that the original garment is in a foreign museum and the coat now exposed to view is a copy.

The excitement and unashamed emotion that greets the sight of the jewelled waistcoat or *bhoto*, as it is called, appears to disregard the story. This is a moment of timeless magic that mere rumour cannot tarnish. Genuine or not, the *bhoto* bestows a blessing on the faithful for yet another year, and I doubt that all the powerful ingredients of relentless change will ever detract from this ancient ceremony.

There is one more moment of special significance. An open-mouthed vessel is dropped from the very top of the chariot's spire. If it falls face down, then the people of Kathmandu valley can expect a year of plenty and happiness. But should the pot settle with its mouth pointing thirstily to the sky, then drought and distress may follow.

If one believes that fervent prayers must surely be answered, then the prayers of all Kathmandu must prevail. I saw them offered and they were impressive. ♦

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

Mohan Koirala making associations

The current Vice-Chancellor of the Royal Nepal Academy Mohan Koirala is applauded by fans who find his poems playful and inventive, and reproached by critics who find his writing abstruse and unwilling to reach out to its audience.

Grafting together common social narratives, fragmented dialogues, literary quotes and his own keen observations, Koirala produces poems which tease meaning out of a rush of words, and at their very best, sparkle with associations.

Without a doubt, his poems speak not to the masses, but to the sophisticated reader who is comfortable with ambiguity and even obscurity in language. Indeed, Koirala's poems refuse to tell the reader what to think, asking them instead to seek their own meanings from his offering of shards and fragments.

The following poem is a particularly vivid example of Koirala's wit, playfulness and dexterity with language, and one which is slightly less obscure than some of his others. With its witty commentary on contradictory Nepali mores, it also supports the poet's claim, in a recent interview, to be primarily a social writer.

OUR VILLAGE SETTLEMENTS

A house with curtains on the windows without curtains
With an indoor toilet and cemented stairs too
With its own tap or for lack of it water must be carried over
from someone else's well
A house with its own walls or only overhead beams of its own
Or the house of someone
Who fetches vessels of drinking water only from someone
else's house
This is what a village house is like
♦♦
Sit around for hours staying home all day and with pride about
How can I go anywhere without a car these days
After riding a bus a person who needs lots of space can't
tolerate the crowd otherwise
Who walks on the street clasping his son who isn't well
Or when taking his wife to the cinema is compelled to reach her
in a taxi
Who sits around complaining it's late when the bus breaks
down on the road till it's pushed and repaired
♦♦
The type who can't make his way around Ranamukteswor or
Asan to buy turmeric till he flocks along with his wife
(Himself full of light suffering faith and knowledge in extreme
religiosity)
Who must reach Sri Pashupatinath temple from time to time
must frequent the goddess Kali at each festival
Is eager to reach Lord Narayan
Doesn't trust that the motorbike will start whether or not it has
petrol
Till his wife slides her hand from the back seat and pinches his
waist
When having to search upon request for plum candy and other
such products
A man who can't do anymore without a motorbike
No matter whether its plates are yellow white red or black
♦♦
A father of children who refuse to walk to school if the bus
doesn't come
Faithful to a creed that deems that the household will thrive if
young sons and grandsons
Walk, lisping in foreign tongues, in courtyards upper floors
house rooms, otherwise it's ruined
Days passed in talk, in fun, in eating whole mouthfuls, in search
Come near I turn them over, move away I turn them over
When red earth shakes and the bed quilt rips when shopping
when examining the feel of riding a taxi
Wiping dung each morning household duties auspicious Sri
Ganesh having a long line of successors in the family
With a wife who brags that
You sell alcohol the whole neighbourhood's defiled only at
parties does mine—that's why he's kept his caste
Though declaring that wisdom is greater than
blind faith considers blind faith to be
Wisdom
There is a belief in our village settlements
There is a belief in our house

("Our Village Settlements" appears in Koirala's 1986 collection *Himchuli Raktim Chha*.)



An injured Machhendranath is lowered to the ground before it is hoisted to Zawalchhet for the Bhoto Jatra on Tuesday. The chariot toppled after the guide ropes got entangled from overhead transmission wires. Minnath is in the background. (right) Also on this page: Desmond Doig's drawing of the chariots, done in 1988.

ABOUT TOWN

Films

Foreign

Scream - Kathmandu Mini Vision (226169, ext 512)

Nepali

Dharmaputra - Bishwajyoti (221837)
Nata Ragatko - Heera Ratna,
Sukumbasi - Ashok, Heera Ratna,
Ranjana (221191)

Hindi

Bicchoo - Jai Nepal (411014),
Manakamana (225284)
Jungle - Guna (520668), Kumari
(414932)
Biwi No 2 - Krishna (470090)
Kunwara - Tara (476092, 491703),
Gopi (470090)
Refugee - Guna (520668)

Events

Clean Pashupatinath
Temple Campaign organised by
INHURED, Putalisadak. Every
Saturday from 8:00 to 10:00 with
bamboo brush and bucket, used
newspapers and tissue paper in
Pashupatinath Temple area. 429741.

Narayan Gopal
Shriharjani Programme organised
by Sigma Resources and Himalayan
Telecommerce. Sigma House at
Balaju. 4 August. 11:00 am. 350310

Health/Meditation/Retreats

Teachings and meditation
One-day workshop at Himalayan
Buddhist Meditation Centre.
Kamaladi. 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.,
Wednesday and Saturday.
Tel: 221875.

Guided meditation: Free
programme of guided meditation at
Himalayan Buddhist Meditation
Centre, Kamaladi. 6:00 p.m. on
wards, Thursday. 221875.

Music

Classical guitar by Kishore
Gurung at the Chimney, Yak & Yeti
Hotel. 248999. 8:00 p.m. onwards.

Festival

Gurila, The Buddhist Holy
Month. August 1-30. Gurila, the name
of the 10th month in the Nepal Era
calendar is a sacred month
dedicated to Lord Buddha. Images of
Buddhas are displayed in various
monastery courtyards for devotees
who go around in a procession from
one stupa to the next. The Lakhe
(masked dancer) performs dances in
city courtyards. Candid moments to
grab in your camera.

Nag Panchami. 4 August. The
divine source of rain, the Naga
(divine serpent) kings, are performed
puja. Taudaha (the big pond), 6 km
south of Kathmandu, on the way to
Dakshinkail, is packed with
devotees. In the city, the doorways
are pasted with picture of Naag.
Ancient festival. Good for
photography.

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



SUJATA TULADHAR

Bhaktapur started it, Patan
played copycat. Since 1 January
2000, tourists entering Patan
have been charged an entry fee.

"Visitors are requested to
pay an entry ticket to the
historic Patan City against
payment of Rs 200, Rs 25 for
SAARC nationals. The
proceeding collection [sic] of
Tourist Entrance Fees go to
Tourism Development and
Heritage Conservation Funds of
Lalitpur Sub-Metropolitan
City."

Nice try, but it has not
gone down all too well with
tourists and shopowners who
depend on them. Andy
Maharjan of Andy's Art Gallery
in the heart of the city says,
"Earlier tourists would look
around the place for a day and
come back some other time to
buy the things they like but now
since they have to pay again the
next time they enter, hardly
anybody comes back."

Since most of them do not
know about the fee, they are
ambushed when guards at Patan
entry points suddenly accost

Patan fee fiasco

them with demands to pay up
for taking a stroll around.

If the tourist refuses to pay
or happens to be someone who
doesn't understand English, the
situation can get nasty. Says
Govind Maharjan, owner of a
stationery store at Patan Dhoka:
"Almost 20 percent of the
tourists trying to enter the city
from Patan Dhoka return
without visiting because of the
harassment they face at the
ticket counter. Tourists get
easily offended by the way the
guards pounce on them. I have
even seen the guards literally

Even in Japan we have places
which charge foreigners money
but they already know about it
from the guidebooks."

Since the entry fee was
introduced pretty recently,
guidebooks do not mention it,
and neither have most of the
travel agencies updated their
brochures. "It's becomes quite a
problem for us to explain things
when we bring our clients to
Patan and we have to ask them
to pay additional Rs 200. Some
fear that they are being cheated
because nothing of that sort had
been mentioned in the
guidebooks", says G.L.

Maharjan, a tourist guide.
Shashi Shekhar Shrestha,
the Office Secretary of the
Municipality does admit that
there has been a lack of
publicity. "The Travel
Association of Nepal objected
to it when we started. But our
preparation period (90 days)
was too short for us to inform
every one."

The City's entry ticket
entitles visitors access to seven
major sites. However, as Patan
Museum and the Golden
Temple are run by separate
managements, they charge their
own fees. Very often, tourists
just turn away, and both Patan
Museum and the Golden
Temple have seen a drop in
visitors.

Officials at the Lalitpur Sub-
Metropolitan City office believe

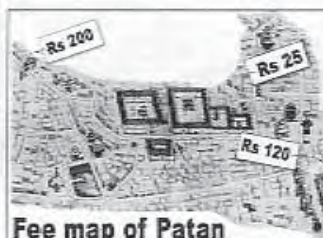
that 25 percent of the tourists
visiting Patan pass without
registering as they enter from
the routes without check posts,
of which there are many.

There is also some leakage. A
local guide, who did not want to
be named, said, "When I was
taking my clients for a tour
around Patan Darbar Square,
one of the guards offered me a
fifty-fifty deal. I had eight
foreigners with me but he asked
me to pay for only five of them.
So we could have made a profit
of three hundred each."

Till 12 July, the City had
collected Rs 7.4 million from
the 51,710 tourists visiting
Patan. The money is to be spent
on a German-supported Urban
Development through Local
Effort (UDLE) project for
Patan's preservation,
maintenance and restoration.
UDLE is to provide 40 percent
of the financial support, the
municipality has to match it and
the rest will be raised locally.

"So far we haven't spent
even a single penny from the
collected amount," says Shrestha
of the Municipality. In addition
to this project, we are also
aiming to spend the collected
money on a new programme to
be launched some time later this
year."

For the hassles the fees have
created, the Municipality better
have something to show for it,
and fast. ♦



Fee map of Patan

pull tourists by the hand to the
counter to show them the
board."

No one at the five entry
points and the counter at
Darbar Square has undergone
training of any kind. One guard
said he was trained for a week
only to "salute and march".

Hatama Kiichiro, a Japanese
tourist living in Patan since
April 2000, says, "Charging
money for entrance is okay, as
long as people know about it.

HAPPENINGS



Guests at a seminar to mark the 44th anniversary of diplomatic relations between
Nepal and Russia organised by the Nepal-Russia Friendship Association at the
Russian Cultural Centre.



A K Agarwal of ATC Exim shows off the latest line of Samsung electronic
consumer items to dealers in Kathmandu.



From L to R: Vibha Maya Ranjit, first runnerup, Miss Nepal 2000, Jasmine
Shrestha, second runnerup Miss Nepal 2000 and Niru Shrestha former Miss
Nepal at the Nepali Times launch.

PLAY REVIEW

Cast aside caste

In Hindu tradition, a jogi is a person who has
ceased to be a householder. He does not have
a caste. There is a popular saying in Hindi: *jaat
na puchho sadhu ki* (Don't ask an ascetic what
his caste is).

Jaat Sadhnu Jogiko asks the audience to do

were hounded. A young man with ambition
had to endure it all: expectations of a first-
generation college-goer, petty jealousies of
frustrated teachers, claustrophobia of a
village institution. Strangely, there is a
contemporary ring to it, even in Nepal.

Vijay Tendulkar, the celebrated Marathi
playwright, created *Jaat Hi Puchho Sadhu ki*.
The play was so powerful that it became an
instant hit, praised as much for its
style as its theme. A social satire, a
literary humour piece and a sitcom all
rolled into one.

Nepali director Anoop Baral has
done a remarkable job adapting it into
Nepali. And a feat that won him a fitting
accolade: approval of the audience in the
Royal Nepal Academy on 26 July. The
audience sat through the entire presentation
in rapt attention, and there was wild
applause at the end.

Sunil Pokhrel played the
lead role, excelling as the
village boy-turned college Prof
Mahinarayan Gharti, MA. When
Pokhrel broods, he succeeds in
making the audience serious,
and when he goofis he has them
in splits. The supporting cast was
equally competent. The female
parts are weaker, although even
with their bit roles Nisha Sharma and
Mishri Thapa dominated the second half.

If it is true that the play has been filmed
by Nepal Television, it is good news for
theatre-lovers who missed out the single-day
performance. *Jaat Sadhnu Jogiko* deserves
a wider audience. But the magic of the stage
is a different experience, and more shows at
the Academy would have been welcome.

C.K. Lal

the opposite: ask an ascetic his caste. It's a
suggestion that is worthy of dramatic
presentation. The setting is the 1970s, when
education in India was a mess. Exploited by
management committees and ridiculed by
uninterested students, teachers in rural colleges

OFF THE BEATEN TREK



The town that time passed by

Halfway on the drive from Kathmandu to Pokhara, and four hours off the highway lies Bandipur, the hilltop Newar trading town that time has passed by. And it is none the worse for it. Unlike other towns that decayed and withered, Bandipur thrives and wears its

isolation proudly.

The town is now promoting itself as a relaxed hill station, famous for its tranquility, its gorgeous views and as a retreat and educational centre.

You can catch the historical trading trail at Dumre Bazar on the Pokhara highway and climb

three hours through pine forests alive with birds to the township situated at 1000 m. This is the climb immortalised by King Mahendra in his poem "Bandipur's Long Climb".

The view from up here of Ganesh Himal, Himalchuli, Manaslu and the Annapurnas is unrivalled. The surrounding hills are ideal for hiking along trails that take you through rhododendron forests, holy caves and hilltop shrines that once served as fortresses.

In the 19th century, Bandipur was the transit point where Tibet met India in commerce.

Pokhara's airport and its

growing importance as a tourist and trading destination in the 1950s, and then the Prithvi Highway which led to the shifting of the district headquarters out of Bandipur to a roadside centre put the old trading town out of business. The Newar traders moved down to Narayanghat, and its well-educated doctors, educationists and professionals to Kathmandu.

Today, many of them are coming back. Some are investing in schools, colleges and tourist retreats, and the old Newar houses are being renovated. The town's old world charm is now attracting a trickle

of tourists.

For those who want to get even further away from civilisation, Bandipur can be the starting point of what is called the Magar Trek, a three- to four-day hike down to Gaighat to the south. This is one of the few mid-hill treks where you will not see any other trekkers.

The walk from Bandipur is along the north-south spine of a Mahabharat ridge offering spectacular sunrise and sunset views and a serrated horizon crowded with peaks of the Central Himalaya. The Magar villages along the trail are untouched by the outside world, the hardworking farmers are

hospitable and friendly.

An alternative route is to walk due east for three days through thick forests, with the high himals to the north keeping constant company. Also keeping you company, will be the 15 or so flights a day between Kathmandu and Pokhara which fly past at eye-level along the ridge. On the third day, you descend steeply down to the road junction of Mugling from where you can either raft down the Trisuli or take a bus to Kathmandu or Pokhara. ♦



by PADAM GHALEY

YOUR WEEK



ARIES 21 March-19 April

Make room to invite new changes in your domestic life as the situations and emotional matters are likely to shift rapidly now. Recharge your ability to cope with sudden changes.



TAURUS 20 April-20 May

Don't go for serious purchases at the moment. Take your time to identify your needs. Materialistic desires might upsurge intensely. Control expenditures. Explore intuition for spiritual self-support.



GEMINI 21 May-21 June

Try to get detached from things happening around. You are likely to get easily influenced by other's frivolity. Check your monetary flow. This week avoid reaching a conclusion too soon.



CANCER 22 June-22 July

You are likely to be plunged into a completely new setup at work. But be confident about your ability to adapt and take in new changes. You have a great deal of power than you may have previously felt.



LEO 23 July-22 August

Spirituality will help you a great deal this week. Try to review yourself. Shifts in consciousness might have occurred in you and it is best if you remain calm and take things as they occur. Don't let other's secret out.



VIRGO 23 August-22 Sept

Issues that you have great emotional attachments with might surface. Don't get disturbed. Your ability to integrate the dark side of what you've been exposed to, will aid in bringing life back to normal.



LIBRA 23 Sept-23 Oct

Don't allow confusions to take over you. Back off and keep your own counsel if need be until the situation makes more sense. Trust your intuition in the matter and don't second-guess yourself.



SCORPIO 24 Oct-21 Nov

Make room in your life for a new understanding of domestic matters. Situations in this area continue to be very changeable, and you will do best if you understand that you can ultimately benefit from what's happening.



SAGITTARIUS 22 Nov-21 Dec

Take things at ease and confidence. The immense knowledge you have stored for long needs to crack out. The monsoon is your inspirational element. You are now ready for your journey towards a peaceful mind.



CAPRICORN 22 Dec-19 Jan

Major changes are likely to occur in your behaviour and how you express yourself. There is a possibility of family changes that might push you towards indecision. But your strong personality will help solve it all.



AQUARIUS 20 Jan-18 Feb

You have a productive week ahead. Too many things might occur at the same time. Have patient and trust your self. Your sensibility to arts and music will further enliven your days ahead.



PISCES 19 Feb-20 March

The focus is on friendships this week, and your perception of them. A change in your life may alter the way that others respond to you and this could be very revealing. Be observant.

NEPALI WEATHER



A gap in monsoon circulation is seen over the Deccan Plateau, which will bring a relative dry spell to the central Himalaya during the week August 8-15. But before that, the present monsoon pulse moving slowly eastwards across Kathmandu Valley will bring heavy rain on Wednesday and Thursday. Clouds will begin to disperse over the weekend, but night-time showers will continue. Days will start becoming sunny and humid. Elsewhere in Nepal, the soaked soil will be more prone to landslides in areas of cloudburst..

Kathmandu

Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
28-19	28-18	29-10	30-20	30-20	31-21	31-21

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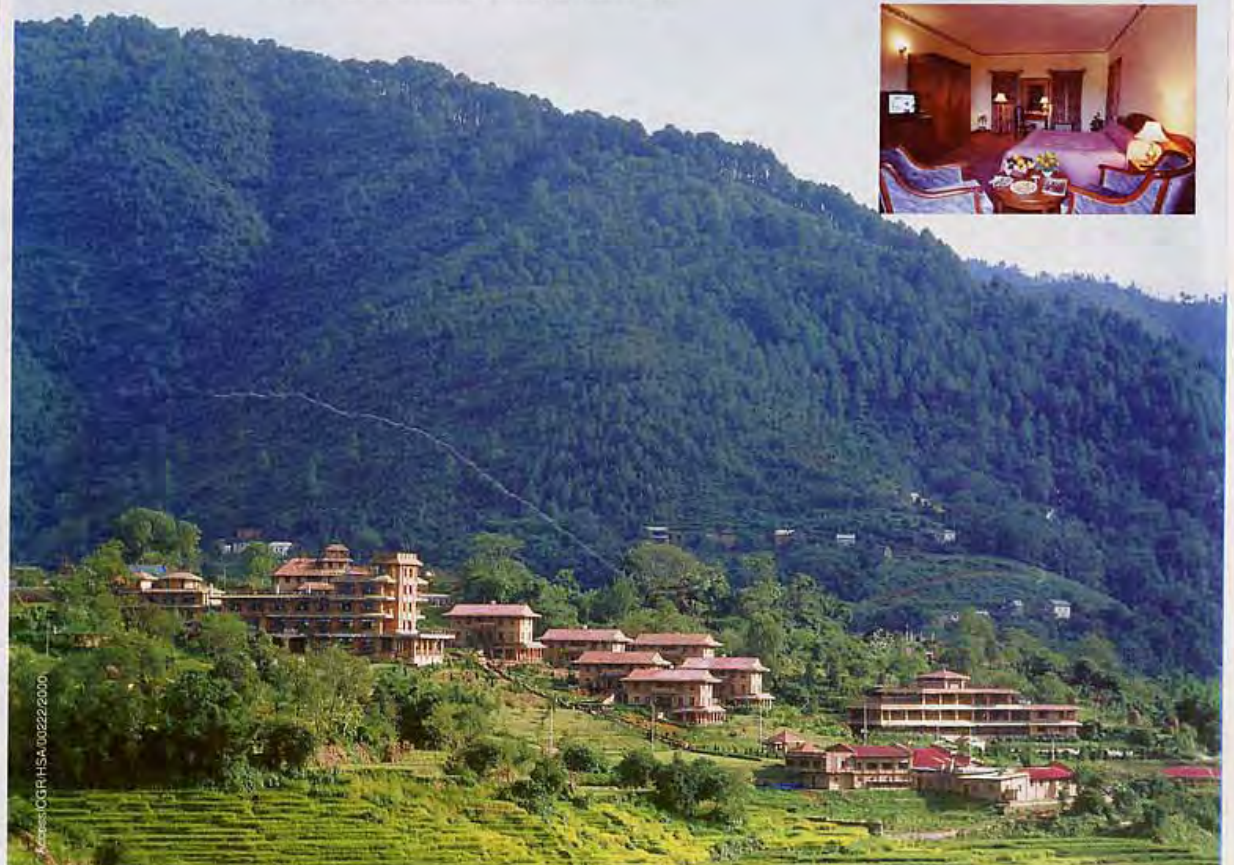
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Funny Side Up

by Kunda Dixit

As I was saying last week, before being distracted by melanin-challenged Monica, we hope that the Mayor and Minister keep going at each other's throats so that Kathmandu's garbage problem is never resolved. The fact of the matter is, we just can't live without it anymore. Sniff addiction—must have the odour in order to live.

Not to put too fine a point on it, garbage today has become a vibrant symbol of our nation's young democracy in action. It is a showcase of our hard-won freedoms. It is an emblem of our sovereignty, territorial integrity and our worth as a nation. The fact that we throw away so much must mean we have a lot more

where Buddha and Sita were born, this is the land from where Amiko taught the Chinese how to build pagodas. So, no nation should underestimate us. We are prepared to bear any hardship, and will leave no stone overturned to safeguard our right to dump trash wherever we want within Nepal's sovereign territory.

The question now arises, how far does our territory go? Prime Minister Girija has promised to get Kalapani back for us, and hopefully we will also get back bits of submerged Terai. But what about our air space? How come no one is worried about air space?

Littoral nations can claim up to 200 km of ocean as their economic zone. But being

Nepali air space

landlocked, Nepal can't lay claim to any sea. (Unless, of course, we occupy one of the islands in the Ganges delta since it is technically Nepali soil, and that will make 200 km of the Bay of Bengal ours.)

But how far above Nepal does Nepal go? How many feet above Mt Everest is it still Nepal? Where does Nepal end and outer space begin? This point needs clarification, and we should be prepared to go to the International Court of Justice at The Hague to establish our sovereign right over air space.

Luckily, the special ramp that was brought in for Indian Airlines to frisk passengers at Kathmandu airport answers this question. In hand-to-hand combat with the Indians on security procedures, our battle-hardened negotiators fought for every inch of Nepali air space.

Finally they agreed that the ramp should be 40 inches above the tarmac. So, it is now official: Nepali air space is 40 inches above ground level. And we would guard these 40 inches tooth and nail if only we had an air force.

Extrapolated all over Nepal, this expands our national territory by at least 540 cubic miles. Rejoice, Nepal has just got bigger!



Sagarmatha, of the nine-coloured Danphe, the Great One-Horned Asiatic Rhinoceros. This is

NEPALI SOCIETY

If there is one aspect of Nepal that makes Arzu Deuba really concerned, it is the low status of women in Nepali society. This is the root of Nepal's poverty, and the reason why the country remains poor. Arzu has one agenda: the gender agenda.

A mother, activist and the wife of former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, Arzu juggles all three aspects of her life with flair. After returning to Nepal from the United States 10 years ago after finishing her doctorate in public health, Arzu has been lobbying intensely for women's rights, health, education and social equality.

"Nepal is not a poor country, it's our self-image that is poor. We haven't really put our minds to improving society," she says.

Arzu is the moving force behind Saathi, a group that addresses the problem of domestic violence against women in Nepal. Saathi supports women who are battered by husbands, fathers, or mothers-in-law. Saathi also provides counselling for women who have suffered domestic abuse and rape.

Another aspect of Nepal's underdevelopment that really rankles Arzu is the country's very high maternal mortality rate. She helps run the Safe Motherhood Network that works in 11 districts where the rate of maternal mortality is highest.

Arzu also heads Samanta, the Institute for Social and Gender Equality which tries to ensure that women are not an afterthought in the



development process. With her full activist life, Arzu has little time for personal matters. She says, "Life is boring if you just live for yourself."

Grindlays



In US\$	Dal-Lentil 1 kg	Bhat-Rice 1 kg	Petrol 1 Litre	Diesel 1 Litre	Kerosene 1 Litre	Electricity 1 Unit	\$ Rate 1 US\$
Bangladesh	0.79	0.39	0.43	0.23	0.39	0.04	50.00
Bhutan	0.65	0.31	0.56	0.33	0.18	0.02	44.46
India	0.67	0.38	0.59	0.29	0.14	0.06	44.90
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	53.32
Sri Lanka	0.76	0.38	0.64	0.25	0.20	0.03	78.50
Nepal	0.68	0.39	0.56	0.34	0.18	0.08	71.00

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

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