Peace in pieces

Everyone agrees there can’t be a military solution to the Maoist problem. But peace efforts only get lip service as both sides sharpen their knives.

BIDOH BхRATTAM WITH SHIVA GAUTAM

This is how violently destructive civil war began: when handliners call the shots, vested interests benefit from an escalation of violence, and those who call for a negotiated settlement are not taken seriously. Peace is everyone’s business: they’re just not doing much about it. One politician more than any other has stalled his political career on peace. Sher Bahadur Deuba. But he is caught in a web of intrigue within his own party, and can’t make his move. The talks are now at a standstill. Deuba admitted to us in a candid interview, it’s been a year since their PM Krishna Prasad Bhattarai gave his passageway to seek a negotiated solution, and put him in charge of a peace commission. There was a flurry of calls between him and Maoist leader Pandit Prachanda, then for the past four months: nothing.

The Maoists are really not in a big hurry to talk. They have already made their political point by staying their will to negotiate, even as they plan for their post-military offensive. For its part, the government is spending Rs 6 billion to raise a paramilitary police force and deploy new weapons, it wants to wield a bigger stick before agreeing to sit down.

Off stage, factions within the Nepali Congress are busy with some serious backstabbing in the run-up to their party convention in January. A Deuba coming up with some peace breakthroughs could upset their plans. Neither Deuba nor his party chief, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, are good communicators at the best of times. These days, they only talk to each other through their media mouthpieces. All this confusion has worked well for the Maoists who have spent the past few weeks making their presence felt in the capital with some pipe bombs. Though the bombs were maginfied many times over by the media, the rebels did succeed in sending a local message: that they were capable of hiring even the Valley if they so wanted.

Most of Deuba’s early spadework has now been wasted. He had got Prachanda to agree to talk in return for minimum conditions: make public the whereabouts of Maoists arrested by police, release those jailed for insurgency and call off the police offensive. Recalls Deuba: Prachanda was not only willing to talk, but also to call off his actions during the talks. I believed him, although I can’t tell what was behind his willingness.”

The government claims it has done its bit, the talks have the sanction of both the executive body of the ruling party and the government, and says it has already released over 100 rebels from jail, including Dev Gorung, a central committee member of the CPN (Maoist). But the Maoists have not responded to Deuba’s latest call for talks, made through a statement in late August.

“Don’t think they are satisfied,” says the Kathmandu-based editor of a weekly close to the Maoists. “They want the specific whereabouts of at least three senior leaders, Dinesh Sharma, Danda Pani Neupane and Manisha Yadav.”

The government’s response has been muted. Prachanda has even questioned Deuba’s mandate, and threaten to disband the peace commission. Koirala himself needle Deuba at every opportunity for failing to resolve the crisis despite all necessary assurances provided. Deuba says he still has access to Prachanda if needed, but it is evident that he’ll have to start from square one, even if the party gives him a real go-ahead.

If the Maoists were showing off their pipe bombs in Kathmandu, the government has been trying to show its presence in Rolpa and Phalum. Deputy Prime Minister Chandra Prasad has just returned from a two-week tour. He told us: "This government is clear on talks, as a democratic party, for us dialogue is a conviction, not a strategy."

Poudel has been trying to sell the government’s development package for the insurgency-hit districts, and fuels the Maoist with not being serious about talks. “They have not stopped terrorising the masses, they blame the government for everything. They are using the talk of talks as a strategy, not a way to resolve the crisis.”

One political analyst who has been following the Maoists closely is Shyam Shrestha of the Leftist Mekhankanti magazine. He does not doubt that the Maoists were at first serious about talks. “It was the first time that they had shown any flexibility in the five years of their war,” says Shrestha. “The proposed development package and armed police force may have led them to inspect the government’s seriousness about talks,” he adds.

Shrestha, however, does not rule out that the Maoists may have been buying time to consolidate their gains in their “base areas”. “I don’t think they ever believed they would win the war of the revolution through talks, but they needed the time.”

All the Maoists had to do to score public relations points was appear serious about talks. Recently, they took the media on a tour of the regions under their command and got video coverage of an open public meeting held on 26 August in Koshiyalgach, Rolpa.

Meanwhile in the ruling party there are increasing signs of crisis. “The enemy is at the gates, but we don’t seem to trust each other on how to deal with it,” a source close to Deuba said. “By fighting each other, we have shown them our soft underbelly, and given them more confidence.”

That is also the message the Congress party is giving to other opposition parties. Among them the UML has taken a vacillating you-pourme-position vis-a-vis the Maoists. The object apparently is to keep damage—what has not been very high with the UML, compared to other parties—at present levels. But the party is well aware of how the insurgency is being handled.

UML’s Subash Nembang says: “The Deuba coalition is confused, it doesn’t want to know if it should hold talks, nor does it seem to have a clear goal.”

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LET DEUBA TALK

The Army wants more men, the Police wants automatic weapons. Maoists have what they want: child recruits and deadly pipe bombs. None of them seem to have any concern for what the rest of us want: peace.

This is certainly a "People’s War." It is the people who do it, it is the people who are maimed,分娩 out of their homes, not the Maoist leaders, not the police chiefs, not the generals and ministers. That is why no one talks about talks anymore. Except for Sher Bahadur Deuba, Deuba, should oil be himself in the corner: "I want to talk, I want to talk," Deuba would answer. Even within his corner, there is now rivalry among leaders to bag the big prize of resolving the Maoist insurgency. There are those who want to do it militarily, others want to go for negotiations. But only so long as they themselves get the credit. And the Maoists? They don’t care either way, their revolution is moving along just fine at its own inexorable pace.

Sher Bahadur Deuba heads the talk force formed by the Nepali Congress to hold talks with the Maoists. It was Krishna Prasad Bhattarai who formed that commission, but Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has been keeping it on a tight leash, threatening to disband it every so often. So Deuba (and the prospect of talks) are stuck. The government says "OK, let’s talk," but it is reluctant to specify what it wants to discuss.

Neither are the Maoists too eager to commit themselves to anything. In the killing fields of Rukum and Rolpa, Gokha and Sirhu, neither side has scored military victories dramatic enough to be cashed in at the negotiating table. So, they reason, why talk?

This is all the more sad. The government loses nothing if Sher Bahadur succeeds in engaging the Maoists. Koirala should realise that if the talks are indeed successful, as prime minister, he can reap more out of the peace dividend then can Sher Bahadur. But he obviously does not want to take the chance of Sher Bahadur bringing the fighting to an end and growing in political stature for above any Nepali leader of his generation. What a small price to pay to safeguard democrats, ensure the nation’s survival, and end this pointless bloodshed and (incidentally) foster a better political future for a smile partner on the verge of disintegration. But politics being the cynical game it is, the protagonists can’t do that so.

For the Maoists, too, talking to the government does not mean an end of the struggle. After all, it was Chou en-Lai, the trusted lieutenant of the great chairman, who made the little-known quip of Chou’s famous, “All diplomacy is continuation of war by other means.” However misguided their turn to violence may be, the Maoists leadership does have its core values and to oppression and aggression.

A quick military victory is impossible for either side, so even the most optimistic Maoist will readily agree that it may be pragmatic to have a fallback option in case talks allow them to continue the political struggle. It has happened in other countries. Senior government functionaries argue that talks will sap the morale of an already demoralised police force who are in the line of fire. Lame excuse, and false bravado. Talking does not mean that the government will change its laws and make policies necessarily contradictory. The approach has to be not “either or” but “either else.”

Our appeal to Girija Koirala and Prachanda is very simple: give peace a chance. Deuba has nothing to lose. The people have had enough of this profane war.

LOOK, NO LUNGS!

There used to be a time when Tundikhel was reputed to be Asia’s biggest parade ground. Oh, well. That’s like saying we had the world’s tallest dwarf. But look at what we did to Tundikhel. First we axed the magnificent and historic plane trees on its sides. Then the army carved it up, and they discontinued the great tradition of the cannon boom at high noon. At the other end, a kitchy park came up. There wasn’t much to brag about Tundikhel anymore. Starting this week, there is even less. Tundikhel this week is hosting a Kathmandu Utsav, a Datashop shopping mall in a tent, and ever on the other side, the World Hindu Federation is holding a hawala in another huge circus tent. Aside from being potential fire hazards, these giant bamboo and canvas constructions have taken away the one last bit of open space that Kathmandu had.

It seems like either open space, we hate, we delet oxygen. So it is only an "imply" spot anywhere, we quickly cover it up with an Office’s Club. And then we block the only sensible shortcut from Marti Ghar up to Tundikhel, anunciating it with a hideous billboard sponsored by a lumbering manufacturer. Welcome to Asia’s meossed parade ground!

By CK Lal

STATE OF THE STATE

My patriotism is purer than yours!

It’s flag-waving time, and the Olympics is as good a time as any to take a long hard look at patriotism.

People in power everywhere like to play on patriotism. In this game, allegiance to the symbol of power is flaunted by players and spectators alike. In Nepal, if you do not wave the flag in a particular way you are a traitor. There are those who believe that Nationalism is an end in itself. No matter that we don’t have much to show for ourselves as a nation, and immigration officers around the world turn us with haughty contempt. Doesn’t matter, we tell ourselves, we’re proud to be Nepali. Anyone who asks "Excuse me, but what is there to be proud of?" is automatically declared a "anti-national" during the Panchayat days, the chosen adjective was "anti-national" by the self-appointed guardians of nationalism.

Someone once said: "Patriotism is love of one’s country, nationalism is hatred of all others." What exactly constitutes Nepali nationalism? Nepal is a sovereign country, but it’s yet to become an integrated nation, as R.P. Koirala once admitted. The process of creation of a real composite national identity really started only in 1990, when the new Constitution of The Kingdom of Nepal was promulgated, and sovereignty was for the first time vested in the Nepali people. Prior to that, what we had in the name of nationalism was servitude to hierarchy rulers.

Nepal’s present territorial contour resulted from the clash of two ambitious powers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the gunpowder of British India prevailed over the Khalat of the House of Gorkha. Nepal promptly became a pawn in the Great Game. National unification was a way to simplify the history of a complicated history abutressed by later-day court historians.

Gorkha rulers fought fierce and often bloody battles to assertion retness. Prithvi Narayan Shah shifted his base from an unprotected Gorkha to a safer and more prosperous Kathmandu. Like any other immoderat, he expropriated the resources of conquered fiefdoms and distributed them among his nobles, some of whose descendants helped create the myth of unification.

From the time of King Prithvi Narayan Shah to the overthrow of Rana in 1951, Nepali nationalism had only one dimension—blind loyalty to the Crown, whether won by the Shah kings, or the Rana prime ministers. You owed your life and livelihood to the Maharaja (dethroned), and you were duly bound to be loyal to him, his kith and kin, and the superior officers appointed by him.

King Mahendra discovered the usefulness of devotion once again when he assumed absolute powers through his royal coup in the winter of 1960. The chaut chaut once more put ruler above country. There are some in Nepal today for whom this sequence still holds true. In an apparent extension of Mar’s dictum that religion is the spine of the masses, King Mahendra named Nepali nationalism into an even stronger sedative: it keeps democratic aspirations of the people subdued for three decades. The problem arises because the very idea of nationalism is vacuous. Any ruler who has used it as hollow slogan will tell you that. Historically, nationalism has always been the favourite riding horse of any and all dictators through the ages. "Naut", after all, comes from the German word "Nationalismus".

Even democratic countries like India and Sri Lanka often whip up nationalistic fervor to silence subordinate minorities.

In his off-quoted book From Empire to Nation, Rupert Emerson argues that inhabitants of a country must feel that they belong together in the double sense that they share deeply significant elements of a common heritage and that they have a common destiny for future. When such a sense of belonging does not exist, as in the case of Nepal, a common destiny needs to be fashioned as an ideal, and it should no be based as an imagined past. The creation of such an identity is an unaccommodate process, cannot be based on exclusivity for "us", and prejudice against "them".

Politics of identity is a dangerous game that can lead straight into the pit of civic strife. Instead of fabricating a past out of falsehood, it makes more sense to concentrate on a shared vision of a common future. Rather than fuse one’s ethnic purity as is George Spalding, it’s much safer to wear by a shared symbol of national unity such as our present Constitution. Prithvi Narayan Shah ruled Nepal in the way he knew—by his sword. We must create a modern Nepal by methods more suited to our times: by fashioning a mosaic made of all ethnic aspirations. It is not a game to be played by desperately frustrated elements.

Let the likes of Janadan Adhikary and Duman Nath Dhakalanga take a walk with their imagined tears of "Fijitation" of Nepal. Not only do they forget that a few of the "Indians" attacked by Spalding’s mows were Fijan Nepalis, but they make the dangerous mistake of exaggerating an outside democratic threat to be seen as nationalists. As the popular Nepali proverb goes: the ghosts of the mind are scarier than those in the darkness. Fears need to be overcome, not feared.
"The leaders are to blame for the Maoist problem."

Six Nepalis speak out on the Maoist problem, and none seems to favour the military option.

Sabrina Shrestha
student, Kathmandu

The root cause of the problem is probably something to actually approach it sensibly. Both the government and the Maoists should not have taken the path of violence. It seems both sides are locked in a struggle of ego while the common people suffer. Because people are ignorant and uneducated, many tend to give themselves easily to fear. And because of the fear, they either join the Maoists or raise a strong voice against them, and ask the government to use force. The use of force is not good. It provided nothing but insecurity.

The problem is of course getting bigger for the country. A village or city begins at dawn and festival and social life get back to normal. Those living in the city may not be affected, but look at our brothers and sisters living a tough life in the villages. They are living in fear and insecurity. They have to be given relief, not only physical relief but also psychological. Students, especially girls, in villages are losing hope. You've got to take up arms if you don't have the political connections for better education and employment.

The leaders have lied many times to the people by giving them false hopes. They are to blame for the Maoist problem.

Rahul Khanday
tour operator, Kathmandu

I think the main cause of the Maoist problem is widespread poverty and lack of education because when democracy was established people had hopes and dreams that couldn't be fulfilled. This led some to believe that the only way to solve this is to start a people's war. The leaders are also to blame for the situation. Leaders at all levels of parties are to blame because they only think about their personal benefit rather than look at the good of the nation.

Erika Advisory
student, Kathmandu

The growing problem of the Maoist movement, especially at the societal level, needs to be solved as soon as possible. And there are ways apart from using force to do that. There is no need to use police force and the military. The government can set down and talk with the Maoist leaders who now seem willing to talk.

We have seen a lot of changes in the government, but no one in power has really done anything to gain the trust of the Nepali people, let alone the Maoists. All parties are involved in serving their own interests rather than in hearing the voice of the people. In a poor country like Nepal, this issue has now become very important to look into sensibly. If the problem is not tackled in a peaceful way, who knows Nepal may be dragged into a civil war pretty soon.

Look at what is happening now, while the death toll rises on both sides, more and more youth are being forced into taking up arms. If there had been good education and planning in the country from the beginning, there would have been no need for a Maoist revolt.

Gokul Khadka
entrepreneur, Patan

Nepalis are very peaceful-loving people. I think all Nepalis should be assured of the fact that the Maoist problem will be solved out in a peaceful manner. It's just a matter of time.

The government and the Maoists must realise that there is a lack of effort from both sides to solve the problem. The problem is very critical. We in Kathmandu don't realise that the problem is very intense but outside Kathmandu the problem is at its peak.

Erica Advisory
student, Kathmandu

Because I think even as the Maoists fight for their ideology the government is also looking for ways to show things. The reason why talks are not moving ahead is that there has been no real identification of the problem. The government might be trying its best to solve the problem and the Maoists might also be moving to reach an agreement, we don't know.

There is confusion about whether Maoists are fighting an ideological war or a violent war. The army is doing their own way but face-to-face talks have to take place and both sides, the government and the Maoists, have to halt the fighting. All wars end at the negotiating table.

Chitra Mallick
entrepreneur, Kathmandu

There is a possibility and negative side to everything. Democracy too has its pluses and minuses. I think the Maoist problem started due to the dissatisfaction felt by the many people over poverty and state in the nation after democracy because people expected so much of democracy. Lack of education and widespread poverty helped light the fire.

Maoist leaders are highly intelligent people and only when they understand that violence will not help in achieving their goals will an end to this problem be possible. The government as well as the Maoists should sit down and talk. What is happening right now is that both parties are sticking to their stubborn demands and forgetting the people.

Sending the army will not help solve the problem because the problem is not just about winning the war against Maoists. All options have to be considered and looked into.

Nanda Shrestha
student, Dolpo

The main cause of the Maoist problem is unemployment, poverty and lack of education. People from the villages turn to Maoism because they do not have food to eat or clothes to wear. They work hard but agricultural production is low. They are uneducated and can be led to do anything because they cannot think for themselves. The Maoist leaders were clever enough to understand this and exploited it accordingly. It's going to very hard to solve the problem even in its present situation. If the leaders in the government during the days of war in Nepal just had a bit of thinking and had a bit of humility had no need to understand

considered the Maoist problem.

Alastair Bell

I have been reading Nepal Times from the first issue. After more than a decade spent in Nepal trying to make sense of what is happening, I feel so relieved to read material written by people who know that facts and words matter. So please keep that in mind: if you don't do obscure the story with jargon. But do not simplify the issues either. Politics, society and environment are complex, it takes hard work to understand their linkages. I know that Article 19 is providing a reference and an example of intellectual discipline for Nepal's educated class.

Albert Greer
Kathmandu


THE DOLPOPA

Having recently visited Dolpo, I would like to add a few more things to Padam Ghalay's article (#8). At least 10,000 people live at altitudes of up to 6,000 m above sea level. Dolpo—many more than in the Khumbu—yet, they have no useful vaccine immunisation programmes, boarding schools to help the locals of French and German nationals have been set up with indoctrinated Nepal teachers, but government actually presents a sorry picture.

Beside the Yarcho gompo ('Himalayan vulture'), this area is an ethnologically paradise. Jattamis is just one of the useful medicinal plants which grow here. There is potential here for collaborating with some of the following in a big way to sell to countries like Taiwan and China where the consumption of these is highest. Contrary to rumour mills,

Mummies are not disturbing the peace at Lake Ringmo or in the upper Dolpo area. It is still the weather, and the beautiful but dangerous terrain which make Dolpo so magnificent and yet so inaccessible at the same time.

Ed Hillyard made a positive impact in the livelihood of the Sherpa people of Dolpo Khums. People like Threby (who starred in Caravan) ask: Will the Dolpois too have to walk to school because of people like Eric Valli? Will or Nepal be able to help themselves?

Budha Baniyal, MD
Kathmandu

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Budha Baniyal, MD
Kathmandu

ANYTHING GOES

C.K. Lal is an excellent writer, but substituting metaphors for facts turns his opinion into potencial ranting. Mr Lal has penned two articles on "Paras killed Pravin Gurng: therefore monarchy is in the dock" thesis (45, 7) that he has not taken the effort to tell the readers any facts about the death, accident or motive. Just stating "the public is convinced" is not sufficient for conviction. Perhaps the facts do not suit Mr Lal's agenda.

If the king were to act just on the signature campaign and a march to the palace by a section of the public would happen if the other people started taking a mob to the palace with the other demands? So let us be aware of what we ask for. Mr Lal says that in the past people were "forced to be loyal" or that truth was manu-factured. Nobody can ever be forced to be loyal, people became loyal voluntarily when the going was good. Mr Lal need not look more royal than the royalties by talking about the king's "real interests". Remember, when the facts were clearly established, it was the same king who, during the ancient regime, did not hesitate to punish not only his senior bureaucrats, police and army officers (who have been subsequently reinstated by the new democratic regime) but his youngest brother as well. That was without the persuasion of supposedly 300,000 signatures and a motley crowd trying to desperately recover political political preference by clutching on to a tragic accident. The act of royal justice and redressal is more than we can say for the present free- for-all, anything-goes regime. We are totally established beyond reasonable doubt about Parashiv involvement, the king will act according to the best tradition of monarchial justice in Nepal—

without fear of the mob or flavour to his néphews. I remain, His Majesty's most humble 'mission'.

Miranda K. Devkota
Kathmandu

TIMES

I have been reading the articles published in nepalitimes.com on the web. This is just to compliment you on the great job all of you do at Nepal Times by writing on issues that were untouchable just a few years ago. Issues like the long overdue reality check for our royalties and a message to the powerful smugglers that we indeed are watching what they are up to. Well touched in no compulsion because every journalist seems to be hammering from these days. However, the articles to your pub-

lications always stand out.

I want to give a special mention to your columnist C.K. Lal. He does an excellent job synthesising and

analyzing hot issue in depth. Congratulations on being one of the few news sources from Nepal with such consistently high quality and integrity.

Sushil Bogal
Seattle, USA

I have been reading Nepal Times from the first issue. After more than a decade spent in Nepal trying to make sense of what is happening, I feel so relieved to read material written by people who know that facts and words matter. So please keep that in mind: if you don't do obscure the story with jargon. But do not simplify the issues either. Politics, society and environment are complex, it takes hard work to understand their linkages. I know that Article 19 is providing a reference and an example of intellectual discipline for Nepal's educated class.

Albert Greer
Kathmandu


LETTERS
Prime Minister Girija Koirala appeared live on CNN's Q&A programme hosted by Riz Khan on 6 September which was broadcast only on the network's South Asia feed.

During the interview, the Prime Minister fielded questions from a wide range of people from Nepal and abroad who sent in their questions either by phone or email. There was a simultaneous online live chat going on in cnn.com Nepali Times transcribed the interview for readers who missed the show.

Riz Khan: Let me start by asking you. There is so much already on the UN's plate. What can Nepal hope to get out of this summit? What do you hope for in your country?

My dear friend, this summit, I feel that United Nations should have a new vision for the future and, also because the scientific and technological advancement and economic liberalisation throughout the world...

Riz: But, in fact, I was going to ask you this is an opportunity for you to meet some of the key leaders that may be hard to get hold of sometimes. What sideline meetings can you have? What can you achieve on the side perhaps that the main meeting won't...

I will focus on poverty alleviation because there are the wide gapping between have and have-nots. The gap between the have and have-nots have widened very much. In future, that will create

security concerns to United Nations. That gap should be narrowed down by United Nations.

Sudhir Bhatarai, Vietnam (email question): It seems you are guided by "kitchen" members of your cabinet. It seems you want to run politics as a family business. Can you clarify?

My dear friend, I'm not that kind of man who is influenced by the family members. I might hold opinion about Nepal, how to develop it. So, it is all nonsense to say that I am being surrounded by couriers and my family members. It is wrong to see that...

Riz: What about issues of... I mean, you are accused of things like nepotism, corruption and so on. What are you doing to combat corruption in Nepal?

Well, when I took over power, three priorities I had made. Law and order situation was maintained, second to eradicate corruption and third good governance. I'm working on that line. And the corruption is an invisible enemy. It's very difficult to root out corruption. But I'm sure we are inside this enemy. We will root out corruption. That's my first priority is to root out corruption. Then alone political stability will be maintained in Nepal.

Caller from India: Mr Prime Minister, I'd like to ask you: your government has been using the slogan of "Khadmo, Ma MLA" against ISI and having any base of ISI in Nepal. But evidence which have been claimed by the Indian...

Nepal relation?

Well, my dear friend, Indian government should pinpoint where ISI is. And another thing, I cannot throw stones in the darkness. So I've told India's Prime Minister Mr Vajpayee about this. We are working on this. But then we will be able to control this. Otherwise, it is just like throwing stones in the darkness.

Priti Panday, Kathmandu (email question): What have you done to...

My dear friend, Ramesh, you don't know anything about the functions of the party. In democratic party, this kind of things happen, but it will not, the party will not break, it will not, this government will not fall...

Riz: Well, as regards Bhutanese refugees, I have talked to the Bhutanese Prime Minister right now and I want to sort this matter out. But I think that without the good offices of India the problem will not be solved. During my visit to India I talked to the Prime Minister of Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee about this. This time Mr Vajpayee is positive to resolve this problem.

Riz: Prime Minister, let me ask you. Of course, Nepal doesn't have a direct threat from India. But news of attacks on tourists and the tourist industry may be effective if it were to happen, what you might feel (un)confidence (un)clear about tourism in Nepal. In all bringing outside investment, experiences have shown you need for these Indian tourist making new outside spanning throughout the kingdom.

Well, we are very much concerned about Maoist terrorist activity. As regards the security and order for the tourists (travel) we are proceeding towards that direction. We want that tourists should come to Nepal and see (un)clear.

Ramesh (caller from India): I would like to ask the Prime Minister whether the government in Nepal would survive?

The government will survive. What do you mean by prime dear friend?

Ramesh: It means that there is a lot of friction between the earlier prime minister and the prime minister...

My dear friend, Ramesh, you don't know anything about the functions of the party. In democratic party, this kind of things happen, but it will not, the party will not break, it will not, this government will not fall...

Riz: If there was some sort of political stability, what sort of

The tourists return

I n his first floor bookstore overlooking the busiest street in Thamel, Paki is eagerly awaiting the arrival of the second tourist season of the year. "It's not that there are no buyers now, but there are too few of them," says the bookkeeper who has been in the business for the last two decades.

Pakum, a small area near the airport, is dotted with Bed Shakha Market to the travel executive whiling away her time in an air-conditioned office, the waiting is finally over.

It has been a long year since the record hordes who arrived in Nepal last autumn. The spring season was pretty dismal, fire with the Y2K scare and then the Indian Airlines hijack. And with the rains tourism came to a near-complete halt. That is why the upcoming season holds special significance for the industry.

There are reasons enough for hope and one is the increase in international flights to Kathmandu. Singapore Airlines and Gulf Air have announced additional flights and Hong Kong's Dragon Air is beginning twice-weekly flights. Says Ashok Pokhrel, president of PATA Nepal Chapter, "There isn't a negative trend in the flow but

the growth is not phenomenal either. The industry still has the confidence although we did go through a pretty rough summer." The number of tourist arrivals by air till the end of August this year was 211,153, which shows a decline compared to the 249,286 who arrived over the same period last year. The fallout of the December hijack is clear in the number of Indian visitors to Nepal, going down by 34 percent this year.

This is not a healthy sign given the huge potential that exists in the Indian market, says Pokhrel, "Your million Indian travels abroad annually, and we get only about a hundred and fifty thousand of them. With an open border, easily usable currency and a culture and religion so similar to our own, we should be flooded with them, but unfortunately few people in the travel trade see that," he says.

Regardless of the figures so far, there is anticipation in the air. The 1 sq km area with over 2000 hotel establishments is in being spruced up. "We are trying to tackle various problems tourist face. There has been a lot of cases of credit card overcharging cases, selling of fake idols and crafts. Indian products are being sold as examples of Nepali craftsmanship. All these things affect Nepal's image," says Tejendra Nath Shrestha, president of Thamel Tourism Development Committee. "Apart from that, we are also serious about manage-mant street hawkers, and providing security to visitors."

The Committee is planning to organise exhibitions and sales of Nepali industrial products, food festivals, street festivals and other tourist attractions. It is also working on standardising the rates for the growing number of Internet service centres and local groceries and bakeries, to discourage unhealthy competition.

The tourists return

SALU, SUBEDI and ALOK TUMBHAHANGPEHY
"Once the Bhutanese refugees join hands with the terrorists, it will be a great headache to India, Nepal and Bhutan."

R.K. (referring to web chat): The economy is in a terrible, population growth is still a problem, and agriculture production is declining. Please comment.

Well, economic, because our economy is not that sound. But recently we are managing to make our economy healthy. And also regarding agriculture we have focused (a lot). I feel there is a problem in English 'Empire mind it's devil's workshop'. But in Nepal empty mass is devil's workshop. Empyrean English does not listen to Information Technology in Nepal. I don't know about technical subjects but I want that this technology should be introduce in Nepal. So it is apparent to me that I am very glad that India has given support for the information technology.

Sukanta P. Pradhan, Nepal (email address: S.Dewanbali@yahoo.com) I think which should be allowed to trade with Bangladesh via Indian land without any restrictions (given that Nepal is landlocked).

Tour operators are hopeful that this season may not be as good as the previous year, but worries remain about long-term prospects. "This year we are expecting a moderate number of tourists, as usual. But the tour operators for the coming year are unprofitable because of the rising political instability," says Shrestha. The Maoist rebellion is certainly contributing to the reduction in tourism, especially since travel advisories put by various Western countries have specifically highlighted the Maoist threat in Nepal. But there are other long-term issues that has hindered the growth of the industry in Nepal, says Narendra Yadav, president of Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN). "After the resumption of the Indian Airlines flights we were quite hopeful but the statistics didn't live up to our hopes. The biggest problem in all of this is the inefficiency of the national flag carrier. HAN is seriously thinking of dumping RANAC and partnering with other international airlines in terms of promotion and marketing."

The Director of the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), Pradeep Raj Pandey, however, sounds upbeat. "Even with its limited infrastructure and budget, NTB is trying its level best. And our name has been internationally appreciated. In India we have tried to project the image that we are not anti-Indian as was perceived during the BJ regime. I think the marketing in India will definitely produce positive results."

One can only hope that for the sake of the country's tourism sector its momentum isn't stunted.

Robert Rieffel dead

Robert Rieffel, long-time Kathmandu resident and Nepal-lover, died last week in Maracalao, Venezuela, at the age of 85. Rieffel first came to Nepal in 1961 for treks in the Himalaya. In 1970, he was designated general manager of Royal Nepal Airlines. That was when Air France was running the airline. He stayed on in Nepal after his two-year stint as RANAC, authoring the classic tourist guidebook Namaste Nepal (Bahuguna Press 1990), which has also come out in French and Spanish. Later, he served as Belgium's Honorary Consul in Kathmandu. Rieffel's wife was a dedicated social worker who died in Kathmandu in 1984. Rieffel was devastated by the loss. He later moved back to France and then on to Venezuela to live with his son, Mark. His son will bring his father's ashes to Kathmandu next month and will place it next to his mother's grave at the British cemetery in Kathmandu. Born in Strasbourg, Robert Rieffel started his career as a correspondent for the news agency AFP in Eastern Europe during the Second World War. He was an avid mountain lover and had also written With Zimba the Sherpa and What Do I Know About Nepal. •

Drama at Miteri hospital

The police have come under some human rights organisations' "unauthorised" entry into a Kathmandu hospital premises in search of two suspected Maoist rebels admitted to the hospital for gunshot injuries. The police entered the Miteri hospital in Baghaun on 2 September, six days after two young patients had been brought it from Sindhuli, claiming that the duo matched the descriptions of Maoists being sought by the Saptari District Police. Speaking to us, both the wounded admitted they are associated with the Maoists. Rajan K.C. said he has been fighting the People's War since the very beginning, while Birajaya Phuyal said she was a recent entrant in the Maoist fold. The two had been injured in clashes with the police on 23 August.

After the police entered the wards, the hospital's medical director, Dr Birendra Jhaliwal, went to court asking an order to keep them out. On Thursday the Appellate Court of Lalitpur asked the police to refrain from actions that could affect the hospital's operations. The court has also ordered different government departments to clarify why the police had entered the hospital premises without necessary authorisation. The petitioner also says that the police entered into the wards, disregarding hospital regulations and misbehaved with the staff and patients. The police deny the allegation, and also deny that they had any motive other than visiting them, as has been reported. They plan to take K.C. and Phuyal into custody after the treatment is over.

Reading literacy figures

How many people in Nepal can read and write does the names (that basically qualifies one as "literate")? Apparently in the maze of figures bandied about, no one can be sure as it could be seen on the occasion of International Literacy Day on 8 September.

The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) and the National Planning Commission (NPC) figures based on a 1995-96 survey conducted in 37 districts, puts national literacy at 52 percent. UNESCO says something else. According to its report for the year 2000, 32.6 percent Nepalis are "literate".

The different findings arise from the different parameters used. While the government includes everyone above the age of six in its surveys, UNESCO does not count children below 15 years.

The UNDP reports adult literacy in its annual Human Development Report and the figure for 1998 (the reported date), was 21.7 percent for females and 56.9 percent for males. This one is another mismatch with government numbers.

Functional literacy—how many can actually use literacy skills in everyday life—is something none of the statistics tell. Experts believe that could be lower than even what UNESCO reports.

DyPM tours Maoist districts

DyPM Pranit Ram Chandra Pokhrel visited the four mid-western districts most affected by the Maoist insurgency to try to seek support for a proposed "integrated development programme" the government wants to implement. Pokhrel's visit, limited to the safety of the district headquarters of Rukum, Ropa, Kailali and Salyan, was marked by promises of new roads and more money for development projects. He has also occasioned the visit to the highlights of democracy of the Nepal Congress party.

"Fall Guy" for Paras released

The death of singer Praveen Gurung in a hit-and-run last month on 6 August has caused a new turn after police released Khagda Bahadur Bhuji, who had claimed responsibility for the accident. Bhuji was released on the third week after he was reportedly released under orders from the Home Ministry. The government decision came after it was reported that a letter from the Royal Palace to the Prime Minister (posted on 26 July) that King Birendra had sought details on the accident from the Government. The Nepal National Free Students Union (ANWSU) had spearheaded a campaign to collect over 500,000 signatures to petition King Birendra to take action against his nephew Paras Shah, who is alleged to have been at the wheel of the Fajji which hit and killed the singer. The King's organisations affiliated to the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist) are now demanding that the government make public the details of the accident.

Public spending review

The government has named a five-member public expenditure review commission to report on how public spending can be improved and how it can be used to support the priority sectors. The commission is headed by Brijaya Dhoi Chand, MP, Shanker Sharma, member of the National Planning Commission and three other government officials. The commission is to report to the government in six months.
Fight for Congress party presidentialism

Since the last meeting... September 13

Two second-generation leaders of the Nepali Congress—Shalija Acharya and Sushil Koirala—have announced that they will contest for the post of party president during the forthcoming 10th Nepali Congress national convention in September.

Shalija Acharya is the daughter of former Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and Sushil Koirala is the son of the late Prime Minister Bimalendra Koirala. Both are well known in the Congress party and have strong support from different factions of the party.

The battle for the presidency of the Nepali Congress is likely to be intense, with both candidates having their own strengths and weaknesses. Shalija Acharya is known for her dynamic leadership style and her ability to connect with young voters, while Sushil Koirala is seen as a more traditional leader with a strong base among the party's older members.

Both candidates have promised to work towards the development of the country and to bring stability to the national politics. However, the upcoming national elections are expected to be a major test for both candidates, as the Nepali Congress is one of the major parties in the country and its performance will have a significant impact on the political landscape.

Will the UML split?

Saptak Dhairah, 8 September

The visits and programmes of the ruling party in the Maoist-affected areas, havealled the leaders of the UML out of their deep slumber. Opposition leader Mahatar Kumar Nepali has started visiting these areas, and has stated that there is a certain amount of friction between the Maoists and the UML.

While the government has asked for help from all political parties in solving the problem, the major opposition parties are slow to respond. On the one hand, it says the Maoists are their friends, and therefore have to be helped. On the other, the UML finds its coercers being attacked by the Maoists.

The tussle for leadership between the Nepali and K.P. Oli is making the low-level cadre restive, and the war of words between Ishwor Poudel and Pradip Nepal is only adding to their discontent. Both Nepal and Oli, in the name of strengthening grassroots cadre, are in fact steering the takeout to take over the leadership.

The feud between the top comrades will be on full display when the party's student's wing, the ANSUF, holds its 8th convention in Butwal from 13 September. Oli is regarded as wielding considerable clout in the student wing, and Nepal will be all set to try and clip his wings. It was in Butwal that the ANSUF held its 6th convention, where it split. A repeat major in the offering at the party level.

While Oli has considerable following among certain sections of the UML membership, including women, Nepal is facing rough weather in calling the shots. But Nepal has always trod on his sleeves, and has shown particular flair in turning down Oli's favours. The stage is set for a classic showdown at the ANSUF meet—Nepal leaving nothing unturned to get the student's backing, and Oli hopes to consolidate his standing. The confrontation will be all the more interesting when both men pick for their own corner to the ANSUF top cap.

If the UML is not to be struck by the Nepali Congress bug, it will have to get its act together. Its reckoning as a party of some national strength in many ways depends on how its students' meet goes.

Nepali disgraced at UN General Assembly

The Prime Minister at the UN Summit it seems has done more harm than good for the country. First of all, he insisted on speaking in English, which is not his fluency. He went on to make a mess of himself, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's and Barack Obama's speech in English, still he spoke in Hindi and used an interpreter. Koirala also had a New York moment.

He again spoke in speaking in English on the CNN's Q&A programme. When asked about the total number of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, he replied "hundred thousand".

He should know that the number is not hundred thousand, Koirala also didn't do his image or the country's any good, when he fumbled with the facts and figures concerning Nepal. Some of the questions were raised to irritate the Prime Minister, and to make him appear as an idiot.

When a Vietnamese journalist quizzed Koirala on his kitchen cabinets and the influence that his family members has on the government, the PM called it a "stupid question" and refused to answer.

Missing Foreign Minister

Dhurba, 10 September

The Prime Minister in New York to take part in the UN Summit. This is the ideal time for Nepal to renew and cement its friendship with all the major countries. Thus it is not only natural that the foreign minister should accord Darji the privilege of his interaction with world leaders. But our FM is instead in Sweden. Most of the states in New York will have their foreign relations chief with them. With the absence of our Foreign Minister, our Prime Minister cut a very figure when it came to the nittry-gritty of foreign affairs.

Last week, when the Japanese PM was in Kathmandu, our Foreign Minister was in China. Our foreign minister was to visit China no doubt, but not when the head of our largest donor is in our country. This surely must have baffled the Japanese.

This underlines the fact that our Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not serious about its work.

Cholra still dangerous

Himil, 10 September

After reducing the water level of the Cholra lake by three meters, a sense of relief is being felt by the people living along the banks of the river Tamakoshi in the districts of Dolakha and Sindhupalchok.

The newly constructed canal remove water from the river to the forest. However, the water level in the lake has not decreased as fast as expected. The lake is still full, and people are worried that the lake might burst.

According to specialists, to reduce the level of the lake, a total of 400 pipes is required, but since it is difficult to technically feasible to lay so many pipes, the idea was not followed through. A total of 17 streams were planned to be appropriate areas, to warn people of the danger should the lake burst. A total of Rs 199.5 million has been spent on preventing the disaster, but some of the villagers feel that it is not enough. They fear that the lake will not burst at all, and that people are only safe after the money the government spent on the project was wasted.

Smitten in Dhusalkha district, Cholra lake at a height of 4500 meters above sea level, and is believed to have been

THE NEPAL PRESS 13 - 19 SEPTEMBER 2000 NEPAL TIMES

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Nothing in the world has revolutionary change occurred without the people rising up to bring it about." — Bhutan Bahadur Ghentup, first leader, in Nepali Pratya weekly, 8 September.
Higher HIV risk

The AIDS epidemic in Nepal is raging on trucks and buses. Here, a public health message is painted on a billboard along the road in Kathmandu.

The AIDS epidemic in Nepal is spreading into the general population because of unprotected sex and drug use. And it is no longer confined to ‘’high risk’’ groups like sex workers, truck drivers and drug user. Latest results from a survey conducted by the STD/AIDS Counseling and Training Services (SACTS) on behalf of Family Health International (FHI) show just how explosive the growth of the epidemic is. Of the 300 sex workers interviewed in the last 12 months, 23 percent were HIV positive. The sero-prevalence among injecting drug users (IDU) was much higher, at 76 percent, says V.P. Gurbachan of SACTS.

Between 30,000-60,000 Nepalis are infected, and it could reach 300,000 in the next 10 years. Nepal used to be a ‘’low prevalence’’ country just recently, today it faces the prospect of a ‘’concentrated epidemic’’.

Another FHI study reported some positive signs: condom use is up, especially among the ‘’high risk’’ groups. The Behavioural Surveillance Survey covered 400 truckers, 600 male bachelors and 400 female sex workers in urban centres and settlements in 6 districts along the East-West Highway and compared results with the previous year.

Truck drivers were found to be the main clients of sex workers, followed by migrant workers, police and army personnel and microcredit collectors. Over 80 percent used condoms at least once, and it was 68 percent among truckers and 55 percent among male labourers. ‘’Consistent condom use’’ was also up in all three groups: sex workers, 40 percent, truckers, 51 percent, and male labourers, 32 percent. These findings from the previous year showed that only 40 percent of the truckers and 26 percent of male labourers were using condoms.

Given the situation, ‘’there is no time to waste’’, cautions Dr. Chandra Kunwar, the Chief of the FHI in Nepal. ‘’It is urgent that we move quickly to set up condom stands on the highways and in truck parks.‘’

The Nepalese AIDS epidemic is spreading at an alarming rate because of unprotected sex and drug use. This is a serious concern for the Nepalese government, as well as for international organizations working in the country. The epidemic is spreading rapidly, and if left unchecked, it could have severe consequences for the country as a whole. The government and international organizations are working together to combat the epidemic through various initiatives such as condom distribution and awareness campaigns. However, more needs to be done to reach the most affected groups and to stop the spread of the disease. The government and international organizations need to continue their efforts to control the AIDS epidemic in Nepal.
NRB reports 6 percent growth

Nepal Rastra Bank has confirmed the government statement that the economy grew by 6 percent last fiscal year. Agriculture was the mainstay of the growth while the contribution of the beverage, construction and export industries was also significant. Nepal Rastra Bank’s 12-month (up to Mid-July 2008) economic update also reports low inflation (3.3 percent) and a budget deficit of Rs 10.2 billion—a 13.5 percent increase compared to 1998/99. The government spent Rs 55.76 billion in 1998/99, a 1.1 percent point increase over the previous year’s rate of growth in government spending of 8.8 percent.

The National Urban Consumer Price Index (NUPCI) recorded a rise of 3.3 percent this July, compared to 11.3 percent in July last year. NRB says inflation was controlled mainly because of a drop in food prices. The NUPCI rose by 3.7 percent in the hills, 3.6 in Kathmandu, and 3 percent in the Tarai.

Exports continued to do well, growing by 44.7 percent to reach Rs 91.6 billion. But imports also went up, by 22.2 percent to Rs 100.9 billion. Among exports, garments recorded the highest increase, while woolen carpets remained more or less at last year’s level. Cashew nuts, however, has registered moderate growth. The balance of payments (BOP) recorded a surplus of Rs 13.4 billion in the first 11 months of fiscal year 1998/99. However, due to increasing imports, the current account deficit touched Rs 4.2 billion. BDI surplus was a result mainly of receipts of miscellaneous capital items, which is a sort of a “catch all” item in the BOP account.

BOP surplus in mid-July stood at Rs 14 billion, the Bank said, as a result of which foreign exchange holdings in the banking system increased by 22.6 percent to Rs 94 billion.

LG’s new range

The South Korean electronics giant LG is introducing a new range of electronic and household appliances and adding six new service outlets in Nepal.

Among them are new refrigerators that come with “door cooling” in addition to the normal back cooling that most of such appliances have. There is also an introducing large capacity washing machines, including ones that allow front loading. LG, which claims to be the leader in refrigerator sales with a 25 percent share in the Nepali market, now sells over 20 models.

The new television range being offered include LG’s Flatron that comes in different colour casings to allow customers to choose models to match their interior décor. LG—originally Goldstar—has which been associated with Nepal’s Chauthaury Group for the last 13 years, will continue selling “economy” 17’’ brands in the 14’’ and 20’’ range, company officials said.

The company is also entering the mobile phone market. LG’s new service outlets are to be opened in Butwal, Nепalgunj, Birtamod, Janakpur, Dhangadi and Mahendranagar, which will complement those already existing in Kathmandu, Pokhara, Biratnagar and Narayangadh.

Regal Room at Yak & Yeti

The Yak & Yeti Hotel has unveiled what it claims is the capital’s largest convention hall to add to its existing facilities comprising of four meeting rooms and two board rooms.

The newly opened Regal Room measures 144 by 56 feet and can accommodate over 1000 people at a time, says the hotel. The new set up can also be divided into two rooms with sound-proof partitions for use by smaller groups.

Rawal challenges screening

Former Nepal Rastra Bank governor, Tilak Rawal, has challenged his sacking in a petition filed at the Supreme Court last week. Rawal says he was appointed for a five-year term and his dismissal within seven months was unfair.

PPA reviews

A government official said last week that a “review” of the power purchase agreements (PPAs) between independent power producers (IPPs) and the Nepal Electricity Authority was underway, following directives issued by a parliamentary committee. The review comes a few months after the first IPP, Khitmo Hydroelectric project (60MW), began supplying power to the NEA. Another IPP, the 36-MW Bhotekosi, is nearing completion.

The IPPs have not commented on the government’s recent move to invoke the clause that allows ‘‘review of the PPAs in good faith.’’ Privately, however, they say any such attempt will not bode well for new investments in the hydro sector.

According to the PPAs with both Khitmo and the Bhotekosi projects, NEA will have to buy all the power generated at approximately seven US cents, the highest in the region.

Grindlay Gazette

**INTEREST RATE UPDATE**

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Shyam’s Midas touch

Nearly everything Shyam Kakshapati touches turns into gold. Now the Nepali entrepreneur is invading Tibet!

Shyam Kakshapati is one of the few Nepali business magnates who has built a business empire without taking the usual shortcut to success. He has succeeded not by cutting corners or by buying monopsony licences using connections in high places. Rather Shyam chose the hard way, going directly to his customers with products they need, maintaining consistent quality and providing it at affordable prices. Now Nepal’s best-known restaurant owner is taking his culinary and management skills to Lhasa.

Shyam’s Nango Group has just taken over two restaurants in Lhasa under a management contract and will begin operations in November. The other Nango Nweii is now being refurbished and redesigned. “We’re also working on a new menu,” says Shyam, who has just returned from Lhasa. Tibet Nango Nweii will offer Continental, Nepali and Indian cuisine to the 45,000 tourists that visit Lhasa every year and in the locals who seem to frequent Nango Nweii, too. With so many potential customers, Shyam believes he can make the ideal profit.

Shyam’s Nango Restaurant has been a favorite at Durbar Marg for over two decades, a cozy warren hide for locals and tourists. His chain of fast-food restaurants, the well-known bakery cafes, are doing well. After investing over Rs 100 million in his restaurant chain and having reached the limits of growth within the Kathmandu Valley, Shyam decided to strike out for the city.

Shyam has always ventured where Nepalis have feared to tread, going back inside new areas of business, taking risks and reaping rewards. At 48, Shyam looks much younger—especially with the George Harrison-length hair that’s rubbing his shoulders. What makes Shyam’s myriad ideas click?

“You have to give people their money’s worth,” he says. “Evaluate yourself what is the best price for what you are selling. The test depends on the merits of the business idea, timing, determination and hard work.”

Shyam came to Kathmandu as a mere boy from Tansen in Palpa district. Born into a family of trackers, his knack for feeling the public’s pulse is partly inbred. But his ideas were real-driven and moulded by his own experiences while growing up.

Before going into business, Shyam even flirted with the idea of becoming an airline pilot. But after losing his father at 14, he was pushed into the family’s trading business. Shyam the 14-year-old could not long remain satisfied with the traditional businesses and soon moved into new and uncharted territories.

It all began with Café de Park, a restaurant he opened at Rama Park in 1973. Café de Park was an instant hit. What Kathmandu did not have at the time was a place where people could listen to good music, meet others and generally hang out. Café de Park provided the city’s post hippie youth a place they could call their own. “We had the best music in town,” he says. “The idea clicked and I was encouraged to do more.”

Nango came about three years later. By this time, Shyam had done so much research and he opened the Nango Chinese Room next door converting an existing Japanese restaurant. That’s when things really started picking up. Recalls Shyam, “From there I have kept on moving.”

Next step was Kathmandu’s first supermarket, Nango, Basar at Patuli Sadak, which took the few ventures along with the taxi idea that had to close down. Shyam says he learned a lesson from this: don’t start a supermarket on rented property because it is a long time to make your shop a landmark.

Shyam’s vision for his taxi fleet was to have large, comfortable cabs with two-way radios that could call to their homes. His target was the 80-year-old Yellow Cab, initially did well, and was good while it lasted, but was soon forced out of the street by smaller rivals.

“Well, as a business it did fine,” Shyam says about his taxi fleet. “The real reason it failed was close was government policy which changed to allow small cars to be operated in —as against the earlier one that required bigger cars.” Shyam’s Nango Cab next did to mono-cab what McDonald’s did to hamburgers. He turned the traditional small family kitchens in the city’s narrow by lanes into fast-food by dispensing them through clean and efficient eatery on major thoroughfares. Bakery Cafe was a sort of revival of Café de Park. There are now six outlets in Kathmandu Valley, and one each at Kathmandu and Tansen. Another one is opening in Narayanganj, Basantapur.

“Shyam’s Nango Group has grown bigger with the addition of three new outlets,” says Shyam. “Everything is going fine.”

Kurintar, the Riverside Spring Resort and Bakery Cafe, was opened at Kathmandu. The restaurant offers a fine dining restaurant, bar and a number of other facilities, such as a spa, a gym, a conference hall, and an outdoor pool. The resort is located on the bank of the Bagmati River, offering stunning views of the Himalayas. The resort is designed to provide a comfortable and relaxing atmosphere for guests to enjoy the natural beauty of the area.

Shyam’s Nango Group has been a leader in the Nepalese hospitality industry, and has continued to expand and diversify its offerings. With a strong focus on quality and customer service, the company has become a trusted name in the Nepalese market.

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Kurintar Riverside Spring Resort and Bakery Cafe. (Below left)

Kurintar Riverside Spring Resort and Bakery Cafe. (Below left)

Kurintar Riverside Spring Resort and Bakery Cafe. (Below left)
Looking for the Yeti

The Yeti was a Pilatus Porter that crashed at 5,200 m below Dhaulagiri in 1960. This month, an expedition is going to look for it, take it back to Switzerland, and make it fly again.

GENEVA – Last week, a ten-member expedition will set out from Kathmandu to recover a legend, one which makes the hearts of all mountain climbers and recreational pilots beat faster.

The wreckage of the famous Yeti plane has been lying around for more than 40 years now up in Nepal’s snowy heights of 5,700 metres. The tiny airplane was the prototype for the Swiss aircraft Pilatus Porter PC-6 and in 1960 it had a major role in helping a team of climbers from Switzerland to succeed in scaling the Dhaulagiri, till then the only 8,000-plus metres mountain in the Himalayas which had not yet been conquered.

Altogether, the Yeti made 16 flights to carry equipment and supplies of the expedition led by Max Eisein. The plane’s fans claim that its hangings at an altitude of 5,700 metres are to this day a world record. But on the 17th flight on May 5, 1960, the plane crashed on the slope. The two pilots survived, but they had to leave the Porter PC-6 behind.

“The Porter PC-6 is a great airplane and for this reason till this day is constructed almost without any changes by the Pilatus works,” says Bruno Asselli, president of the Porter Vintage Association. The only difference now is that the plane has a turbine engine, instead of a piston engine.

Asselli’s club has now set itself an ambitious goal. The remains of the Yeti, which has lost some of its parts to souve-
nir hunters and locals over the decades, are now to be recovered in a 15-day expedi-
tion. The plane is to be brought back to Switzerland via Kathmandu.

The expedition is due to leave from Munich on 28 September. If Yeti fans have their way, then the multi-purpose plane which now enjoys a cult following will then be fully restored and made fit for flying excursions again.

Since the entire project is a costly one - total expenses of $240,000, the expedition hopes for support from the Pilatus company and the German Alpine Association.

“We are going by the principle that the rubbish left behind by earlier expeditions should vanish from the Himalaya mountains,” expedition leader Leo Canadita said.

Caminada is mountain climber, engineer and pilot and knows his way in the region. For years he served as advisor to the King of Bhutan in the construction of mountain railways. His main hope now is that his nine fellow expedition members will not get worm out on Dhaulagiri.

“Given the thin air at more than 5,000 metres altitude, cutting apart an airplane is not as easy as many people might imagine,” he says. His expedition members are between 28 and 57 years old and all are mountain climbers.

Further information: www.porter yeti.org

STAN ARNINGTON

For nearly five decades, the rugged Pilatus Porter was the workhorse of Himalayan aviation in Nepal. Its contemporary, the DC-3, was a Land Rover that serviced grass strips in the middills and rural, then the Pilatus Porter was as versatile as a yak. It could land just about anywhere, it climbed like a rocker, glided like a parachute, and even though it wasn’t pressurized its turbo prop version could fly to 9,000 m.

It is also a testimony to the dangers of flying in the Himalaya that virtually all the Pilatus Porters that served in Nepal are no more. The first one to come to grief was the Yeti which crashed on Dhaulagiri Pass in 1960 (see accompanying article) and the last one hit a mountain in bad weather near Namche Bazaar two years ago killing its pilots. A private airline is thinking of getting a Pilatus, and unless it does, the days of these fine flying machines will sadly pass.

Perhaps no one knew the Pilatus and flying in the Himalayas better than that great legend, Captain Emil Wick. Emil was sent by the Pilatus factory in 1952 to train pilots of Royal Nepal Airlines which had acquired three of the planes. But Nepali pilots didn’t particularly like flying the single-engined Pilatus. Emil, however, loved to fly the Porter and by the time he retired he had logged more than 14,000 hours.

Emil came first to Nepal in 1960 to pilot the Yeti, a red-and-yellow plane with Swiss registration bought back to Nepal by the Polish Austrian Swiss expedition in Dhaulagiri. At that time Nepal’s hinterland was very much off limits to foreigners, passengers on domestic flights had to have their passports stamped, and planes had to carry liaison officers. The Yeti played an important part in the successful Swiss ascent of Dhaulagiri.

The approach road was over some
Perhaps no one knew the Pilatus Porter and flying in the Himalaya better than that great legend, Captain Emil Wick.

"Captain Emil Wick with his beloved "Beaver" Charlie." Photo: Copyright of Nepal Royal Airlines.

snow. I heard on the radio: Airport is closed, all aircraft diverting, wind is 55, gusting up to 60 knots. That was strong wind. And below us the Thai DC-5 was down with its final in the air at an overpass." "Jeez, Chris, I thought, now on bullshit. I told the tower I cannot diver, I don’t know where, and there’s a thunderstorm. I have fuel for 45 minutes left, I’m landing across the airstrip. She said ‘Negative! Negative! No permission!’ Somehow we had to get down. The wind dipped to 25 knots. It’s now or never. I told the tower I’m turning for approach. Negative, negative, no permission! We landed into the wind and had stopped by the width of the runway. The Director of the Airport came over and wanted me to file a report why I didn’t follow orders. I said you want to kill me or what?"

Emil left Royal Nepal Airlines and Nepal in 1985 and returned to Switzerland to work at the Pilatus factory. In Nepal, everyone has heard of Captain Wick and he still returns periodically. In his last visit in 1995 he dropped in on the Royal Nepal Aviation office and didn’t know anyone there. Until word got around the office, he was just some old guy with gray hair. Emil had heart surgery, and has been in and out of hospital in Geneva for the past six months.

His beloved "Alpha Bravo Charlie" has long been cannibalized, it sits alone in an unsanctified field near the airport, forgotten and forgotten. And the swap-like chase of the Pilatus Porter has died out from the Nepali sky. Only the legend remains.

Caption: "Baby!"

OPEL CORSA OPEL, THE ONE YOU’VE NAILED. WE’VE TESTED YOUR BEST SELLER AND REAPED SATISFACTION.

Baby!

Then we went now down and hit a rock that turned us 180 degrees. The plane is still there. We couldn’t go down across because the weather was bad, but we had food for two days. Finally we walked down to Tikuche, stopped for the night and then we hired some porters and went to Pokhara. I’m the only person to walk down Dhaulagiri without climbing up.

In 1973 Emil again ferried expedition gear to Dhaulagiri, this time to an American expedition. Instead of landing on the glacier, he landed on the supplies. I had to squeeze my ass out over the Annapurna range and across the Kali Gandaki Valley. The winds were deadly up there at 25,000 feet. We had to do the drop area from the west to the east if possible. We went up and if Dhaulagiri was clear we crossed it and then went to French Col at 17,500 ft. We would turn and come from the west, fly past the spur at 19,200 ft where we landed in 1980, come low and slow and drop. Sometimes the boxes caught an updraft and went higher up before they dropped.

"One day we went and bought a chicken in Pokhara, a nice cock. I picked up the chicken on the cockpit seat and tied a long streamer on it so we could watch a fall. We dropped the cargo on the snow. They told us by radio thank you, thank you very much, wonderful. We went round again and wrrp, our went that bloody cock. He went down soaring and landed very close to the kitchen tent. It was alive, and that cock raised a ruckus. I ran there, we have two bottles of wine.

But the Sherpas said no, you cannot kill it, it will upset the gods and spoil the expedition. So that cock sat on the glacier until it got freshfrozen feet and went snow blind. This was probably the highest landing chickens in the world at 17,500 feet. Finally when the expedition was done, they took it down to Tikuche and cooked it for dinner."

I remember flying to Shyangboche with Emil once. We overshoot Lukla, that notorious airstrip on a ten-degree slope uphill with a mountain at the end. Emil told me about the time he had landed at Lukla backwards, beaking in front of the mountain and landing downhill. In a few minutes, we pan Namshe and Emil takes a few suds from the oxygen mask, lowers the flaps and heads for the postage-stamped runway. We make the obligatory yip pass to scare the animals off the runway, hardly scanning the trees and the huge rock, make a turn in front of Khumbdle peak and land in a cloud of dust with plenty of runway to spare. A year or so later I was sitting at Lukla waiting for a flight. The weather was lousy - rain at Lukla and snow in the high mountains. Emil had slipped into Shyangboche a few days earlier and got trapped in the sudden storm, and had to sit on a snowy runway waiting for the radio. Suddenly, at about 4 pm I heard a plane. I grabbed my rucksack and headed for the airport just in time to see the Pilatus Porter emerge from the clouds above Lukla.

"Anybody for Kathmandu?" said Emil as the weather started to close in. Anyone in Lukla with any sense in either in bed or drunk by 4 pm, so we was the only one to jump into the plane as the aircraft still bolted from their beds that it was illegal for me to fly without a ticket. By the cloud had obscured the end of the runway, but Emil said ‘let’s go’ and off we went.

"Shall?" he muttered after we were airborne. There were mountains all around us and Emil was flying blind through cloud. "Aha, there’s one!" he said as he spotted a hole and we shot almost straight up, the propellers in front, emerging into the line afternoon sun. "Alpha Bravo Charlie" departed Lukla at 16:15, present level 160, estimated Kathmandu 17:00, Emil into the radio. "Say again" came the crackle from Kathmandu control. Emil replied: "160, that’s 16 thousand feet," radios Emil. "Negative, you cannot fly that high," said the tower. And off went the radio as he turned to me with a grin.

As we come over Lamjung, Emil recounts another tale: landing transversely across the runway at Kathmandu in a dust storm. "We were coming back from Langtang. The weather was bad. We came down that Tshuli valley and it started to snow. I couldn’t see nice, I said to myself, be careful, flys down, slowly, slowly. I could open the window but I couldn’t put my head out. It hits like needles, that..."
Do you suffer from information overload?

Information machines have created an under-managed, over-energised workforce that is less productive.

JEAN GOMES

We are in the middle of one of the greatest revolutions in human history, and most of us are still unaware of its real consequences. The biggest change in our working practices since the industrial revolution is here, all thanks to the personal computer. PCs have been changing the way we work since the mid-80s, but the advent of the internet has led to an explosion in the amount of information that organizations employ in management, and few are equipping their people with the skills to cope.

Just a decade ago, the average white-collar worker processed around 10 items of mail a day: today that number is around 100. Information overload from a range of sources - email, intranets and mobile phones - has created a need for managed, over-energised work environment which is actually reducing, not increasing, productivity and people's feelings of empowerment.

Studies by politicians Mori and NOP conclude that "techno-ego" leaves 50% of people who use a computer at work feeling "helpless and frustrated". A tenth say IT makes them "feel stupid" and "want to walk out". One in five holds Bill Gates personally responsible. The emphasis in many organisations is on volume of work. New ideas and quality of thought take a back seat when you break down what people actually do.

Speed is not the same as responsiveness and less is frequently more. I regularly watch the madness of senior executives in brainstorming sessions, of all places, logging onto their laptops to catch up with emails, such is the corporate culture of instant response to even the most banal inquiry. Do we really want our computers to set the agenda for how we humans work?

One of the most admired skills today is the ability to process huge amounts of information. In his recent book on global change, Fencepost, Patrick Dixon suggests that "text scanning" is a major third, millenial skill. "(The) ability to scan a page of text every five to 15 seconds and underline 50% of relevant data with a marker. Ability to scan an entire 250-page book and underline 50 key sentences in less than 20 minutes. Ability to write a two-paragraph, world-class executive summary on a product or company you have never heard of, using a wide variety of online databases, in less than 30 minutes." But do we really want people to be judged on the same metrics as computers?

HumanIT, the world's first digital charity, thinks not. It was established five years ago with the aim of making the benefits of the knowledge economy and digital revolution available to everyone. HumanIT wants to investigate the social impact of the IT revolution, to design projects to help overcome the potential counterproductive issues of the information revolution, and to lobby government, IT companies and businesses to use their responsibilities to manage this revolution with care.

People need to be taught how to use email effectively, rather than succumbing to the temptation to be busy inefficiently online. Technology companies need to think more about human interaction with software and less about increased speed and functionality that 99% of us don't need or use.

Information technology is the defining achievement of our age. It is shaping our thinking, our work and our future. In a recent essay in Wired magazine, the bible of the network revolution, Bill Joy, co-founder of Sun Microsystems, suggests that human beings face "something like extinction" in two generations if computer intelligence and biotechnology follow their current development curve. He puts it in strong terms: "We are on the cusp of a nuclear war.

This sounds dramatic but we live in a world that our grandparent's imaginations could never have comprehended. Unless we think deeply about how technology is shaping our lives, we have little chance of ensuring that our grandchildren will live in the sort of world we would wish for them."

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Rods to nowhere

One year after the UN arrived to rescue East Timor, it is being blamed for wastefulness and bungling.

TOM FAITHWORTHY / DOL

T he spectacular overture over Dili harbour has been obscured by a sectional intrusion. Floating hotel ships towed in by the United Nations have landed in the capital of the East Timor, a country battered by violence a year ago.

The ships, the largest of which is named Hotel Olympia, have been chartered by the UN operations department, with the aim of providing accommodation for the mission of the United Nations to East Timor (UNTAET) in protest at what he called "UN Duni" who carried out bureaucratic feuds without any genuine concern for the mission and the people of East Timor.`

"Integriale of newspapers is a hierarchical system that cannot be adapted to the novel markets and the unique conditions of each deployment," Professor Giuseppe Miraglia said in an article titled "The UN's Kingdom of East Timor in the Autumn 2000 issue of the journal of the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

East Timor marks the first time that the UN has been called upon to operate in a year ago scenario, where the infrastructure has been badly damaged and intact. The United Nations mission on behalf of the United Nations membership for a transitional period. After the UN and the East Timor in Cambodia and Kosovo have been quite different. In Cambodia, the UN helped bring warring parties together and supervise a national election, it is overdue for a free and fair result, which demands the departure of the United Nations, the East Timor, for peace and humanitarian efforts there. For more money has gone into peacekeeping than development. Many disillusioned East Timor leaders, on UNTAET's immediate departure and independence ahead of time.

The UN's chief administrator in Dili, Sergio Vieira de Mello, has had some of the blame for not giving the UN a day off, which would be the case at the bottom again.

That was the end of another, navigating the apparent bomb creater on the Mangala hills south of Dili.

Miserably, one day in 1994, I asked him Rupemjebekto to realize that I was not going to stay in peace with the police, to go for leaving my passport, as we drove down. I mentioned this to my wife, who agreed with the idea. It was a burst of rave of Uetsu in which the words "Hillary Clinton" were prominent.

It is the same story. The visiting East Timor's Lady for a nice view had given us, and most importantly local villages, a decent passage up and down. Pakistan also boasts the region's greatest VIP road, and it really was intended for the people. The Monoplayer (it's also capitalised in the Pakistani paper) from Lahore to Islamabad was built under various governments led by Nawaz Sharif. A snipe once called Mr Sharif's "Taj Mahal", an unsustainable building.

But the difference is clear in East Timor's current incarceration and the force of斯塔克, ceased into the brink by the arm for bankrupt.

The United Nations is the only lot, which key in the bank to bankrupt.

Without the assistance of a huge South Korean trust, the United Nations are still in the region as an era to progress. A smooth journey I trust. And, of course, we have an invitation to Prince Charles at Hillary Clinton to visit my home, any time they like.

Sri Lanka pre-poll warning

COLUMBO - Senior Cabinet Ministers contesting parliamentary elections in Sri Lanka have been cautioned by police of possible threats. The police said that the situation was tense for at least five days.

The Police Chief said the warning was being given based on intelligence reports they had collected during the past few months.

The police election for 150 seats in the general elections in the context of the poll have already commenced their campaign securing grotesque promises. Tamil rebels of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) last week assassinated the Industrial Minister C.V. Gunaratne along with his wife and daughter.

In the coming weeks, the LTTE is heading the PA campaign, also has restricted her election meetings compared to previous elections. She survived an LTTE attempt on her life during the election campaign in December last year, but lost her sight in one eye.

The main opposition party leader Ranil Wickremasinghe who heads the United National Party is also taking extra precautions during the campaign.

The new law comes into immediate effect after President K.R.

Narayanan gave his assent to the bills that were passed earlier this year. The bill that altered the earlier act passed in 1965, also makes it mandatory for cable operators to secure copyrights of all programmes they telecast.

In all, the idea was to establish the administration of a facility that could be used by foreign media and private television channels to broadcast communications. India already allows over-the-air telecast. At present, the government gives permission to overseas channels only for special occasions.

Private satellite television channels now operate from abroad, most prominent being Hong Kong-based TV Asia and several others that cater to viewers in India. Observers said the domestic uplinking, among other things, would allow the government to enforce its views on programme content.

Indonesian film wins Venice

BANGKOK - Nobel Peace Prize laureate, the late Thant Myint-U, has joined the list of the world's hottest film festivals. Bangkok will join hundreds of European cities later this month with a "Thant Myint-U's Cup at Home". On Friday, September 22, some 400 cities in 22 European countries will put on an art in order to clear the air and promote environmental awareness and energy conservation.

The Bangkok Film Festival, director of the environment conservation and alternative energy division at Thailand's National Energy Policy Committee, said Bangkok will join the campaign to stress the need to cut the number of cars on city streets and reduce the impact of petroleum fuels, which has been hard hit by the recent increases in prices, which threaten to slow its economic recovery.

More than 100,000 people have participated in the car-free day, Bangkok has been encouraged to use a alternative transportation to get around town, such as bicycles. It was unclear whether the authorities would also encourage the city's millions of noisy, polluting motorcycles to stay at home. (end)

"Leave Car at Home Day"

VENICE - The Venice Film Festival held its annual "Casa" on 7th day. With director based in England Awards. Thant Myint-U, took the prize for his portrayal of the difficulties faced by women in Iran. A special prize for the best directingwent to Santosh Sivan. The film, "The Gentleman of India's Time", was awarded the award for best actress went to Rosy Byrne for her performance in the Australian film Thant Myint-U's Cup at Home. The award for best actor went to Javier Bardem who was nominated for his role in Before Night Falls. (end)

Indian TV ban on cigarette, alcohol ads

NEW DELHI - India has introduced tough television regulations for domestic companies, banning liquor and tobacco advertisements on airtime. Information and Broadcasting Minister Arun Jaitley said on Thursday, the government had passed a new measure which required a commercial operator to secure copyrights of all programmes they telecast.

The new law comes into immediate effect after President K.R. Narayanan gave his assent to the bills that were passed earlier this year. The bill that altered the earlier act passed in 1965, also makes it mandatory for cable operators to secure copyrights of all programmes they telecast.

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Let’s go to Prague

KEN LAIDLAW IN LONDON

Protestors from around the world are gathering up to hold a counter-summit next week in Prague to coincide with the World IMF-World Bank annual meeting to be held outside Washington. The protestors’ summit will highlight how the ride of the harmful side of economic globalization, the controversial policy of free trade and free capital flow, which the two Washington-based bodies have pursued with vigour. The planned protest will focus on the media day demonstrations at the World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting in Seattle last year - the so-called Battle of Seattle - and at the spring meetings of the IMF and World Bank and International Monetary Fund in Washington in April this year.

The aim of the protestors - some 50,000 gathered in Seattle last year - is to focus on the ‘worst practices’ of the three multilateral organizations. All are perceived as fostering wealthier nations and are seen as needing a more multi-participatory decision-making process. Those in charge often hold incredible, being remote, unable to understand the will of the public. How can the movement be made credible, being remote, unable to understand the will of the public. How can the movement be made credible, being remote, unable to understand the will of the public. How can the movement be made credible, being remote, unable to understand the will of the public.

Blame the Blight. The simple game they started in September 1998 has replicated biology in warm water. "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?" has turned into a global subculture, with 27 licensed versions being broadcast in 25 countries.

The world’s countries are already having bought franchised rights from the show’s British creator, Cedric Productions, and there are, of course, at least a few unlicensed knockoffs. So far, the form remains the same, with constants facing questions worth evaluating amounts of money. At least half the fun for the show’s fans is knowing how easy the questions are, and how if they were on the show, they’d win the money. That’s how the world is. That is, the world is.

"Here's your chance to see whether you, too, could be a crorepati, a multi-millionaire, a millionaire..."
—Andres Karranap

The Czech capital may see a repeat of the Battle of Seattle next week.

The challenge of world order.

After the demonstrations in Washington last April, Juliette Beck, co-ordinator of Global Project, a human rights group, wrote in The Washington Post: "This protest may go down in history as the watershed event that sparked an unprecedented global revolution against unmitigated corporate power." Now, round two of the protest is set to confirm an expected deluge of 20,000 international bankers, economists and investors. With a major media presence also expected, the scenic Heart of Europe city will form the perfect backdrop for one more anti-globalization demonstration.

The Prague Initiative states that around 5000 members of the global financial oligarchy - financial and corporate institutions - control 80% of the world’s trade. Properties of the world’s 200 richest people are worth more than the total wealth of the poorest 40% of the population of this planet.

Protestors argue that any successful multilateral trade deal or anti-poverty programme would require more resources from the wealthy nations. Yet, the United States - in the throes of an economic boom - gives little more than one-tenth of one percentage of its total economic output as non-military aid. Even the World Bank admits there is little hope for improvement.

In World Development Report released last year concludes that, if current trends continue, the international development goals of reducing by half the proportion of people in extreme poverty in 2015 will not be met. Nor would the primary education target of full enrolment by the same year be reached.

Funds will be spent on helping the IMF and World Bank to be two busy promoting the interests of multinational corporations, to care for the poor.

The protestors’ message in Prague is very simple: Globalization has not led to economic benefits for all, as was promised by its advocates. Economic globalization has not only failed to reduce poverty. "Within the framework of the so-called Structural Adjustment Programs and the World Bank enforce strict conditions for providing loans to developing countries (including economic deregulation), liberalization and privatization," said Prague-based Initiative.

* * *

To be a millionaire

British

Title: Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?
Top prize: 50 million (about £21 million)
Host: Chris Tarrant, radio personality

1. Starting with the classics, put these four addresses of Chopin in order.
   a) Warsaw
   b) Duszniki
   c) Paris
   d) Rome
   France
   France
   Poland
   France
2. For what was a song "Dancing in the Moonlight"?
   a) Dance
   b) Music
   c) Love
   d) None of the above
   England
   England
   England
   England
3. Who is the lead singer of the band, Status Quo?
   a) Francis
   b) Paul
   c) Rob
   d) Brian
   England
   England
   England
   England
4. What are the writing partners of the Rolling Stones?
   a) Brown and White
   b) Jagger and Richards
   c) Richards and Winter
   d)并没有
   England
   England
   England
   England
5. "What are the writing partners of the Rolling Stones?"
   a) Brown and White
   b) Jagger and Richards
   c) Richards and Winter
   d) None of the above
   England
   England
   England
   England
6. The top 10 wires of the 20th century.
   a) Who is the lead singer of the band, Status Quo?
   b) What are the writing partners of the Rolling Stones?
   c) Who is the lead singer of the band, Status Quo?
   d) What are the writing partners of the Rolling Stones?
   England
   England
   England
   England
7. What is the writing partners of the Rolling Stones?
   a) Brown and White
   b) Jagger and Richards
   c) Richards and Winter
   d) None of the above
   England
   England
   England
   England
8. "What are the writing partners of the Rolling Stones?"
   a) Brown and White
   b) Jagger and Richards
   c) Richards and Winter
   d) None of the above
   England
   England
   England
   England
9. "What are the writing partners of the Rolling Stones?"
   a) Brown and White
   b) Jagger and Richards
   c) Richards and Winter
   d) None of the above
   England
   England
   England
   England
10. What are the writing partners of the Rolling Stones?
    a) Brown and White
    b) Jagger and Richards
    c) Richards and Winter
    d) None of the above
    England
    England
    England
    England

- Andre Karranap

South Centre rebukes Annan report

GENEVA - An inter-governmental organisation of developing countries has denounced the keynote report by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, saying its analyses and prescriptions are too broadly attuned to the dominant views and interests of the industrialised North.

The South Centre says the report, titled "We the Peoples: The Role of the Nations in the 21st Century," ignores the views and concerns of the developing nations of the South. The Secretary-General distributed the document last April with the intention that it would serve as the basis for discussions among heads of state at the Millennium Summit last September.

Another recent report by Annan, about poverty in the world and proposals to overcome it, also triggered objections by representatives of governments in the North and of civil society organisations involved in the issue.

The South Centre report, prepared by the South Centre in Geneva, was prepared jointly with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a bloc of industrialised nations.

Bush Jr gaffes worry supporters

WASHINGTON - President George W. Bush is cutting an ever sorier figure these days compared with up-and-coming Al Gore. The Texas governor is frugally fining the national media, running his campaign press conference over time limits, spreading civility and panic among the party faithful.

Bush's latest tactical missile was his refusal to agree to take part in three half-hour televised debates with the vice president—a stance that left the governor with a hungry "bush baby" and a coward. The bi-partisan Commission on Presidential Debates has sponsored the quadrupled Q&A session since the 1980 campaign and the 90-minute debates are carried by all major US television networks.

Vote is willing to submit to the strict rules of the formal commission debates that do 90 to 100 million Americans tuned in to the last presidential campaign. Bush, however, said he would like the verbal sparring to take place under the auspices of gossip Larry King (CNN) and Tim Russert (NBC), whose average audience sizes do not usually exceed 5.5 million viewers.

The debate followed the heels of another recent Texas bust that analysts agree contradicted political statistics. Speculating on running mate Dick Cheney we a microphone the governor thought he had been dead, Bush called a New York Times report a "major disappointment". He has not, however, cast aside the possibility of running mate, remaining defiantly: "I said what I said. I'm a plain spoken fellow."

Not since the summer of 1999—when reports were rampant of Bush's "major league" narcotics and alcohol consumption—has the press been so unanimously critical in its coverage. (Die Welt)

UN "serious" about peacekeeping

NEW YORK – The United Nations Security Council is to Overhauls its peacekeeping mechanisms, with special focus on conflicts in Africa. The council rushed through a six-step programme after the embarrassment of failing to get 500 of its peacekeeping force hostage to its rules clogged with red tape.

The speed of the reform is recommended in a report by a UN panel of experts for a fortnight after investigations into why the UN had performed so badly in Rwanda and the Balkans. The Security Council has since acted swiftly.

The declaration will be the one concrete outcome to emerge from the long-overdramatised summit which is being held.

Better lives for McHens

LONDON — it could be called the Chicken Run effect. McDonald's, bogey-figure to environmentalists and vegetarians throughout the world, finds itself under fire from the American egg industry for being too self-centered towards hens with its new requirements for egg delivery.

McDonald’s, anxious perhaps to repair some of its battered reputation with those concerned with animal welfare, has introduced new guidelines that egg producers must follow. The guidelines call for McDonald’s to supply the corporation with eggs for its McMuffins. Egg producers must cease immediately the practice of withholding food and water to stimulate egg production, among other things. If this move is implemented, 1,000 increase the space allotted to a hen by 50 per cent to 80 sq cm or 220 sq inches by 2006.

The British anti-fast food, the Chicken Run film, which tells the story of hens escaping from hellish conditions, has been a popular hit in the US and has been credited with helping to raise the issue of battery hens.
A trickle of hope on the Bagmati

With two projects working side-by-side, it may not be long before clean water flows in the Bagmati at Pashupati.

When the Bagmati Area Sewage Construction/Rehabilitation Project was announced five years ago, there were only a handful who believed that the project would rescue the Bagmati from its original pristine condition. With a mandate to clean up the Bagmati from Sundarijal to Chobhar, there was a fear the Project could do to transform the Valley’s principal river from the sewer it is at present. Three projects chief cost Rs 310 million later, the Bagmati remains as polluted as ever. But things may be about to change for the better. At least the stretch that flows by the holy Pashupati Temple Complex. In its first and second phases, the Project concentrated on the Bagmati above the Pashupati area, given the religious significance the river has to Hindus as it flows by the ancient site at Ayarhat. The plan is to set up a sewage treatment plant beyond the Gokeshwar temple at Tamangaga, in which all the sewers between Gokeshwar and Maha Park will be connected. The sewage would then be conveyed through a 322-meter tunnel under the Mithigareshwar hill and released into the Bagmati at Tilganga. Work on the tunnel, which was begun by a Nepali company a year later, has been halted due to lack of technical knowhow. The Chinese company that took over has so far completed 227 meters, and construction work is going on at both ends of the tunnel.

Initially, it had been suggested that during the dry season the treated water from the plant would be used to flush the Bagmati. But the idea was dismissed after the Abbot Bhasa (head priest) of Pashupatinath opposed it saying the treated water may be clean but not "pure and holy." Meanwhile, the project cost has risen from its earlier estimate of Rs 600 to Rs 750 million, and the deadline for the two phases has been extended by a year from the original 2000. Project officials are confident they will be able to complete the work in time. Says Bishnu Poudel, chairman of the project, "All the work of the first and second phase will be completed by early next year. The tunnel will be completed by next July and the treatment plans will be operational by March." What is not clear, however, is how the flow will be maintained after the project is completed and the Bagmati is cleaned up. The water level is never particularly high above the Pashupati, mainly because Bagmati water is siphoned off at Sundarijal for public distribution by the Water Supply Corporation. While the project involves alternatives such as boring deep wells are being looked into, it does not look particularly promising. Which is why a second scheme, the Ganga Ayarhat Project, comes almost as a complement. The Ganga Ayarhat Project has been initiated by industrialist Bishal Chaudhary, who was shocked by the state of the Bagmati when he had to cremate his mother earlier this year. Says Bishnu Tuladhar, the team leader, there is to be constant flow of water in Bagmati. "We plan to clean the Bagmati waters. We will be bringing water from the Dhup area (in the Indravati watershed near Sundarijal) and mix it to the Shivalaya river (a tributary of the Bagmati). The second thing we’re doing is to build another water reservoir above the existing one and bring that water through a 15-km pipeline to Ayarhat," says Tuladhar. With two projects working towards similar ends, there is some confusion. But Tuladhar assures it side. "There should be no confusion regarding our work as we’re concentrating only on Ayarhat area," he says. "Our working area is from Surayath and Raj-Rajeshwar to the Pashupati complex." The Ayarhat in the main and top view of the Pashupati Temple Complex from atop Maktalail hill.

The Ayarhat is the major project. The Bagmati sewage treatment/Rehabilitation Project will be to clean the Bagmati flow throughout the Valley. Project head Poudel says, "After the completion of the first and second phase, the project will go for the third and fourth, that is, from Tilganga to Chobhar gate. Given its track record, nothing much should be expected of Project anytime soon, but at least there is a distinct possibility that devotes will soon be able to take a truly holy dip at Ayarhat."
Down and out under

Thoroughly demoralised, five Nepali athletes are going to Sydney accompanied by 21 officials.

For Olymic 2000.

Rukuna Shumsher thinks that NOC hasn’t overlooked Paleke. “Since the Finance Ministry released the money at the last minute on Thursday and there was little time left, NOC was given the responsibility,” he said. But according to rules, it is NOC which has to take charge.

One thing is clear: the row between NOC and IOC is now public. And another bone of contention is the daily allowance for athletes. Initially, Rukuna Shumsher and NOC general secretary, Dhitu Bahadur Pradhan, were to receive $20 each and other officials, including Paleke, were to get $22.5, while the athletes, had been allocated a mere $8. After the athletes refused to accept the meagre allowance, it was increased to $17.50, just a day before the team left for Sydney on 11 September.

The Finance Ministry released Rs 3.5 million for the trip. But Rukuna Shumsher says this amount is not enough and says NOC will have to dip into its kitty for another Rs 350,000. Sources at the Ministry said Rs 8.9 million was released to Crown Prince Dipendra and his entourage of five, which left for Sydney on 10 September.

All this bickering over money would have been fairly normal by Nepali standards. But what has suffered is the morale of the athletes. On Friday, 5,000 rupee Gyan Bahadur Bohara was practising in the army ground instead of the synthetic track of Dadurak Stadium because it was closed. Soorer Bhagyavat K.C. has a six-year-old ride to compete with in Sydney. Till Friday, 5,000 rupee Athleen Paleke didn’t get their shoes and race tracks.

So, what will the Nepalis do in Sydney? The athletes will make their appearance in the stadium, gain some exposure. And for the rest of those in the stadium, some sightseeing and lots of Foster’s Lager. Is it sure that they won’t be coming with the medals, but there will certainly be a lot of baggage.

Sydney

The temperature Tuesday morning in Sydney: 10 degrees. The first noem to Olympuc to be held in the southern hemisphere didn’t begian for one thing, it’s winter under down.

Bemutched marching band members struggle with shiny snowshoes, atmospheric conditions are no problem in the Olympic Village, foreign journalists in the chilly Main Press Centre bemoan not packing jumpers. It’s all part of the weather roulette, which has seen storms scare sailing and canoeing competitions above all— with local athletes organising their fear of thunder and lightning.

“They could stop the ceremony because there’s so much higher moisture,” nancy office of Sydney organising explains. “The weather is perfect.”

The latest could wreak special havoc with the highly-sensitive men and women sprinters who will be doing battle for track and field’s most coveted medals at 8 pm local time on 23 September. Temperatures continue to drop to around 10 degrees Celsius then, as they have been, the risks of injury to susceptible muscles will increase dramatically. And you can forget about breaking records.

On top of all this the main Olympic complex at Homebush Bay, where 14 different sports will be staged, has the reputation of being Sydney’s windiest spot.

Fans queue for remaining tickets

Olympic fans queued up for hours to buy the tickets, kilometres to snatch up the remaining 150,000 tickets for some of the Olympics’ top events. Sydney Olympic organised said the rush for the final tickets still could push the Olympic committee into profits for the two-week sporting spectacular.

Officials said last week they still need to sell some US$ 57 million in tickets to reach their target. Tickets going were those for the 1,500m swimming final, which will include local hero Lrden Perkins, who won gold at the 1992 and 1996 Games. The 7,500 tickets for that event sold out in two hours.

Tickets for the basketball test show between Dream Team 4 of the United States and Australia Saturday night in Melbourne Park sold out in less than an hour.

Australia’s “Olymic-pique”

A Newcastle resident, broadband Marcus Kostalics has withdrawn as master of ceremonies for the opening of an IOC conference at Sydney’s Opera House after organisers demanded she speak in French and then in English. “I guess it’s a matter of principle over protocol,” Kostalics said. “We are in Australia, the majority of the people in the concert hall for this event would speak English and I thought it was a matter of principle to speak English.”

French speakers are thin on the ground in cosmopolitan Sydney, where English is the language more in demand. Allowed in popularly by Arabic and then Chinese.

Sri Lanka’s biggest-ever contingent

The biggest ever contingent to take part in Olympic games from Sri Lanka left for Sydney with the main concentration on track and field athletics. The 159 athletes, represented by 45 in track and field and 114 in other sports, two swimmers, two shooters and a long yachtsman are taking part in the events. They left country early on Wednesday.

The contingent includes IAAF World Championship Silver Medalist Susannah Jayasinghe, who will be taking part in the 1,500 metres, 200 and 400 metres relay events. She is also a champion sprinter, Damayotie Dashew, is the team captain.

The contingent which has backed by 11 officials was given a grand send off at the Independence day function. The biggest contingent to take part in an Olympic Games from Sri Lanka was at the 1992 Barcelona Games when it sent 11 members.

Sri Lanka has so far achieved success at an Olympic the 1984 Olympic 200 metre hurdles event.
Manu Brajak's muddled majority

Manu Brajak is one of the most interesting short story writers today, playing with Nepali's mixed languages, pulling together disparate urban and rural subjects, and still managing to confront the conflicting demands of art and political correctness. The story bristles against the political correctness, the ideologically correct, uncomely dread of being unpolitically correct. Devoid of any major literary merit, Manu's Brajak's work can be read in his collections Titre Basak ra Ma, Jabarkot Phal, and Bravaya Yama (from which the story was excerpted).

The weather will be clear today and tomorrow

Nepal Today - east

Manuscript - set

Nepali Television - present

Shri Nepal Video - present

Manu Brajak's video was watched in every house of a developing country in a matter of civil rights. I've recently discovered that once you have eyes and ears, you must have brains to think, reflect and develop.

Jiggling the bridle a friend ordered yesterday, 'Bring a partner! We're watching a new kind of film in a completely new way - one that's... we'll... you know.'

Since my own wife isn't here, I arrived alone. The video had already started. I came out when I noticed. 'Who could I find?'

He beckoned rửaously. 'Never mind, come.'

A blue lamp was being screened. As with typical journalists, there's no Nepali term for blue film. How can there be a name without a name? Though Nepali will have a名称 after a year or two, it is still bound to have this kind of progressiveness. She needs revolution, she needs the lights switched off. I went cut, my expression curtly and my mind drifting. When Bipin opened the door, he said, 'Lowest, lastest tradition?'

Look, Thakali calling you.'

I didn't say, 'Leave, leaving of Babba. This time she's surely pass his BA. It's truly a matter of civil rights to keep a video deck.'

If a Gorkha can keep a wife, why can't a Nepali keep a video deck? But who am I asking this question to?

A clothespin box I bought at Nepal, selling Rattan Park, and when I emerged from a stop to the public, the usual blue Gorkha was keening. This is not an appeal, no money! I thought of gaining some change, but didn't. Bipin called me a bastard and also a nondescript. All, I must become progressive, now I must be a humanist. I must replace the massacre of the rich by stealing spotty. So give nothing. Let him keep stealing, that's a bond of a blue film. Nepalis are now realizing videos as a demoralizing way, but this one, he's singing the same old hymns, begging for alms.

Play is a hazardous thing. So I had a dancing game at a place standing a lamp with a jilbing of cucumbers and an unripe gourd. Give a spotty and recently cucumber slashed with salt and pepper. I didn't ask for change, she didn't ask for one.

The next time I saw a woman.

To one kid's a policeman's-dad. Policemen aren't called dads, since younger brothers don't have the right to make out (junior). Such is a situation.

I had wanted to sit in the park, but I bought a newspaper and scanned it. There was no support, lady at a table opposite me of the kids. He bore to the opposition towards anyone. When you suppose, you're considered a journalist in the world. Also a better. You become Linden and Linden.

Linden is a division, the minority had succeeded. Linden of all her fans and tossed his book in the ocean of the majority. Yesterday I saw her with a man in a stylish dress, this is a sign of old-time. She was being old, fifty, and the dinner boy was swaying his rapier that he couldn't go above twenty.

The majority takes pity, this majority will always give at least twenty...
Hungry Eye

Yok Yeck Chinese Restaurant

Yok Yeck Chinese Restaurant has a long name and a pretty unimpressive entrance—it could easily be an office space. That could be why not many people have discovered the taster dish that lies just behind the big tare at Ekahauka.

The first thing you see when you get to Yok Yeck is a group of Chinese people, their table piled high with exciting looking bowls and plates. This happy family are the restaurant owners from Malaysia, who eat dinner at the tables next to their clustrs, nightly. It's a great concept—and feeling like we are truly part of the family we sat down and asked for some Chinese tea. Best bet as its 40 for a small party, and unlimited added inferences of hot water. An additional authenticity, just like in any Cambodian Por Poong Dinner (outside), the two little tea cups are brought in a lovely red bucket so that you can rinse them out with the first hot swirl of tea before drinking.

Yok Yeck's menu is fascinating, and no dish on the regular menu is more than Rs 100. At this vegetarian's paradise, you can gourmetize on stir-fried vegetables in various ways, chicken curry, and even king prawns. All of these are carefully fashioned out of vegetable substitutions, and unless they had a stickler on their staffing so to you, you would never guess. Just as to be truly savoury, and have a meat overdose at a vegetarian restaurant that does not allow alcohol or smoking, we ordered the Nasi Lemak with chicken and the Ranguni Massaman.

The Nasi Lemak turned out to be higher quality rice with the requisite prawn crackers. The "chicken" was spectacular, with just the right amount of peanut-based spice. The "mutton" rendang was richly flavoured with a hint of cinnamon and coconut. Other exciting offerings that we could have tried but didn't have the space to include: Lemong Chicken, Tom Yam Fish, Fried Curry Powder Muron, Sweet Sour Pork, Seaweed Omelet, Chicken and Avac Fish.

Our veggie meat-lust over, we turned to the real vegetarian restaurant. Our appetizer had been wiped up several times by now, and eager to plunge into even more delights we ordered the fresh mushroom with seaweed. Crepy black strips of seaweed off the succulent steamed mushrooms to perfection. The vegetable of the day in mozzarella turned out to be genuine bay kuch (Chinese spinach) flash fried in a wok. The sauce was light, with taro curried to add body, and without masking the flavour with the usual MSG gloop that some restaurants love to throw on every vegetable that crosses their chopping board. A pleasant change indeed to find a Chinese restaurant that really knows their vegetables, and serves them up crisp, nutritious and colourful.

In fact, all of the flavours are very Cantonese—relies on purity and simplicity for their taste. This is why the next dish we ordered, Yok Yeck's Guandong Noodles, was simply out of this valley. No more battered noodles and squeezy vegetables called "chowmein" for us, we're coming back to Yok Yeck every time we feel a noodle craving coming on. Brilliantly spiced with a very light sauce, with greens and mushrooms, this dish was a complete hit.

We were very nearly full by this time, but since the recipe kept being refilled, and the family next to us continued to eat on with short breaks to cook and serve us, we were tempted to order one last dish—the Tom Yam fried rice. Similar to the very lemony based soup it is named after, the fried rice came out flavourful and tangy. Portions are adequate for sharing, but on the small side, so luckily we were able to polish it off.

No room for dessert, and there weren't many vegetarian dessert choices on offer anyway. Overall, an unusual and excellent place for vegetarian Chinese food. Interesting menu choices, and if you get confused, just ask the family at the next table. Great service—quick, efficient and helpful—highly recommended.

The Hungry Eye pows Kathmandu Valley in search of offbeat places to eat.

Ratings take into account food quality, taste, hygiene levels and service and come in the following categories:

- Not recommended
- Recommended
- Highly recommended

Price ratings are approximately:

- Cheap
- Moderate
- Expensive

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If you're not studying at NITT, you're missing something
I know this is not the rhododendron season, but who says you have to visit Milke Danda only when Nepal’s national flower is in bloom? If there is a rhododendron theme park in Nepal it is Milke Danda, a cloud forest in eastern Nepal near the Tamur Valley north of Dhankuta. Milke Danda is a biodiversity treasure house with 16 types of rhododendrons, 420 species of birds, thousands of species of butterflies and a wealth of plant life. Situated in an area that receives more than 3,500mm rainfall annually, the forest here is richer and wilder than in any other part of Nepal. During the monsoon months, it is perpetually in mist and the cloud forest turns into a lush forest. By late September when the clouds begin to part, the panoramic view that pans the Himalaya from Kanchendzonga to Everest is astounding. The sky is a deep shade of blue that you can see only in the post-monsoon season. Unsettled and completely off the main trekking maps, Milke Danda is ideally suited for trekkers who like to be off-beat. The Milke ridge originates in the Jhalke Himal area and plunges due south towards the coast. It has an average altitude of 3,000m. The epicentre of Milke Danda is Gupha Pokhari (2,800m), which reflects the massive white wall of the south face of Chimalang and Makalu in its waters on a clear day. No remote area maintains roads for long, and even here lodges have sprung up catering to the few trekkers who happen to come by. The Shepan here are from Num, not from Khumbu, and a favourite item they sell is oblates, the rock hard cheese that you like to dissolve in your mouth.

Caravans of air carrying supplies up to Gupha Pokhari and further north to Tapkoting are encountered frequently on the trail. The path carries large boulders and cobbled down the valley and take stacks of noodles, biscuits and snacks back up to Tapkoting. There are plenty of basic lodges where you can spend the night, and in some of them the very Nepali custom of free lodging if you pay for food is still practised. This system has been steadily eroded by the main trekking trails in Nepal.) It was Frenchman Rene de Milke Ville who made Milke Danda known to the outside world with his fascinating account of the flowers in full bloom in March-April. The forest cover, which had started depleting due to indiscriminate felling, is coming back due to conservation efforts by community groups. Villagers have realised that there is more money to be made from the tourism attracted by the rhododendrons than by cutting down the trees.

To get to Milke Danda, you start walking from the roadhead at Basanta (2000m), four hours’ bus ride north of Dhankuta. It takes three days’ steady climb to reach the spine of Milke Danda. Another way to get here is by bus to Tapkoting from Biratnagar, but even from there it is a four-day walk south. My preferred option is to fly to Tumlungtar from Kathmandu or Biratnagar (private airlines do this route, so there are more chances of getting a seat).

From Tumlungtar to Milke Danda via Chautara takes three days. You can get into Chautara after a pleasant walk through forests. Chautara is a Newari trading town with inclined cobblestone streets and shops selling bronzeware. The weekly market draws farmers and goods from far and wide. Nandipati, a Rai village, is near.

On reaching Gupha Pokhari the next day, there are two options. Either walk east another two days to Tapkoting and take a flight back to Kathmandu, or descend to Basanta in one and a half days via Lam Pokhari and Timjuri Phedi and take a nine-hour bus ride to Biratnagar and fly back.
Funny Side Up

by Kunda Dixit

A for that scintillating Q&A with Ria Khan, we bear that the prime minister has decided to appear regularly on CNN to answer questions from eager viewers.

Ria Khan: Welcome back to the programme, prime minister. So how has the Millennium Summit been for you?

Girija: My dear friend, I come from a land of summits, so for me there is nothing so special about this Summit. In fact, I had a summit with Kahunji just before I left and we decided that we would not come to blows just yet, and we would wait till the Parly Convention.

Ria: But have you been meeting any world leaders in the corridor?

Girija: Not exactly in the corridors, but I did run into Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayeeji and General Musharrafisfi in the men’s room and had a very small mini-summit right there. I had to remind them that there is a proverb in Hindi “jaru kiya to alma baat” (which roughly translated means “my mule is bigger than your mule”). So I told them, look here my dear enemies, Nepal may be small country but our soldiers fight in one of your armies, so both of you have to be very careful.

Ria: We have a question here from Raja in Guan via email. He says: “I want to know when Nepal will become a rich country so I can come back home.”

Girija: Raja bhau, this is a difficult question. As you know Nepal is a mountainous country sandwiched like a yam between two sous, India and China. We have a total area of 56,000 square miles. Our national flower is rhododendron, national bird is dilarpe, and our national paste is pulling each other’s legs. We don’t take ourselves seriously, that is why we like to pull legs. Therefore we can never go ahead. So if I were you, I’d keep that casino job and send home your dollar earnings so that we can afford to send 22 officials, one coach and five athletes to the Olympics every four years.

Ria: We have time for one last question, and on the line from Rolpa is Mr Panchanda. Go ahead. “I’m sorry to see the CNN channel, but I can’t get through to the prime minister in Bhutan. Girijababu, are you going to send Sher Bahadur to talk to us, or not?”

Girija: My dear comrades, as you must be knowing, we have planned a three-pronged approach to deal with you. We are giving our police better TADDA so they will be less reluctant to come and pay you a visit at your headquarters, we are bribing your cadre to defect to us, and lastly but not leastly we are keeping Dr Doshi dangling there with you so he won’t bother us.

Panchanda: So why don’t you come to Rolpa yourself? We could have a Summit.

Girija: That’s very kind of you. We have an all-party integrated package programme designed for your district. But I am hopeful that I can make it after Darius. Shall I bring a khata?

Ria: We’ve run out of time, and I’m afraid we’ll have to leave it there. Thank you, prime minister, thank you, comrades.

Seamless Sabine

Sabine Lehman has built boats and sailed the oceans in them. She is a luped revolutionaries, a theatre personality, a business executive, and has turned vegetarian recently. When Sabine left Berlin in the early 1970s as a graduate in performing arts, she had no idea that someday she would be living her life as a theatre actor and hotel executive in the Himalaya. But what is life, if not full of surprises?

Today, Sabine is the chief conductor of Kathmandu Valley’s theatre circuit, with annual productions from her Studio 7 dealing with everything from Shakespearean classics to translated adaptations of Nepali historical novels. Over the years, Studio 7 has come to be known in Kathmandu for 20 or more brilliant shows with exquisite props, intriguing scripts, musical dramatics and a wealth of local talent.

Her most recent play has been the English translation of The White Tiger by Diamond Sunmore Rana (1995), The Life of Miloep (1999), and The Hundred Thousand Songs of Mailer (2000). The White Tiger got rave reviews, and brought alive to contemporary Kathmandu audiences the place intrigue that accompanied the rise of Jang Bahadur Rana—events that have had a profound impact on who rules Nepal till now.

Sabine manages to seamlessly combine her acting hobby with the business chores of being Managing Director of Hotel Vaja. So how did a stilling enthusiast end up here in a landlocked Himalayan kloegdont? The answer could be a Studio 7 production: Sabine was shipwrecked while in a boat she herself built while on a cruise from Australia to Surabaya in Indonesia. She ended up doing stage performances with her group, Theatre of All Possibilities, in Kenya. Then she happened to fly up to Kathmandu for an international mountain conference in 1978. Sabine immediately decided this was the place for her: “I decided to sail the ocean and go up to the mountains.”

Drama is escapism, and Sabine says it is a way for people to make believe and get away from the tired routines of everyday life. “Whether they are comic, tragic or romantic, dramas recreate moments of death and birth. It is a chance to step out of it for a moment and it does not matter whether this moment lasts for a second, an hour or a lifetime. It’s what you feel then.”

The stage is an arena for Sabine to act a fundamentally existential question: “What is this great drama we are all in?”

Grindlays

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

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