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## EXCLUSIVE

### Saving Kathmandu

Small community groups and individuals have begun a cultural revival of sorts in Kathmandu Valley, triggering a slow restoration of its architectural character. But all is not well. Seven World Heritage Sites in the Valley are under threat from gross government neglect, lack of technical capacity and inability to enforce conservation laws. The deterioration of the Valley's heritage forced UNESCO to step in and threaten to de-list the monuments from its heritage list if Nepal did not do the minimum to ensure that they were preserved.

A UNESCO mission is in town to check compliance with a 55-point to-do list it had recommended in 1998. Left undone until 2004, the monuments most neglected will be downgraded to an "Endangered Heritage Site" list or even be removed from it. The good news is that there are now



Nepalis who understand, love and take pride in their heritage. They are now saying that conserving the cultural landscape and character is essential, not because UNESCO says so, but because it is ours. ....pages 2, 4

### Pokhara tourism

The jewel in Nepal's tourism crown is waking up from the summer slumber to welcome the new tourism season. Hotels, both big and small, are dusting rooms and cleaning shelves to accommodate new arrivals, the first few of whom have begun to deplane.

This autumn Pokhara has a large choice to offer in terms of hospitality—ranging from five-star deluxe to speciality hotels and resorts that offer world-class comforts and an unmatched wilderness experience. Well, Pokhara's bad roads are also a part of the adventure. ....page 9

# WHO'S IN CHARGE?

**Maoists want to declare Nepal a republic. They battle an elected government that is not getting much help from an army of which the king is the supreme commander.**



## A NEPALI TIMES REPORT

A postmortem of the daring Maoist attack on the Dolpo district headquarter in Dunai on Monday has raked up a host of unanswered questions which point to the police and army working at cross-purposes. At the root of this crisis is growing friction between the government and the palace that is beginning to shape Nepal's present polity. A deepening crisis will benefit anti-democratic forces of the left and the right who can take advantage of the ensuing chaos to take the country back to authoritarianism.

To complicate matters further, there is an intense power struggle underway within the ruling party between a faction which wants talks with the Maoists right away, and another which wants to build up police strength before talking.

This was a dramatic and massive attack. Around 1,000 Maoist guerrillas stormed Dunai early Monday morning. The six-hour firefight left 14 policemen dead, 41 wounded, and 12 missing, presumed taken prisoner.

Maoist leader Prachanda issued a statement several hours after the attack, blaming the government for not agreeing to peace talks even though his group was ready.

The attack itself was not a total surprise. Army personnel had notified

headquarters of unusual activity in the mountains above Dunai of people with binoculars and guns. The Chief District Officer of Dolpo, Parsuram Aryal, had sent word to Kathmandu last week that a Maoist attack was imminent, and requested reinforcements. The government started mobilising backup support, and says it requested the Army, which has a company-level detachment 40 minutes away, for assistance. Army sources claimed they were "not formally asked" for help by the Home Ministry.

On Sunday afternoon, a 48-strong police contingent was helicoptered into Dunai from the south. Within nine hours they were in action, trying to repel the attack that they were expecting. The fighting began with a bang soon after midnight with the guerrillas pounding the police station with pipe bombs, peppering sentry posts with gunfire, and demolishing the nearby jail to free prisoners.

Then they went to the house of the manager of Nepal Bank Limited and forced him to open the vaults and made off with more than Rs 50 million in cash and jewellery. The bank had received Rs 35 million in

cash from Nepal Rastra Bank on Sunday afternoon on a flight from Nepalgunj to Jufal airfield, four hours' walk away. The Maoists had prior knowledge of this money transfer, and had apparently delayed their attack by three days because the Royal Nepal Airlines flight remained cancelled until Sunday due to bad weather. No one knows why such a big amount was sent to an insurgency area

without major development projects. Another mystery is why the regional and zonal police chiefs were both out of station at the time of the attack and without notice. Both have since been suspended.

Wounded police personnel who were airlifted to Kathmandu on Monday afternoon told reporters that they fought till they ran out of ammunition, and were waiting for the nearby soldiers to come to their rescue. One of the wounded told the *Kantipur* daily: "We fought till dawn and they came only in the morning to pick up the corpses." The Army has so far not allowed its helicopters to be used by the police, but did send one Mi-17 to pick up the dead and wounded on Monday.

The Dunai attack came as the

government and the army have been locked in a behind-the-scenes tussle over deployment, training and re-equipping the police's anti-Maoist campaign. Fresh into office earlier this year, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, stirred a hornet's nest by threatening to use the Army in anti-insurgency operations. But he later backed out, realising that the generals wouldn't listen to him.

As a compromise, it was agreed that the Army would train a paramilitary police force and provide it with automatic weapons. So far, a contingent of 100 has been trained but they have not been deployed anywhere. Government sources say that although the Army has been paid for 9,000 self-loading rifles (SLRs) these have not been given to the police. The Army argues it will make the guns available only after the paramilitary force is raised.

Nepal's constitution is ambivalent about who actually controls the Army, the elected government or the palace. It is this ambiguity that is the source of uncertainty. Army Chief Prajwal Sumsher Rana said two weeks ago that the military should be placed under the National Security Council, which consists of the prime minister, the defence minister and the army chief.

**Editorial**  
page 2

An emergency Cabinet meeting on Monday decided that the government would use "all security" means to enforce law and order. Sources said the cabinet essentially stopped short of calling for Army deployment to contain the situation, deferring a decision on it until the prime minister meets the king on Wednesday.

The Maoists have so far been very careful not to escalate the conflict to the point of dragging the Army in. And the attack on Dunai appears to have been just that: to ensure maximum damage and propaganda points, but stop short of actually capturing the district headquarters. Meanwhile, the Royal Palace has been sitting on a government ordinance that would provide the legal basis for the Armed Police Force now being trained. "It is lingering, neither moving forward or back," says a government source. "All they do is ask polite questions." ♦

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## FIDDLING WHILE DOLPO BURNS

For the first time in five years of armed insurgency, a district headquarter has borne the brunt of a frontal attack by Maoist guerrillas. This could prove to be an ominous start of a long, cold winter of continued conflict.

Rolpa, Rukum, Salyan and Jajarkot are all "Category-A" Maoist strongholds by the government's classification and hence the concentration of forces there. Government presence in the district headquarters meant that it could show a semblance of control by keeping the national flag flying above the Chief District Officer's building. The Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister flew in and out on helicopters on largely symbolic visits to denounce terrorism. Everyone knew that the Maoists roamed freely in the hinterland. They had their own administration, collectives and courts in place. It was convenient to pretend everything was normal. Dunai is a remote, poor and sparsely populated town four hours' walk from the nearest airfield. It was vulnerable, and the firefight seems to have been short and bloody.

But the attack has sent a significant symbolic message: the solution to the Maoist crisis lies in Kathmandu not in western Nepal. The Maoist leadership is just taking advantage of petty politicking between factions



of the ruling party and between the rulers and the opposition. Then there is the lingering and potentially destabilising struggle between Singha Durbar and Narayanhiti for supremacy. The friction between the Royal Nepal Army and the Police is just the outward manifestation of this dangerous game.

The Maoists would be foolish not to capitalise on this disarray at the centre. They are playing a

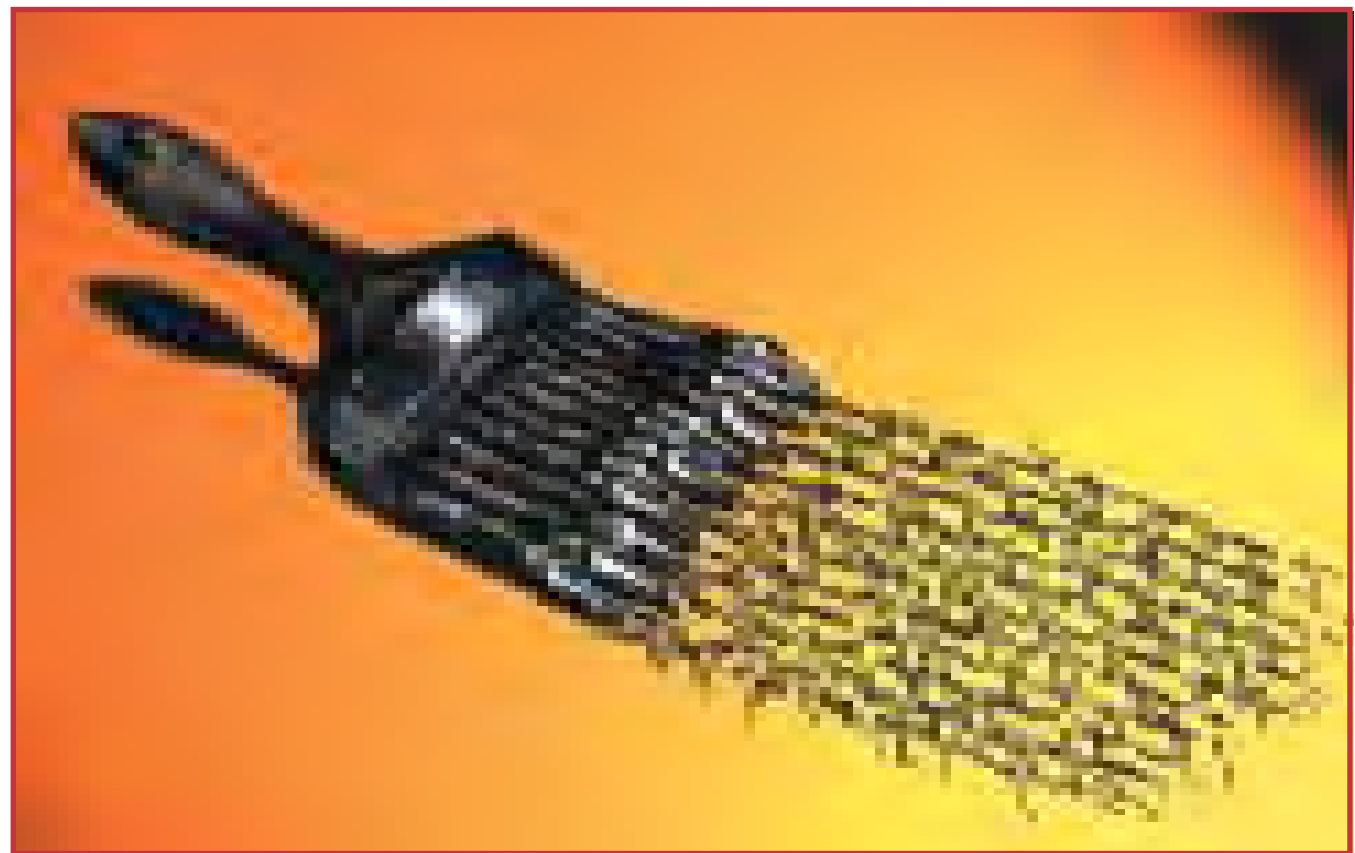
carefully calibrated game: having scored a major propaganda victory with their audacious attack on a district headquarter, they left without capturing it for it could have pushed the government to make one more effort to send in the Army. The military has been marking time. Army Chief Prajwal Sumsher Rana warned two weeks ago that the Royal Nepal Army could not idle away and watch the country go to rot. But he has also succeeded in putting obstacles to police weapons modernisation and the formation of a paramilitary force. He will now have to answer why policemen in Dunai weren't better armed.

The fall of Dolpo should galvanise the government's resolve to deploy the army for peacekeeping if it becomes necessary. And for it to be taken seriously, the ruling party must put its own house in order and end a power struggle that has paralysed governance. Factions within the ruling party and the opposition parties must all realise that democracy's future in Nepal is much more important than their narrow-minded squabbles. Very soon, if they are not careful, there may be nothing left to squabble about.

## HERITAGE TODAY, GONE TOMORROW

There will always be the scornful who will say that Nepal is too poor to be worried about maintaining some crumbling old temples. Why, when Nepali children don't get enough to eat, should we spend money on the upkeep of termite-infested courtyards? This argument is disingenuous. To begin with, there is now strong evidence that Nepal is in fact not a poor country at all. Reports published in this paper and elsewhere point out that huge amounts of cash are being pumped into the informal economy by Nepalis working abroad. Nepalis are bulging with cash: Rs 50 billion is floating around at any given time. The problem is that this money is not being invested productively to create jobs and generate new wealth. It is also concentrated in the hands of a very few: the gap between rich and poor in Nepal is one of the widest even in South Asia's unequal society. So, if there is poverty here, it is of the mind. Of creativity, vision, and a commitment to development and the future.

Some of that creativity is now urgently needed to preserve Kathmandu Valley's endangered heritage. We may pat ourselves on the back for having fobbed off attempts by the World Heritage Centre to de-list our monuments from the List of World Heritage Sites. But the fact of the matter is that our heritage is under grave threat, and we have not shown the political will to preserve the rich cultural landscape of Kathmandu. It now seems some of the conscientious people of the Valley are not waiting for the government or UNESCO to tell them how bad things are. They have started renovating and restoring by themselves. Both should support these efforts and find ways to replicate them.



### STATE OF THE STATE

by C.K.LAL



## Freedom to be irresponsible

**W**e may not be shooting the messenger yet, but messengers are getting enough hints from the executive, legislative and judicial branches to lay off. Even for journalists, it seems, no news is bad news. Consider the recent spate of bad omens for the press:

- The Public Accounts Committee of parliament summons the station manager of Radio Sagarmatha and wants a news source revealed
- Communications Minister Jai Prakash Prasad Gupta fumes about 'anti-democratic reporting' and wants the press to behave itself
- Our learned judges guard their privileges with the threat of Contempt of Court against any hack caught sniffing around

It appears that the three wings of the state are ganging up against the fourth estate. The media should just be a mouthpiece, amplifying their proclamations, toeing the line, buttering the boss, being the propaganda organ. Old habits die hard.

The tradition of a drummer going around the village announcing the wishes of its chief continues to this day even if the message is coming in through the cable or dish antennae. In hierarchical societies, the media—be they the old *bhat* and *katuwal* or the modern reporter or commentator—is expected to sing hosannas in praise of the powerful.

But in a democracy, the media becomes an essential mechanism for check and balance. It has to be allowed the freedom to be irresponsible. Democratically-elected governments may not like what the media says about them, but they must protect their right to say it. That is why thin-skinned politicians, or those who have a lot to hide, don't last long.

Unlike the fourth estate, the three branches of government (parliament, executive and the courts) are funded by the tax-payers' money. They are accountable to the people. And since the press represents the public on a day-to-day basis, the government should ideally be transparent towards it. The rulers are elected by the people to run the country for a limited period, and as the people need to know how they are performing, the rulers need to communicate with those who chose them through this conduit.

### The three branches of government are ganging up against the fourth estate.

The independent press does not run on government grants, which is actually public money. It should run on its own resources, and is accountable to no one except its readers, listeners or viewers. If the media's foot soldiers break laws while pursuing that objective, then prosecute them by all means. But any call by government officials for the media to pursue some "higher mission" rings hollow. Even the gutter-press and sewer-channels will rot if they don't have a readership.

The press does not need the communication minister fuming about what a newspaper should or shouldn't publish. He is free to choose what he likes to read, or what he wants to write. In the same way, he should not be offended if other writers and readers exercise a similar freedom. The press is not accountable to him, it is answerable to the public directly. And it does so at regular intervals, at least more regularly than he answers his own constituency. The press is on trial every time it publishes, broadcasts or telecasts something, it does not have to wait for an election to face its electorate.

Even in more mature democracies, politicians regularly accuse the media of being irresponsible. Our politicians are no different. They are just more insecure. The media must protect its independence. That is its most precious possession. It must assert its right to seek the truth, even if it is subversive. Truth is invariably subversive. It is only those who want to hide in dark corners and do things secretly who benefit from a controlled press.

In the 1980s, the London Times columnist Bernard Levin challenged a

government call for the press to be responsible. He wrote: "The press has no duty to be responsible at all, and it will be an ill day for freedom if it should ever acquire one...we are and must remain vagabonds and outlaws, for only by so remaining shall we be able to keep the faith by which

we live, which is the pursuit of knowledge that others would like unpursued, and making of comment that others would prefer unmade."

If the Public Accounts Committee wants Prateek Bhandari of Radio Sagarmatha to reveal his sources, why don't they first make a law to that effect? The Honourable Jai Prakash, who happens to be an ex-journalist himself, would do well to reflect over whether or not he was once responsible. The very idea of responsibility reeks of authoritarianism when it is imposed from outside. Responsibility is something that comes from within, and members of the press are no less responsible just because they do not agree with one interpretation of "national interest".

There is some truth in the allegation that a section of the Nepali press (of the extremist fringe in particular, and other Trojan Horses in general) is not adhering to its own code of conduct. But that is too specious a ground to pour scorn over the entire media, as Honourable Jai Prakash has been doing lately at every opportunity. Honourable Minister, are there no black sheep in politics, and do all sections of the government honour their commitments to the constitution? Or is the press, particularly the mainstream media, comparatively a better performer? You decide, I have my own biases.

The press has become a favourite whipping boy of all sections of power. The Nepali press must take that as a compliment. It means at least some of us in the profession are doing something right. Watchdogs aren't supposed to be cute and cuddly, they are supposed to snarl. ♦





# A mercenary for democracy

**CHARLOTTE DENNY**  
**W**hen the protesters went on the rampage at the World Bank and International Monetary Fund meetings in Prague last week, Mark Malloch Brown no doubt allowed himself a sigh of relief. Until just over a year ago, his job as the public face of the World Bank would have put him directly in the firing line for the biggest rallies against globalisation since the protests which shook the World Trade Organisation talks in Seattle last December. Trying to justify the bank to people who believe babies are murdered in developing countries and environments destroyed in the organisation's name is no easy task, even for a man with as impressive a track record in the black arts of political spin doctoring as is Malloch Brown. Instead, he has swapped his post as head of external relations at the bank for the top job at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), an organisation that most development campaigners regard as one of the good guys of the development aid world, although even its best friends would admit it has not always been the most effective outfit.

Among his goals are putting Africa online, reshaping his organisation as the main source of advice to developing countries and mediating in the debate which has split the development community over whether economic growth or redistribution from rich to poor is more important in tackling global poverty. Malloch Brown admits the contrast between the bank and the UNDP was "a bit daunting" at first. The UNDP runs on a shoestring compared to resources available to the bank and the fund. Its core budget this year was \$700 million—less than what the bank spends on

administration—although with the extra resources it mobilises the overall total rises to about \$2.5 billion. The bank's lending programme, by contrast, totals \$7 billion. "It's all got there by a wing and a prayer," says Malloch Brown. In fact, the budget has been declining over the past decade from a peak in 1992 of \$1.2 billion. The UNDP has been a victim of the aid fatigue which hit the main donors after the collapse of the Iron Curtain removed the political justifications for many countries' lending programmes.

A British national with a long track record in the international system—he worked for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the early 1980s—Malloch Brown came to the UNDP at the request of the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, to shake up the place and be part of Annan's reforming agenda which was showcased at the recent millennium summit.

Malloch Brown was received initially with suspicion. Some poor countries believed he had been chosen to smuggle a bank perspective into an institution which has always been seen as an ally of the developing world. While the World Bank and IMF are under the thumb of the donor countries—the Group of Seven leading industrialised economies controls nearly half of the votes on the Fund's management board—the UNDP has always been much closer to the recipients of aid.

Malloch Brown freely admits he preaches the Bank's line about the need to accompany aid with political and economic reform and he deliberately set out to turn the UNDP's focus to the importance of good governance. It was a message not universally popular with aid recipients unaccustomed to receiving lectures on reform from their friends at the UNDP.

"In the first six months I had

a bit of rough ride because I said governance ought to be our priority. There was a lot of initial caution, the developing country representatives in New York said 'Oh, my God, he's another part of this secret political version of the Washington consensus'." For some developing country governments the strings which come attached to aid programmes these days, requiring them to consult with their electorates, are seen as a new form of political structural adjustment.

But the initial concern has dissipated, according to Malloch Brown, as poor countries have come to realise that they need to change. They would still rather hear the message from the UNDP, however, than endure the more heavy-handed approach of the Bank or the Fund. Malloch Brown's belief in the importance of democratic reforms comes from his time at the UNHCR during the late 1970s, which convinced him that the root of all problems in developing countries was a lack of democracy.

"If you have a competitive political system in which to resolve differences, you won't have refugee flows," he says. It was also the spur behind the next stage of his varied career, his work as a political consultant for various developing country governments in the late 1980s



and early 1990s. He describes himself then as a "mercenary for democracy", and he and his colleagues chalked up some impressive victories, including Cory Aquino's election campaign in the Philippines in 1986 and the no vote in the Chilean referendum of 1988 which eventually ended General Pinochet's rule.

The wave of fledgling democratic governments which came to power in the 1980s were ripe for advice from Malloch Brown's consultancy with its sophisticated polling techniques

**"Globalisation is inevitable: the question is on what terms. We have to make sure that**

**poor people are included in the process."**

and understanding of political systems. He learnt a lot, as well, along the way.

"A lot of these nice phrases about local ownership in the development community I learnt at the political coalface." Malloch Brown sees his role at the UNDP as the culmination of his previous experience. The organisation clearly needs a PR overhaul to restore donors' confidence, but at the same time he has to go gently to avoid alienating the trust of the developing countries, which is its biggest asset. The old-style UNDP ran thousands of small development projects and had a reputation for being bureaucratic and inefficient. Malloch Brown thinks the project-based approach is a waste of time when its resources are dwarfed by other aid agencies. "UNDP was in the wrong business, we didn't offer any value added," he says. "In a tight market for official development assistance we were going nowhere."

The plan now is to reposition the UNDP as an advisory and advocacy agency. That is not, he hastens to add, because advice is cheap, although that is an advantage, but because "if you

look at the environment in which we are operating, advice is a scarce commodity". In fact, turning the UNDP into an advisory body will bring it once again into competition with the Bank, which is also championing the governance agenda. His old boss, James Wolfensohn, has been trying to reposition his institution as the "listening bank". But in a head-to-head battle over who should be the prime source of advice to the developing world the UNDP has many advantages.

While the Bank is handicapped by the perception that it is in the pocket of the G7, the UNDP can capitalise on trust. "I'm stunned by the freedom I have to raise issues with governments," says Malloch Brown. The backlash against globalisation which started in Seattle last December has also benefitted the UNDP. "The Seattle aftershocks which have driven the developed countries back to us made them more cautious and anxious to find an alternative path."

Malloch Brown is no advocate of stopping the processes of economic integration, however. "Globalisation is inevitable: the question is on what terms," he says. "We have to make sure that poor people are included in the process." ♦ (*The Guardian*)

## LETTERS

### ARMY, INC

C.K. Lal's comment on the Royal Nepal Army (#10) opening a commercial bank shows once more that something is seriously wrong somewhere. One of the primary responsibilities of a democratic government is to effectively assert civilian control over the military, and to maintain a balanced civil-military relationship. Successive governments after 1990 have failed to reign in the Royal Nepal Army. It is no surprise, then, if the RNA is attempting to turn into a corporation, as C.K. Lal alleges.

The assertion that the king is under the impression that the army is still solely his is open to speculation, but it must also be acknowledged that the army survives on the taxpayer's money and not on a private or royal grant. The government therefore cannot

wash its hand off its constitutional responsibility of running the army within the legal framework of the nation. Successive governments have approved all major decisions concerning the army, and without cabinet approval. The army is still largely run with an antiquated and ossified mind-set. Transparency is practically non-existent, sycophancy and nepotism is actively nurtured and personal whims and fancies have precedence over sound reasoning.

If good governance and rule of law are to prevail, the army should be run by laws and regulations published in the gazette. Why is an elected government so inefficient or incapable that it cannot even ensure that one of its branches—the army—sticks to rules?

**Gyan J. Thapa**  
**Kathmandu**

I agree that the army should not venture into capital market (C.K.

Lal #10). A bank for the army is fine but commercial banks is altogether another prospect.

But Mr Lal contradicts himself. If, as he says, the army is buying unnecessary equipment, and a poor country like ours cannot spend so much money, why can't the army venture into commercial business to sustain itself, and free itself from all the politics and hassles? The army is for the country and as long as it serves the nation, the Nepali people should have no problems.

It seems Mr Lal does not like the army very much and prefers politicians, even though the money politicians have misutilised runs into billions of rupees. And why is it acceptable for the army to be involved in infrastructure development and rescue efforts, but not in running a bank?

**Arun Khadka**

**Kathmandu**

**FUNDAMENTALLY FLAWED**

I believe that you missed (#10) a very significant "investment unfriendly" Nepal government action: Tax Deduction at Source (TDS). In most countries taxes are paid on profits with very lenient allowances for expenses. But because of corruption among politicians, and the underlying distrust of the government, even normally law-abiding Nepalis tend to hide taxable income and avoid paying taxes.

TDS was an answer to this, but since income is reduced so is business liquidity, and thus, entrepreneurial ability to take risks is likewise reduced. The Ministry of Finance is extremely slow at refunding overpayment of taxes, if such a process even exists. Recent inquiries at the ministry indicates that the whole

process of recording and tracking TDS payments is fundamentally flawed.

**RC**  
**Kathmandu**

I agree that Nepal's policies are unfriendly to investors (#10). Nepal must travel extra miles to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to rejuvenate its moribund economy. We must stop reciting the liberalisation hymns and get down to serious task of correcting our labour laws, and provide attractive incentives to potential investors.

Enron and the privatisation of BPC should be eye-openers. India's honesty and sincerity also counts a lot for Nepal's industrialisation. Kodak is an example of how New Delhi should not work. The sooner our *hakims* in Singha Durbar move to correct these ills the better it will be for falling FDI flows into Nepal.

**Gaurav Sharma**  
**Kathmandu**

**Q&A**

Thank you for publishing the transcript of the CNN Q&A with Girija Prasad Koirala (#9). This is probably one of the very few times that a publication is being commended for publishing rubbish. The interview was an excellent example of our prime minister's intellect, his thought process and his ability to understand the critical issues affecting Nepal. I blame Girija's "advisers" for letting him appear on CNN.

**Bichar Nepali**  
**Kathmandu**

The word-for-word interview of our honourable PM was interesting. His words made no sense at all and proved that he has just not been doing his homework. What a chance our country missed to present our grievances and problems.

**Alok Tuladhar**  
**Kathmandu**





## KUNDA DIXIT

Devendra Bahadur Shrestha's 200-year-old ancestral home at Kulimha in Patan could easily have gone the way of most houses in this ancient town—demolished to make way for a characterless concrete highrise. But it didn't.

After the wholesale destruction of Kathmandu Valley's cultural heritage and architectural character in the past 20 years, there is a growing

trend towards renovation and preservation. Families like Devendra's are in the frontline of this desperate struggle to conserve the cultural landscape of Kathmandu Valley. Inspired by the bed-and-breakfast pensions in Italy, Devendra is turning his home into an eight-bedroom, family-run lodge called Shrestha House with a \$30,000 seed grant from the National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan.

"Even if we hadn't got the money, we'd have gone ahead and converted it ourselves," says Devendra, who has used traditional building materials and the Newari style to make a functional, elegant and comfortable lodge, just off Patan Durbar Square.

Patan is among seven sites in Kathmandu Valley that were included in 1979 in UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites. The others are Hanuman Dhoka, Bhaktapur,

# KATHMANDU CAN BE SAVED

After the wholesale destruction of Kathmandu Valley's cultural landscape and architectural character in the past 20 years, there is now an emerging trend to restore and preserve what is left.

Swoyambhu, Pashupati, Baudha and Changu Narayan. UNESCO had then described Kathmandu as a unique "living heritage site" unparalleled in the world.

Being on the list is prestigious, and makes Nepal eligible for some international support for its conservation efforts. But the accelerated urbanisation of Kathmandu Valley has threatened the cultural landscape and monuments of the seven sites, prompting successive meetings since 1993 of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee to warn that unless something is done to reverse the trend, Kathmandu Valley may be downgraded to "Endangered Heritage Site", or even de-listed. But Nepali delegates from the Department of Archaeology have managed to keep Nepal on the list by promising to meet a series of conservation criteria. A meeting of the committee in 1998 required Nepal to fulfil 55 recommendations by the year 2004, but a year later expressed "serious concern over the persisting problems of demolition or alteration of historic buildings within Kathmandu Valley".

A six-member team from the World Heritage Centre is in Kathmandu this week to see how far Nepal has got with the 55 recommendations, and to find out once and for all whether there is political commitment at the highest level for heritage conservation. "This is a very serious effort to get an objective assessment of the situation," Eduard Sekler, team member and author of a 1977 Kathmandu Valley heritage conservation masterplan, told us. The mission makes recommendations to the independent World Heritage Committee which will meet later in the year to decide on whether Kathmandu Valley will remain on the World Heritage List.

Sekler, who first came to Kathmandu in 1962 to begin an inventory of heritage sites, says: "I have noticed the changes in the Valley in perspective, many of them were unavoidable, and it is sad. But I have also been walking around this week, and I see definite signs of local communities more serious about heritage preservation than they were five years ago."

Sudarshan Raj Tiwari is Professor of Architecture at Tribhuvan University and has been working to restore not just the monuments but also the "ambient envelope" of the Valley. He says: "There is no doubt that public awareness about using brickwork, restoring traditional facades, wood carvings on windows is growing." But he says a lot more needs to be done to revise and implement housing and zoning regulations. Above all, Kathmandu residents need an alternative, and Tiwari sees an urgent need to de-congest New Road to ease the pressure on hotspots like Hanuman Dhoka.

Being downgraded to the List of World Heritage in Danger would be a loss of face for Nepal, and a matter of shame that after 30 years we could not protect the jewels of our history and tradition. But some, like Austrian architect and conservation consultant, Goetz Hagmueller, who has worked in Bhaktapur and Patan for 20 years, say that being kicked out of the UNESCO list isn't such a big deal. "Maybe after that there will be an effort to prioritise heritage conservation and there will be more international support for Kathmandu Valley conservation," he told us.

Bagmati conservation activist Huta Ram Baidya says it is inappropriate to be all excited

about conservation and heritage lists just because UNESCO thinks it is important. "When will we start doing things ourselves without forever being dependent on donors? What is stopping us from renovating crumbling Kasthamandap, or from ceremonial oil lamps being lit there? Why do we have to wait to be told by foreigners that things are in bad shape before doing small doable things?"

And that is exactly what seems to have started happening. Despite government inaction, without outside support, some families and communities in the streets and *bahals* of inner-city Patan and Bhaktapur are restoring ancestral homes. When they do tear down old buildings they have reconstructed them with traditional material and in proportion and harmony with the rest of the street.

In Patan's Momaru Galli opposite a *halwai* shop we ran into Rajdip Shakyas supervising work on his new house. The inside has reinforced concrete beams, large spacious rooms and tall ceilings but the outside is traditional Newari façade with brick, decorative *terra cotta* and a doorway carved with five Buddhas. "It is slightly more expensive to build, but this is the least we can do to protect our heritage," he says. His neighbour and tourism entrepreneur, Dilendra Shrestha, says tax breaks and other financial incentives for traditional construction near heritage sites would encourage others to follow Rajdip's example. The individual examples of successful conservation need to spread to other parts of Kathmandu Valley if it is to retain its rich cultural landscape. ♦

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HERE AND THERE

by DANIEL LAK

# Thrill of the chase

It was obvious that none of the Nepali athletes were going to win medals in Sydney. But they were steely eyed and enthusiastic: it was about being there for your country, your colleagues and your family.

My parents bought their first colour television in 1968 to watch the Olympics in Mexico City. Since then, the Olympics have come and gone many times. I usually don't enjoy watching sports on television, but every four years, I seem to lapse, and indulge in vicarious thrills and agonies.

Patriotism flares up too, a rare enough sentiment in my heart. I check each day to see how many medals Canada has won. A small thrill goes through me at each new bronze or even silver. Never mind that they've been won through incomprehensible pursuits like synchronised swimming, or rhythmic gymnastics.

Of course even my mild nationalism took a jolt in 1988 in the Seoul Olympic games when the hapless Ben Johnson got caught taking anabolic steroids, after he'd filled us with joy for his stunning victory in the 100-metre final. I was in France at the time, and the newspaper headline in a local tabloid, before the drugs test, read "Big Ben" in 72 point type.

Then the next day, the same paper announced "Le Scandal" in equally large print, and Ben was exposed as a cheat. I defended him stoutly at the time to snooty colleagues, and equally fended off racist comments by my fellow countrymen "after all, he's not really Canadian, he was born in Jamaica". But my vicarious thrill-seeking took years to recover. Now I regard the whole business with ambivalence, despite those daily glances at the medals table. The way the Americans, Chinese and Europeans gorge themselves on gold is slightly distasteful. I'm happier to watch the mighty Kenyans put the sorry state of



Sharphooter Bhagwati K.C.

their country at the back of their minds and out-race the world in long-distance running. Or to see plucky Australia with its population not much more than Nepal's, churn up the pool and leave American and German swimmers bobbing along behind. For surely it's the thrill of the chase that makes the Olympics special, and that's increasingly lost from every aspect of the modern games.

Participating, personal best, trying your damndest, these are as important as winning. Or they're supposed to be. I had the pleasure of meeting some of Nepal's young Olympians before they set out for Sydney a couple of weeks ago. It was obvious that none of them were going to win. But the runners and the lone shooter that I met, the remarkable Bhagwati K.C., were steely eyed and enthusiastic. It was about being there for your country, your colleagues and your family. That march around the track at the opening ceremony, the tearful goodbyes to new friends

from distant lands at the end, and trying your best on the day—that's why they going to Sydney. They would have fun, they would do their best, and they would tell their grandchildren about the time they participated in the Olympic Games!

I've been in India for much of the Sydney Olympics, and it's sad to see how some journalists and sports fans are reacting to the ups and downs of Indian medal hopes. When India's first-ever competitors in Olympic rowing finished last, scornful press-wallahs wrote of "national shame" or "pitiful performances". I found myself wondering what any journalist, myself included, ever did that could compare with a first-time Olympics appearance for your country. Then India's best female weightlifter Karnam

Maleswari, surprised everyone by winning a bronze. As she spoke to the press after getting her medal, she mentioned a newspaper story that had accused of her drinking too much beer and putting on weight, thus dashing her medal hopes. There's a journalist somewhere in Delhi who might be hearing from Ms Maleswari when she gets back. I hope he's got some beer in the fridge.

As the Olympics become more about rich nations pouring resources into winning, and medallists make millions by endorsing products, the small victories keep me hopeful. Maybe Nepal, or India for that matter, doesn't harvest medals as the Americans and Chinese do. But their athletes ooze dignity and the spirit of the Olympics, and that's more important than winning. ♦



## Indian border police

Three Indian states bordering Nepal—West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh—are to set up a special police force to check smuggling of arms and ammunition and narcotics along the Indo-Nepal border, reported *The Times of India* newspaper.

The Indian finance ministry has already agreed to the proposal and is likely to be forwarded for cabinet approval early next month. The idea is to set up 53 police stations—one every 10 to 15 kilometres—and seven check posts in eight Indian districts bordering Nepal. The border force will consist of 1,000 personnel, including armed policemen and intelligence officials.

## Lawsuit against government

Three environmental groups filed a petition last week asking the Supreme Court to direct the government not implement the agreement reached between Nepal and India regarding the import of Indian vehicles.

The petitioners charge that the agreement announced in the joint communiqué at the end of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's visit last month not only violates the Nepal Mass Emission Standards 2056 (1999) but also the fundamental right of the citizens to breathe clean air as guaranteed by the Constitution of Nepal 1990.

Nepal's emission standard requires vehicle importers to submit Type Approval (TA) and Conformity of Production (COP) certificate certified by a government-recognised authority. But the joint statement not only annulled the requirement of COP certificate but also allows vehicle imports on the basis self-certification by the manufacturers.

## Aid to Pashupati

The Indian government is to provide Rs 39.70 million to Pashupati Area Development Trust (PADT) to build a *dharamshala* at Tilganga within the temple complex. The proposed rest house will accommodate over 74 pilgrims, says a press release from the Indian Embassy.

The recently re-constituted PADT board has begun taking steps to free the Pashupati area of alcohol and meat, and took a decision last week banning the sale of such products near the temple. Officials say they will enforce the new rule "strictly".

Pashupati is one of Nepal's most controversial shrines, namely because the PADT itself has been accused of corruption and also because the temple priests are said to pocket most of the offerings made by the devotees, which critics say should be used for the upkeep of the temple area.

## FM radio questioned by PAC

The parliament's Public Accounts Committee summoned the station manager of Radio Sagarmatha seeking disclosure of the source of a news broadcast by the station sometime ago. The public radio station had reported that informants from Nepal Bank Limited had told its reporters that three PAC members had approached the bank to bargain for concessions because they had power to influence the pace and intensity of an ongoing PAC investigation on NBL loans.

Talking to us, Station Manager Prateek Bhandari said he did appear before the PAC but only to stand by the story. He also said he refused to disclose anything to the Committee, citing Clause 2(5) of the Journalists' Code of Conduct formulated by the Press Council, which protects the sanctity of news sources. The three PAC members named as having contacted bank officials are Birendra Kanaudia (Nepali Congress), Birodh Khatriwada (UML) and Hridayesh Tripathi (Nepal Sadbhavana Party).

## SAARC lawyers meet

The eighth meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation for Law (SAARCLAW) concluded early this week. The theme of the conference was "Good Governance for Development". Alongside, a meeting of the Chief Justices of South Asia also took place.

This is the second conference in Nepal since SAARCLAW was set up in 1991. Speaking at the inaugural, Secretary General of SAARCLAW, Bharat Raj Upreti, said Nepal faces the worst examples of vice and corruption, amorality and lust for power, and that the meeting should try to find ways to end corruption and restore the confidence of the common people in the law.

## Correction

The article entitled "Money, money everywhere" in Nepali Times (#10) reported that Nepali finance companies, cooperatives and trusts have an estimated Rs 45 billion waiting to be invested. The Rs 45 billion mentioned includes savings with these institutions and other commercial banks, bringing the total investable amount in Nepal to be around Rs 50 billion, and not Rs 90 billion as the introduction to the article said. Also not mentioned was that the article was adapted from a longer piece from *Himal Khabarpatrika*. The error occurred during translation.

—Editor

### CELEBRATING THE MOUNTAIN PORTER a photo exhibition



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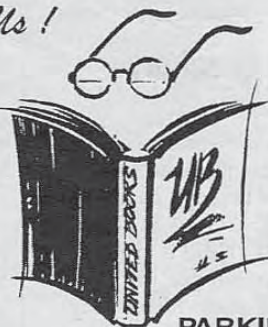
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PARKING AVAILABLE



**'I am doing my job'**

Subash Chandra Nemwang, CPN(UML) MP and Chairman, Public Accounts Committee in *Nepali Patra*, 22 September

**Is there any problem between the Public Accounts Committee and the Finance Committee?**

I don't know what type of problem you are talking about. There is no problem between us. We are working within the parameters given to us, and they within theirs. Therefore, this will not lead to any confusion.

**The home secretary and water resources secretary have said that the PAC is interfering in the work of the executive and is trying to create a shadow government. Is it true?**

Officially they have not told me anything. All I have come to know is through the papers and gossip. The PAC is going to do its work properly, with dedication and conviction and if this leads to people saying that an alternative government is being formed, then so be it.

**Is it also true that the Civil Aviation Ministry has accused the PAC of overstepping its jurisdiction?**

Minister Chataut himself appeared before the committee and said that whatever he had been reported as saying was not taken in the proper context. Therefore I have nothing to add. Secondly, I want to make it clear that the PAC is doing its work, within established parameters and will not tolerate any wrongdoing by ministers, ministries, secretaries or any other functionary. We will do everything that is advantageous to the nation.

**There are differences among the ministers and MPs concerning the jurisdiction of certain committees. Is that true?**

There are three things that the press and the public have to understand. Voices are being raised from the wrong places. We have to understand that if the committees work properly, the parliament and the nation will benefit and become stronger. This means that the voice of the people is being heard. Only those who do not want the public to benefit are raising these concerns. We agree there are problems in the committees and we are rectifying them as and when we see it fit or necessary. Just because there is some disagreement between the committees does not mean that they are not working properly. That is the view of the people who do not want to see the committees become effective. Take, for example, the funds for police welfare. Some people do not want certain issues related to this fund to come out in the open and therefore they say all sorts of things. They say that the committee is not working cohesively and so on, but none of that is true.

**It is said that both the Finance Committee and the PAC are looking into banks in which the government has some stake?**

Besides the PAC, I do not know of any other committee handling this issue. The PAC is looking into the issue of banks quite seriously and we are carrying out on-site inspections also. The decision concerning the Maiti Devi branch can be taken as an example of our decision-making. We have to study documents prepared by many national and international organisations, we have put in place all that we want to do, want to achieve and are preparing an action plan on which direction we want to go. We have asked for documents from Nepal Bank, Rastriya Banijya Bank, Agricultural Development Bank and the Nepal Industrial Development Corporation. We have analysed some documents and have formed a sub-committee under MP Hridayesh Tripathy, which will submit a report within two months. We have formed sub-committees for different banks and institutions and they will all report to the committee. We have found that in some cases the principal in question was just 2-2.5 million rupees and now the interest alone has reached 50-60 million. ♦

**QUOTE OF THE WEEK**

"Those who think our technology is inferior and print publications abroad spending millions have begun to say that the parliamentary system is not suitable for Nepal...[they] are digging their own grave."

—Communications Minister Jaya Prakash Prasad Gupta's remarks on the press in Kantipur, 23 September.



२. न. काँग्रेसका सम्पूर्ण सक्रिय सदस्य यी नै हुन् !

Punarjagaran, 29 September

Here they are, all the active members of the Nepali Congress.

**Power purchase hurting NEA**

Deshanter, 24 September

The "take-or-pay" agreements between the Nepal Electricity Authority and independent power producers is forcing it to shut down its own power plants. According to a source at NEA, after it began buying electricity from Khimti Hydroelectric Project (60MW), it has stopped generation at its own Marsyangdi project (69MW).

The source adds that another 36MW project, the Bhote Kosi, will begin generation later this year and the 7.5MW Indrawati will begin supply to the central grid next year, all under the clause that NEA has to purchase the electricity.

The NEA may be forced to shut down more of its own plants and because of the same clause may be forced to stop buying power from the 12MW Jhimruk project that is available at almost half the cost (Rs 2.50 per unit) supplied by Khimti.

The NEA failed to assess the demand and supply before agreeing to buy electricity from Khimti, Bhote Kosi, Indrawati and Upper Modi, which explains why it has agreed to buy electricity from them. As per the agreements NEA has to purchase the electricity whether it needs it or not.

According to Ratna Sansar Shrestha, of 1475 gigawatt hours of electricity at NEA's disposal it was able to sell only 1113 gigawatt hours. If that electricity was sold at half the going rates, NEA would earn an additional Rs 1.19 billion.

Instead NEA, on 13 July, decided to increase the power tariff by 30 percent which would make electricity generated by diesel plants cheaper than hydropower.

**Cabinet reshuffle after Dasain**

Saptahik Bimarsha, 22 September

The prime minister's procrastination over the promised cabinet reshuffle has led to a new round of protests and infighting. Dissatisfied party members wrote a protest letter to the PM and tomorrow the PM and Krishna Prasad Bhattarai are to sit down again for a new round of "Talks".

This round is to build pressure to influence the re-shuffle of the cabinet and the Central Working Committee of the party. The disgruntled MPs were miffed after Koirala told them that the changes would be made only after Dasain. Koirala plans to visit the Maoist-affected areas after meeting Bhattarai and return only after Dasain begins. Informed about Koirala's plans Sher Bahadur Deuba is heading to the eastern region.

Deuba, along with Khum Bahadur Khadka, Bijaya Gachchedar, Yog Prasad Upadhyay, Chiranjibi Wagle and Purna Bahadur Khadka, had sent the protest letter to the PM over alleged irregularities in the distribution of party membership before its convention next year. The deadline for making corrections in the voters' list for the convention is 30 September.

The Congress party office says the list could not be made available to all because the list contains 8,000 names.

**Quack vs quackery**

Kantipur, 23 September

The Chairman of Nepal Medical Council, Dr Bhoj Raj Joshi, who has been accused of helping a quack, Rathor Singh Rana Surya Shastri (S.K. Rana), practise in Nepal is to attend an international seminar that will seek ways to prevent quacks from joining the medical profession.

The seminar is being organised by the General Medical Council of Britain and Joshi's trip is being paid for by the Ministry of Health. The meeting is said to be one that would lead towards the formation of a World Medical Council.

The first seminar in the series was held in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1998, and Dr Joshi and the registrar of NMC Dr Baburam Marashini had attended that meeting.

Dr Joshi stands charged of influencing the process to grant Rana the NMC registration needed to practise in Nepal. The NMC had investigated the issue and reported that Dr Joshi was morally responsible for all that has happened. The NMC says that Dr Joshi had also worked as anaesthetist during an operation by Rana where the patient operated for a minor injury had died.



Video picture of Dr Joshi the anaesthetist during one of the operations by Rana.

Dr Joshi is also said to have flouted the rules in prescribing the registration process. Dr Joshi is also accused of delaying investigations into the accusations against Rana, whose 50-year-old patient, who had lost a thumb in an elevator accident did not recover from a coma after the operation.

At present Rana is in the Dillibazar jail in relation to a case involving forged citizenship and Dr Joshi is still under police investigation.

**PM's stand helps palace**

Deshanter, 24 September

Frustration and gloom has set in the Nepali Congress party members and the general public. This is all because the prime minister has refused to reshuffle the CWC and cabinet before Dasain. A few weeks earlier the PM, under pressure from different sides had agreed to make changes in both the party executive and the cabinet.

He then left for America and there were expectations that he would go for the reshuffle after he came back. He is now back but is preparing to visit Maoist-affected areas. He has given clear indications that he is not prepared to make any changes now.

He feels the timing is not right at this point of time. He feels that he is the most powerful person around and can do as he pleases. Sher Bahadur Deuba is on a visit of the eastern part of the country and Koirala is losing no sleep over it.

We have to remember that Koirala was the one who engineered the toppling of the government led by Lokendra Bahadur Chand in 1998, just before Dasain. People therefore ask, "If it could be done then, why not now?" Koirala also ousted Bhattarai just days before he was to make an official visit to France.

That was to have been the first official visit of a Nepali Prime Minister to France after Jung Bahadur's [in 1850]. Then too, he showed no leniency to Bhattarai. So, why now to his ministers?

He put Bhattarai up on a pedestal, made him the prime minister and after using some incidents as an excuse, toppled him. Inefficiency, corruption and lethargy of the government were said to be the reasons why Bhattarai

had to go.

Now, Koirala faces the same charges, but says, it would be unkind to sack ministers just before the festival season. The PM is using Dasain as an excuse to shelter his inefficient and corrupt ministers.

People feel that this attitude of the PM may gradually make the palace stronger. People's frustration with the leadership, corruption and lethargy could make them look for another power centre and this is where the palace could step in. The Maoist problem too, is not moving toward a solution and people blame the leaders for this as well.

**Indian encroachment**

Budhabar, 20 September

A recent book, *Nepal ko Simana*, by Buddhi Narayan Shrestha, says India has encroached upon a total of 1.17 million ropanis [1 ropani=76x76 feet] of Nepali territory spread over 56 locations in 21 districts of Nepal. It says 744,000 ropanis have been encroached in Darchula district, in the Kalapani-Limpiyadhura area and 32,000 ropanis in Jhapa district alone. Some of the details on the disputed border are as follows:

Darchula, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura area. Total area encroached is 744,000 ropanis.

Kanchanpur District. About 222 ha at the Tanakpur barrage, some land was used for the construction of the afflux bund. At Bramhadev Mandi 2,917 ropanis was used when the Sarda Canal was being built. Encroachment has taken place at Rampur, Laxmipur, Bilaspur and Royal Suklaphanta National Park.

Kailali. Some jungle besides Mohana river and at locations along no-man's land.

Bardia. Areas in Manpur, Murtiya, Bhimapur, Tapara have been encroached upon. Roughly 60 km along border pillars #41 to #98 have been encroached by farmers from both sides.

Banke. Indians have built houses in no-man's land and the border is not clearly marked near Santalia village.

Laxmanpur Barrage. Nine village development committees face flooding and inundation because of Indian construction.

Dang. Dundwa area has been disputed since the British Raj. India has encroached in the Koilibas area.

Kapilvastu. No-man's land does not exist along Krishnanagar township and along the Thanda river banks.

Rupandehi. An Indian border police post has been built on no-man's land in Sunauli, about 20 kms encroached near the Marchawar area and another 21,950 bighas encroached near Susta Narsadi.

Chitwan. Jungle near the Balmiki Ashram, locations near Madichure and Taratal. In Thori of Parsa the border pillars are placed 500 metres within Nepali territory, between pillars #84 and #85 which are classified as "missing". There is encroachment in Laxmipur, Pipra and Sikara and near Raxaul.

Rautahat. Gaur, flooded by a dam near the border and areas near Jamuna, has been occupied by Indians.

Sarlahi. Area between Sangrampur and Hataull has been occupied and cultivated by Indians for the last 20 years. There is encroachment along Tribhuvannagar and Siraha Madar.

Saptari. 50 bighas in Lalpatti, and 60 bighas in Kunauli are encroached upon.

Sunsari. Areas along the Kosi barrage, near Bhandabari. Several locations in Shivanagar, Sahebganj and Harinagariya are occupied by Indians.



# Himalayan ice reveals climate warming

**Drilling through ice on the Tibetan plateau 70 km north of Kathmandu has brought up fresh evidence of global warming: the last decade was the hottest for the past 1,000 years.**



Large glacial lake below Mt Manaslu in Central Nepal (left) shows the extent of glacial retreat caused by climate change. Nepal's longest glacier, Ngozumba (above) below Mt Cho Oyu also shows retreat with moraines blocking off new lakes.

1,000 years. The core also showed a clear record of at least eight major droughts caused by a failure of the South Asian monsoon, the worst of these a catastrophic seven-year-long dry spell that cost the lives of more than 600,000 people. The new findings, published in this week's issue of the journal *Science*, outline data recovered from three cores drilled through the Dasuopu Glacier, a two-km-wide ice field that straddles a flat area on the flank of Shisha Pangma (Gosainthan), the 8,014m (26,293-foot) peak just north of the Nepal-Tibet border.

The international team, including American, Chinese, Peruvian, Russian and Nepali members, retrieved the cores during a 10-week, 1997 expedition to the region. "This is the highest climate record ever retrieved," explained Lonnie Thompson, professor of geological sciences at Ohio State University and leader of the expedition, "and it clearly shows a serious warming during the late 20th century, one that was caused, at least in part, by human activity. This is a very compelling story."

For the last 25 years, he and his colleagues have drilled cores from glaciers and ice caps in some of the most remote parts of the planet in an effort to recover records of ancient climate. Most current predictions of global climate change suggest that early signs of warming will be seen at high elevations where these ice caps exist. So far, Thompson's work has borne this out. "This work is a great achievement

accomplished under extremely adverse and hazardous conditions," says Herman Zimmerman, director of NSF's earth sciences division. "These investigations of the earth's past climate leave little doubt that the earth is warming and that all characteristics of our climate can change rapidly. This is something that needs to be taken quite seriously by all the peoples of the world."

Researchers at Ohio State's Byrd Polar Research Centre and the Chinese Lanzhou Institute of Glaciology and Geocryology divided the three cores and were able to identify annual layers for the last 557 years. Samples from these layers were analysed for dust concentrations, chemical composition and oxygen—and hydrogen—isotope ratios.

The isotope ratios let researchers extrapolate the air temperatures present when the ice was formed. Dust concentrations give an indication of dryness or wetness in the region, and the analysis of chlorides, sulfates and nitrates provide clues about volcanic activity, fossil fuel burning and desertification.

"We now have a record from 23,500 feet in the atmosphere (about as high as instruments are carried in a weather balloon), one that has been preserved naturally, that shows the last 50 years were warmer than any other equivalent period in the last 1,000 years," Thompson said. The real surprise came with the monsoon records the core revealed.

The South Asian monsoon is a major climate event that cycles

annually across the southern Himalayan region, the Far East and reaches as far west as Africa. Changes in the monsoon cycle can bring catastrophic flooding or droughts. The core data showed that in 1790, the cycle changed, the rains lessened and drought took hold in the region, a condition that continued for seven years until 1796 when the monsoons returned. "That event was major," Thompson said. "It killed more than 600,000 people in one region of India alone. And that was at a time when global populations were much less than they are today." (Estimates place the world population in 1800 at 980 million.)

"If a similar event occurred today, the social and economic disruptions would be horrendous," he said. Current world population is just over 6 billion people. The ice core record showed other serious monsoon failures and ensuing droughts in 1876-77, and around 1640,

1590, 1530, 1330, 1280 and 1230, though none was as devastating as the 1790 event. Thompson's paper offered no indications of what might have triggered the monsoon failures. The data, however, do seem to point to the impact human activities have had on changing climate in the region. Core samples covering the last century reveal a four-fold increase in dust trapped in the ice and a doubling of chloride concentrations, suggesting an increase in both drying and desertification in the region. "There is no question in my mind," he said, "that the warming is in part, if not totally, driven by human activity. I think the evidence for that is so clear—not only from this site but also from Kilimanjaro in Africa." Thompson led an expedition to the ice fields atop the highest mountain in Africa earlier this year. At least 75 percent of the ice there has disappeared since 1912, caused in part, he said, by global warming. ♦

Ice cores drilled through a glacier more than four miles up in the Himalayan mountains have yielded a highly detailed record of the last 1,000 years of earth's climate in the

high Tibetan Plateau, according to the National Science Foundation in the United States.

Based on an analysis of the ice, both the last decade and the last 50 years were the warmest in

## VILLAGE VOICE

# You should see our village now

It takes seven to eight hours to reach our village Balakot from the district headquarters in Kusma. There are 24 households living in the Nigali settlement of Balakot VDC ward number 6. Ours is a predominantly Magar village with some Bahun and Chhetri families. The village is remote and lags behind in every respect compared to others in this district. To reach the nearest health post we have to climb for an hour and a half. The nearest market in Lunkhu Deurali is two-and-a-half hours' walk away.

The economic state of our village is also quite dismal. No one from our village is in government service and the number of people serving in the Indian Army and working as servants in Bombay is also limited. Very few people own *khet* or *baris*. The main source of income for us is raising pigs, working as labourers and selling *raksi*.

In mid-January, Chandra Bahadur Chhetri came to our village and told us about the benefits of getting together in a group to improve our lives. He told us about developing an organisation, told us about making savings and convinced us that if we helped ourselves, we would not need help from outside. We brainstormed about what our most pressing problems were. Four days later, we formed the Kalika Devi Women's Community Organisation with members from all the 24 households in our village.

Well, what can I say? Things have really changed since we joined the Village Development Programme. We meet every week and we save Rs 5. We have rules to fine latecomers and absentees. We even slapped a Rs 500 fine on two men from the village who got into a drunken brawl. Before the women formed the



Kalika Devi Women's Community Organisation cleaning up the village trail. Women are spearheading a campaign to improve living conditions.

group, the menfolk used to drink at any time of day. We have now set up a liquor curfew—people can only drink between five and nine if they want to, and that too only inside their homes. Anyone caught breaking the rules is fined. Those caught selling liquor have to pay a fine of Rs 20 and those caught drinking the stuff have to pay Rs 15 as penalty. The hygiene and health conditions in our village used to be deplorable. People would defecate from their portals of their homes for the pigs to lap up; dogs and chickens would wallow in waste. With shit all around, the stench used to be so bad that we had to hold our breath while walking around the village. Disease spread, children had typhoid and were always sick. Now there is a temporary pit latrine in every home. Every Monday morning we members go

around the village cleaning the streets, taking the rubbish out of the trail, picking up trash. You should see our village now, it is much cleaner.

Our village economy used to rely mainly on the home distilleries, and the selling of liquor. Some worked as labourers. Today, with access to credit from our own collective savings, we have started various activities like raising improved breeds of pigs and chickens, others have started growing vegetables and selling them in the market.

Our village is not really known for its learned people, in fact illiteracy is rampant here. Imagine, we do not have a single SLC graduate. But now after our literacy campaigns, it is only a few old and weak-sighted people who cannot read and write at least a bit. I am a 'test pass' (passed the pre-SLC test) myself.

You know, I always used to wonder and worry whether this village of ours would ever take a turn for the better. There was so much to do to improve things, but it seemed like we were paralysed, we didn't know where to begin. Now, we have begun to notice how quickly things can change for the better. I am quite optimistic. I can see signs of self-reliance, which in turn has given our people more self-esteem. There was a time when we used to dread visitors to our village; imagine what they would think seeing all the filth and the drunkenness and the poverty. We used to wish they wouldn't come. Now we look forward to welcoming visitors, we want them to see what we have done for ourselves. You come, too. ♦

Rewati Hamal is the manager of the Kalika Devi Women's Community Organisation in Nigali, Ward # 6 Balakot VDC, Parbat District. This piece was translated from the original Nepali for Nepali Times.





## BIZ NEWS

## More ADB money for Melamchi

Asian Development Bank (ADB) officials said last week that it may increase its loan to the Melamchi Water Supply Project to \$120 million—up from the \$100 million it was seeking to provide.

A Bank official told the daily The Rising Nepal that the money would come as one loan, and not in two packages as had been originally proposed. The additional \$ 20 million is meant for waste water improvement. The Bank is expected to decide on the loan in December.

Other donors expected to contribute to the project after the ADB decision are Norway's Norad and Sweden's SIDA (\$ 25 million each) for a 28-km tunnel to bring water from Melamchi to Kathmandu, and Japan's Bank of International Cooperation (\$55 million) for water treatment. Nepal is expected to chip in about 20 percent of the project's \$430m cost.

## Rupee takes another dive

Commercial banks asked the Central Bank to pump a million dollars into the market to help prevent the slide of the rupee, which reached a low of Rs 73.6:\$1 last week.

The Foreign Exchange Dealers Association (FEDAN)—a group of 11 commercial banks that deal with foreign exchange—asked the Nepal Rastra Bank to intervene on Wednesday after the rupee dropped by 60 paisa in two days. Nepal's rupee is pegged to India's currency and any change in the IRs:\$ rate is transferred to the Nepali exchange rate.

The slide in Indian currency was partly caused by the soaring petroleum prices. The Indian rupee was trading at IRs 45.10:\$1 when the market opened on Wednesday and closed at IRs 45.25:\$1.

## Cargo thefts

Freight movers say there is much pilferage and theft of outbound cargo from the Tribhuvan International Airport. Goods being transported by road are damaged or stolen in India on their way to the ports.

A press release by the Nepal Freight Forwarders Association (NFFA) says a consignment shipped to New York sometime ago had been pilfered and scrap paper and other useless material was used to make up for the weight of the stolen goods. NFFA has lodged written protests about the thefts with the concerned government agencies.

Officials at the airport say the possibility of goods being stolen from storage is slim and the security of goods on the ramp is the responsibility of the concerned carrier.

## 6th Nepal-Bank of Ceylon branch

Nepal-Bank of Ceylon Ltd, a joint venture bank based in Siddharthanagar, opened a branch office in Banepa last week and another one is planned for Kathmandu's New Road in November. The New Road branch will be the Bank's third outlet in Kathmandu Valley. The Banepa opening (the Bank's sixth) is part of the Bank's plan to expand banking services outside Kathmandu said U.O. Jayaratne, Managing Director. The Nepal-Bank of Ceylon Ltd was established in 1996.

## RBB, NBL reforms

The government is looking for foreign banks interested in taking over two of the country's ailing banks under a management contract, sources at the Nepal Rastra Bank said. An advertisement to that effect is likely to appear in *The Economist* magazine later this week. An audit by the international auditing group KPMG Barnets early this year had declared the two banks "technically insolvent," following which the central bank and the government had begun seeking ways to keep them from collapsing. By its own account, about 23 percent of the Rastriya Baniya Bank's total investment of Rs 29.91 billion is either of "poor quality" or outright bad. Nepal Bank Limited fares no better with 32 percent of the total loan of Rs 22 billion unpaid, some for decades.

The banks have been plagued by poor assessment of projects, almost non-existing monitoring, insider lending (in the case of NBL) and political loans (in the case of the government-owned RBB). According to the KPMG report, the two banks together hold about 60 percent of all deposits in the country and are said to have a negative net worth of over Rs 25 billion.

## King at Hyatt

King Birendra is inaugurating the Tara Gaon Cultural Tourism Centre complex at the Hyatt Regency premises near Baudha on Wednesday. The Centre will be putting up typical Nepali villages, representing Nepal's hill, mountain and tarai to go with existing workshops where artisans produce, display and sell their crafts.

Also within the Tara Gaon complex is the 290-room Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, which opened 84 of its rooms and food and beverage outlets—The Café, The Lounge and The Terrace—for business on 31 August. The Tara Gaon Development Board is an equity participant in the hotel project. Other shareholders are the ICTC group, the Sharaf Group (that owns Yak and Yeti), the Asian Development Bank, Hyatt Regency and the general public.

## Indian super models on ramp

The Indian Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO) doesn't just come to promote trade, it also promotes Indian beauty and glamour. Manpreet Brar—runner-up at the Miss Universe contest last year, walked down the ramp at the Regal Banquet Hall at Hotel Yak and Yeti on 19 September on the occasion of a trade show in Kathmandu.

The main attractions were designs by Ritu Kumar, designer for all Indian Miss Universes/Worlds (and also Princess Diana). J.J. Valya, another well-known name in Indian haute couture, presented his fusion of East and West with a whole sequence dedicated to white silks. Designers Monisha Bajaj and Niki Mahajan were represented as well.

The fashion show was part of a six-day Indian Trade Exhibition that opened at the Bhrikuti Mandap grounds on 20 September. Over 90 Indian manufacturers displayed products on communication, information and electronic technology at the six-day fair.

At a seminar organised alongside the exhibition, Nepali and Indian officials and businesses discussed ways to remove the bottlenecks in bilateral trade. The meeting was organised by the Nepal-India Chambers of Commerce and Industry (NICCI) and India's Trade Promotion Organisation.

## ECONOMIC SENSE

by ARTHA BEED

## The right amount at the right place at the right moment.



If you feel sadistically inclined towards the customs officials on landing at Katmandu, relax, take a deep breath, pop your blood pressure pill and have the Dasain pocket money ready.

Now that Dasain is around the corner, many Nepalis are flying home for holidays. If you know anyone who is coming in send them an email right now to warn them not carry not more than one set of dot pens, only one perambulator (whatever that is) and not more than two kinds of chocolate. If they do they will be liable for prosecution under the draconian new 'Personal Baggage Order 2000'.

Personal baggage rules have always been interesting in Nepal since the country decided to encourage smuggling in the 1970s as a means to boost the economy. The sight of people wearing seven layers of camouflage jackets and identical Adidas at Bangkok airport in the middle of summer had become an easy way to identify Nepalis. *Jhiti gunta* (personal baggage) has made the airport one of the prized appointments for civil servants. Successive ministers have ensured a steady inflow of funds for the party by managing this trade. The new Order is a continuation of the traditional practice of making new laws to perfect new ways to extort money from traders flying in with price tags still dangling from their Raybans.

The new Order has some interesting provisions. The law accepts the fact that a traveller may have an unauthorised source of convertible foreign exchange. So if you have bought some stuff from the money you sent by *hawala*—do not worry. There is nothing that can't be solved with the right amount at the right place at the right moment.

If you have stayed abroad between 15 and 30 nights (important point: nights, not days) you will get an exemption for goods of total value of Rs 1,000 and if your stay is more than 365 nights you can get an exemption worth Rs 6,000. So at today's dollar rate you have an exemption of an astronomically mind-boggling amount of \$85.

"Travellers should not show up oddly at the Customs Office (for example by wearing more clothes than needed according to the weather, or carrying more than one piece or pair of watch,

camera, goggles, etc.)." So the Custom Officer will now have the right to subjectively decide whether you have showed up evenly, or oddly. You can bet your last rupee that he will decide that you have dressed oddly and require you to leave that bottle of Red Label to compensate for your wrong sense of dress code.

Foreigners can bring into Nepal a movie or video camera, a portable music system and ten pieces of recorded and blank cassettes, one perambulator (that one again) and one tricycle, one used fountain pen, and one set of dot pens or lead pencils, one used watch. So, tourists better not have digital cameras, CD players, portable DVD players, CDs, no VCDs and of course no bicycles. Otherwise, the guardians of our revenue service will grab you and turn you into a source of personal revenue generation. Of course, if you just have one perambulator, you can get in scot-free.

Lest I be accused of ridiculing the new Order, let me add hastily that I am ridiculing it. I am asking for it to be scrapped forthwith. It shows a poverty of imagination, a penchant for petty harassment of our own citizens, a rent-seeking mentality that has turned a place we euphemistically call an "international airport" into a den of thieves. Why don't we just ban the important of everything? You are just not allowed to bring anything into Nepal as personal baggage. Period. That would be much more honest.

There are more than 150,000 Nepalis traveling abroad each year, and we have to bear in mind that all of them are not smugglers. The fact that we have such rules turns each and every Nepali into a criminal as soon as they step out of the plane. Next time you feel sadistically inclined towards the customs officials on landing at Katmandu, relax, take a deep breath, pop your blood pressure pill and have the Dasain pocket money ready. ♦

Readers can post their views and discuss issues at [arthabeed@yahoo.com](mailto:arthabeed@yahoo.com)

## Grindlays Gazette

## INTEREST RATE UPDATE

NEPALI RUPEE	CURRENT%	PREVIOUS%
Call Money Avg.	5.00	5.25
84 Days t/bill	4.54	5.00
91 Days t/bill	4.75	4.84
365 Days t/bill	6.18	6.16
Repo rate	5.25	5.34

Average 91 day T/bill rate dipped lower due to aggressive bidding by some of the Govt. run banks. Excessive liquidity in the inter bank market especially with some state run banks has inflicted undue pressure on the rate of 91 days T/bill in the primary market. Expected range for next week 4.5 to 5.00.

## FOREIGN CURRENCY : Interest rates

	USD	EUR	GBP	JPY	CHF
LENDING	9.50	6.25	6.00	1.50	5.25
LIBOR (1M)	6.62	4.65	6.07	0.39	3.21

BANK RATES(DEPO/LENDING)	Mkt	Hi/Lo	Mkt	Avg
S/A NPR	6.0/3.5			5.30
F/D 1 YR	7.5/6.0			6.81
OVERDRAFT	15.5/12.5			13.54
TERM LOAN	14.5/13.0			13.49
IMPORT LN	13.0/10.5			11.52
EXPORT LN	13.0/10.0			10.96
MISC LOAN	17.5/13.5			15.13

## CURRENCY UPDATE

AG/USD	CURRENT *	WK/AGO	%CHG
OIL(Barrel )	35.95	32.70	+ 8.84
GOLD(Ounce)	272.25	272.80	- 0.20
GOLD ( NPR *)	7115	7150	- 0.49
EUR	0.8533	0.8675	- 1.64
GBP	1.3980	1.4190	- 1.48
JPY	107.12	106.23	+ 0.84
CHF	1.7845	1.7804	+ 0.23
AUD	0.5435	0.5575	- 2.51
INR	45.99	45.59	+ 0.88

\*Currency bid prices at 1.30 p.m. on 28/8 - Source Reuters

**Oil :** Oil consuming nations are joining forces, in a bid to persuade OPEC to open their oil taps further, fearing crude price near 10-year highs could hurt economic growth.

**Currencies :** Euro toppled to fresh record lows against the dollar after a regional US Federal Reserve official said the Euro's weakness raised questions about its longer-term survival. The Pound Sterling was near 14 year lows against the dollar amid the Euro's weakness and ongoing speculation that UK interests are at or near their peak.

## INDIAN RUPEE OUTLOOK :

The Indian rupee ended firmer at 45.99/46.01, new closing low on Monday as worries persisted about the impact of oil prices, near 10-year highs. The IRs has fallen 5% since January against the dollar. The Forex reserve fell by \$ 264 million in the week to September 8 to \$ 35,355 billion.

## INTERNATIONAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR NEPALI TIMES

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

marketing@nepalitimes.com



# Pokhara pokes around for tourists

Nepal's scenic valley is coming out of a tourist drought and is looking eagerly forward to a healthy autumn season.

**BINOD BHATTARAI IN POKHARA**

7rekking stores along the lakeside are dusting their wares, airport taxi drivers are sprucing up their ageing Datsuns and cafes are re-painting the garden chairs.

As the monsoon clouds part to let the early tourists take a peek at the cleft summit of Machhapuchhare, Pokhara is in

throughout spring and summer.

Pokhara's uniqueness lies in the fact that it is lower than Kathmandu, but much closer to the mountains. Three large lakes add beguiling charm, and you can watch peaks unbelievably high in the sky from the bottom of a tropical valley. The town is at 900 metres and the summit of Machhapuchhare (6990m) is



in some hotels plummeted to 20 percent this year.

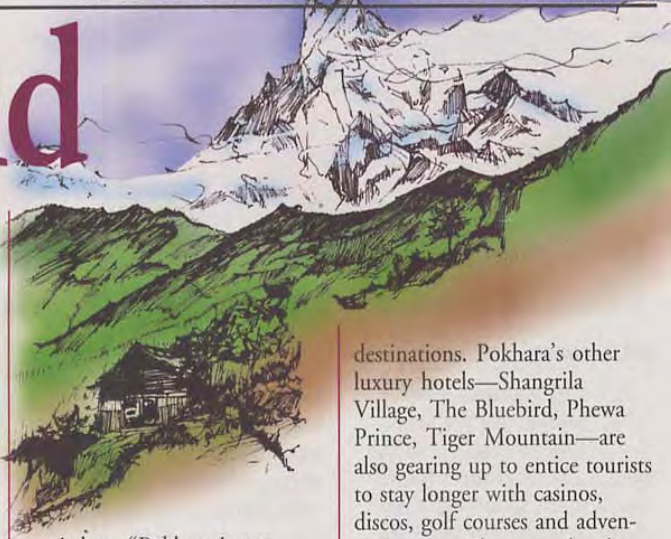
"We've had the worst off-season so far, you could hardly see any Indian tourists around," says Gyan Nidhi Tiwari, Executive Assistant Manager at The Bluebird Hotel, a four-year-old upmarket property. "Occupancy may have gone down to 20 percent but our average was pulled up by conferences to about 50 percent."

The Bluebird is one of about eight new hotels and resorts in Pokhara that came up after the boom years of 1996-98 when luxury hotels tried to increase tourist stays and attract a wealthier clientele by adding attractions like adventure sports and health spas. The newest, biggest and most luxurious of Pokhara's new hotels is The Fulbari Resort, which is trying to promote itself as a health and fitness destination in its own right. After a very slow start, even

Fulbari seems to be picking up. "November looks very, very good," says Vijay Subba, Front Office Manager. "We have a feeling that things could be changing."

Fulbari has been plagued by high management turnover, the pullout of Dusir Thani, the Thai hotel chain, from a management contract, and low occupancy. The poor condition of the 8 km access road to the city is also hurting business. Not that the roads to other hotels in Pokhara are any better. But at least distances are shorter.

Fulbari's new manager, Deepak Bahl, formerly of India's Taj and Hindustan Hotels International groups, has a track record of bringing ailing hotels to profitability, and he is looking forward to working some of his



magic here. "Pokhara is not Calcutta," he told us. "But we will turn this property around within 12 months. That is both a commitment and a compulsion because it is time we started showing the owners some money."

But for the real breakthrough in arrivals, most agree that Pokhara must have direct daily flights from Indian

destinations. Pokhara's other luxury hotels—Shangrila Village, The Bluebird, Phewa Prince, Tiger Mountain—are also gearing up to entice tourists to stay longer with casinos, discos, golf courses and adventure sports. There are already ultra-light sightseeing flights (very popular with Indian tourists), paragliding and windsurfing on the Phewa Lake.

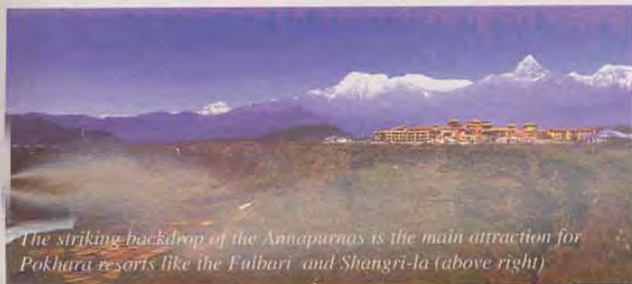
"We've always done well during the tourist season, now we want to improve occupancy during the off season," says Rajiv Shrestha, Front Office Manager at the Shangrila Village, the elegant and well-proportioned hotel south of the airport. The hotel has managed to maintain a 63 percent occupancy, which Shrestha says resulted from its own marketing that began in 1993, three years before the hotel opened.

Over at the tourist hangout of Baidam-Lakeside, increasingly called "Thamel-by-the-lake" because of the ugly concrete construction and squalid shopfronts that have come up in striking contrast to the natural beauty of the place, hotels and lodges cater to the trekking crowd. There are about 500 big and small hotels and restaurants along the shores of Pokhara's Phewa Lake, and competition to grab the 'free individual tourists' (FITs) is very intense, which leads to harassment at bus stops and airports. Lodges and hotels also have to undercut themselves so much that they are barely profitable.

"All hotels undercut but few admit it," says Tiwari of The Bluebird. "Even we had to slash rates to ensure that rooms were occupied during the start-up months."

Fulbari needs the bulk of Pokhara's tourists because it has the largest number of rooms to fill. "But not at the cost of rates," says Subba. "With the type of booking for November we hope we never have to."

Not slashing rates could be a good overall strategy but can also be bad business, especially when tourist numbers are low, overheads and high and fixed and Nepal continues to have the "cheap destination" tag. The bigger hotels are trying to agree on a pricing code. But old-timers don't think it will work. Pokhara's tourism is fragile, vulnerable to the Kathmandu road getting blocked by landslide. At other times, all it needs to scare tourists is an exaggerated travel advisory by the US State Department like the one in early September warning Americans to stay away on a Maoist "black day". Maoist slogans are splashed all over the trekking trail north of Pokhara, but there haven't been any major hits on tourists. The few attacks that have occurred could easily have been carried out by local criminals who blame it on the Maoists. ♦



The striking backdrop of the Annapurnas is the main attraction for Pokhara resorts like the Fulbari and Shangri-la (above right)

full anticipation for the new tourist season. The disastrous fallout from the Indian Airlines hijacking last December, the subsequent four-month ban on Indian Airlines flights to Kathmandu and negative media reports about Nepal hit arrivals

only 30 km away. Such is Pokhara's allure that some of its fancier hotels used to be booked even in the monsoon, with visitors from India, Spain and Italy. Pokhara has always been a favourite destination for Indian honeymooners, but occupancy

## Pokhara Lodge bags new award

Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge, which opened in 1998, has been awarded the coveted *Conde Nast Traveler* Ecotourism Award 2000 in the hotel/resort category. *Conde Nast Traveler* awards properties, tour operators and destinations which make "protecting the planet a profitable enterprise". This now makes four international awards for the latest Tiger Mountain property including the PATA Heritage and Culture 1999 Gold Award, and Highly Commended Status for the Conservation International Ecotourism Excellence Award. Perched at 3,900 ft (1,200 m) on a spectacular hilltop ridge, Pokhara Lodge is Tiger Mountain's most recent tourism destination. The resort has 19 elegant rooms in hand-cut stone bungalows arranged in clusters on terraces around the main lodge, reflecting the architecture and layout of the local Gurung communities.

If you had this **drink** !  
Would you be able to  
identify the brand ...



**rum** 'DRINK/ r'm/ n a strong alcoholic drink made from the juice of sugarcane plant • I'll have a ( glass of) rum, [C/U] • rum and cola is my favourite drink [U] "Fifteen men on the dead man's chest/Yo-ho-ho with a bottle of rum" ( pirate song from Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, 1883) .....

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# Zen and the art of kite flying

In Nepal kite flying is a martial art. We don't just fly kites for the fun of it, we fly kites to fight other kites.

SALIL SUBEDI

As the monsoon rains subside, the sky turns deep blue again and the wind suddenly changes from east to west you can tell Kathmandu is ready once more for the annual kite-flying season. There are other things that go with kite flying: the fluttering quiver of a dive-bombing kite, the smell of ripening rice in the golden fields where the kites swoop, the collective victory cry of "chaaaaait" from the rooftops.

And everyone has a kite-flying memory of childhood. Of a cousin who fell off a roof while backing out after a launch (luckily, he

escaped with just bruises), epic kite battles in which a dozen kites with their lethal *maajhaa* strings fought for supremacy in the great Battle of Wotu in 1968, children chasing falling kites with long sticks and running across traffic with their eyes on the prize.

The big difference between Nepali and European kite flying is that here it is martial art. Nepalis don't just fly kites for the fun of it, they fly kites to fight other kites. The idea is to cut their line with your line. That is why you need a kite with manoeuvrability, obedience and a killer instinct. You need thread that looks threatening with a blood red colour and shards of

glass glistening in the sun. And then the most important item: you need a *lattai* that has the capacity to reel in or reel out faster than the enemy. It is the *lattai* that also distinguishes the Nepali kiteflyer from Indian flyers.

We don't know whether kite-flying came to Kathmandu from the north or south, but either way there is no doubt that it has evolved its own distinctive Nepali characteristics. Kites seem to have been discovered in the land that discovered gunpowder: China. First historical references date to 400 BC, but it appears that kites may have come to China from what is now Indonesia. Kites were used in 170 BC by the Chinese general Han Hsien to measure distances. Kites have reached

enormous heights, and the world record is 30,000 ft. People have always been fascinated by the possibility of going up in a kite, and Marco Polo did it in the 13th century on return from China. But people-lifting kites didn't really catch on.

Marconi did use a kite to hoist an aerial for his trans-Atlantic radio transmission.

Avid kite flyers like the editor of this paper have flown kites at 18,800 ft at Makalu Base Camp in winds gusting up to 60 knots. But because the air is thin, the kite survived.

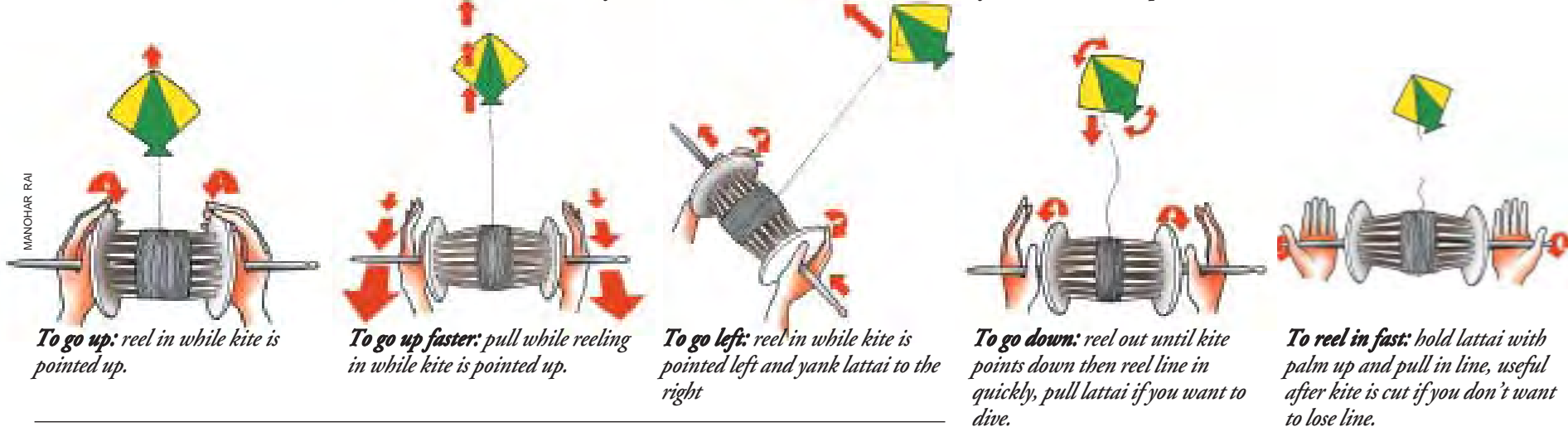
In congested Kathmandu, kite aficionados clamber up to their

rooftop terraces to get their kites aloft and there is never a shortage of enemies to engage. The fights, when they do happen, are exciting even for spectators as the top guns swoop, climb and do their victory rolls in the ruthless dogfights overhead. And the vanquished, drifting unguided in the breeze trailing long strings.

These days people don't make their own line armour, called *maajhaa*. But some old timers still have the secret time-tested recipes for the strongest *maajhaas* reputedly made of a witch's brew of boiled slugs, gum all mixed with powdered glass made from crushed light bulbs. These have to be mixed carefully—you don't want a *maajhaa* that is so sharp that it cuts your own line inside the *lattai*.

Kite fighting with a *lattai* is an art that needs a lifetime of

experience. True kite warriors first learn from their masters, then they gain experience and pass it down to the next generation. After getting a kite aloft you let it go in a tumbling motion riding on a gust of wind. Tumbling makes it reel out faster than a side-by-side (*tiktike*) motion. After the line has gone for a while and when the kite looks dangerous close to the trees, you stop the *lattai* abruptly, and the kite shoots straight up. The way a kite behaves in the sky gives an indication of the personality and dexterity of its pilot. You can tell that a *tiktike* is flown by a novice, a *puchhare* is probably a kid, the flashy Red Baron is a show-off who will sooner or later get himself shot down, the Darting Diver is probably flown by a dare-devil who will get stuck on a television antenna, the High Hoverer is a deceptively calm but ruthless falcon who will plunge suddenly and cut the enemy's umbilical before he can utter "gwankh" (the



mirinda

## Go fly a kite (and uni

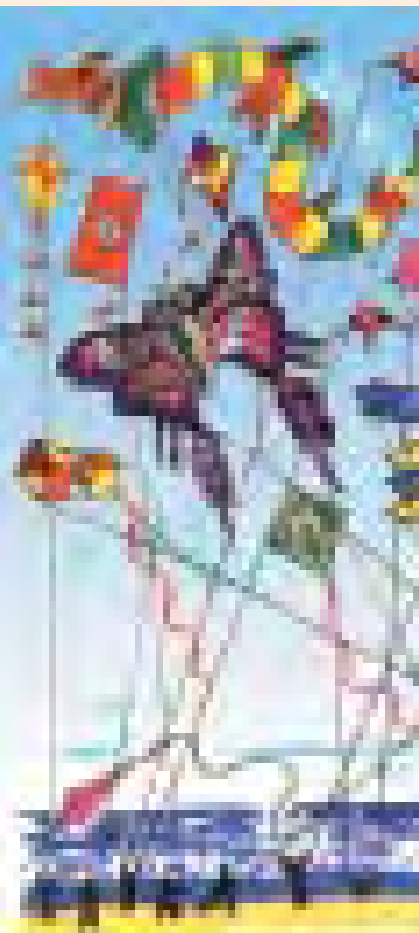
PETER AVIS IN DIEPPE, FRANCE

They came from Australia and South Africa, China and Chile, Germany and Guatemala, Italy, New Zealand and Nepal. In all, 33 delegations of kiteflyers were gathered with their creations in the kite village erected at the edge of the seaway that separates France from Britain. Thousands of people crowded the town for nine days to watch fantastic displays—and sometimes friendly battles—in the sky. There were vigorous acrobatic kites and langorous kites dancing ballets. But most impressive of all were the monarchs of the sky, such as the tubular sea monster brought to Europe by famed kitemaker Peter Lynn of New Zealand, and his green octopus that threatened constantly to land, like King Kong, on the roofs of adjacent hotels.

For this millennium edition of the Dieppe biennial festival—the eleventh in the series—three countries were the guests of honour: Guatemala, Korea and Indonesia. A team of 10 Guatemalan kiteflyers brought to Europe for the first time six

giants of Sumpago—vast circular constructions on bamboo frames measuring up to 18 metres across, richly painted in reds and ochres that evoke the colour of the soil of the land where they were made.

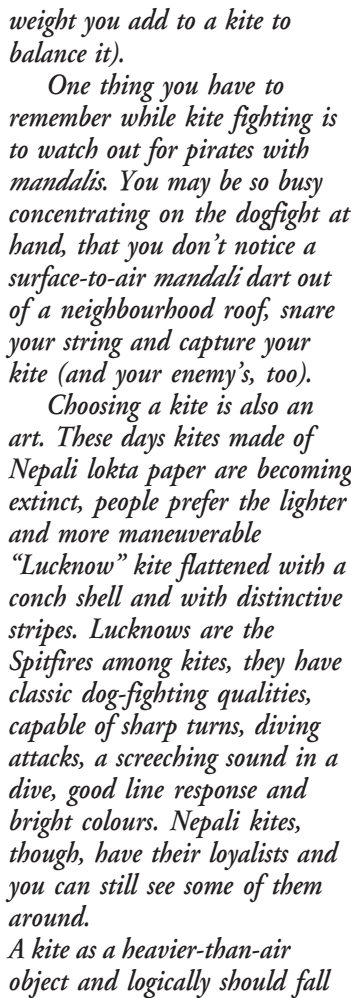
Korean kites, too, are conceived as means of communication with the heavens. It is a tradition in Korea to write on kites the names and dates of birth of new children and to launch the kites during the first fortnight of the year. When the kite is high in the sky, the cord attaching it to earth is cut and it wafts away the evil spirits that threatened the children it protects. Battle kites are also a speciality of this nation, whose kiteflyers develop great speed and dexterity. Indonesian kites, in keeping with the predominant philosophy of that country, are considered to be in communion with nature. The *layang-layang* are of a vast variety, many of them associated with a particular island of the archipelago. The most popular Balinese kite is the *be-bean*, in the form of an undulating fish whose fins



float in the sky, suggesting the movement of fish in the water.

It used to be considered that kites originated in China—which also had a team in Dieppe this year—but scholars now situate the birth of the





weight you add to a kite to balance it).

One thing you have to remember while kite fighting is to watch out for pirates with *mandalis*. You may be so busy concentrating on the dogfight at hand, that you don't notice a surface-to-air *mandali* dart out of a neighbourhood roof, snare your string and capture your kite (and your enemy's, too).

Choosing a kite is also an art. These days kites made of Nepali loka paper are becoming extinct, people prefer the lighter and more maneuverable "Lucknow" kite flattened with a conch shell and with distinctive stripes. Lucknows are the Spitfires among kites, they have classic dog-fighting qualities, capable of sharp turns, diving attacks, a screeching sound in a dive, good line response and bright colours. Nepali kites, though, have their loyalists and you can still see some of them around.

A kite as a heavier-than-air object and logically should fall

*under the influence of gravity. But it doesn't. The reason is that it is an airfoil, and its flight is defined by aerodynamics and Bernoulli's principle. Unlike other airfoils like the wings of aeroplanes, sails, bird wings and parachutes, kites can alter or redirect the flow of air around it unevenly so as to create pressure differences. While putting the kite in the air, the angle of the kite diverts the flow of air unevenly over it. This causes the air passing over the kite to move faster than the air passing under. At this point, according to Bernoulli's Principle, the faster a current of air moves, the lower its pressure becomes. And, as any physics student will tell you, there is thus a high pressure buildup below the kite which gives it lift. Gravity tends to pull the kite down while the lift makes the kite float.*

*When the kite is in equilibrium, four forces—gravity, lift, resistance (drag) from the wind, and the tension of the kite line—cancel out.*

Drag tends to push the kite horizontally back while the kite line pulls the kite forward. This state keeps kite in steady position. There are some *lato changa*, or idle kites which only respond only when stronger force is applied through the line. This is caused by the low lift-to-drag ratio. If the drag is greater than the lift, the kite will not fly at all. On a keen breeze, a kite will be at equilibrium and easy to control. When the wind dies down, the kite stalls. But even here, quick *lattai* action can keep a kite aloft. But there is a penalty: you will have to sacrifice line length. Pulling at the string with a *lattai* raised above the head is the traditional Nepali way of flying a kite in light breeze.

There are various traditional ways to steer a kite (see *diagram*). To take the kite left, for example, wait for the kite to point left and give the *lattai* a yank pulling it on the right side of your body. Ditto if you want to go down or up. While reeling loose the *lattai*, the kite often rotates, and you have to be careful not to reel in while the nose is pointed down this could

*put it in an uncontrolled dive. Also remember to allow for delay for the kite to respond to your command, and this delay is always directly proportional to the tension on the line. So, if your line is tight the kite responds immediately, if it is sagging it is sluggish.*

*There are Nepali kite fliers who attend various international kite festivals every year. Nirmal Man Tuladhar, a linguist and editor of CNAS journal and Thailand-based Nepali writer Ramesh Shrestha returned last week from the Dieppe International Kite Festival in France (see box below).*

Because of the congested urban space, the Nepali roof-top kite flyers are sometimes compelled to yank the *latta*i to coax their kite up. But field kite flyers have the advantage of a long runway for a kite's takeoff and get it higher after the launch for it to catch a passing breeze. "But there is one disadvantage when you jolt. Sometimes, this causes the knots to weaken resulting in the string to snap and the kite becomes *chai*," says Juju Kaji

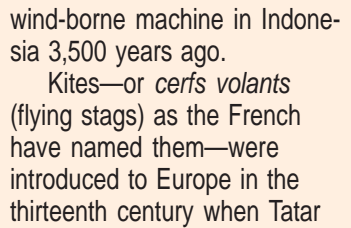
*Maharjan. Juju owns a shop in Balaju that sells kites during Dasain. The famous brands of non-doctored white strings like the Eagle, Chain, Gun marks are still found in the Nepali market but they don't sell much. "Kids who buy kites these days have completely forgotten the art of making maa'jhaa. I remember when I was a kid, we used the gh'yukumari (aloe vera), sabdana (starch), bulb glass dust and even mobicol as maa'jhaa," says Juju.*

*Maajhaa-making used to be a major expedition. Says Sankha Narayan Prajapati of Gongu Bu: “We skipped school to make maajhaa, it used to take us the whole day.” These days, people don’t have time and just buy ready-made threads. Also, the wide fields that were traditional kite-flying areas of the Valley have been overgrown, says Prajapati, pointing to the Gongu Bu bus Park where he used to fly kites as a boy.*

*The cost of kite in Kathmandu ranges from Rs 5-50. The lines cost Rs 40 for 1000m. Pre-armoured line from India costs Rs 7/metre to Rs 25/metre. The most popular kite shops are in Bhotahiti and Asan, and also Kalimati and Baneshwor. ♦*



te the world)



armies hoist them into the sky belching smoke and flames, to terrify their enemies on the battlefield. Since then, kites have been recruited to more peaceful uses, such as meteorology. In the late twentieth century, kites became a sophisticated leisure industry. The latest development of kite technology in the service of a sport is in fly-surfing, with kites used to pull surfboards and their necessarily skillful passengers through the sea.

The high point of this year's edition of the Dieppe festival was the Children's Arch. Two kilometres long, it consisted of 2,500 individual kites strung together in the longest arch ever created. Every child attending a primary school in the town was invited to decorate one of the kites. The arch was conceived as a window on the world, facing both land and sea, and a peaceful symbol of the new millennium. ♦ *(The Observer)*

premium  
whiskey



*maajbaa*: line armour  
*mandali*: stone on string  
 used by kite pirates who  
 prey on low-fliers  
*kakaa*: string at point  
 where it is tied to kite  
*phuin*: kite aerobatics  
*tthini*: launching kite by  
 copilot  
*loppa*: stall  
*hi-chair*: kite with line cut  
*gwanbk*: paper weight to  
 balance kite  
*tikriike*: sluggish side-by-  
 side movement of kite  
*chakchake*: kite with  
 attention deficit disorder  
*tauke*: kite with pattern on  
 top quadrant  
*babache*: kite with bottom  
 half of a different colour  
*dariwaal*: kite with  
 symmetrical pattern on  
 bottom left and right  
*dharkke*: kite with stripes  
*puchhare*: kite with tail



GAURAB RAJ UPADHAYA

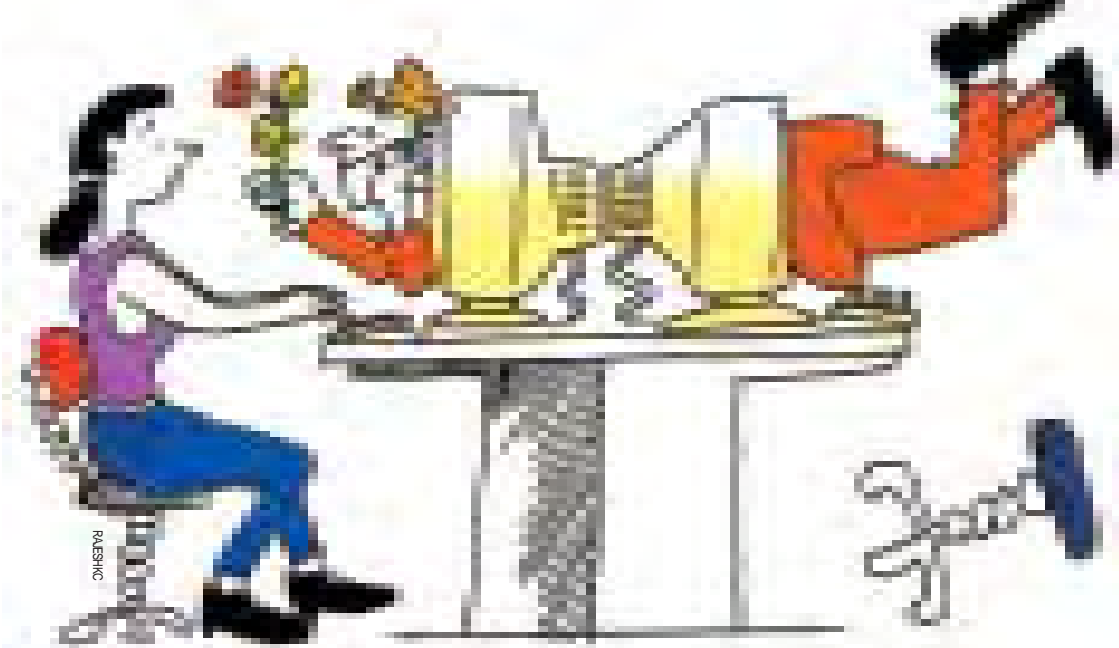
sapna logs in  
koool : hello sapna, welcome  
roger : hi there dream girl  
naina : hi sapna,  
sapna : thanks all of you.  
koool : are yu really a dream!!  
sapna : i am my mua bua ko  
sapna kya  
roger : we already had the doe-  
eyed and now we have  
the dream  
pujan is singing "sapna sapna ma  
timro sapna"

What they seem to like the best is the anonymity of it all. Unlimited access to the Internet has allowed Nepalis from all over chat to their heart's content, yakking away in a distanceless world. Kathmandu's cyberspace is getting increasing attention from all those who have never been able to use the neighbourhood chowk for a little talk. The youngsters are not here to use the Internet to widen their intellectual horizons, they are here to pass the time and enjoy the nameless banter giggling away anonymously in front of their monitors. The subjects range from music, teachers, friends, and drift inevitably to sex.

www.econepal.com's ch@tm@ndu seems to be the favourite for most Kathmandu teens. If you eavesdrop into this space you can tune into students from Kathmandu's upmarket schools and colleges talking about homework, and commenting on teachers. From the level of the discussion, it is evident this is a teen site. @assassin—a moderator of the site says that they are happy with the response, but few others feel that this chat room is all kids stuff. But since it has a regular population, ch@tm@ndu has many people dropping in to

# Let's have a chat

Nepalis have always loved to chat. Today young Nepalis from all over the world meet in the cyber chowks to chatter away.



put in their two cents worth. They're all into PM (personal messaging) and the chat site runs a robot to filter out offending words, but it seems our youngsters have creative ways of getting around such strict discipline.

The other crowd congregates around www.explorenepal.com and its "Chautari". The great thing about Chautari is that you can even use Nepali fonts, but despite our repeated attempts no one was replying to us in Nepali. The main impediment seems to be lack of Devnagari script keyboard skills. That is why you keep seeing "gd:sf" which translated reads as "namaskar". Nepalnews.com's "General" chat is the another meeting place for Nepalis from abroad. Chatterers of Nepali origin and

with connections to Nepal from all over the world gather here, drawn in mainly because they are already browsing nepalnews regularly to find out what is happening in Nepal. Riddleman—a regular chatter at this site says: "Hey man, come on—who wants to do serious stuff on a Internet Chat room." He is off to putting another riddle to the chatters "Where is it you touch a woman to make her blush?" We don't stay around long enough to find out the answer.

The oldest chat site is nepalsearch.com's renamed "dhuk-dhuki chat" which is equally popular among Nepalis abroad. This was the first Nepali chat site, but has been losing audience as the newer breed of teens opt for technically superior chat rooms. But as the chat site has undergone technical changes, it could re-attract users.

The "koolest" of all seems to be www.nepalhomepage.com's "Kurakani". Although sparsely-populated, the discussions are more lively and the subjects on a higher plane: fashion, Shakespeare and the merits of Thamel cafes with French being the favourite alternative language. Being one of the most known web sites, it is surprising more people aren't joining in—could it be that they are intimidated by the subject matter?

There are a host of other sites that cater almost exclusively to the Nepali diaspora, but strangely enough there is little chatter here about Nepal, and when Nepal is mentioned it is not with any nostalgia, or homesickness but more "thank god we got out" kind of sentiment.

Technical superiority of java (a cross-platform computer language)-based chat rooms seem to be preferred by chatterers. "SickFreak" whose signature is ubiquitous in the sites writes: "Ha! Text based chat, kya bore—you can go around Kathmandu and come back by the time the message is updated."

There are other groups of chatters using international chat softwares like AOL IM and MSN Messenger. LiveN'Kickin—a regular on most chat sites, under various names—says "I use AOL IM for chatting with friends—

chat sites are just timepass—rarely you make friends there." Janet—another regular using MSN messenger—uses it for chatting with friends from India, where she went to college. Some prefer ICQ, and there have been quite a few who have met their mates through the sites. One who goes by the name "Bann" even met his Singaporean girlfriend on the Net. And they have already met in a non-virtual manner in Kathmandu twice. Chatting is catching, and as the use of computers spreads in Kathmandu more and more are logging on to this virtual community. Some companies have problems

with internet speed because of congestion. Says one staffer in a Kathmandu-based company: "These days I go to office on Saturdays for chatting—it is great fun." Isn't it exciting, finding out that from Kurakani Chat that Sapana has just burnt her finger? Rub a cucumber slice

on it, Sapana. ♦

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badboikillaz - grab ur glocks when u c tupac..call da comps when u c tupac  
Sima - gal - Skater rai is\N\N  
iris - logged off - from 202.70 using Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 5.0; Windows 98; DigExt) on 9/22 at 1:32pm  
prabhat has timed out.  
SkaterRai - u callin m a nigga,i aint no fuc\_kin nigga  
Sima - gal - Homa - pra isn't here..keh..  
Subash - logged on - from 172.136 using Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 5.0; Windows 98; DigExt) on 9/22 at 1:32pm  
badboikillaz - yeah..sk8r..show em ..nigga  
Sima - gal - Me?????????????  
SkaterRai - fu\_ck all the sweeper\N\N

Below are some frequently-used phrases in Nepali chats. Readers can send in translations, where they think we are off mark.

hoina ta?	= isn't it	jhingaa	= irritating person
ho ra?	= really	naulo maancche	= new guy
ani	= then	gafaadi	= bullshitter
raamro	= good	fantus	= fool
haterikaa	= oh, no	haawaa	= (same as above)
dhwaas	= show off	fk	= faaltu kuraa
kasto	= what-what	faaltu kuraa	= useless stuff
sutna jaane kyaa	= off to sleep	padante	= bookworm
baraf	= ice	hallaa	= noise
la-la-cha-cha	= you got it	chwank	= kool
made		oj	= over janne
chuppaa	= kiss	nakkali	= stylish girl
bhayo	= enough	jhiike	= slick
keti fasaayo	= got the girl	tuppi	= topknot
balle-balle	= dancing	kuire	= paleface
nakacharo	= shameless		

**DHUK DHUKI CHAT** BUILD YOUR OWN HOME PAGE

Ernesto Disconnect Float About

Ernesto> whats up room?  
<Sumach>any body here in the name of yourname  
<Sumach> this room is good  
karmacharya has left.  
Ernesto> revery name here has some other name  
Ernesto> hi there redddy  
<Sumach> ernesto all r busy here

Ernesto  
Sumach  
soul  
joolie  
pacific  
Reddy

**Roman Nepali phonetic guidelines for emails and chats**

There are several factors limiting Nepalis using the Net. The main reason is affordability, of course. Then there is access to phone lines, and finally it is the English language. Most Nepalis are not familiar with the Devnagari keyboard, and even if they want to chat or send an email they have to use "Roman" Nepali. However, although there have been attempts to standardise Roman Nepali (mainly by the British Gurkhas in Hong Kong through their Newspaper (Lokmat)) the chat sites are a confusion of different styles and phonetics.

a	as in	"pani"	(also)
i	as in	"chiso"	(cold)
e	as in	"ke garne"	(what to do)
ai	as in	"aiyaa"	(ouch)
chh	as in	"chhahara"	(waterfall) as opposed to
kh	as in	"kharaayo"	(rabbit)
f	as in	"fulbari"	(garden)
u	as in	"gundaa"	(tough guy)
d	as in	"dudh"	(milk)
dh	as in	"dudh"	
dd	as in	"ddaanne"	(national pheasant)
ddh	as in	"ddhaal"	(condom brand)
s	as in	"sukuti"	(dried meat)
sh	as in	"shikshya"	(education)
ssh	as in	"risshi"	(ascetic)

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# Widows, war orphans and women

**MOSLEM UDDIN AHMED**  
IN DHAKA . . . . .

*A*fter many years, there is a tiny bit less despondency when Prof Panna Kaiser talks about the genocide that accompanied Bangladesh’s desperate bid for independence from Pakistan in 1971. Kaiser is the widow of the eminent writer-journalist, Shahidullah Kaiser, who was among hundreds of intellectuals picked up from their homes and assassinated at the end of the nine-month war—a move calculated to leave a nation bereft of its best brains at birth.

Now, a secret report ordered by the Pakistani government into the creation of Bangladesh by a commission headed by former Chief Justice, Hamoodur Rahman, was submitted in October 1971, has been made public.

Leaked to the news magazine *India Today*, the report is highly critical of the role of Pakistani army generals who had been charged with suppressing the revolt in Bangladesh, accusing them of abuse of power, atrocities and moral turpitude. “I had always believed that such big events would be unveiled some day, and at last that has come true,” says Kaiser, whose son too was killed in the war. But, she adds, “there is nothing in the report about the killing of intellectuals. I demand a proper investigation into the killing of members of the intelligentsia in Bangladesh during the liberation war.”

Like Kaiser, old wounds have been reopened in Ferdousi Priyavashini, an eminent sculptor who was gangraped by Pakistani soldiers and underwent an abortion. Unlike many other women, Priyavashini never made a secret of the brutal sexual assault on her. She told a shocked audience at the launch of an autobiography in November 1999: “I failed to save myself from the claws of the soldiers even though I was born into a Muslim aristocratic family.” Her grandfather, Abdul

**A ghost from the past has come to haunt relations between Bangladesh and Pakistan: the blood-soaked 1971 Bangladesh liberation war against Pakistan. A Pakistani report into the secession, kept under wraps by successive governments, has reopened past wounds.**



Hakim, was Speaker of the provincial assembly of the erstwhile East Pakistan which later became Bangladesh. Priyavashini supports the demand for punishment for those responsible for the atrocities of 1971—between 1.5 and 3 million Bangladeshis are believed to have been killed in the military crackdown. An Australian doctor, Geoffrey Davis, who provided treatment to women after the war, estimates that a staggering 400,000 women were raped. The government puts the rape figure at 250,000. Priyavashini supports Kaiser’s demand, citing the Nuremberg trial of Nazi war criminals. “Why not,” she asks, “when the Nazis and perpetrators of crimes during the Second World War are still being docked? I demand their trial in the international court.” Hundreds of mass graves have been unearthed across Bangladesh, and they are still being discovered—the remnants of a genocide that are often compared to those of Pol Pot in Cambodia and Hitler’s Nazis. The Hamoodur Rahman Commission charged the

occupation army officers with serious moral degeneration and corruption, ascribing these two vices as the main causes of defeat in the war. But, in submissions before the Commission, General Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi, the Zonal Martial Law Administrator in the then East Pakistan, and his predecessor, General Tikka Khan, both denied their personal involvement in the atrocities. “I say no. I have been doing martial law duties. I never stopped anybody coming to see me. I became very religious during the East Pakistan trouble. I was not so before. I thought more of death than these things,” he told the Commission. Nevertheless, the Commission incriminated him, saying he had earned “notorious repute of sexual immorality”. The Commission is said to have recommended trial of six top army officers, including Niazi. But none were tried. Now, the issue is making headlines in both Bangladesh and Pakistan. Visiting the United Nations for the Millennium Summit, Bangladesh Prime Minister Hasina Wajed called for the trial of Pakistanis

involved in the 1971 war crimes. Then in her address to the UN, Hasina, whose own father—Bangladesh’s first president Sheikh Mujibur Rahman—was killed in a military coup, called for action against those regimes which overthrow democratically-elected governments. Although she did not name Pakistan, its military ruler Gen Pervez Musharraf responded by calling off a scheduled meeting with her. Back in Dhaka, Hasina’s guns were still blazing. “Pakistan must seek forgiveness for their atrocities and this is not only our demand, but the world’s conscience,” she said. As for her criticism of military dictators, she added, “I have spoken about my ideals and people are the source of all power, not weapons. I don’t know why he took it upon himself.” Hasina, the national press in Bangladesh, as well as victims and freedom fighters have all demanded publication of the full report after the *Daily Star* newspaper published extracts in nine instalments. ♦ (*Gemini News*)



**More Afghan refugees in Pakistan**  
**PESHAWAR** – The Shamshatū refugee camp near this north-western Pakistani city, saw millions of Afghans come and go in the last 20 years is seeing a fresh flow of refugees as drought and war ravage their homeland again. Dozens of sand-coloured tents have sprung up. The roofless houses have got new canvas coverings. Once again, Afghan refugees have made Shamshatu their home. Some 306 refugee families were settled here in December 1999. Another 523 Afghan refugee households were brought to the camp in early September by the Pakistan office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Refugees at the camp say that tens of thousands more Afghans are on way to Pakistan, fleeing the stepped up fighting between the Taliban rulers of Kabul and the opposition forces. Most are travelling on foot because they cannot afford other forms of transport. Each family has been given a tent, a stove and kitchen utensils. They are sometimes given a small quantity of grain. According to Pakistani government estimates, 1.2 million Afghans are living in refugee camps in the country. More than one million Afghans have settled down in various cities and towns of the country. Estimates by the UNHCR put the number of Afghans living in camps in the North West Frontier Province at 900,000, while 300,000 are living in camps in the eastern Punjab and south-western Balochistan provinces. Pakistan and Iran together host an estimated 2.6 million Afghan refugees. (*IPS*)

**India, China warned of meltdown**  
**NEW DELHI** - The big Asian economies of India and China grew by a healthy seven percent last year, but they are in danger of repeating the recent history of some East Asian nations, warns the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). “What we are telling India and China is: ‘Don’t let capital harm your countries and maintain capital account controls,’” said leading Indian economist, Sunanda Sen who released UNCTAD’s *Trade and Development Report (TDR) 2000*. According to Sen, the late 1990s Asian financial crisis has taught nations like India, the importance of controlling their ever-widening fiscal deficits and maintaining large foreign exchange reserves, as they open up their economies to the world. China’s expected entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO) will lead to considerably larger capital inflows. Sen says developing nations will have to be cautious with foreign capital. “Developing countries need capital from outside but they must learn to differentiate between long-term capital and the speculative short-term portfolio investments,” she added. Sen, who teaches economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, said while the former Asian “tiger economies” have made a spectacular recovery from the crisis, “it does not mean they are roaring again.” (*IPS*)

**South Asian gangs in Thailand**  
**BANGKOK** - The violence here involving rival gangs from South Asia has revived fears that Thailand’s lenient immigration law is being abused, making the country into a major global base for transnational crime. The mid-September gun attack in Bangkok on an alleged Indian underworld leader, Chhota Rajan, reportedly ordered by a rival, is expected to revive demands for tightening Thailand’s liberal entry rules for foreign visitors. The incident follows a spate of crimes here involving foreign nationals in the past year. Thailand is under pressure from Sri Lanka not to let Tamil Tiger rebels from the Indian Ocean island nation abuse Thai hospitality. “We are strengthening measures to prevent foreigners from committing crimes in Thailand. But we also have to strike a balance with the need to promote tourism and bilateral relations with other countries,” said a Thai government official. (*IPS*)

**Japan losing war on crime**  
**TOKYO** – Gangland shootouts, rising juvenile violence and a big increase in serious offences have raised fears that Japan—one of the safest countries in the world—is losing the battle against crime. Official statistics show that Japan is in the middle of its worst crime wave in two decades, and its police service, which has been plagued by scandal, seems unable to meet the challenge. While the number of offences has increased, the arrest rate has declined. In the first six months of this year, the national police agency (NPA) investigated 1.1 million crimes, an increase of 12 percent on the same period of 1999, and the first time that the half-year figure has exceeded 1 million. During this period, the number of arrests fell by more than 20 percent to 281,000, prompting police officials to acknowledge that investigators can no longer keep up. The admission—from a police service at a low point in terms of morale and public respect—is seen as a plea both for sympathy and extra resources. (*The Observer*)

# Bhutan military buildup to fight ULFA

The Bhutanese army has been modernising its equipment, upgrading training and strengthening anti-guerrilla commando units for the past three years to take on Assamese rebels from India embedded deep in the kingdom’s territory, says *Jane’s Defence Weekly*. Rebels of the United Liberation Front of Assam and the Bodo Liberation Tigers, which are fighting for greater autonomy and a separate homeland, have been using Bhutan’s eastern districts as a safe haven to mount attacks on Indian forces in the northeast. Militants from the two outfits began seeking refuge in Bhutan soon after the Indian Army began cracking down on ULFAs and Bodos eight years ago. In 1997, following the agreement between India and Bangladesh to act against ULFA bases in Bangladesh, the rebels moved their operational bases as well to Bhutan. There are now an estimated 2,000 ULFA guerrillas as far as 180 km inside Bhutan. *Jane’s* quotes Bhutanese officials as saying that the presence of the rebels is “the greatest security problem that Bhutan has ever faced”. The journal says that the Royal Bhutan Army started modernising its lightly-armed, 6,000-strong infantry with Indian help in 1997. It also quotes Indian sources at the home ministry as saying that the Indian military training team based in the eastern town of Ha has trained 2,000 Bhutanese soldiers in counter-insurgency operations. Bhutan has been sensitive to pressure from India and King Jigme Singye Wangchuk travelled to eastern Bhutan last year to meet the

guerillas and to “ask them to leave”. Earlier this year, state officials in Assam said they had concrete evidence that high-level Bhutanese officials have helped ULFA leaders with transit facilities through Paro airport, and allowed the transfer of funds and weapons. Bhutan’s National Assembly last month said that since requests for ULFA went unheeded, Bhutan should drive the militants out by force. India had asked for permission to allow its troops to enter Bhutan to flush out the rebels, but Bhutan has so far been reluctant, and officials said training of the Bhutanese forces was the compromise solution. The weekly military journal published from London goes on to say that the Bhutanese army has created six new battalion-sized units. Says the *Jane’s* report: “Each additional wing is in different stages of training and acclimatisation. It is perhaps too early for them to committed for counter-insurgency operations. The Royal Bhutan Army is prepared to take on casualties in the event of operations against ULFA and Bodo rebels.” Indian defence planners have always regarded the “chicken neck” area of north-eastern India where the borders of Bhutan, China, Bangladesh and Nepal are in close proximity as a strategically vital area. If the Assam insurgency is not controlled it could threaten the whole of the northeast. ♦



# From kingdom to repub-

**l-lic**  
**Former British MP and native New Zealander Brian Gould considers his country becoming a republic, and concludes that the UK is likely to follow suit.**

When I was preparing to return to New Zealand in 1994, some of my friends in Britain asked whether I was going back to a country which would soon be a republic. I assured them that New Zealand would be the last country to abandon its loyalty to the monarchy. It took me only a few months to realise I was wrong. I had assumed that, while the rebellious Australians might want to put up two fingers to the British royal family, New Zealanders still lived in a society where Britain was described as 'home', the news came from the BBC and ladies took afternoon tea.

But while it remains true that there is considerable (but at times rather embarrassed and therefore undeclared) affection for Britain and things British, in other respects, New Zealand has changed greatly. New Zealanders no longer see their country as an English country which has unaccountably found itself towed out into the middle of the South Seas. New Zealand's physical location, as part of the Asia-Pacific rim, is now increasingly reflected in its economic, political, cultural and ethnic character and outlook.

Hard on the heels of these changes comes constitutional change as well. The honours system no longer deals out knighthoods conferred by the Queen. Appeals to the Privy Council look likely to be brought to an end. Even the little Union Jack in the top corner of the New Zealand flag may be under threat. And overlying all of this is the sharply increasing sense that it is anomalous and anachronistic for a fully independent country in the South Pacific to have as its head of state the hereditary monarch of a different country 12,000 miles away.

These changed attitudes reflect

a potent mix of factors—a growing sense of national identity, a long-held New Zealand passion for egalitarianism, a new generation of young Kiwis whose British roots are more distant and a more cosmopolitan society in which Polynesian and Asian elements are both numerically and culturally more significant. But what is really happening, I think, is that New Zealand sees itself as part of the new, or at least the modern, world.

It seems impossibly out of touch with modern realities to imagine—from this vantage point—swearing fealty, figuratively or literally, to an elderly English lady wearing a crown and funny clothes. I first became aware of this change in New Zealand perception when I realised that news bulletins in New Zealand never refer to the Queen as the Queen of New Zealand. She is manifestly someone else's queen, an object of respect and affection, but having very little to do with New Zealand.

It is certainly inevitable and probably desirable therefore that New Zealand will become a republic and sooner rather than later. It is even possible, given New Zealand's uncomplicated constitution and the small and open nature of its political system, that New Zealand will beat Australia to it.

The one real obstacle to change is in itself instructive. For a significant section of Maori opinion, the demise of 'the Crown' in relation to New Zealand would call into question the commitments on which Maoris rely and which are embodied in the Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840 by Maoris and representatives of Queen Victoria. Some care would have to be taken, therefore, to transfer those treaty obligations and to bind New Zealand governments to accept them into the future.

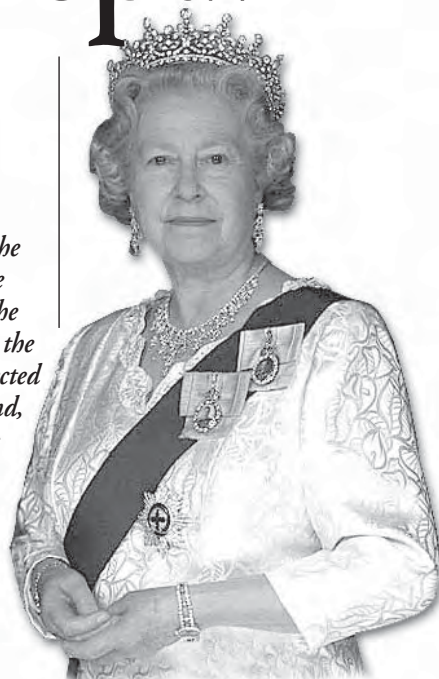
In New Zealand, as in the

United Kingdom, therefore, the monarchy can be seen in some quarters as the guarantor of the constitutional settlement and the means by which we are connected to our history. In New Zealand, however, these considerations seem likely to be overridden by a concern for the future rather than the past. The effort will be made to distinguish between those aspects of our history which remain of value and must be sustained and those which are anachronistic and hold us back from operating effectively in the modern world. Will the same be true of the United Kingdom?

I believe that it will and it should. It may take longer in the case of the United Kingdom, but my guess is that it will not be delayed for much more than a generation. A generation born into a new millennium will be increasingly puzzled by and uncomprehending of a hereditary principle which will apply nowhere else—nationally or internationally—in the institutions that matter to people's lives. Class and hierarchy will be less significant and talent and mobility more significant. The monarchy will increasingly seem an anomaly, an institution no longer relevant to the way Britain wants to be in the twenty-first century.

The British are, of course, more tolerant of anomalies than most. We have learnt to live with what Bagehot called the 'dignified' parts of the constitution. Continuity rather than rationality has been the watchword of our political system. These are in some senses strengths and strengths which will give us some pain to abandon.

The demise of the monarchy will be a cause of shock to some and regret to many. There will be a long process of anxiety and dispute as to what to put in its place. The monarchy will offer, or its supporters will suggest, that it should be reformed and its role



reduced in various ways.

But in the end, the British will take the plunge. The bicycling monarch is faintly ridiculous and, in any case, to what purpose? An elected president may be a fool but would at least be a fool preferred to other fools. And what is to stop monarchists from seeking a popular mandate for royalty by putting up and voting for a royal candidate?

The British will change because their self-image will no longer permit them to remain where they are. That self-image is changing fast and so is the reality which it reflects. The British are in many ways, and arguably have been for a long time, the most innovative and iconoclastic of people, the least easily herded and corralled. They now need a constitution and system of government which reflects that reality and frees them to express their creativity and refusal to recognise barriers. For all the value of its past contribution, for all the respect and affection in which the Queen herself is held, the monarchy is now a barrier which should go. ♦

## Whites will become minorities in US,

LONDON - Just as the US Census Bureau issued figures showing that non-whites made up 49.8 per cent of the population of California, Anglo-Saxon whites are already a minority in Hawaii and the District of Columbia. Now they are an ethnic minority in the country's most populous state. Where California goes, the rest of America is predicted to follow. At present 72 percent of the US population is non-hispanic whites, the US Census Bureau predicts they will become a minority between 2055 and 2060.

The past millennium was more than anything the era of the whites.



Just 500 years ago, few had ventured outside their European homeland. Then, with several acts of genocide clearing the way, they settled in North America, South America, Australia, New Zealand and, to a lesser extent, southern Africa.

But now, around the world, whites are falling as a proportion of population. In its World Population Profile 1998, the US Census Bureau predicted that by the second decade of this century all the net gain in the world population will be in developing countries. "The future of human population growth has been determined, and is being determined, in the world's poorer nations," it said.

The global centre of gravity is changing. In 1900 Europe had a quarter of the world's population, and three times that of Africa; by 2050 Europe is predicted to have just seven percent of the world population, and a third that of Africa.

In Britain the number of ethnic minority citizens has risen from a few tens of thousands in the 1950s, to more than 3 million—or around 6 percent of the total population—now.

One demographer, who didn't want to be named for fear of being called racist, said: "It's a matter of pure arithmetic that, if nothing else happens, non-Europeans will become a majority and whites a minority in the UK. That would probably be the first time an indigenous population has voluntarily become a minority in its historic homeland." ♦ (The Observer)

## Oil prices will remain high

LONDON - Oil prices will stay at or near their current high levels, at least for the short term, according to oil experts. "We expect no substantial change in the coming three to six months," said Standard Chartered Bank oil analyst Claudio Piron Tuesday. OPEC's attempts to talk down the oil price holds little promise, according to Peter Gignoux, an oil trader at Schroder Salomon Smith Barney, adding, "the market wants to see more barrels".

The price for a barrel of oil stood at \$36.88 last week in New York, the highest price in a decade. By 19 September oil prices in both New York and London had dipped slightly. The current oil stockpiles in the USA are about 30 million barrels below the average in the last three years, Gignoux said, adding that it is very hard to try to predict how long it will take for the pressures holding up oil prices to fall off.

"In a bull market, everything's bullish, and right now there seem to be a variety of stimuli. The market is very nervous," Gignoux said. He favours the United States releasing some of its 571 million barrel strategic petroleum reserve onto the market in time for winter's cold weather. If that were done, he says, the market would be rid of one worry within two or three weeks. On 23 September, US President Bill Clinton announced precisely that.

London's Centre of Global Energy Studies (CGES) sees no point in OPEC increasing its oil production, according to a new report. The centre's experts blamed the latest price rise on low heating oil inventories and on a shortage of the light, sweet crude that refiners "desperately" want to produce it.

"We're getting very late now for refiners to do very much ahead of the winter, and that's really what's driving price at the moment," says the CGES's Julian Lee, adding that refineries and distributors would need so much time to produce and deliver oil from increased supplies that consumers wouldn't receive the new oil before winter arrives. The situation leaves the market open to suffering a further, dramatic upsurge in crude oil prices if a harsh winter results in panic buying and oil hoarding. (Die Welt)

## Joint approach to development aid

BRUSSELS - Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) want the European Commission and EU governments to work together when drawing up development policy to avoid a repeat of the drift and duplication that have characterised the policy in recent years.

In a resolution adopted by an overwhelming majority of members last week, Euro-deputies said that unless there was greater co-ordination between the two, European Union (EU) aid would continue to be hampered by waste and ineffectiveness.

Ministers drew up guidelines for improved co-ordination in the mid-1980s and have never missed an opportunity to harangue the Commission, the EU's executive arm, for its notoriously slow delivery of aid. At the same time, however, national governments have been loathe to hand over the credit for helping developing countries to the bureaucrats in Brussels and have jealously guarded their powers in the field, parliamentarians pointed out during a debate Wednesday.

The result has often been a duplication of efforts in some fields and confusion as to who should do what in others, they said. The European Commissioner for Foreign Affairs Chris Patten and his development colleague Poul Nielson have recently acknowledged that this lack of co-ordination means that although the EU is the world's largest aid donor, it often fails to have the impact it should.

MEPs also rubber-stamped two agreements reached in head-to-head conciliation talks with EU governments before the summer recess. The first, on measures to promote the sustainable management of tropical forests, represents a rare victory for Euro-MPs, who fought hard to secure more money to protect endangered forests in developing countries.

The Council of Ministers, which groups together the 15 governments of the EU, initially pencilled in only 63 million euros for the five-year programme. MEPs thought this was a derisory amount and called for the sum to be quadrupled to 249 million euros.

(IPS)

## WB hijacking Internet: activists

WASHINGTON - The World Bank and civil society have fallen out over a \$60 million Internet initiative by the Bank.

Non-governmental organisations and academics are alarmed over the Global Gateway, a portal website project which the Bank says will be the "the premier web entry point for information about poverty and sustainable development" but which the NGOs



# PK going on 50



HEMLATA RAI

Young women in ochre-coloured sarees is perhaps one of the most ubiquitous sights in Kathmandu. From early morning till late in the afternoon, the bustle of these uniformly clad women fills the streets of the capital. These are the 'PK girls', students of Padma Kanya Campus, the oldest all-women's col-

lege of Nepal. This year, the venerated institution is turning 50. It has been a long haul for Padma Kanya since its inauguration by King Tribhuvan on 17 September 1951. The college had only 12 students and seven lecturers. The principal was Kamala Devi Sinha, an Indian professor invited personally by

the then education minister, Dilli Raman Regmi. The college was housed in the building of Padma Kanya Vidyashram in Dilli Bazar. (It later shifted to a rented house near Bhrikuti Mandap, then to what is now Shankar Dev Campus, before moving to its present location in Baghbazar in 1970.) The college now has 8,000 students, 425 teachers and 106 administrative workers. It has its own buildings, libraries, laboratories, conference halls, cafeterias and hostel. The name of the college has changed from Padma Kanya College to Padma Kanya Campus to what it is presently known as officially, Padma Kanya Multi-Purpose Campus. It offers undergraduate-level courses in 23 subjects under the humanities, commerce and science streams. Students can also pursue post-graduate studies in Nepali literature, English literature and home science. Plans are on to introduce post-graduate courses in sociology and anthropology, economics, dance, music, culture and archaeology and population studies after the intermediate level is phased out from all colleges under Tribhuvan University. Padma Kanya was established barely half a year after the end of the 104-year-long autocratic Rana rule. Despite the fact that the Ranas restricted academic activities in the country, the college is named after one of them, Padma Sumshere, for his role in initiating free education for

girls in Nepal. The college was established when Nepal's overall literacy rate was a mere 3 percent, and the number of educated women was even more negligible. In such a situation, the college marked the beginning of a new era in Nepal's social and political history and there is no doubt that it has contributed tremendously to the general development of Nepal. In the last fifty years, the campus has produced hundreds of politicians, efficient administrators, eminent academicians and outstanding professionals. It's list of alumnae could not be more impressive: Queen Aishwarya and her daughter, Princess Shruti; Nepal's first and so far only woman deputy prime minister, Shailaja Acharya; the only woman in the present cabinet, Kamala Pant; the first Nepali UN Fund for Women regional director, Chandani Joshi; and so on. Even these days when 'private' colleges are making their mark felt, the college is still a highly sought-after educational institution. "The college has always felt this pressure for admission. Even back then, some influential people tried their political connections to secure admission for their girls," says Angur Baba Joshi, principal of the college for 12 years in the 1960s. Says Sushmita Dahal, a BBA student at Padma Kanya, "Parents encourage their girls to join this campus, but students here face some disadvantages also. Since it's a prominent girls' college with an easily recognisable uniform, general people tend to be critical about the girls' behaviour in and out of the campus. They do not excuse a PK girl so easily." The thousands who have passed through its gates can attest to that. Besides being easily identified as a PK girl and hence having to watch their steps, the constant refrain was the hassle of having to get ready for college; the amount of time spent in starching the cotton sarees and ironing them is something most would like to forget about their days at Padma Kanya. But that does not prevent the more than thousand hopefuls who apply for admission every year, less than half of whom are lucky enough to get accepted. "Parents feel safer with their girls in a women's college. Besides, ours is among the very few in Nepal with all kinds of physical educational infrastructures," claims present Campus Chief Chirik Shova Tamrakar. The campus administration has had an ambitious plan on the anvil for the last couple of years. It wants the campus be developed into Nepal's first women's university under the government's multi-university concept. Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala had assured consideration of the proposal when it was made back in 1997, but nothing has come of it so far.

**Royal alumna**  
Queen Aishwarya, like her daughter, Princess Shruti three decades later, graduated from Padma Kanya Campus. That was back in the 1960s, when she attended college as a regular BA student, and when no one had any idea that she would one day become queen of Nepal. Her then principal, Angur Baba Joshi, remembers her as a "quiet" and "very disciplined" student. "She was by nature quite reserved," says Joshi. She also recalls Queen Aishwarya had a close circle of friends who were "good and prominent students" in their own regard. "She had a keen interest to participate in cultural progra-mmes organised by the college, but her parents did not give her permission to take part in them." Joshi, however, says she had not noticed the Queen's aptitude for literature when she was at the college. "It could be that her literature teachers saw the possibility of her one day earning a reputation as an outstanding lyricist of our time, but I personally do not remember associating her with literary activities."

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# Wave Show

## Mukti & Revival

September 28 Thursday 6 pm

Opening band - **The All Stars**

## Robin N Looza:

October 2 Monday 6 pm

Opening band - **Albatross**

September 30, Saturday 2 pm

## Flower Generation

## Wild Graz

## Smarica

## Third Grade Chaos

**At Dashain Mahotsav, Bhrikuti Mandap Exhibition Ground.**

Dashain Mahotsav organized by House of Rajkarnicar

See October issue of **Wave** for your free entrance ticke to **Dashain Mahotsav.**

# dasain



# Australia's multi-hued squad signals changed times

Although discrimination against Aborigines is widespread and rife, sports-mad Australia is learning to draw from an increasingly multicultural pool of sporting talents.

SANJIVA WIJESINHA IN MELBOURNE

The list of Australian medal winners at the Olympic Games a century ago could easily be mistaken for a team from the British Isles. Australians in those days considered themselves so much an extension of Britain that, when they lacked the numbers to participate in team events, they joined up with the British.

But the make-up of Australian sports is changing as multicultural immigration gradually blurs the nation's ethnic dividing lines. This year's Australian Olympic team boasts not only 'traditional Aussie' names such as Thorpe, O'Neill and Perkins—it also has sportsmen and women with names like Olevsy, Gregorieva, Van Heer and Kneebone.

Among those in this month's Games is Bulgarian-born weightlifter Kiril Kounev who has competed for Australia for the past 10 years, winning six gold medals at the last two Commonwealth Games and narrowly missing the bronze at the Atlanta Olympics. Russian-born Irena Olevsy, along with Naomi Young makes up a

## Changing face of Australian sport

Denied citizenship in the country of their ancestors until 1967, Aborigines will be conspicuous by their presence in Sydney



Aboriginal athlete Cathy Freeman: gold medalist 400 metres in the Sydney Olympics

highly-rated synchronised swimming team. Silver medallists at the last Commonwealth Games, they train harder than those competing in the traditional swimming events—spending nearly six hours in water each day in addition to

weight training and land drills.

Certainly one of the most pleasing sights at the Sydney Olympics is the participation of indigenous Australians. Until 1967, denied even the basic right of citizenship in a country

inhabited by their ancestors for over 40,000 years, Australian Aborigines are still among the poorest populations in the developed world. But they are conspicuous by their presence at the 2000 Games. Kept out of sports, as in all other walks of life, it was only in 1996 that an Aboriginal athlete won an Olympic gold medal—Nova Peris-Kneebone as a member of Australia's 1996 hockey team. Switching from hockey to athletics after the Atlanta Games, he again struck gold at the 1998 Commonwealth Games as a member of the 100-metres relay team.

Probably the most high-profile Aboriginal athlete today is 400-metre-runner Cathy Freeman, silver medallist at Atlanta and winner of the event at the last two world championships. Freeman, 26, first hit the headlines at the 1994 Commonwealth Games when, after winning the 400-metres gold medal, she ran a victory lap draped in the red, black and yellow Aboriginal flag.

Another Aboriginal athlete vying for selection at the Olympic trials in August is Patrick Johnson from the Umpila tribe of north Queensland. Add to this lot two Russian-born pole-vaulters, a Sri Lankan-born sprinter, and Italian-speaking marathon runner Silvana Trampuz—and you have a multicultural, multilingual, multicoloured Australian team. ♦

(Gemini News)

## Olympics half-way done

The "Aussie, Aussie, Aussie, Oi, Oi, Oi" Olympics hit the half-way point Sunday amid universal praise for a sensational sporting celebration only mildly tainted by drug abuse in weightlifting.

Aussie teenage icon Ian Thorpe got the swim events off to a dream start by winning the 400m freestyle in world record time en route to three gold medals. And when the same day the Aussies also brought the house down by ending the US perfect Olympic gold medal record in the 4x100m freestyle relay, Michael Klim played air guitar in a mock reference of American swimmer Gary Hall's claim that the Americans will smash the Aussies "like guitars".

In the end Hall was right as once again the Americans dominated in the pool with 14 gold medals to Australia's five. The US also have the most successful women's swimmer ever in Jenny Thompson, who now has a total eight gold, one silver and one bronze. Holland also got five from Pieter van den Hoogenband and Inge de Bruijn, who set world records in each of their disciplines' semifinals as the swimming competition saw a total 14 world records broken.

Van den Hoogenband ended Alexander Popov's bid for a unique 100m gold medal treble, and Peter the Great also failed to make it three 50m golds in a race which saw Hall and Anthony Ervin dead heat for double gold. Aussie veteran Kieren Perkins also failed to pick up three 1,500m freestyle golds but at least completed a local one-two finish behind Grant Hackett on the final day of action in the pool where the noise from the 17,500 fans was deafening.

A few hours later the main attention shifted to athletics where Marion Jones and Maurice Greene cemented their role as sprint queen and king with overwhelming victories. (dpa)



Ian Thorpe

## Sex and sports in Sydney

Sex is not yet a designated competitive event at the Olympic Games, but that doesn't mean there isn't plenty of it going on after the torch was lit on 15 September. The Sydney Olympic Games Official Committee (SOCOG) is certainly taking no chances, although the incidence of AIDS in Australia is one of the lowest in the world.

The Committee has not underestimated the capacity of the 10,000 residents of the Olympic athletes' village to have a good time and has ordered from the official supplier to the Games, Ansell, "stronger and safer" condoms, in an "assortment of types, including ribbed and regular". Ansell says it will make 100,000 condoms freely available to athletes. Sex workers always abound at international sports events. Sydney is no different and the cost of commercial sex will not be low. Raphael Epstein, of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), thinks sex workers at the Olympics charge \$300 for an hour. Whether athletes, officials and sponsors are customers of the sex workers is unclear. ♦ (Gemini News)



## IOC protects Internet rights

SYDNEY - International Olympic Committee watchdogs are surfing the Internet around the clock during the Sydney Games in an effort to catch those who undermine exclusive Olympic television broadcast rights through illegal video-streams on the World Wide Web. So far, IOC director general Francois Carrard said, the efforts have been successful.

"We are monitoring the situation very closely. We are looking for protection of our rights holders and looking for violators," Carrard warned. The IOC has hired a London-based company for the operation and is so far satisfied, as Carrard said: "We are taking action when necessary. So far I think we have been rather successful."


With more and more people hooked up to the Internet around the world and high-speed connections also rising, the Internet is posing a big threat to the IOC and international television broadcasters who have paid billions of dollars for the rights until 2008.

Sensing the danger, the IOC announced 24 August that it would invite global sports leaders and information technology wizards to a conference at its headquarters 4 and 5 December. "New media has the potential to fundamentally alter the world relating to sport, especially the way sports is consumed as entertainment," said IOC vice president Dick Pound, who will be the chairman of the biggest such conference in a decade.


But he vowed: "We will never allow the Internet to be a substitute for television. The Internet is an addition to television." (dpa)

## Rains in the games

SYDNEY - It may seem ironic that it rained for the first time at the Millennium Games on Sunday and that a piece of the Olympic stadium roof crashed to the ground, at a time when everyone was warning about complacency. Sydney organisers and the Australian public have been praised beyond limit by the International Olympic Committee, athletes, the media and Olympic visitors.




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SAVING FAITH

by DESMOND DOIG

# The mystery of the Black Bhairab



If you look long enough at that wide-eyed, grimacing face you see a scarlet smile of pleasure.

One of the piquant qualities of the great black Bhairab in Kathmandu's Durbar Square, is that no one knows where it originally came from, the temple or even the town in which it stood, who the craftsmen were or to which age they belonged. It was

found lying face down near a royal forest where a Malla king was constructing a garden. To many it was miraculous, as all statues that 'rise from the earth' or 'fall from the heavens' are. The other great stone statue that was similarly 'found', is the image of Buddhanilkanth, the

sleeping Vishnu, which belongs to the fourth or fifth century AD.

The black Bhairab is more crudely carved, but its power matches the overwhelming might of its subject, a six-armed god standing triumphantly upon a demon, cloaked in human skins and garlanded with human heads. He wears an ornate golden headdress, snakes writhe from his ears instead of earrings and coil about his neck, and in his hands holds an upraised sword, a chakra, a trident, severed heads and a bowl so reddened with vermillion it might contain blood. Carved flames dance about the tableau.

Purists would have the statue cleaned of its colour but here it is unnecessary, the black figure hung with red arid yellow and white against a raw cobalt sky in which are set a vermillion and yellow sun and moon with human faces, projects a stunning force no ordinary stone could achieve. There is sacrificial blood on the figure which appears necessary for so powerfully primitive a god who instils majesty with fear and protects with terror.

From dawn till late evening there are worshippers at the spot, mostly women wrapped in shawls and making offerings of rice, vermillion, incense and oil lamps and flowers.

How so massive a statue was brought to where it now stands in the old palace square, miles apart from where it was discovered, is yet another riddle that attaches to the image.

When it was raised in its present position, guarded by two stone lions and attended by a panel of ashtamatikas, it took on a new quality.

People accused of cheating or lying were brought before the Bhairab to swear their innocence. If they lied, they would surely die of a mysterious bleeding. Modern justice has discontinued the practice, but it is possible that in dark ceremonies no passersby see, oaths are still taken before the frightening presence.

Bhairab represents the awesome, destructive forces of Shiva who, if properly propitiated, becomes the omnipotent guardian. As such he is

venerated throughout Nepal, making him the most popular of all deities. His image is everywhere, often just a head because legend is fitted with stories of how Bhairab was decapitated.

One tells how Bhairab came from Kashi, Benares, in India, to visit the New Year festivals in the guise of a man.

People soon grew suspicious of a tall, handsome stranger in their midst and informed their priests. Using tantric rites the priests soon discovered that the stranger was indeed Bhairab, so they plotted to bind him with spells and keep him in the valley Bhairab, finding himself trapped, tried hurriedly to sink into the earth and escape, but as he disappeared the people cut off his head, which they enshrined and have worshipped ever since.

Perhaps the children who told me that the great black Bhairab had come from heaven were right. Their reasoning might surprise scholars, for they had him so gorged on the wicked and on demons that he could no longer fly. Why did he not fly away again when he was empty? Because the people of Kathmandu keep him happy, they said, and there is, if you look long enough at that wide-eyed, grimacing face, a scarlet smile of pleasure. ♦ (Excerpted with permission from *In the Kingdom of the Gods*, HarperCollins, 1999)

## DINESH ADHIKARY IN SEARCH OF PEACE



This year's Madan Puraskar literary award went to noted Nepali poet and lyricist Dinesh Adhikary. What many of Adhikary's admirers don't know is that he is a government lawyer working for Council for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA). So, beneath this anti-corruption lawyer lurks a modern poet

whose simple words and accessible contemplation evoke deep social comment.

Some Dinesh Adhikary verses have found their way into music, with vocals by Narayan Gopal and others. "My words are about people, the love, hate, angst and soul of people," Adhikary told us. "So I explore their place in society, the economy in politics." The Madan prize was awarded for Adhikary's latest book of poems, *Atirikta Abhikekh (Extra Archives)*.

In "Home", Adhikary examines the relationships between modern mores and family values, community and individual, individual and god, and finally the place of religion in a materialistic age. It is an age-old quest, and no longer confined to the godless consumerist west. Urban Nepal is going through similar spiritual confusion, the rituals of traditional religion and the yearning for spiritual solace. Adhikary here makes a scathing judgement on people who go to temples to look for peace, even though for him there is nothing to compare it with the peace that comes from the love of his wife and children.

### home

whenever i see  
people  
heading for the temples  
with offerings  
i don't know why  
i'm always in a hurry to get back home

my son is shaping the times  
with his mighty hands  
so what if he did not eat some curd on the sly?  
i think he's more valiant than krishna  
my little daughter  
with her bright eyes  
and oh-so tender fingers  
she always manages to drive away my fatigue  
i find her stronger than kali  
and when my beloved shrouds her needs  
and serves me a platter of smiles  
i find her more bountiful than laxmi

forgive me, if i have offended anyone  
those who always leave their homes  
to scour the temples in search of peace  
i cannot even bring myself  
to see humanity there  
so what if they have conquered the spoils of the world?  
if they have not discovered happiness in their own homes  
i wouldn't hesitate  
to call them born losers

when i'm away  
and see  
people  
busy clanging bells in the temples  
i don't know why  
unknowingly  
and slowly  
i take it out from my pocket  
and start caressing  
the photographs of my children



The Bhairab at Hanuman Dhoka on a recent evening, and as drawn by Desmond Doig in 1980 (above).



ABOUT TOWN

**FILMS**  
❖ **Nepali**  
**Basanti** – Bishwo Jyoti (221837), Plaza 1  
**Chalchitra** - Ashok, Ganga Chalchitra, Hira Ratna, Prithvi,  
**Mailee** - Goon (Kha) (520668), Krishna (470090), Ranjana (221191)  
❖ **Hindi**  
**China Gate** - Tara (476092)  
**Dhadkan** - Jai Nepal (411014)  
**Dragon** - Kumari (414932)  
**Fiza** - Gopi (470090), Goon (Ka), Manakamana (225284), Metro  
**Kaho Na Pyar Hai** - Sri Nava Durga  
**Karobaar** - Padma  
**Shadi aur Barbadi** - Goon (Kha) (520668)

**EXHIBITIONS**  
❖ **Celebrating the Mountain Porter.** A travelling exhibition of photographs on Nepali porters by 15 mountain photographers from around the world. Display includes pictures of traditional porters, trekking porters and high altitude porters. 10 am-6 pm. 30 Sept-5 Oct. Hotel Yak and Yeti. Free entry.  
❖ **The Heritage of Chitrakars-2000.** A unique exhibition showcasing traditional paintings by the Chitrakar family of the Kathmandu Valley on a wide variety of subjects spanning a period from the medieval Malla era up to the Rana regime. Durga Bhawan, Bhat Bhateni. 11 am-5:30 pm. 22-30 Sep. Free entry. 419559, 425958.

**EVENT**  
❖ **Fun and frolic - Dasain Mahotsav 2000.** Annual fair of food festival, music concerts, fashion shows, Nepali folk dances and contests. 175 stalls at Bhrikuti Mandap. 11 am-9 pm. Thu, 28 Sept, onwards.  
❖ **Lecture** - "Bhaktapur Development Project from Operation to Cooperation, 1974-1986" by Dr Ernst Reichenbach (Programme Coordinator of UDLE). Durbar Hall, Shankar Hotel, Lazimpat. Free entry. Tea/Coffee for Rs 50 will be served afterwards. 410151.  
❖ **IIFT Fashion Summit 2000.** Fashion show by amateur Nepali and female models sponsored by IIFT of New Delhi and designed by Pawan Sodhi at Dasain Mahotsav 2000, Bhrikuti Mandap. 7 pm onwards. Sat. 30 Sept.  
❖ **Sports - Mountain Bike Championship.** Second phase on 1 October. Registration open till event eve. MTB theory and practice workshop follows after race by international cyclists. Contact Peter Stewart, Himalayan Mountain Bikes, Thamel. 427427

**MUSIC**  
❖ **Traditional - Dhime baja and dance.** Ethnic Newari bands from Lalitpur performing at Dasain Mahotsav 2000, Bhrikuti Mandap. 1 pm, Friday, 29 Sept.  
❖ **Rock** - Live rock show by Mukti and the Revival Band celebrating the re-launch of WAVE magazine at Dasain Mahotsav 2000, Bhrikuti Mandap. 6 pm, Thursday, 28 Sept. Entry tickets at entrance.  
❖ **Pop** - An afternoon live rock gig featuring the first Nepali female band, Sparkle Girls, at Dasain Mahotsav 2000, Bhrikuti Mandap. 3 pm onwards, Fri, 29 Sept.  
❖ **Jazz** - Live jazz by Cadenza at Upstairs Restaurant, Lazimpat. Every Saturday 7:30-10 pm.

**Festival**  
**Ghatasthapana, 28 September**  
Ghatasthapana, which literally means 'establishing the pot', marks the first day of Bada Dasain, a major festival for Nepali Hindus. On the first day, the *kalash* (holy water vessel), symbolising the goddess Durga often with her image embossed on the side, is placed in the prayer room. The *kalash* is filled with holy water and covered with cowdung on which maize seeds is sown. A small rectangular sand block is made and the kalash is placed on the centre. The surrounding bed of sand is also seeded with grains and Durga is invoked to bless the vessel with her presence. This is the first of the three days of the festival.

ART REVIEW by WAYNE AMTZIS

Modernity's celebration of the traditional



*Express* 2000  
**Siddhartha Art Gallery,**  
*Baber Mahal Revisited*  
19 September-3 October

In his poem "City Fair", the contemporary Newar poet, Purna Bahadur Vaidya, describes modern-day Kathmandu as an obvious seductress "baring her many her multicolored eyes throughout her body—a city handing out civilisation" to the crowd, and admits I "lost my very face within that onrushing crowd".  
The Newar painter Shyam Lal Shrestha in a key painting from the Expression 2000 exhibition currently on view at the Siddhartha Art Gallery depicts a similar scene—a street or square full of anonymous figures standing forth or milling round oblivious of each other's presence. Perhaps they are Newars in the native dress, but the faces fade, the forms are overlaid by strokes of colour; the near facelessness masked by the beauty of multicoloured layering.  
The artist, though admitting the city's anomie, stresses beauty, and, in the larger context of his work, the face of his culture is maintained in paintings that characterise ceremony and situation that are explicitly traditional Newar. Within these sensually rendered forms colour is brought forth as it is in life. Sometimes integral to the emerging work and elsewhere taking on the predominance of abstraction, strokes of colour overlay or manifest emotions evoked by the scene.  
Modernity in the artist's bold use of colour and accentuation of the brush stroke confirm the vibrancy within the Newar culture itself—as if colour and stroke abstracted were born of locality and tradition. In this larger context, the isolated moment of anomie sensed is no more than the mist of morning not yet burnt off, ready to reveal a cohesive culture and people held to the ever-present morning of their world. The many richly textured paintings linked to Newar life and ceremony attest to this ongoing and centuries-old milieu. The poet raises a warning; the artist anticipates it. Within the forms of modernity, and despite the ever-present and encroaching larger world, the traditional and the local can achieve a viable mode of expression. Where the balance holds, abstraction's energising force brings forth the inbred power of Newar culture—for the outsider, the merely picturesque takes on a likelihood of presence, not a static eccentricity, but a living grace.  
Where abstraction dominates, the sustaining rituals of the local are lost in the interplay of colour and stroke and what remains of the cohesiveness of its cultural gestures is the patterned regularity of brushstroke in the painter's hand.  
Where colour dominates, a saturate brilliance, not unlike the multicoloured lure the poet decries as a sign of an indigenous culture's decline, masks in its celebration of the abstract the loss of the indigenous. Shyam Lal Shrestha's Expression 2000 exhibits the sustaining power of the local and the dynamism of the abstract—his defining work is where these forces generate a unity of form. ♦

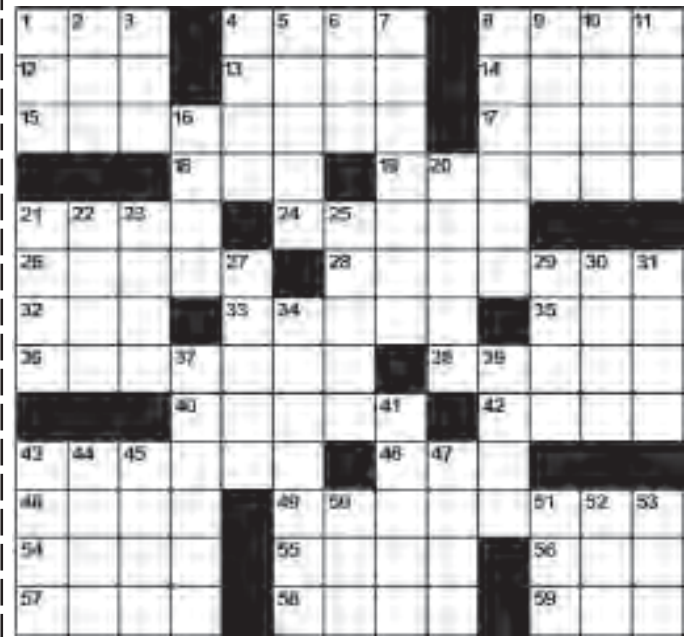
**NEPALI WEATHER**

The monsoon is in full retreat, as you can see in this fine satellite picture taken on Tuesday afternoon. Aside from a few cells towering over the Himalaya, the moisture has evaporated. But there is still some local convection in the afternoons that can spring surprises like the dousing that Pokhara got on Monday with 80 mm of rain in four hours. Light drizzles at night are possible, and a passing cloud could bring sleet or snow flurries at altitudes above 16,000 ft. Temperatures will fall steadily to a minimum of 16-17° C in the mornings, with some mist that will burn away soon enough. The days will become balmy with plenty of sunshine.

**KATHMANDU**

Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
27-10	26-17	26-10	26-10	26-17

QUICKWORD 1 by Cross Eyes



- Across**
- 1 A sum of many advertisements (3)
  - 4 The sound returns (4)
  - 8 Doctor or lawyer works on it (4)
  - 12 Stuck in a pothole? (3)
  - 13 Valli or Clapton? (4)
  - 14 A/c abbr (4)
  - 15 Come and finish it (8)
  - 17 Surprised? Nuts! (4)
  - 18 Employ to sue (3)
  - 19 Can't breathe, ma! (6)
  - 21 Doze off and it breaks (4)
  - 24 Penalty for Nepal? (5)
  - 26 A domestic call (5)
  - 28 Salad ingredient (7)
  - 32 Aha, it's jumbled! (3)
  - 33 Build upright (5)
  - 35 Basketball assn (3)
  - 36 Where is it on? (7)
  - 38 Only for grownup (5)
  - 40 One sharp, good looking (5)
  - 42 Pluralise 18 across (4)
  - 43 Siamese legs (6)
  - 46 Mum's the word (3)
  - 48 Front of a plane (4)
  - 49 Drinking a big word (8)
  - 54 Mrs Schroeder is one (4)
  - 55 Christmas in France (4)
  - 56 Row to find fish eggs (3)
  - 57 Camp out in one (4)
  - 58 They must be crazy (4)
  - 59 Short evening (3)
- Down**
- 1 Curved trajectory (3)
  - 2 Takes two to do (3)
  - 3 An e-less stem (3)
  - 4 Eek! Slippery! (4)
  - 5 What a jerk (5)
  - 6 One visit to my site (3)
  - 7 Pacific, Atlantic (7)
  - 8 My home is one (6)
  - 9 End act with an "h" (4)
  - 10 Worthless bag! (4)
  - 11 One neat volcano! (4)
  - 16 After larva (4)
  - 20 Who no! Get it? (5)
  - 21 A part of Cole's salad (4)
  - 22 Captain of the Ark (4)
  - 23 A pain that sounds like one (4)
  - 25 Evening happening (5)
  - 27 Bloodsucker! (5)
  - 29 Antelopes with silent "g" (4)
  - 30 Capable (4)
  - 31 Drat, mice! (4)
  - 34 Arouse by singing (7)
  - 37 Dirty cloth outside (3-3)
  - 39 Numb and speechless (4)
  - 41 Fix firmly into bed (5)
  - 43 27th US president (4)
  - 44 Listen at this place (4)
  - 45 I sprinted to Tehran (4)
  - 47 Lubricants (4)
  - 50 Cow call (3)
  - 51 Anger (3)
  - 52 November (3)
  - 53 Wow, its Gopal-ji (3)

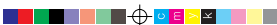
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To send in your entries, please fill in the details below and fax to 977-1-521013, or email to crossword@himalmedia.com. Entries can be dropped off at Himalmedia Pvt Ltd, Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur.

Name.....  
Ph.....email.....

SPORT PLAZA





HAPPENINGS

OFF THE BEATEN TREK

by MANISHA ARYAL

BAIKUNTHA SHRESTHA



The newly-appointed Norwegian ambassador to Nepal, Ingrid Ofstad, presenting credentials to His Majesty the King at the Royal palace on 22 September.

AMAR SHRESTHA



Subani Budha Magar, 18, (left) became Miss Capital 2000 at the Royal Nepal Academy on 22 September.

MIN. BA. RACHARYA



Renowned Nepali singer, Deep Shrestha (right), making a comeback on stage after a decade with a charity concert promoting children's literature organised by Himal Association at the Russian Cultural Centre on 22 September.

For most people on the trekking superhighway from Lukla to Everest Base Camp, Namche Bazaar, at 3,440m, is just an acclimatisation stop. But hang around for the weekly Saturday market and you will be able to take in the trading rhythm of the capital of Sherpaland.

Not long after the sun clears the eastern ridge of the amphitheatre-like Namche, the Saturday market is bustling with traders from far and wide. Tibetan traders come loaded with cheap Chinese goods: shoes, blankets, readymade clothes, and even solar panels. Lowlanders journey up, sometimes 10 days from the nearest roadhead of Jiri, loaded with rice, meat, toilet paper, Coca Cola, and instant noodles. All these to be sold to Sherpa hotel owners, some of whom descend a thousand metres every Saturday from as far as Pheriche and Lobuje to stock up for the week.

Until the middle of this century, the Sherpas themselves went north, and over the Nangpa La to trade in Tibet. Yakloads of sugar, butter and paper were exchanged for salt and wool and again bartered southwards with grains. But after the Chinese takeover of Tibet in the 1950s,

# Lingering in Namche

Instead of rushing through Namche, stay and acclimatise. A day in the capital of Sherpaland is worth the wait.

the mountain trade came to an end.

Luckily for the Khumbu people, that was about when Nepal opened up to mountaineering, and Sherpas became high altitude guides, porters and hotel owners. That is why the "new" traders in the bazaar now are villagers from down south. Cash transaction has replaced barter trade and the grains, vegetables and imported beverages human porters carry up goes to feed the 50,000 climbers and trekkers, their guides and porters that visit the region each year.

This once-a-week market was initiated by the government thirty-five years ago and has acquired significance far greater than anyone could have imagined at the time. There were over two hundred merchants at the bazaar on a recent Saturday morning. Gopal Tamang, a trader from a village six days south of Namche, was worried. More traders means stiffer



competition, and less profit.

"I sold eggs for fifteen rupees," says Gopal Tamang, who makes the trip twice a month in the tourist season. "Now it's gone down to four rupees. What can you do? I'm losing so much on Coke—I sold a box for twenty five hundred. Now I can't even sell it for thirteen hundred... I'm losing a lot this week." Even then, this seasonal income is still a lot more than what Tamang and others like him earn from farming alone. So they continue to come up by the hundred for the weekly bazaar.

Tsering Topgay travelled 13 days from Tibet, with 10 yaks loaded with Chinese carpets and blankets, Nike shoes, thermos flasks—items prized for sturdiness in the Nepali hinterland. With his waxy black hair plaited and bound in scarlet tassels, Tsering stands out in his sheepskin jacket. As he talks, he touches the clump of turquoise and coral, threaded through each ear, to indicate other things he is willing to sell. He speaks no Nepali, but manages to do business.

"We use calculators to get around the language problem," says Tsering. "If we want to sell



something for 100 rupees, we press one, zero, zero, on our calculator. If Nepalis want to lower the price, they'll press their number on their calculator..." Negotiations continue, until both Tibetans and Nepalis agree on a price.

"Trekking tourism occupies an important place in the region's economy today," says Sonam Gyalzen Sherpa, Chairman of Namche Village Development Committee. "It fills the vacuum left by the demise of Tibet trade." As for Namche's bazaar—that too has evolved. From a centuries-old trading post, to a one-stop-once-a-week-shopping centre. ♦

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