Let there be light

This Tihar, let us light a lamp rather than curse the darkness.

Latter-day traditions of Tihar include the official sanction of gambling. Nepal imports nearly Rs 50 million worth of playing cards every year, and most of them are used up this week. Even women, traditionally barred from gambling, play their hands with modest stakes. In the eastern and central tarai, celebrations continue till Chhath Puja when the Sun is elaborately worshipped in its female form as Mother Goddess Chhathi Mai. This four-day festival involves fasting, penance and then fasting. It is said that Chhathi is the only time when even a setting sun is celebrated for its glory, since the cycle of birth starts with death. In a sense, then the setting sun is the life-giving sun. An earthen lamp is worshipped as a miniature symbol of the life-giving sun. The earthen lamp is the product of all the five elements—the punchatama. A potter takes raw earth, mixes it with water, turns it on his wheel, sets it dry in the air under the sky and then bakes it in fire. When that earthen lamp arrives in your puja room, it has already passed through the process of life and death. It is now the symbol of eternal, of immortality and of light. It is capable of listening to your prayers of salvation just as a lamp can lead you from darkness to light.

In the brave new world of triumphant capitalism, everyone is an ‘Economic Man’, a Yudhistira. Just like the original religious antecedents of Christmas are covered by modern commercialisation, so is it with Tihar. From virtual firecrackers on the Internet to Diwali greetings on satellite channels, the original message of Tihar is lost in this blizzard of consumerism. Good fortune is translated into wealth, and the implication is that money can buy you happiness. So we open up our wallets and make Laxmi’s little feet from the door to the waist. Greed is glorious, and, with globalisation, ostentatious displays of wealth are no longer considered in bad form. Ejected by table, the new creed is: it’s no use having it unless you can flaunt it. Thus the rush at jewellery shops, department stores, illegal cracker vendors in the by-lanes of Asan and the gambling dens of Gunavat and Maharajgunj, not to mention all those casinos in the city where all you need to do to get in is pretend to be an Indian.

The form is prominent, but does the substance of Tihar survive? The best time to reflect upon that question is this week, when expensive sweet packets suit all-atri, dry fruits challenge guavas from the garden, madals make way for electric guitars in the disco groups, and people go for extravagances in a big way even in a festival as religious as the tarai’s celebration of Chhath.

But all is not lost, and even that what is lost is not lost forever. Like a porter’s wheel, change goes and then comes back in cycles. The realisation that culture is beyond the realm of consumerism seems to have dawned upon many. The little terracotta deus is staying a comeback. It’s all a matter of keeping faith. Darker the night, brighter burns the wick. May its flickering flame inspire us to live in harmony with the five basic elements of life. Let us light a lamp, rather than curse the darkness.

Melamchim

Kathmandu is running out of water, but this is due more to mismanagement and under-utilisation of existing supplies than a real shortage. Upgrading existing capacity and expanding anticipated water mains would be adequate for now. But at the rate Kathmandu is growing, the Valley will need extra water from outside. The Asian Development Bank is to give the final green light for the antiquated water mains would be replaced. There is an adequate capacity for now. But at the rate Kathmandu is growing, the Valley will need extra water from outside. The Asian Development Bank is to give the final green light for the existing supply, and that means extra water from outside.

Two ordinances

Government sources confirmed two ordinances have been forwarded to the palace for royal assent. One envisages the setting up of a Regional Administrator in each of the five development regions, and the other the setting up of a paramilitary Armed Police Force. Both laws have been in the making for some time now, but the process gathered momentum after the Maoist strike on Dunai last month.

EXCLUSIVE

Court martial

Twenty-eight officers from the Royal Nepal Army’s UN peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon are facing general court martial for allegedly selling ammunition to Islamic Hezbollah and Amal militants. Apparently this wasn’t the first time: earlier Nepali officers had sold UN rations and a generator to the rebels. The Nepali weekly, Jana, has made no official comment on the scam or the court martial proceedings. See: From the Nepali Press.

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Valley's water supply can be substantially improved by demand management, supply management and reduction of leakage. Our investigation in this issue shows that the 6- and 8-inch Rana-era pipes of the Tri-Bhim and Bir Dhara networks are still the mainstay of the Valley's water distribution system. Many of the storage reservoirs and the outskirt parts of the town are nearly a hundred years old, but they are still functioning. It is the latter-day tubewell pumps that have broken down and need to be repaired.

Production engineers told us widening the intakes on the Nallu, Mahadev, and other streams that flow down to the Bagmati, doubling the capacity of existing reservoirs, adding new ones with small 20-metre dams on the higher reaches of Bishnumati, Kitni, Nakhu and other kolas, and replacing the antique 6-inch pipes with bigger trunk lines would easily take care of the Valley's water crisis, politicians on the podium reach for a glass of melamchi, please”, or “Make mine melamchi, with bigger trunk lines would easily take care of

Wet dreams
Whenever water shortage hits the Kathmandu Valley, which is most of the time, the subject of Melamchi invariably comes up. Melamchi is whispered in hushed tones, as if it is a mantra from heaven. Successive gangs of politicians since 1990 have sold Melamchi as the panacea to the capital's perennial water problem. Melamchi has already entered the vocabulary of Kathmandu's socialites as a synonym for water. “Can I have a glass of melamchi, please”, or “Make mine Scotch with melamchi”. Hailing through advertising on the Valley's water crisis, politicians on the podium reach for a glass of melamchi.

With a population reaching nearly a million and a half, Kathmandu needs 150 million litres of water a day. Present supply is officially 80 million litres a day, although unofficially it is known that His Majesty’s Government's undertakings, the Nepal Water Supply Corporation, pumps only 60 percent of that amount. Leaksage and pilferage is conservatively estimated at 40 percent. That means a shortfall of a whopping 110 million litres a day. No wonder some neighbourhoods are on the verge of rioting.

Taps are now dry all year around, you don’t have to wait for April. If it wasn't for groundwater, Kathmandu would have been uninhabitable. It may soon be away back to the days of shallow tubewell water is now contaminated with sewage and chemicals. For the short term, the

STATE OF THE STATE

Comrade Nepal pedals to work
Petrol had only two uses in my village: as fuel for a Chinese lighter, or as balm for aching muscles after a hard day's work.

But a shift is to see opposition leader Madhav Dixit-Nepal cycling to Singh Durbar. For the people of his constituency in Raasthapur, District, bicycles, together with ricehusks and cow-carts, are the main modes of transport. But I was dismayed to discover that it was just a protest prank. Comrade Nepal still will not be bicycling to work every day. A day later the UML Secretary General was being chauffeured to work in a black limousine. Every time prices of petroleum products go up, symbolism takes over the streets of Kathmandu. There are rallies with empty jury cars, traffic is held up, handkerchiefs are enfolded, protest letters are handed over, the prime minister and his cabinet colleagues are bursted in effigy with much fanfares for the benefit of press photographers. Consumer activists issue angry statements. And then things get back to normal throughout the kingdom. People have come to take fuel price hikes as a fact of life. And protests are a diversion to be tolerated as a diversion from the dull routine of everyday life. Three-wheeler drivers protest by charging a call for a jury can rally, few people bother to look up.

Why don’t Nepalis care too much about fuel prices? A facile answer is inflation. That rapid sense of apathy that afflicts us all. Prices are beyond our control, so we accept them. Decades under dictatorship has further ingrained this fatalization into the Nepal psyche. The sense of hope that you can effect a change is not there. But the sense of resignation of a nullum population is not the real reason for this lack of interest.

More important are the sources of energy used in Nepal. Total energy consumption in the country was about 292 million GJ in 1995/96. Nearly 90 percent of it came from biomass sources such as fuelwood (80 percent), animal dung (6 percent)—another reason to keep worshippers' cows and bulls—and agricultural residue (4 percent). Only about one percent of it was electricity, notwithstanding all the hydropower hype. The rest, only about 9 percent of total energy consumption, was met by fossil fuels. The price of fossil fuel affects us all in one way or another: the newprint on which you are reading these words is transported laboriously up from Birgunj in smoke-belching diesel trucks. But the impact of a hike on diesel (or even kerosene) prices on a subsistence farmer in Ramnagar is marginal. Despite the claims that diesel is a poor man's fuel and needs state subsidy, the fact is that it is only the urban-dwellers and a section of rural elite who rely on fossil fuels for their daily needs. For the rest, kerosene is something that you need to fuel your radio in the hills or delphia in tarai and it’s (its)

not available, or if it’s too expensive, blow it off and go to bed early. No big deal.

When Rajiv Gandhi imposed an undeclared economic blockade on Nepal in 1989, he had expected us to go down on our knees and say we’re sorry, please send us our kerosene. Well, guess what, Nepalis held out for more than a year. The reason was that most Nepalis didn’t use fossil fuels, and those who did seemed west to keep up civilisation. For the urban users, the government flew in kerosene from Babha in Royal Nepal Airlines jets covered in tarps. The Nepali elite which depends on kerosene for its lives, in rumjatar, a small portion of their total household expense, the rich are also aware that a government (in any Third World country) can do little about fuel prices.

It’s people like me in the middle-class who are hurt most. The seven percent rise in bus fare and the increase in kerosene prices hits us badly. The poor may manage with their three-litre quota of subsidised kerosene—if they can afford to buy that much. My peers in the middle class will probably brand me a traitor for saying this, but protests over the fuel price hike should be held outside OPEC headquarters in Vienna, not in Kathmandu. The Marxists-Leanists should call an Austria-wide bandh, burn in effigy Hugo Chavez, the Venezuelan OPEC Rambou. He has more to do with the rise of kerosene prices than Gaddafi.

The lesson for Nepal and the world is to lessen our dependence on fossil fuels. If only the transportatio and diesel cartels would let go of their iron grip on state policy, we should be using this opportunity to look at a fast east-west railway corridor along the tarai, connected to the hills with cargo-cable car systems. All powered by the energy of our flowing rivers and not the liquified remains of prehistoric rainforests.

The government certainly needs to do much more than it is presently doing to keep a check on spiralling prices. The opposition can help by not bringing the economy to a halt by blocking highways. As it is, prices are on fire. Protests simply end up adding to the traffic congestion and diesel cartels would let go of their iron grip on state policy, we should be using this opportunity to look at a fast east-west railway corridor along the tarai, connected to the hills with cargo-cable car systems. All powered by the energy of our flowing rivers and not the liquified remains of prehistoric rainforests.
If war is the continuation of politics by other means, then an insurgency is politics by other means.

It is widely believed that the Maoist movement has been a major deterrent to finding a long-term strategy and vision. The primary focus of the government must, therefore, be to mobilise multipartisan backing for the NSC's directives and guidance to government decision-makers and help them formulate responses; and monitoring and evaluating the implementation process.

Negotiations, in their paranoia, and inaction brought about by heavy-handedness, have benefitted from government inaction. The result is that the insurgents have gained control. The government has taken the path of violence. In all cases, the target of the Maoist movement has been the people with the power and those in power are preoccupied in fighting among themselves. The principal objective is to actually win an insurgency strategy. The primary focus of the government must, therefore, be to mobilise multipartisan backing for the NSC's directives and guidance to government decision-makers and help them formulate responses; and monitoring and evaluating the implementation process.

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The NSC is the government's principal body to deal with crises such as these. But as political bindings prevented the NSC from being an action-oriented and effective entity, key decisions like defining the role of the Royal Nepal Army have been unnecessarily delayed. Ultimately, political leaders, through the medium of the NSC and preferably with the approval of a National Security Adviser, have to take up responsibility for its coordination, crisis management; identifying and assessing short-, medium-, and long-term threats to national security; facilitating intelligence and analysis to political decision-makers; and helping them formulate responses; and passing on NSC's directives and guidance to government decision-makers; and monitoring and evaluating the implementation process.

Insurgency is a zone between politics and war. If war, as Clausewitz declared, is "the continuation of politics by other means" then an insurgency is politics by other means.

Sugat Ratna Kansakar

27 OCTOBER - 2 NOVEMBER 2000 NEPALI TIMES 3
Melamchi, our minds

After much debate and delay, the Asian Development Bank is finally getting ready to approve the Melamchi Project at its board meeting in December. But, even if all goes according to plan, Kathmandu will have to wait another six years for the first drop of melted snow to arrive at Sundarijal. What do we do till then?

Paradise? Lost?

The best way to understand Kathmandu Valley’s limits to growth is to regard it not as a valley at all, but as a plateau. We should be calling it the Kathmandu Plateau. The terrain on all sides, including the north, plunges to only 600 m above sea level before rising again. This leaves Nepal’s capital high and dry, dependent only on the rainfall that is trapped by the hills on its rim. There are no snow-fed rivers running through, and with the population now nearing 1.5 million, the valley’s only river has turned into a sewer. Water shortages have become a year-round phenomenon, not just something that happened in the dry season.

As taps run dry, the cry for water has become louder and louder. Politicians can’t ignore it anymore, so they respond with a one-word mantra: “Melamchi.” Over the years, the river flowing below this picturesque little village on the boundary of the Langtang National Park, 30 km directly north of Kathmandu, has turned into a panchayat for parched Kathmandu. The debate about whether or not some $500 million should be lavished on an over-pampered capital is not heard anymore, no one really asks the scientists what they think, and no one questions the unquestionable—wouldn’t it be better to just start moving the capital somewhere else, at least have a systematic plan to relocate key offices and industries?

Politics and populism take over, and the debate is mixed in slogans that any Nepali hydrologist who says that Kathmandu has enough water, that there is really no shortage, is regarded as a crank. Question Melamchi, and you are anti-development, a crazy. Kathmandu needs about 150 million litres of water a day. One of Nepal Water Supply Corporation’s public sector undertakers, with the task of quenching the capital’s thirst and taking care of its sewer system on a monopoly basis, claims that it supplies about 80 million litres a day. Out of that 40 percent is lost in leakage. “Simply cutting wastage and pilferage by 50 percent would alone mean increasing supply by 15 percent,” one water expert told us. He requested anonymity because, working for the government, he doesn’t want to be punished for his views.

So Kathmandu’s hapless citizens have been forced to bide their time. And they have to drill deeper and deeper as the water table falls because of over-extraction. One estimate says Kathmandu’s average water table has been falling by an average of 1.8 metres a year. Large hotels and soft-drink makers have drilled deep for geological water—and it is a gift from nature, after all. There is no government policy to price extraction of this precious commodity. As Kathmandu’s population growth exponentially, storage of water inside the valley alone will not meet demand, and there will have to be an outside source. The ADB says it has studied other inter-basin transfer possibilities for Kathmandu Valley, but Melamchi is the only feasible one.

Critics of Melamchi say that not enough has been done to upgrade the existing water collection intakes, the capital could generate the 25 MW of electricity from a powerhouse at Sundarijal. The Nepalese, in our view, have been 19th century in opposition to this, and insiders in the Melamchi project say in a place that considered a fish net over a Stephanie as security enough.

The Gita says change is the only constant. But even the ancient faith from that book is being challenged every day, a faith that once bounded us. So paradises are lost and Eden’s serpents proliferate as indeed they are forced to. Dr Nitish Misra Shrestha, Nepal’s leading political scientist, has to cope with the derisive change. So let’s talk of these rites of passage, the loss of innocence. Let tomorrow come, we will face it together.

Water shortage.

Village Voice

Paradise? Lost?

Let’s talk of rites of passage, the loss of innocence. Let tomorrow come, we will face it together.

This is a development parable, repeated many times in world history in all corners of the world, of how the very act of trying to save Shangri-La can spoil it. It is a story about schmaltz, about boot-legging. It is about how de-scalping does not always deliver the goods. This is a serious story of the dynamics of change. How to try to ensure that when change does occur, it is under control of the people who are being changed, and it is a change for the better, at least slightly. In the sixties, Sir Edmund Hillary and Desmond Doig made the first move to understand the Himalaya. “What happened?” they asked of the valley’s elite. “Two white men came many years ago and gave us a pump,” said the old man. “And since then we have not had to sleep at the water source there was population explosion. Then, neighbouring villages came and settled...”

Second story. A famous anthropologist heard of this dreadful change, and determined not to upset the fragile balance of this Khumbu he went about and studied. His thesis brought hordes of tourists in amidst its people without disturbing a single thing. Then he went back and wrote a thesis which was widely acclaimed in academia. And a hundred anthropological teams followed. They made suggestions, helped the poor and needy, and generally did good. But the changes, people later said, were not good. The first anthropologist should never have written his thesis because it brought hordes of other researchers. The region’s awesome enticing beauty became commonplace.

The media is the message, these days. Yesterdays’ water pumps and anthropologists have been replaced by an overwhelming force as powerful as nature’s many moods that created change in the past. Television heightens expectations, gives rise to models and fables with what we don’t have, but have could. And a cloistered society has spawned violence, greed, and envy. The Internet whisked us to worlds undreamt of, and whose effects are yet to be understood. Admittedly today it’s the elite of Nepal that is key to most of this but there is also a burgeoning middle class and there is suddenly the vulgar and articulate disenfranchised and disfranchised, be they Maoists or “ists” of a number of hues. There are now robbers in a place that considered a fish net over a Stephanie as security enough.

DUBBY BHAGAT

4 NATION

27 OCTOBER - 2 NOVEMBER 2000 NEPALI TIMES
The ADB is the lead agency and the biggest lender to the project, which is supported by a consortium of donors that includes the Norwegian aid agency, NORAD; the Swedish agency, SIDA; the Nordic Development Fund (NDF); the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation (JIBC); the World Bank and the OPEC Fund. The ADB’s final mission was in Kathmandu from 18 September-4 October to appraise the project and prepare a report for the ADB board to discuss. The ADB loan amounts to $120 million, and it will be upon the endorsement of this that other donors are expected to get their approval processes underway.

The base cost of the project as it stands today is $138 million. But infrastructure projects are notorious for cost over-runs and after investments, interest payments, taxes and contingencies for complications in the tunnel drilling activity, the total cost comes to $441 million. The government is putting up 25 percent of the financing, most of which will be cost for land taxes, duties and interest on construction.

The current design will ensure people pay for water and has been a controversial basis on the Melamchi Khola just 6 km north of the Ribharma Khola at an altitude of about 1,500 m. About 170 million litres a day of water is to be piped to homes and other users within a 26.5 km long tunnel to bring the water to a treatment plant to be built at Mahankal near Sundarijal. The tunnel will have a cross-section of 10 m square and will be a major feat of engineering.

About 170 million litres a day of water will be diverted through a 26.5 km long tunnel to bring the water to a treatment plant to be built at Mahankal near Sundarijal. The tunnel will have a cross-section of 10 m square and will be a major feat of engineering. The tunnel will have a cross-section of 10 sq m and will be a major feat of engineering. The tunnel has a downstream component of distribution and treatment systems to ensure water supply in Kathmandu Valley. The existing distribution system will be overhauled to ensure reliable and adequate supply. A private operator will be hired by 2001 to improve operation, management and rehabilitation of Kathmandu’s existing urban water supply and sewage facilities. One way is to ensure people pay for water they use and improve the efficiency of the system.

Supporters of the project say that although expensive, Kathmandu Valley residents will be paying for reliable water supply just like they pay for electricity. Water tariffs in Kathmandu could increase to Rs 23 per cubic metre when Melamchi water is piped to homes and neighbourhoods. At present, water is sold at a subsidised rate of Rs 8 per cubic metre, even though the costs involved in supplying it is Rs 16 per cubic metre. Says the ADB’s Nepal representative Richard Vokes: “Melamchi is a least-cost option, and private management has been brought in to ensure people pay for water. Tariffs have to be significant to ensure cost recovery, otherwise it will be difficult to justify subsidies for a rich valley population.”

What will remain to be seen is if just charging money will make Kathmandu water supply dependable and regular and of acceptable quality. The argument is that if it is expensive, people will not waste it; this would hold in Melamchi, where studies showed the same frugality about using expensive electricity, or if electricity was not available.

**MELAMCHI FINANCING PLAN (IN MILLIONS US)

| MELAMCHI | 120 | loan |
| JIBC | 52 | loan |
| Japan Bank for International Cooperation | 55 | loan |
| NDF | 11 | loan |
| NORAD | 29 | Grant |
| OPEC | 16 | loan |
| SIDA | 25 | 50/50 loan and |
| grant | World Bank | 80 | loan |
| HMG | 110 | |

**Establishment of a regulatory body to control tariffs, adjust performance of water operation and protect consumer interest**

**A clearly defined tariff policy has to be prepared before the water tariff is paid by the people of Kathmandu**

**The Melamchi headworks are close to the Langtang National Park, and its access tunnels are located within the Shisapangma and Nangchen Lunbo. ADB says it has mitigation plans to address the negative environmental impact of the tunnels and the social effects of the influx of thousands of construction workers from outside. The plan is to ensure that a minimum water supply level will be maintained in the Melamchi for downstream irrigation, water supply, water operation and for maintaining the habitat of aquatic life. A social uplift programme is also planned for the development committees (VDCs) in the Melamchi valley, for which the project has allocated $5 million. The plan is to ensure that a certain percentage of the water tariff paid by the people of Kathmandu will be made available to the 14 VDCs. ADB has also prepared a repayment policy for people displaced by the tunnel, which is awaiting government approval.**

The Melamchi Board is to consider some of its image and why are there are in the process of hiring a public relations consultant.**

**Implementation of an autonomous Kathmandu valley water and wastewater strategy**

**Policy on groundwater extraction, licensing and monitoring**

**Formulation of a Kathmandu valley development plan—including relocating development refugees who have suffered because the government didn’t keep its promise.**

**A clearly defined tariff policy has to be prepared before the water tariff is paid by the people of Kathmandu.”**

The Melamchi project, and there will still be some in the woodwork, admits that the plan for resettlement and the flush-out of parts of the Melamchi valley is not good on paper, but doubt whether future governments will keep that commitment. Nepal is full of development refugees who have suffered because the government didn’t keep its promise,” says an activist. Besides, what are the people of Kathmandu going to do till 2000? Some of the immediately de-able activities like improving the storage capacities and upgrading the main degradation and upgrading the main water bodies need to be incorporated right away, they say.

**To bring water to Kathmandu, water has to be conserved and treated with a purpose resource.” For a final approval by the ADB board, the government will have to commit to the following conditions:**

• Implementation of a Kathmandu valley water and wastewater strategy
• Policy on groundwater extraction, licensing and monitoring
• Formulation of a Kathmandu valley development plan—including relocating development refugees who have suffered because the government didn’t keep its promise
• Establishment of an autonomous Kathmandu water authority (KWYA) by 2002 for water resource management

The plan is to submit memorandums demanding specific registration is to be set up on 76 Melamchis at District Administration Offices in five districts where the practice of bonded labour was widespread before the government’s July decision. That would be followed by sit-ins and culminate in general strikes in Kailali, Kanchanpur, Banke, Bardia and Dang districts. A sit-in is also planned for Bhadrakali, the famous spot to the west of the Singa Durbar, the central secretariat.

Government officials say the Dasiain and Tihar holidays have delayed identification and registration of the freed bonded labourers, which they say would be completed in about a month’s time.
Mass court martials

Janai Aatm, 18 October

Based on a report published by this paper some time ago, the Royal Nepalese Army is getting ready to court martial 55 soldiers at one go. The news story had made public a scandal in which the commanding officer of the Sinphulan Devi (37th) Battalion Colonel Rajendra Khadka had, sent 14 soldiers back to Nepal on the charge of selling local ammunition to the Habilam and Ahul rebel groups during their term of service as part of the 15th Commission in Lahan. Of the 14 one committed suicide. But it has now become clear that Khadka himself was party to the being held in groups of five at different army battalions. Now there are voices for similar action to be initiated against a number of colonels who are alleged to have raised funds and misappropriated NPR 700,000 from servemen who gave him the money to purchase gold. Because this colonel, Rintindrah, is the son of a powerful family, it is unlikely that the case will be initiated against him. He has just returned from Lebanon (57th branch) and is now attending staff college to prepare to take charge of the Sumsherbal Battalion.

Centre at fault: Gorkhali

In the end our story has proven to be true and the army has formed a 10-member general court martial committee to bring to book Khadka and his alleged accomplices. Among those facing court martial are 28 officers, including Major Narakh Sahak, Major Narash Bhakta, Adjutant Prabhakar Shah (possibly related to royalty) and Captain Bibhun Karki.

Even though delayed, the army has initiated action against those accused of selling ammunition. However, the army continues to remain silent about the generator and ammunition sold by Aditya Bahadur Shah—a relative of former military secretary to the king Lt Gen (retd) Santan Kumar Malla—who was in Lahan before Khadka. It is said that arms and ammunition had begun to be reported to be missing when Shah headed the Nepali army unit in Lahan before his promotion.

In an earlier issue this paper had published that Lt Colonel Shrestha of the Bhaicorn War Battalion, who headed the 36th batch of peacekeepers in Lahan, had even sold a generator. Even though that report originated from Lahan there was no action taken because of the clout Santa Kumar Malla wielded. And Khadka is now beginning to get tainted. It is said that action was taken because of the clout Santa Kumar Malla wielded. And Khadka is now beginning to get tainted.

The force is also to be used in border security and for relief operations during natural calamities. The ordinance says the size of the force would be decided by the government and another clause would also allow the government to transfer personnel from the force to the army if necessary. The force will be under the command of an inspector general.

The Nepali Police presently has a 7,000-strong armed wing. A government task force had recommended that the police be given the responsibility for fighting the Maoist rebels. Even though the task force had recommended a nationwide police force there was no mention of the Home Ministry Source said that the number had not been increased because the government was afraid of the police force immediately using personnel from the police.
Garbage has begun piling up along the city’s sidewalks and main thoroughfares once again after the municipality stepped dumping waste along the banks of the Bagmati River. And matters may get worse once the government’s temporary holding site in Teko is used up, mainly because the government and municipal officials have failed to find a lasting solution to manage waste.

TRASH IS BACK

The bird scare at the airport closes a landfill site, and trash is piling up once more on the city streets.

MIMLATA RAI

Garbage has begun piling up along the city’s sidewalks and main thoroughfares once again after the municipality stepped dumping waste along the banks of the Bagmati River. And matters may get worse once the government’s temporary holding site in Teko is used up, mainly because the government and municipal officials have failed to find a lasting solution to manage waste.

The dumping along the Bagmati was stopped after several aircraft suffered bird hits at the Tribhuvan International Airport recently, which many said could have resulted in a tragedy. The solution to manage waste. Officials have failed to find a lasting solution to manage waste.

NC ready for party election

The ruling Nepali Congress (NC) has finally laid to rest a long-standing controversy that was proving to be a stumbling block to the election of a new president during the party’s 10th general convention to be held early next year. This came about with the decision of the central leadership to renew the active membership of a small group that was up in arms against president Girija Prasad Koirala for what was charged was an attempt to influence the outcome of the upcoming elections. The party’s central working committee met at a marathon seven-hour session at the Prime Minister Koirala’s residence at Baluwatar on Sunday—with roust police deployed outside the gates to keep a motley crowd of slogan-chanting protesters at bay—before deciding to renew the membership of all those who figured in the 1995 party list and who had applied for renewal by 29 September. The applicants would have to provide valid applications, accompanied by formal resignations from two regional and/or district units. However, the decision would not cover dissidents who had contested against the official NC candidates in the last elections, said spokeman Narahari Acharya.

Renewals would also be made for those members who had been handed active party membership by the president in 1996. This includes some Congress stalwarts such as Kathmandu’s Harish Bhattraiy and Marshal Jumma Shukla, whose names had earlier been excluded by the then district presidents Prakash Mas Singh. Singh was one of the ‘stars’ whose name did not figure in the roster of active members published by the NC some two weeks back. Neither did anyone from the Kathmandu district committee headed by him that was dissolved earlier this year appear in the list (against which the party received about 900 complaints).

Singh was among those leading the protests Sunday. Party sources said membership of Singh and his fellows had not been renewed not because that would make a difference in the party election but because of the technicalities, namely, they did not re-apply when the first call was made and had submitted incomplete applications when applications were asked the second time. Others who will get their memberships renewed are those who joined the NC from other parties but had not had their membership renewed and those who had not been given membership so far. The party also decided not to renew membership of those that had moved to new districts unless the concerned members decided to accept renewals for representation from districts where they had originally become members.

In 1995, the Nepali Congress had 105,000 active members. The new decision could mean an addition of 1,000-1,500, a number that falls far short of being capable of affecting the outcome of the party election although Sher Bahadur Draka and the handful of permanent dissenters it leads within the party tend to believe otherwise.
Oil price aftershocks

After the petrol and diesel price hikes, it was only a matter of time before public transport operators area up which would soon be followed by corresponding increases in the price of almost every commodity. And as expected, within days of announcing the new fuel prices, the government fixed new transport fares. Bus operators can now charge Rs 4.50 for every seven kilometres—they are already said to be charging Rs 5.00 because of the problem of handling change—and Rs 5.50 for distances between 7-13 km, while the fare for a distance between 13 to 25 km is Rs 9.

Tax rates have also increased: at flag down it is Rs 7 and the charge for every kilometre travelled is Rs 12, up from Rs 9 before the changes. Likewise, the flag drop rate for motorcycles is Rs 6 and Rs 8 for every kilometre travelled. The taxi rates will be effective after the Department of Standards readjusts the meters, but drivers are already asking customers to pay the increased rates, which is calculated on the spot.

Actually, the government increase of 7 percent fell far short of the 30 percent hike demanded by transport operators for short-, medium- and long-distance public vehicles. It will be some time before the fuel price increase registers in national inflation statistics. This is because fuel, light, water and transport together account for less than 10 percent in the basket of goods on which the Consumer Price Index is calculated. But over time the increased prices will begin to seep into the cost of production of all goods and services—from restaurant food to labour wages.

In the short run, because of the subsistence nature of the economy, the severest impact of the new oil prices will be felt mainly in urban and semi-urban areas where people rely solely on imported kerosene for cooking. It was thus not surprising that the Central Carpet Industries Association (CIAA) demanded that carpet workers be given 12 litres of subsidised kerosene each month since the proposed three litres would not be enough to meet their needs.

Bad start for Kumari Bank

Even before it began banking services, Kumari Bank Ltd has been mired in controversy, apparently due to a boardroom dispute that has now reached the courts. The court has upheld the founding-chairman of the bank, Noor Pratap Shrestha, promoter of Hotel Radisson, who was appointed some weeks ago. The court also declared illegal the decisions taken by the new board of directors. The bank plans to begin operations in December.

Qatar's French connection

Qatar Airways is to begin twice-weekly flights from Kathmandu to Paris starting 1 November, the company announced last week. The route will be serviced by a Qatar Airways is to begin twice-weekly flights from Kathmandu to Paris starting 1 November, the company announced last week. The route will be serviced by an aircraft.

Tax registrations up

The number of taxpayers obtaining Permanent Account Numbers (PAN) has reached close to 20,000, up from about 4,000 a month ago. Firms and individuals can obtain the PAN from the Kathmandu Taxpayers Service Centre.

Samsonite suitcases

Samsonite, the company which claims to produce the most fashionable luggage and accessories for travel, has opened a satellite unit in Nepal near the industrial estate at Sankhu. The company has associated with a local businessman to sell the products in Nepal, a market which the company says is dominated by low-priced unbranded products, with little choice for consumers. The company also promises that its products will be world class, supported by after sales service and "soft" on the customer.
The city Vishnu may have built

When you drive into Bhaktapur, your car is a time machine and you are back in the 15th century

large bronzed Buddha, still known as the Bhairab. It was adorned by the進貢品 such as rice beer, butter, and flowers. The statue of the goddess of prosperity, Manjusri, sits in the main temple complex. The richly painted lion statues, carved from wood and stone, guard the temple entrances. The tiled, terracotta shrines are adorned with intricate carvings and paintings.

The city of Bhaktapur is renowned for its ancient architecture, with its medieval city walls, temples, and palaces. The city gate, constructed of stone and brick, is a striking example of the city's architectural prowess.

The city is also known for its textile industry, with local artisans producing high-quality fabrics and garments.

In the heart of the city, the Durbar Square is a treasure trove of historic landmarks, including the 15th-century Panauti Mosque, the 17th-century Taleju Temple, and the 18th-century Taleju Bhimsen Temple.

Bhaktapur is also famous for its handicrafts, such as woodcarving, pottery, and weaving. The local artisans are known for their skill in creating intricate designs and patterns.

The city is also known for its cultural events, such as the Bhaktapur Festival, which takes place annually, and the Durbur Festival, which is celebrated with a grand procession.

Bhaktapur is a must-visit destination for anyone interested in history, architecture, culture, and arts.
Dawn breaks over Bhaktapur like the opening of an act set in some medieval conch-shaped stage. This ancient town is a treat to behold, and a classic lesson in heritage conservation.

Home of Mystery: “Were there nothing else in Nepal, save the Durbar Square in Bhadgaon [Bhaktapur], it would still be amply worth making a journey halfway around the globe to see it.”

And sure enough more than 50 percent of the tourists who come to Nepal take the time off to visit this great city. The city gates, just west of the Durbar Square, welcome more than 500 visitors a day. Hence, a day without at least one story of how some heritage would be to risk the tremendous culture, heritage, social harmony and committed people who are gentle and hard working,” says Prem Swaul, mayor of Bhaktapur. “The people of this city are so much at ease with making a positive outlook towards the conservation of their town. Earlier, it took quite an effort to make them do it but now everything, from heritage conservation to sanitation management, is taken care of through community efforts.”

Bhaktapur, or the “city of devotees”, with its myths of Tantras and Tantriks, is a living heritage site believed to be guarded by the eight power goddesses, or Ashta Matrikas, who surround the city. Though official history has it that this Newari town was founded by king Anand Dev Malla in the 9th century, the famed Chinese traveller Hieun Tsang mentions the city in his travel chronicles of the 7th century AD.

Spread over an area of 6.88 sq km, 12 km south-east of Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, or Bhadgaon as it was formerly known, showcases the splendours of the Golden Age of Nepali art and architecture. There are 345 significant monuments (108 Buddhist and 237 Hindu) all of which are part of the Bhaktapur world heritage site since 1979.

The city’s architecture is a reminder of the various stages in Bhaktapur’s history, and reflect the rule and patronage of various rulers. Among these, there are 232 architectural masterpieces from the Malla period. Several of these Malla period buildings are privately owned, and many of them are still being used as residences. The Shah rulers who came after the Mallas added another 117 buildings and the Ranas have had their own influence as well.

To talk about the timelessness of Bhaktapur’s living heritage would be to risk telling the same story twice over. Yet this aspect is its biggest draw. Dawn breaks over Bhaktapur like the opening of an act set in some medieval conch-shaped stage. Hundreds of ancient monuments, brick houses, shrines and temples stand as props, and the eighty thousand or so citizens who live in this ancient town still go about doing what have been done for more than a thousand years.

Visits to Bhaktapur before your visit there proves costly. The best preserved and least polluted of Kathmandu Valley’s cities has placed a further premium on visits. The entry fee for foreign visitors is slated for an increase, beginning Jan 2001. The fee for non-South Asians will be raised to $10, while those from the region will have to pay Rs 50. But there is no point cribbing about it since the trip will prove well worth the amount and more.

This easternmost of the Valley’s medieval urban settlements has remained a model for heritage conservation since it was declared a World Heritage Site in 1979. Indeed, Bhaktapur and her citizens stand proud with many awards and mentions for the preservation of their culture and heritage. The First Honourable Mention from Asia for 1998-99 awarded by UNESCO, states—“in recognition of its outstanding contribution to the restoration of hope, the reinforcement of solidarity and the consolidation of the culture of peace in everyday life”.

The admiration for Bhaktapur is not new. As far back as the late 19th century, when Nepal still had many well-guarded secrets, foreigners like E.A. Powell of the British East India Company wrote in his book, The Last Will and Testament of a Nepalese Prince: “Here is a city five to six thousand years old, a city of many ages, rich in history, tradition and mystery. The very air is charged with the history of an ancient nation. It is a city of mystery. And sure enough, more than a thousand years. Dawn breaks over Bhaktapur like the opening of an act set in some medieval conch-shaped stage. This ancient town is a treat to behold, and a classic lesson in heritage conservation.

Dawn breaks over Bhaktapur like the opening of an act set in some medieval conch-shaped stage. This ancient town is a treat to behold, and a classic lesson in heritage conservation.

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ahead and ask the gods to be with them. The evening songs remind them to rest since the day is done,” says one old man as he waits for his fellow musicians at the Bhairav temple sattal. Tibetan chants from the music shops reverberate on a serene morning, a reminder of the not-so-distant past when pilgrims from the north came chanting Buddhist prayers and rested in the numerous paati pauwas (resting places for pilgrims and travellers).

History is replayed when Sundar Prajapati, a potter at Talako Square, sits down beside the furnace with his eight-year-old son, teaching what was handed down by his forefathers. “We don’t make so much of the old designs anymore, but at least my son is learning,” he says.

One difficult aspect of conserving Bhaktapur’s living heritage is to maintain a fine balance between the ancient and the modern. Some decisions like the municipality’s ban on cable television are met with scepticism by the younger generation. “Do we have to be deprived of what the rest of the world is enjoying? Not everybody would like to stay back and do the same old work here,” says Rajesh, a college student.

Not exactly an argument that is likely to move the mayor. “We don’t want to spoil our age-old rich culture with mediocre cultural values aired through cable television,” he says.

There are also some critics of the move to increase the entry fee for visitors. Among them is Goetz Hagmueller, Austrian conservationist and architect, who has been living in Bhaktapur since 1979. As head of the Bhaktapur Development Board, he played an important role in the conservation and restoration of the town. Hagmueller is not too happy about the increased entrance fee; “I agree that the municipality has been doing a lot from the money raised and has set an example in preserving the cultural and historical heritage. But the income generated from tourism has been utilised efficiently and the results are there for all to see; the architectural heritage is well preserved and the city is well maintained and free from the traffic and chaos of other places.

The debate may continue on aspects such as the increased entry fee and others like the ban on cable television. However, Bhaktapur’s guardians have a credible history—of knowing what is best for the preservation of this ancient town. A visit there will tell you more.
A gourmet’s guide to Kathmandu

MANIKA BANIT AND SWETY SINGH

Two words after the dinner finishing, Nepalis (at least those of us who can afford it) will be gorging themselves once again. After all it is once, certainly a much more affordable and lighter feasting than lunch. And there is no better place for those Epicureans than Kathmandu.

The capital offers a varied choice for those who cannot break the gayyans at any rate. We present a selected survey of eateries that are intended to serve as a guide to both tourists and Nepalis who want to taste the best of the facilities by going on a gastronomic tour.

Wanjale Baton is one of the restaurants that can serve as the base of Kathmandu’s Newar cuisine combined with what we acclaimed the table of Himalaya’s mountainous area. Moskva (Tel: 415236, 218111) serves an exotic proposition that you must visit if you are anywhere in the world, not even in native food.

Where do you find dishes with names which would make any Nepali mouth water spontaneously? To offer exotic, charismatic and mouth-watering Delicat of Malish’s Korean special is something quite unique, with glimpses of Newar culture. Modernized into a must for the fusionists and the Newari Neo-Yan and may have something special.

The Russian meal costs Rs 975.

Bananas Chaur (Tel: 411798, 423128) which is used for the Nepali- Russ concept for the main course. Kilroy’s “Welcome to Kathmandu” is a suprisingly cosmopolitan gourmet’s paradise. It will allарь, and that you need to do it yourself. There are a lot of other restaurants, especially in Thamel, just waiting to be discovered.

SOALTEE AD

27 OCTOBER - 2 NOVEMBER 2000 NEPALI TIMES

Kathmandu is a surprisingly cosmopolitan gourmet’s paradise. It will allарь, and that you need to do it yourself. There are a lot of other restaurants, especially in Thamel, just waiting to be discovered.
Street dramas seek to inform Nepalis about AIDS

J Apan’s public radio, the Japan Broadcasting Corpora- 
tion (NHK), is doing an eight-hour direct broadcast 
from Nepal on 3 November. The broadcast which is part of 
NHK’s “All-Asia Autumn 2000” programme is to be 
broadcast throughout Japan on the station’s medium wave 
and FM frequencies.

A team of two Japanese technicians and four producers are already in town making last-minute arrangements for the broadcasts. NHK’s Nepali Correspondents Mikis and Lexman Upreti are providing research and logistical support.

The eight-hour programme will consist of music, talks, 
teachers and short radio features on lifestyle, nature, 
culture, trekking, tourism, commerce, industry and aspira-
tions of the place for me.

He is a member of the proud Bengali nation, and as he 
takes no nonsense from anyone, in my opinion, he is the 
darkest and is a talented American journalist. The two 
of them went to an art exhibition at a Delhi museum 
and were confronted with a demand for admission. Rs 10 
per Indian national and Rs 150 per "foreigner." My friend, 
as they say, went ballistic and parsharshum him but slightly in the following lines.

Nepali performing plays on 

Nepal's highways. Girija Prasad Koirala is about a truck driver 
and his helper, in which the 

The length of his --- is a packet 

It was tabhaganti something so insensitive and 

Street theatre director, has been 

entertain and educate

Let them eat apples

It all began with an innocent packet of 

We were turned out, 

There were, it turned out, 

NHK broadcasts are listened to by about 20 million people

Radio and television is seeing an upsurge of 

In any case, I'm back in Kathmandu where the cheese 

Copyright © 2000 Nepali Times

Nepal calling Japan

What’s all this noise? Why are 

AIDS

AIDS is a real problem for the 
country’s health and everyone is 
vulnerable. The aim of the 
drama, which was staged in a 
street play format, was to tell 
Nepalis and their rulers that 
they are not as safe from HIV 
infected drug users. Equally at risk 
are numbers of poorly educated, 
young village men seeking low-
paid seasonal work in India’s 
cities, and to some extent in 
Kathmandu also, where they 
visit brothels.

Makwanpur, the district 

Nothing more? What kind of ridiculous cringing reverse dis- 

Anna says she wants you to eat apples anyway.

- a packet of --- is a packet 

free postcard for foreigner.

The AIDS education street 
programmes.

entertainment, trekking, tourism, commerce, industry and aspira-
tions of the place for me.

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tions of the place for me.
More sex please, we’re Indian

With open displays of affection, girls flirting with boys and running their hands through each other’s hair - all is not what it seems at one Delhi night club.

With an almost completely female audience, and the absence of men, the Delhis’s hippest bar and night club, Djinns, has become a refuge for the city’s young population.

UNCUT

New Delhi - India is in the throes of a gender revolution. After two centuries of Victorian stiffness, couples now walk about holding hands in Delhi’s parks as they wander past the Moghal tombs. There is kissing on TV, and teenage girls hang out after school in internet chat rooms, flirting with male classmates.

But the dream of India’s capital the sari has not just slipped a little but has fallen off entirely to reveal a bare midriff. It all happens at Djinns, Delhis’s hippest bar and night club, not far from a major traffic intersection where lepers beg. Here is where the capital’s young elite rich come to party. They might well get off with each other, behaviour unthinkable a decade ago.

its plastic hippopotamus, red London phone box and fake buueting memorabilia, Djouni may resemble a trendy London pub, but that is not the point.

It is one of the few places in India where it does not feel like India.

None of the girls see anything traditional—they flaunt micro-skirts, skinny designer handbags and shiny hair.

The boys sport Armani shirts, shiny black loafers and floppy haircuts.

Having talked my way in—something of an achievement in itself—I struck up a conversation at the bar with Rajiv. He claimed to have made his money exporting garments. He liked London and had visited Equinox, the Ministry and other London clubs.

How easy, I asked, was it to meet girls here? “The thing about Indian girls,” Rajiv explained, “is that they are very shy at first. But once you get to know them, they’re pretty wild.” On a balcony above, the club’s in-air DJ waggled his arse in the air.

Girls in sequinned evening dresses working for Chinese Regal took photographs of the suitably glamorous.

In the darker recesses, several merrily chaperoned wearing saucy mini dresses sat around back- padding. Everyone in Giacci, Prada or Armani seemed to be having a good time.

The designer labels are just one consequence of India’s blossoming consumer revolution, which begins in the early nineties when the country’s previously closed economy was opened up for the first time.

What gets Delhi its unique hedonistic frisson is that much of the money going into places such as Djouni—where a half-pint of lager costs $3.50—is not strictly earned. The capital is full of bureaucrats, and in India bureaucrats are synonymous with corruption. While a handful of the boys and girls at Djouni are the progeny of a few rich IT professionals, many are politicians or senior civil servants for parents.

“They are a thoroughly spoilt bunch. If they are ever in trouble their parents always get them off the hook,” one Indian friend told me. But it is not just the young heterosexual rich who are enjoying India’s gradual sexual awakening.

In another Delhis bar, the capital’s first gay bar has just opened. Its customers are almost exclusively middle-class, educated and English-speaking. Yet the bar marks a modest beginning in a country where homosexuality is still technically illegal and many gay men find themselves bullied by relatives into unhappy arranged marriages. Back at Djouni, it is 2am and time to go home. A procession of chauffeur-driven BMWs and Mercedes sweeps down from the band car park.

The drivers are taking their charges back to monstrous, Dallastyle ‘townhouses’ in south Delhi, complete with swimming pools and mock-Grecian porticos, and to huge flats in Defence. The lepers, meanwhile, have knocked off and gone home too.

LUKE HARDING

COLOMBO - For the first time in two decades, which have seen Tamil Tigers wage a doomed and bloody separatist war against the Sri Lankan government, an elected Tamil member of parliament will hold a cabinet position in the island’s new People’s Alliance (PA) led government. These are independent commissions set up for public participation to further their ends.

The new constitution is aimed at giving equal rights to the Tamils and seeking a negotiated end to the war with the separatist Tigers (LTTE), but without the requisite two-thirds majority in parliament it remains an uphill struggle.

It is unlikely that the opposition UNP and the three Tamil parties backing the Tamil Tigers will agree to anything less than a formal peace deal with the island’s Tamil community.

The new constitution is being negotiated with the Tamil Tigers under the new PA-led government. This amount would be on top of the $98.2 billion already spent on bail-out packages following the economic crisis in end-1997. “I begin to worry that I could be the next to be laid off,” says a sales manager of a conglomerate that is a unit that is under the credit bank-directed restructuring.

China to okay pact on human rights

Beijing – On 23 October, China announced its intention to adopt the terms of the UN Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights before the year is out. The announcement came at a summit meeting between top officials from China and the European Union in Beijing.

With France holding the EU presidency, Jacques Chirac led the European delegation to China. He said he was sure the Chinese would ratify the treaty by the end of the year. The EU has been encouraging the Chinese to ratify for some time.

Beijing signed two UN conventions on human rights in 1997 and 1999 but has so far been hesitant to incorporate the terms of the agreements into Chinese law. Despite this week’s assurances, diplomats believe it may well be several years before the regime ratifies the second and politically more significant of the two conventions—that dealing with political and civil rights.

They likewise doubt if the ratification of the two conventions will lead to advances in human rights in China in the short term. “On paper, the Chinese enjoy a good number of liberties,” an American diplomat pointed out, “but in reality these laws are simply ignored.”

By contrast, EU representatives saw the announcement by Beijing as “further proof” of progress in the field of Chinese human rights.

According to Chirac, Beijing will continue to work toward the establishment of a state of law in China and the advancement of human rights. To this end, Chinese officials presented the premier with Rongji with a list comprising the names of dissidents and other victims of state persecution.

One of Sri Lanka’s most respected journalists, Myuvaganam Nimalrajah, has died aged 39 after being shot by unknown assailants. He reported for numerous foreign news organisations from Jaffna where fighting for Jaffna where fighting for the past 17 years. He was one of the few independent journalists able to function in the peninsula and at times was almost single-handedly responsible for informing the outside world of the latest developments in a conflict that has killed 60,000 people.

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“They are a thoroughly spoilt bunch. If they are ever in trouble their parents always get them off the hook,” one Indian friend told me. But it is not just the young heterosexual rich who are enjoying India’s gradual sexual awakening. Indeed, rising oil prices and growing debt problems, falling stock markets and unrestricted financial sector have raised new worries about a new phase of economic woes. Kim’s government is having to work hard to convince people of the need to spend an additional $44.63 billion to bail out the country’s ailing banks.

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Mediating the Middle East

According to a report published yesterday by a London-based think tank, the United Nations has been sidelined from the Middle East peace process. Now, with the Clinton-brokered truce failing to take hold, the UN and the EU step in.

By Richard Norby

The world's three biggest arms suppliers are permanent members of the UN security council and in which one in five adults is infected with the virus. Mbeki's stance on the causality between HIV and AIDS to boost drug industry profits. In an interview with Time magazine he said, "The problem is that once you say it's acquired from you that virus your response will be anti-retroviral drugs." Many other factors, Mbeki said, could contribute to the course of the immune system, like malnutrition, drug resistant strains and poverty, malnutrition and contaminated water. Mbeki maintained that the deaths of thousands of people could not be traced back to a single virus. Mbeki's latest statements could cause conflict in which one in five adults is infected with the virus and in which—accused of the government's own estimates—six million people will die of AIDS over the next decade.

Better conditions for air travellers

The science and technology select committee of the British House of Lords, which is due to report on the aircraft cabin environment of aircraft cabins in three weeks, is expected to recommend that airlines give passengers more explicit preventive advice about deep vein thrombosis (DVT) before long-haul flights. The condition, often referred to as the "economy class syndrome" can be brought on by sitting for long periods in cramped conditions. According to Farrokh, director of the Aviation Health Institute, which researches air deaths, the amount of leg room makes many economy class airline cabins a health hazard. "The danger in economy class is far greater because when the passenger is sitting still the usual pumping action of the calf and thigh muscles no longer pushes the blood up to the heart while at the same time the pressure on the edge of the seat blocks the return of the venous blood," he said. Although no detailed research has been carried out, Khan estimates that as many as 6,000 passengers a year may die as a result of DVT, with as little as three hours of cramped conditions putting some people at risk of blood clots in the deep veins of the legs which can move to the lungs, causing a potentially fatal embolism. The Lords select committee is expected to call on airlines to advise passengers to drink plenty of water, take aspirin—which helps to thin the blood— and do exercises during the flight to try to fend off the condition. (The Guardian)

Mbeki attacks CIA on AIDS

Many people enjoy being criticised—especially Mbeki. For months Mbeki has been offering his abrasive opinions on the subject of AIDS. Now, instead of finally accepting research results the whole world considers valid, he is working himself into a lather over conspiracy theories. According to reports in two South African weeklies, Mbeki told his African National Congress that the CIA was working closely with pharmaceutical manufacturers. He accused the two of colluding to promote a link between HIV and AIDS to boost drug industry profits. Mbeki has been quoted as saying for months for questioning the causality between HIV and AIDS. In an interview with Time magazine he said, "The problem is that once you say it's acquired from you that virus your response will be anti-retroviral drugs." Many other factors, Mbeki said, could contribute to the course of the immune system, like malnutrition, drug resistant strains and poverty, malnutrition and contaminated water. Mbeki maintained that the deaths of thousands of people could not be traced back to a single virus. Mbeki's latest statements could cause conflict in which one in five adults is infected with the virus and in which—accused of the government's own estimates—six million people will die of AIDS over the next decade.

The Insecurity Council Triad

The world's three biggest arms suppliers are permanent members of the UN security council who continue to militarise the world's most volatile regions.

By Richard Norton-Taylor

The current domestic politics of the US and UK has begun to impinge on the Middle East conflict to such an extent that new players have emerged as probable mediators. The states, according to the UN Security Council Secretary Kofi Annan and the European Union's Javier Solana, the violence-torn region seems to reflect the diminishing role of the US—a country that has dominated the region for almost a decade. Anxious to remain in office, Bush has been trying desperately to cobble together an emergency national unity government for just one month. Then there is President Bill Clinton—a lame duck chief executive, further handicapped by the fact that his wife, Hillary, is contesting a Senate seat in New York state where Jewish votes and money are crucial to victory. It was in such a situation that Kofi Annan stepped into the breach. "The Bush administration is by far the US's foreign policy representative. By being personally involved in alleviating ill-considered conflicts between Israel and the Palestinians, Annan raised the profile of the UN, something that has been missing since the US grabbed the mantle of chief interlocutor. In an interview with the BBC's Panorama programme, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir had agreed to participate in the Madrid peace conference on two conditions. He wanted the UN to be excluded and bilateral talks between Israel and each of its three Arab neighbours, with Jordan's delegation to include Palestinians who were not members of the Palestine Liberation Organisation. This has been the case all along between the Israeli extremists and their Palestinian counterparts, who represent a fast-growing political-administrative entity, called the Palestinian Authority. It also explains why Barak refused point blank to accept an international inquiry into the recent violence, and insisted on a bilateral investigation.

In contrast to Israel's lukewarm response to Annan's involvement the Palestinians, aware of the power imbalance between them and the Israelis, welcomed it. Domestic considerations weigh heavily on Barak. He has the support of only a third of the 120 MPs, and the device of a national unity government can only buy time for the final reckoning—no-confidence votes backed by an alliance of religious parties and the Likud, led by Ariel Sharon. It was to bolster his already meagre political fortunes that, following the failure of the Camp David II talks on 26 July, Clinton went out of his way to praise him for making "concessions" on the future status of Jerusalem.

Two days later Clinton told an Israeli television interviewer, "I have always wanted to move our embassy (from Tel Aviv) to West Jerusalem." Tel Aviv is the internationally recognised capital of Israel, Jerusalem is Israel's self-declared capital. It is the

The term aims of the UN operation in Sierra Leone is un CENTRAL AFRICA,

the strain of what looks like an increasingly lengthy commitment in Kosovo, the obvious case is Kosovo, it is incapable of mounting effective peacekeeping operations, it is incapable of mounting effective peacekeeping operations, it continues to support forces in volatile situations," Chipman said. "The long-term overreach, approving ambitious mandates and deploying inadequate peacekeeping. "It remains the case that the UN continues to countries spent $60.5 billion on arms last year, says the report, which also almost $6.6 billion.

The visits by United Nations troops to the violence-torn region seem to reflect the diminishing role of the US—a country that has dominated the region for almost a decade. Anxious to remain in office, Bush has been trying desperately to cobble together an emergency national unity government for just one month. Then there is President Bill Clinton—a lame duck chief executive, further handicapped by the fact that his wife, Hillary, is contesting a Senate seat in New York state where Jewish votes and money are crucial to victory. It was in such a situation that Kofi Annan stepped into the breach. "The Bush administration is by far the US's foreign policy representative. By being personally involved in alleviating ill-considered conflicts between Israel and the Palestinians, Annan raised the profile of the UN, something that has been missing since the US grabbed the mantle of chief interlocutor. In an interview with the BBC's Panorama programme, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir had agreed to participate in the Madrid peace conference on two conditions. He wanted the UN to be excluded and bilateral talks between Israel and each of its three Arab neighbours, with Jordan's delegation to include Palestinians who were not members of the Palestine Liberation Organisation. This has been the case all along between the Israeli extremists and their Palestinian counterparts, who represent a fast-growing political-administrative entity, called the Palestinian Authority. It also explains why Barak refused point blank to accept an international inquiry into the recent violence, and insisted on a bilateral investigation. This is in contrast to Israel's lukewarm response to Annan's involvement the Palestinians, aware of the power imbalance between them and the Israelis, welcomed it. Domestic considerations weigh heavily on Barak. He has the support of only a third of the 120 MPs, and the device of a national unity government can only buy time for the final reckoning—no-confidence votes backed by an alliance of religious parties and the Likud, led by Ariel Sharon. It was to bolster his already meagre political fortunes that, following the failure of the Camp David II talks on 26 July, Clinton went out of his way to praise him for making "concessions" on the future status of Jerusalem.

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BUNNY CAMPBELL IN CALIFORNIA

It carries some of the most striking visual images of any magazine in the world, and perhaps no publication could claim to be more in tune with the current international campaign against corporatism and globalisation than Adbusters, the “journal of the incorrigibles, malcontents and campus rabble-rousers, literacy teachers, reborn lefties, environmentalists, media-writers, environmental activists and global network of artists, which meaning is produced in the way we interact with the environment and the world is the promise of a better future.”

Lasn sees the magazine as a “people-driven planet inc.”. And belonging is best achieved by confronting the prescriptions of America. “We were a lone global network of artists, writers, environmentalists, ecological economists, media-writers, teachers, school teachers, ecocritics, downshifters, high-school shut-disturbers, campus rabble-rousers, incorrigibles, malcontents and green entrepreneurs... We believe that culture jamming will become to our era what civil rights was to the 60s, feminism to the 70s, and environmental activism to the 80s... Above all, it will change the way we interact with the mass media and the way in which meaning is produced in our society.”

Adbusters was actually formed more than 10 years ago, but it is only since the events of Seattle last year that led up to the demonstrations in Prague this year, that it has suddenly started to break through to a much wider audience. Its founder and editor-in-chief is 58-year-old Kalle Lasn, who left Estonia as a two-year-old, and grew up in Australia where he worked for the defence department before moving first to the Australian defence department before moving first to the University of Sydney to study law.

Adbusters does take ads itself and will run “advocacy advertisements,” such as either pro or anti-advertising, but it reserves the right to vet every other kind of ad which means that most that do appear are mainly for books and CDs, rather than for say, cars and alcohol. Some of the visuals are subversions of well-known ads, but although all the likely suspects—Nike, McDonald’s, Coca-Cola and Walt Disney—have been lampooned, only one has sued: “Absolut Vodka came after us with a horde of lawyers, but we beat them back quite handsomely. They got scared and ran away with their tail between their legs. We have quite consciously provoked people like Nike and McDonalds—they haven’t sued but they do subscribe.”

Lasn ran into problems, however, when he tried to advertise his Buy Nothing Day on television. All the major networks refused to run the commercials and CNN only agreed after being bound by a reporter from the Wall Street Journal. But Adbusters remains optimistic. If out culture jam today, then certainly culture jam tomorrow.

“We believe that culture jamming will become to our era what civil rights was to the 60s, feminism to the 70s, and environmental activism to the 80s...”
Beckham’s burblings

David Beckham’s book *My World* might read like something scribbled by a badger, but the aroma will appeal to both male football fans and female

O

By Terry Eagleton

Curiously, though, its very monotone, stream-of-tape-recorded consist of images?

Pele turns 60

Rio de Janeiro - The living football legend, Pele, turned 60 this week, and he is not so sure how to deal with the anniversary that he will celebrate quietly with his second wife Assis and their twins in Switzerland. “I still am as afraid of my birthdays as any other but they rarely had a chance as the facts about Pele’s success speak for themselves. Pele scored 1,283 goals in his professional career spanning 21 years. He won three World Cup titles with Brazil in 1958, 1962 and 1970, two intercontinental championships and 10 Sao Paulo titles with his club Santos, plus a US title with Cosmos New York in his final year of 1977. Pele was named World Footballer of the Century last year.

His parents had seen it from the start. Legend has it that his mother was stunned by how the yet-to-be born boy was kicking inside her. “I was the one of his daughters for a night. But I de-

It’s one of those bold, uninterpretable things, like chasing someone with a vacuum cleaner, wearing a surging or including a close-up photo of your dirty feet in your literary book. But I do these things. I choose them, because I am also one of the great footballer.” Maybe he should also have been a

With more and more golf courses the golfing world. It is the only international-classification of the Nepali Golfers Association of India (NGA), which has included to its official tour. This is because the two tournaments are held at the first and second place, the Nepali pro-baddaNagat Characteristics are third and fourth, consecutively, the professional Golfers Association of India (PGA), which has included to its official tour. This is because the two tournaments are held at the same time.

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**HITS FM off air**

One of the most popular FM stations in the Valley, HITS FM has been pulled off the air this week by Radio Nepal in a move that HITS managing director, Sunny Shrestha, describes as “unilateral, arbitrary, unethical, and unbusinesslike.”

HITS used the Radio Nepal transmitter on FM 100 for eight hours of programming daily for which it paid a block fee of Rs 6 million a year. “We were given barely a few notice before we actually stopped broadcasting, and we have immediately protested this action,” said Shrestha.

Radio Nepal’s board decided Monday to allow another company, Classic FM to broadcast 10 hours a day. The community-owned radio’s Shalendra Raj Sharma defended their decision saying that the contract with HITS had expired and the company had not bid for an extension. “How can we give air time to a party that didn’t even bid?” he asked.

HITS FM 100 starred broadcasting four years ago and had managed to gain a popular following among the valley’s young set. HITS FM also established a music award and had a chart tune that was later copied by other FM broadcasters. The company now plans to install its own transmitter within two months and broadcast on FM 91.2.

**94 FM online**

“Sacred Valley, Shakti Radio”—the FM radio station that has managed to generate a cult following in a relatively short time with its unique style of presentation and choice of music has added another aspect to its services: a live website on the Internet.

The free monthly periodical, www.hbc.com.np, from the Himalayan Broadcasting Corporation (HBC) features informative and interactive browsing using an enhanced interactive software called the “Flash” technology.

Currently, the online magazine, already its second issue, hosts an array of information on philosophy, archival audio and mp3 music that can be downloaded. There are also contents on nature and history, science, trends, philosophy, society, Nepali society, and literature, accompanied by sleek designs and interactive tools. The text is available in both English and Nepali.

Bibhuti Shrestha, info-tech manager at HBC, “This is our effort to show the rest of the world that Nepal too possesses the knowledge and ability to produce great websites, so that it knowledge and ability to produce great websites, so that it

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**NEPALI WEATHER**

If you were wondering what is causing these clouds to build up over the Himalayan foothills, a satellite image of the earth vapour content in the atmosphere provides the clue. The Tibetan plateau and the northern slopes of the Himalayas are blocking moisture. Some of this escape southwest through gaps in the mountains. However, apart from some snow in the high mountain regions down to elevations of 14,500, it isn’t bringing much for the weekend and into next week, afternoons will continue to be hazy, and inversion will cause clinging smog in Kathmandu Valley. Worth watching is a cyclone brewing in the Bay of Bengal, it is going to veer eastwards but will bring fresh northerly winds making it colder and clearer later in the week.

**NEPALI TIMES**

27 OCTOBER - 2000 NEPALI TIMES

**INFOCOM**

To send in your answers, 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: ____________________________

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A trek off the beaten path can also be a tri-ambitious one, where you don’t need the paraphernalia of a major expedition. So, if you are the kind whose idea of fun it is not the sado-masochistic urge to lug yourself up and down 5,000m passes, and you find yourself in Pokhara and want to get away from lakeside tents for two days, the Landruk Loop is the trek for you.

You start at Phedi on the Pokhara-Baglung road, walk (or rather climb) past Dhampus, take a night-break in Landruk, climb up in Ghandruk and then turn your power off and coast down to Birethanti without any effort at all. Then take an hour-long taxi ride back to Pokhara.

The difficult part is getting up at dawn in Pokhara, swallowing some “subcontinental breakfast” (chura and omlette washed down by tea) to take the buses bound for Baglung. If you don’t mind a splash you could take the taxi in Phedi.

The trail doesn’t make it easy for you; it climbs steeply right away but since it is early morning the climb is quite bearable. And true to the adage: the early tourist gets the view, you get some good scene-scenery (as we Nepalis like to call it) whenever you stop to catch your breath. Although steep, the path climbs through forest and the sun rarely gets through the canopy.

After you cross the forest, the air is crispier and the smell and the sun gets the view, you get some good scene-scenery (as we Nepalis like to call it) whenever you stop to catch your breath. Although steep, the path climbs through forest and the sun rarely gets through the canopy.

After you cross the forest, the air is crispier and the smell and the sun rarely gets through the canopy. At the Devil’s Wall, you get the view of the Annapurnas, and that is a view worth waiting for.

From Dhampus onwards, the rhododendron forest opens up more. An hour and a half of a steady but easy climb later you reach Tukche, which opens up a vista of the Annapurnas and Machhapuchhre. A look back down at the trail you’ve walked provides a great sense of achievement.

After Tukche you are on the other side of the mountain, on the trail north towards Pittim Dwarali, a 45-minute walk. You pass waterfalls and rhododendron forests to reach Talika, climbing down a path laid out like a staircase. From here, the path winds in and out with the contours of the mountainside and before long you are in Landruk, just in time for some noodle soup made by the sauni of a local tea shop.

Landruk three days is looking like Zermatt in the tourist season, and the restaurants are clean with patios where you can have lime juice in the sun. And like the hotel of Zermatt give you great views of Matterhorn, almost every room in the lodges of Landruk have window seats looking out at Annapurna South and Hiunchuli.

You can also admire the views while walking along the path as the first rays of the sun catch the tops of the Annapurna ranges. Our trail now loops down to the Modi Khola and up to the incredibly clean and friendly Gurung village of Ghandruk.

The climb is quite stiff, and there is always a temptation to head further north towards Chomrong and Ghorepani. But we have to get back to Pokhara, and this is only a two-day trek, remember? So reluctantly you head down.

You can stop by to check out the famous Gurung Museum in Ghandruk which has a collection of artefacts—weapons, clothing, utensils and household goods used by the Gurungs, and dating back to the last century. Enjoy a good dollop of traditional millet dhindo to give you enough energy for the three-hour descent to Birethanti and you’re off. You plunge past fields, rivers, forests and lose altitude so fast it almost makes your ears pop.

Syanjali Bazaar, about an hour’s walk ahead before reaching Birethanti, remains a perfect place to ease back and have a final snack before you get back to asphalt. In the green fields, the sound of the river and the tea is your final partner in this simple yet exhilarating trek and also to face the gauntlet of taxi drivers coaxing you to take their vehicle back down to Pokhara.
Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Now that Nepal's national treasure, Manisha Koirala, is heading India's latest quiz show, Sabal Das Croreka, we hope there will be no more major gaffes in questions about Nepal. And to improve the general knowledge of Nepal, and to train future politicians, we hear Nepal Television is soon starting its own indigenous quiz show called Ko Banneho Arabpati? After all, with the many similarities between Who Wants To Be A Millionaire and the business of politics this could be an ideal method of training future politicos. Quiz shows and politics are both populated by cerebrally-challenged individuals who regularly appear on televisions to answer earth-shaking questions like: In the film, Titanic, what or who is the Titanic? a) The iceberg, b) Kate Winslett's nickname, c) A large man-eating dinosaur, or d) Training centre for smugglers. And... the beauty of it is that you don't really need to know anything, intention in both is to become stupendously rich as fast as possible. 

Mayor Suwal

Mayor Prem Suwal of Bhaktapur isn’t the mayor that one would expect to meet in a city with a success story to relate. He doesn’t go around in a fancy car, and he doesn’t make reckless promises. Being down to earth is his style. Running a city that is a living museum and heritage site is one thing, being successful at preserving the cultural traditions is quite another. Bhaktapur has been acclaimed for its conservation efforts. This is thanks not just to the motivated citizens of Bhaktapur, but also to the municipality which is in other cities tends to be driven by nepotism (check out the monstrous building the municipality of Patan built for itself). The hardest part was making people understand why we needed to preserve what is left; that it wasn’t just my city or your city but our city. Once they understood this, everybody cooperated,” explains Suwal, letting us in on the secret of his success. The mayor is modest, as we soon find out. An intermediate in mechanical engineering, Suwal’s political career took root when he joined the Nepal Revolutionary Students Union in 1978. He joined the Central Committee of the Nepal Workers’ and Peasants’ Party (NWPP) as a member in 1991 and worked as its secretary from 1994-1996. Steeped in politics, his affiliation with the NWPP would one day make him mayor of the city he loves so much.

Ambassador vodka

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