

CARS, CARS, CARS

10 - 12



### **EXCLUSIVE**

## **DEADLOCK**

In two more weeks it looks like we'll be where we were two weeks ago. Hotel owners and unions are engaged in nasty sabre-rattling. The owners say no way they'll give in to union demands for a 10 percent service charge, and claim privately they'd rather announce a lockout. Unions are equally uncompromising

Having agreed to postpone their agitation on 19 November, hotel employees will now wear black armbands to work starting 7 December, and then launch an indefinite strike from 12 December. Unions have rejected the mediation panel formed by the government saying they were "tricked" into postponing their strike. Hotel owners say they'll agree to any decision made by government mediators, but would also like to amend the labour laws which they claim are anti-investor.

Unions say this is the climax of their 20-year battle for the 10 percent service charge. "We've been very flexible all the time and have even offered to withdraw the service charge if that proves detrimental to the industry and economy in a year," says Bishnu Rimal of the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions. Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN) president Narendra Bajracharya says employers are always ready to talk, but not under threat of a strike and a strict deadline. HAN says if the 10 percent service charge is the norm in the hotel industry abroad, as the unions claim, then they should be governed by the equally investor-friendly labour

## **Buddha Air to Bhutan**

Buddha Air planes have been flying to Bhutan's Paro airport since 15 November. The airline has leased its Beech 1900Ds aircraft to Bhutan's Druk Air for four flights a week. Druk has grounded one of its two BAe 146s for repairs. Buddha Air says the 'wet lease' contract is for two months, but could be extended. The airline would also like to start its own scheduled flights to Bhutan to become the second private Nepali airline to operate international flights.

## **CONSTITUTION TINKERING**

#### BINOD BHATTARAI

he week after Maoist leader Baburam
Bhattarai spelt out his group's demand
to scrap the 1990 Constitution,
everyone from the left to the right wants to
tinker with the ten-year-old document.
Even the main opposition Communist Party
of Nepal-Unified Marxist-Leninist (UML)
couldn't resist it, and the central committee
came up with a number of reasons why ten
years of democracy have failed to deliver.
The conclusion reached by the UML is: it is
not inept politicians, not poor leadership,
not bad governance, not even corruption;
democracy has failed because we have a bad
constitution.

But do we? More and more, it looks like the entire debate on the left of the political spectrum has been hijacked by the Maoists' violent campaign to overthrow the constitutional monarchy. The moderate left needs a cause, and it has seized upon the constitution and proposed amendments to it, mainly in the provisions for elections.

- The UML's two main proposals are:
   Scrap delineation of electoral constituencies based on census counts, because more populous districts get more MPs
- Declare an all-party national government to oversee parliamentary elections.

The UML wants to present a bill in parliament to push the amendments, but that would need the support of the ruling Nepali Congress, which so far hasn't shown any enthusiasm for the proposed changes. NC leaders say the constitution is fine as it is, and the UML just wants to have a ball to run with ahead of next year's elections to local bodies. (Other UML ideas for change include constitutional guarantees for the creation of decentralised local governments, new provisions that would finally bring 'real' land reforms, and the creation of a secular state.)

UML general secretary, Madhav Kumar Nepal, was part of the team that put together the 1990 Constitution, and he feels a need for amendment because the population of developed regions in the country has grown faster and will consequently have more MPs, while traditional UML strongholds in the hill districts continue to face out-migration and hence fewer representatives. "Only a moratorium on changing constituency boundaries every 10 years [based on census figures] would ensure fair representation of the un-developed areas," he said.

Nepal is also adamant that any future



## Suddenly, everyone wants to change the constitution.

parliamentary elections will not be free and fair unless it is overseen by a caretaker national government. He says such national governments could be formed by parliamentary parties proportionate to their representation, and the prime minister could be the incumbent. Nepal even sees a role for such a national government in finding a political solution to the Maoist problem.

Under existing parliamentary arithmetic, only a UML-Congress combine can muster the two-third majority strength to change the constitution. But given that Congress thinks the UML's first proposal is gerrymandering, and the second violates the fundamental tenets of parliamentary democracy, it is difficult to see how such a bill can be passed. "They've raised a non-issue, an irrelevant debate when the constitution has not been fully tested," says Ganesh Raj Sharma, a constitutional lawyer. "It is an escapist attempt to flee from present realities and problems."

The UML needs to keep the fires of the constitutional debate going if only to steal

the limelight from radicals to its left and right. But UML member of parliament Subhas Nemwang says the proposal is not new and is fully justified. "No one seems to be willing to even listen. We've been talking about changes for a long time, and it's now in public debate because our central committee has taken it up." He says the 1990 Constitution was a compromise made when democracy had just been restored, and it is now time to "do what was left undone".

## **Indian media on warpath**

India did not like it when Nepal imported Chinese arms over a decade ago, and promptly slapped a blockade that lasted more than a year. This time it is not Chinese arms, but fountain pens, staplers and polyester fabric that is worrying the Indians. And just as in 1989, the Indian media has unleashed a fusillade. Nepali business stands accused of using subsidies provided by Pakistani intelligence of smuggling the goods to undercut Indian manufactures. The news reports in print, television and Internet are obviously leaked by official sources under pressure from businesses hurt by the cheaper Chinese goods. But what is intriguing is how the protectionist 'Bombay Club' and traders in Calcutta and Patna suddenly see the 1996 Indo-Nepal trade treaty, with its duty-free access for Nepali exports, as a security threat to India.

Indian officials in Kathmandu tried to defuse the brouhaha and told us its media was "making a mountain out of a molehill" and

admitted that even if all of Nepal's imports from China were to be smuggled into India, it would still be a negligible porportion of India's domestic market. But that doesn't cut with Nepali business, which is seriously spooked and angered by what it sees as a familiar Indian tactic of media psy-war and arm-twisting. Nepal put its informal barter trade with Tibet under official licensing and banking rules this year. "We've even got special measures now to regulate trade with Tibet. The Indian media's charges are baseless," says Chandi Prasad Shrestha, spokesman at the Ministry of Commerce. "The recent reports have hurt all who have been working to create a win-win situation for businesses in both Nepal and India," says a flustered Badri Ojha of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry. Indian imports into Nepal grew from Rs 24.3 billion to Rs 32.1 billion within three years since the treaty was signed, while Nepali exports to India grew from Rs 3.6 billion to Rs 12.5 billion.



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## **EDITORIAL**



## LEFT, RIGHT. LEFT, RIGHT.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal and his comrades in the bush want the present constitution scrapped. Presumably, they want to have a dictatorship of the proletariat declared in its place. The Unified Marxist-Leninists, on the other hand, saw the Maoists stealing their thunder so they half-heartedly put forward their own bright ideas for constitutional amendments. Then there are the people on the hard right who are furious that their masters lost power, and now want a new constitution that will set right the "wrongs" of the Jana Andolan. So, there you have it: the entire political spectrum except for the centrist Nepali Congress organising to remould the constitution. So we have to ask ourselves: What are they after? Why now? And who benefits?

Our view is: it ain't broke, so don't fix it. The snowball effect of public cynicism about the state of the country has little to do with flaws in the constitution. It has to do with short-sighted, narrow-minded and selfserving politicians who don't deserve to rule. Blame the driver, not the car. Blame the carpenter, not his tools.

The most curious call for change in the constitution comes from the ultra-left. They don't seem to mind that it would need a 1960-type royal coup to form a constituent assembly, since there is nothing in the present constitution that allows it to be scrapped. As with all their revolutionary forebears, the end justifies the means in the single-minded pursuit of power by the shortest route available. Care a hang for the consequences. Then there are erstwhile partyless parliamentarians like Rajeshwar Devkota, who really has nothing left to lose by calling for major rectifications in the constitution.

It seems if you don't like the Nepali Congress, then you are in the change-the-constitution bandwagon. No surprise, therefore, that the



temptation was too much for the UML to resist-this was just too popular a political plank for the dominant opposition not to have its own act. As the UML's General Secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal says elsewhere in this issue, we need a national government to ensure that the next elections are clean. Pretty clever move by the comrade from Balkhu in taking the wind out of the sails of Messrs Pushpa Kamal Dahal to his left and

Rajeswar Devkota to his right.

Nepalis, being generally gradualists, have indicated by their ballots in the past ten years that they like things to evolve in less unsettling ways than total revolution. Our minds have been primed by successive elections to now contemplate change in governance without being afraid of the consequences of such thoughts. By all indications, the UML proposal to amend certain provisions of the constitution is a trial balloon. They can't be too serious about it, especially if they need to take such amendments to the House for ratification.

Nepalis aren't prepared to give up the essence of the Constitutionthat of creating a pluralistic society with a parliamentary form of government, and independent institutions to monitor its functioning. Changes in the constitution are perfectly natural, and even desirable. However, change for the sake of change may be good politics, but it is bad democratic practice. Having said that, Madhav Nepal must be thanked for bringing the discussion back to where it rightfully belongs—to strengthening democracy, not discarding it altogether. Which seems to be what the two lean and hungry fellows from Gorkha, Comrade Babu Ram and Pancha Rajeshwar, want

## NUMBING NUMBERS

During the Vietnam War, they used to call them "five o'clock follies": evening press conferences in Saigon where they rattled off the daily scores of killed in action. Two marines, 80 Viet Cong. The reporting of the Maoist insurgency in this country is starting to resemble this relentless bombardment of factoids. Today's tally: Police 3, Maoists 2. The numbers numb the nation, the daily count anaesthetises us. Sterile statistics keep the human tragedy of the insurgency, the misery of thousands of individual lives and bereaved families, at a safe distance so it does not spoil our dinner. It also inures us, deadens our senses, paralyses us as we go about our daily chores in a miasma of fatalism and despair. As long as we don't see ourselves as the protagonists in this crisis, it will continue to be remote and we will be detached. The media critic, Johan Galtung said of another conflict: "Peace is not just the absence of war, it is the absence of the threat of war." The media cannot stand the dull periods of non-events when no one dies. Media therefore becomes a part of the problem, a force that pushes people to view violence as normal, and slants public opinion.

Nepali Times is published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd Mailing address: GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal Editor: Kunda Dixit Desk editors: Deepak Thapa, Samuel Thomas editors@nepalitimes.com  $Marketing, circulation\ and\ subscriptions:$ (01) 543333-7 Fax: (01) 521013







STATE OF THE STATE

## **Bringing the House down**



he Supreme Court has decreed that the sovereign parliament of this country has no right to grant an allowance to its former members. The court's interpretation of Clause 67 of the Constitution in effect bars sitting MPs from taking any interest in the welfare of their predecessors. The court decision was greeted with howls of applause from all and sundry. Let's face it, our four-wheel drive lawmakers are not exactly very popular. So it was a very populist thing to do, to cast our honourable members to the wolves.

At risk of being called a knee-jerk contrarian, let me beg to disagree. An important lesson here is that parliament should get into the habit of consulting competent constitutional lawyers whenever it is in the process of formulating law. Such a step will save lawmakers from the embarrassment of having their decisions thwarted by the Supreme Court at a later stage.

In declaring the pension allowance granted to former MPs illegal, the court has resorted to a technical point, it hasn't questioned the motive of lawmakers. "Former members aren't members anymore," said the court, as if it was because they are not sitting parliamentarians, there was really no need to forfeit privileges granted to them by the legislature.

The reaction of the capital's middle class to the court's decision was quite predictable: an indignant serves-them-right. The Pajero scandal, male MPs filing maternity bills, all that got a lot of publicity. And we tarred all MPs with the same brush, dismissing them all as crooks. Being a deeply despotic society, we find it hard to accept that someone not born to power can acquire it through democratic means. This is the reason behind our disdain for politicians. No wonder the chattering class of the capital love to hate commoner law-makers. Almost no one seemed to care for the impact this decision will have on the life of some of the committed, honest and accountable former law-makers of which (believe it or not) there are quite a few.

For independently-wealthy MPs with Panchayat pasts, the allowance was small change in deep pockets. It is unlikely that Arjun Narsingh KC or Kamal Thapa will miss it. When Sharad Singh Bhandari ceases to be an MP, he is unlikely to care that he will not get an MP's pension. Then there are MPs who made fortunes in the

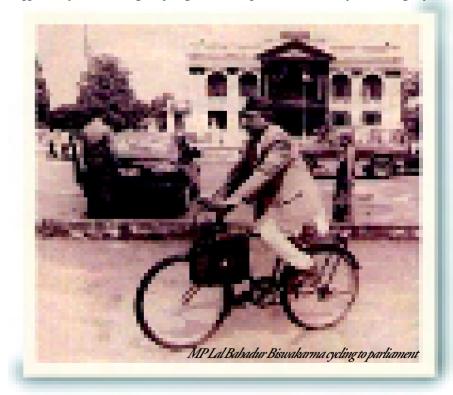
Being a deeply despotic society, we find it hard to accept that someone not born to power can acquire it by being elected. This is why **Kathmandu's chattering class loves to hate commoner law-makers.** 

horse-trading that went on during the hung parliament days when honourable members switched sides for a premium. When five prime ministers in four years tried all possible permutations and combinations to clobber together governments, fence-sitting MPs with fluid loyalties cashed in. Others sold their duty-free Pajeros for huge profits. In short, our lawmakers worked assiduously to build up their own private pension funds.

But what of the honest former MPs—the ones who didn't sell their souls several times over? They had no ancestral property to fall back on, they came to Kathmandu wearing chappals and went back to their districts in chappals. They walked to the gates of Singha

politics of being above politics is a clever ploy to divert attention from our own devious money-making ways. But for every PLU that you can show me paying his taxes, I can show you at least ten political activists working for the downtrodden at the grassroots. I am not aware of even one public servant, civil or military, who can hold a lamp to the sincerity of purpose of a Maheshwar Prasad Singh or a Shankar Pandey.

Members of Parliaments are the most important constituents of a vibrant democracy. If we aren't getting the best possible people there, let's start electing more deserving candidates in greater numbers. But lumping all MPs in the same cesspool hurts democracy. And that goes for



Durbar from their deras, like the ordinary people they represented. Is this the way we repay their integrity, by cutting off the little allowance they had? I'd hate to think of socialist-thinker Ram Chandra Tiwari, firebrand farm-leader Mahendra Madhukar or political organiser Mahendra Roy not even getting a pension after their terms are over.

Kathmandu's urban middle-class PLUs (People Like Us) love to hate politicians. "Politicians have wrecked the nation" is a common refrain at parties and receptions. The

the prime minister, who recently said the parliament is dominated by smugglers, but did nothing to haul up his own colleagues. Considering the money we lavish on sending officials to the Olympics, why grudge the small pension allowance for former law-makers? We have a lot at stake in the formation of a confident, secure and selfassured political class that will not turn to influence-peddling when it retires from parliament. We owe it to them, and we owe it to our democracy.

**VIEW POINT** 

# "Peoples' multi-party democracy offers a comprehensive alternative framework of governance"

e are still in an era of imperialism and proletarian revolution. The validity of Marxism and Leninism has not diminished at all, though tremendous changes have taken place in the world in the recent past. Both the adventurist policies of ultra-leftism and liquidationist policies of rightist opportunism have caused harm to the communist movement in various countries. The communist party should exhaust all possibilities, including the political and militant mass struggle and peaceful competition to direct society towards progress and to remain in the centre of national politics according to the objective conditions of a given society.

The experience of several southeast Asian and Latin American countries and the former Soviet Union is a pointer: the adjustment of policies and tactics with a correct understanding of the needs of time together with clear class stand and outlook and dialectical approach is necessary for success and sustainability of socialism. Now the phase of setback and confusion is basically over and forces of socialism and communism are gradually regaining strength across the world. In various countries communist parties are leading strong popular movements, including the labour movement. The so-called deregulation of trade has supported the ideology of absolute market sovereignty, undermining national and political sovereignty, cultural autonomy of nations and the imperatives of domestic need of national institutions, including those in welfare and service sectors. The US-led world capitalism is not paying attention to the serious concerns of developing countries. US-led military actions and imposition of trade embargoes and blockades against developing, small and weaker countries of the world validate the analysis made by Lenin about imperialism.

When China and India were engaged in earth-shaking liberation and independence movements, the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) was established to struggle against feudalism, autocracy, comprador

capitalism and imperialism. In the first decade, the CPN carried out a militant mass movement along with the participation in parliamentary and local body elections. Even during the despotic Panchayat regime, when all political parties were banned and the CPN was operating underground, the Party carried out both constitutional and extra-constitutional, peaceful and violent forms of struggle. Passing through ordeals of torture, imprisonment and harassment and enduring the polemics of ideological struggle, internal splits and deviations the mainstream communists succeeded in unifying the movement and deepening its

opportunism, anarchism and petit bourgeois individualism and united the party ideologically and organisationally. The congress reconfirmed the programme of PMPD, which envisages a massbased cadre party guided by clear Marxist outlook, organisational principles, and discipline. It was adopted after a long ideological struggle against right and left opportunism. Democratisation of the party, state and society are taken as important goals to quicken progressive change in society.

The contradiction between the toiling masses and the feudal, comprador bureaucratic capitalist classes that are collaborating with foreign

together and establish solidarity and cooperation with the world communist and socialist movements. One of the major aspects of the PMDP is to increase the capability of the communist party by mobilising the people in all circumstances and thus lead the communist movement in a sustained manner. The supremacy of the constitution, rule of law, multi-party, open and plural society, the principle of separation of power and the system of multiparty competition, periodic elections and government of party in majority and opposition of the minority are the mechanisms to maintain wider public support and

guiding state conduct. PMDP will

consolidate the people's democratic

movement, eliminating exploitation

and oppression, developing the

country both materially and

spiritually and creating the ground for social transformation to achieve socialism. We have adopted the peoples' multiparty democracy model as a distinct feature of a new democratic revolution essential to a semifeudal and semicolonial country like

The forces of socialism will march ahead in the new century and the human being will prefer the road to equality, prosperity and peace. In order to achieve successes in this regard, we need to formulate appropriate national strategies under the guiding principles of socialism with due recognition to the imperatives of time and situation and careful analysis of all relevant phenomena and changes. As Lenin said, "Concrete political aims must be set in concrete circumstances. All things are relative, all

things flow and all

things change."



**Madhav Kumar Nepal, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal Unified Marxist-Leninist,** summarises the basic tenets of his party's reasons for adhering to the policy of peoples' multi-party democracy: supremacy of the constitution, rule of law, separation of powers, multi-party competition and periodic elections.

roots among the people. The CPN (Unified Marxist-Leninist) received about 31 percent of the popular vote in the last general elections and won a majority of local bodies. After the mid-term polls of 1994, the CPN-UML had formed the minority government, now it is the main opposition in parliament. We have taken the parliamentary front as an important front of class struggle.

Synthesising the experiences of the past and closely examining the domestic and international situation, the Fifth National Congress led by Comrade Madan Bhandari adopted the programme of Peoples' Multi-Party Democracy (PMPD) as the path of Nepali revolution. At the Sixth National Congress in 1998 we carried out a resolute struggle against rightist

monopoly capital are reflected in the exploitative and unjust production relations in Nepali society. There is unjust and unequal ownership of land, and abject poverty. Control of a large portion of the national income by a handful of powerful people renders a vast majority of the people unemployed and below the poverty line despite increasing external loans and grants. PMPD provides the answers to these questions by offering a comprehensive alternative framework of governance, economic system, education and culture, land reform and proper utilisation of foreign assistance.

The communist party has to lead the revolution to bring workers, peasants, national capitalists and patriotic forces

yak and yeti

## LETTERS

## **ICIMOD**

While on official travel outside Nepal, I was dismayed to belatedly receive a copy of your article "ICIMOD Downsizes". This article contained harmful errors of fact and opinion, which were neither true nor attributed. These statements have hurt the reputation of highly esteemed professional colleagues in ICIMOD. The failure to correctly identify the internationally recruited staff, who are separating by virtue of having completed two or more terms with ICIMOD, was highly irresponsible. The one line correction in the following issue does not even clarify that Anupam Bhatia and Narpat Jodha were not among those whose contracts are expiring. Likewise, your correction continues the error that this was a Board decision, rather than a normal management action upon the completion of contracts, for which the Board is not responsible.

However, the failure to correctly obtain the facts before reporting them pales before the hurtful negative comment on the

professional calibre of our departing colleagues through the unattributed quotation. The professionals who are completing their assignments with ICIMOD have outstanding accomplishments to their credit throughout the seven countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalaya region we serve. These accomplishments are documented in numerous publications and letters of appreciation. They were highlighted in ICIMOD's recent Centre's Day with its Board of Governors and Support Group. Your unsupported and unkind remark dishonours these professionals, and is unfair to them and ICIMOD.

All of us at ICIMOD devote much of our efforts to supporting the efforts of the highly skilled and competent professionals of this region to facilitate increased regional capacity and hope for the future. We welcomed Nepali Times as a creative demonstration of the professionalism developing in the region. It is thus deeply disappointing to find such an article in the Nepali Times.

Gabriel Campbell Director General, ICIMOD

## **KOW-TOWING TO KOIRALA**

CK Lal's columns, till now, were always truthful and objective appraisals of current issues that I read with interest and admiration. However, in "The dynasty strikes back" (#17) he too seems to have succumbed to the bug of sycophancy. His brief stint of objective analytical writing has come to an end, and he has shown that if you scratch Nepali journalists, they show their hidden colours immediately. It is only a matter of time, which in most cases is sooner rather than later. Kow-towing to the Koiralas is a professional necessity, I suppose. It gets its rewards as any cosying up to the powers-that-be (or soon-to-be) does. CK Lal's piece has to some extent damaged your credibility.

A columnist's views do not necessarily reflect a paper's official standing, but no paper can at the same time absolve itself completely from the views it prints.

> Dr SM Dixit Patan

O E > Y



# CENSUS 2001

HEMLATA RAI

he only thing certain about Nepal's current population seems to be that it is still growing too fast, and that it will double in about 25 years. The estimate for Nepal's present population is 22 million, give or take two million. Figures for the population growth rate range from 2.1 percent to 2.7 percent, depending on who is counting. But finally, the guessing game may be over.

On 22 June 2001, tens of thousands of specially trained enumerators will fan out across the country for what is officially called the Nepal Census on Population and Housing 2001. But this is not just a count; enumerators will also collect data on age, sex, occupation, ethnic group, housing, schooling, migration and women's property rights. And for the first time, the census will provide answers, through gender-segregated data, on the status of women and their welfare. In themselves, the roles of men and women have a crucial bearing on family size, and the data will be invaluable in planning future strategies for Nepal's population management programme.

A consortium of donors, including various United Nations organisations, have already begun revising manuals, curricula and questionnaires, adding the gender perspective for the census takers. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is supporting the recruitment of nearly 4,500 specialised women enumerators who will be trained to accurately fill in the census questionnaire. A pilot census was conducted earlier this year to pre-test questionnaires and the results have already been



Next year's census will probably confirm what all of us know: that despite progress, Nepal's population growth is still out of control. The government needs a policy, and it needs to implement it rapidly.

used to fine-tune data tabulation. The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) in Kathmandu claims that the 2001 count will be the most scientific of all censuses since the first National Census conducted in

1911 (when Nepal's population was a mere five million), and a virtual treasure house of valuable data compared with the last one

Present estimates show that Nepal's fertility rate (the average

number of children per couple) is 4.45, a big drop from 6.3 in 1970. The infant mortality rate, a key factor in inducing couples to have fewer children if it is low, has declined sharply from 187 per 1,000 live births in 1960 to 83 today. But while the effect of these factors takes time to make an impact on fertility decline, the sharp drop in death rate and the still-high birth rate has opened a yawning gap and turned Nepal's demographic transition into a serious challenge.

government machinery and the politicians to use the figures properly to meet population targets. The current Ninth Five Year Plan has prioritised a 20year population plan. Under this strategy, by 2016, Nepal's fertility rate has to reach "replacement level"—the point where an average couple has just enough children to replace themselves. In 15 years, if this goal is met, an average Nepali woman has to have no more than 2.4 children. But demographers like Bal Gopal Baidya, former member of the National Planning

Nepal's literacy rate for girls is the lowest in the region. In fact, illiteracy among women in Nepal is the same as in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.

Tribhuvan University population expert Bal Krishna Mabuhang says the census will be important for one simple reason: it will remove doubts about figures. Although Nepal's population crisis is alarming, he says there is no way to assess its impact on the country's overall development right now. "We cannot say for sure that our population situation has reached the crisis point on the basis of data presently available," Mabuhang says. Just one example of the wide disparity in figures is the 1991 census that showed Nepal's population in the 1981-1991 decade grew by 2.1 percent annually. But the National Planning Commission's calculation for the same period is 2.5 percent. After the 2001 figures come in, the Central Bureau of Statistics is planning to decentralise data analysis through regional data processing centres linked with the national data processing centre at its headquarters in Kathmandu. This will help carry out a proper study of present resources, service and opportunity distribution, and comprehensive trends on population mobility.

The lack of proper statistics is only part of the problem. The really big challenge is to get the

Commission, admit that this target may be unrealistic. "To get to replacement level by 2016 is very ambitious," Baidya told

But it has been done elsewhere. Thailand reduced its fertility rate from 6.4 in 1960 to a near-replacement level of 2.4 in 20 years with an aggressive contraceptive drive combined with family health services and economic growth. In Nepal, the government's 20-year strategy barely exists on paper, and for it to be adopted and implemented will clearly take some time. Meanwhile, the clock keeps ticking. The Ninth Plan has also recommended intervention packages like family health services, child survival strategies, and contraceptive prevalence as effective tools for population control. But this would cost 80 percent of the total national budget outlay for public health, and no one in the Ministry of Population and Environment (MOPE) seems to know where that money is going to come

MOPE, it seems, has plenty to mope about. Nepal's population growth rate has slowed down slightly to 2.4 percent since 1995, but experts caution that it is simply not

by DANIEL LAK

**HERE AND THERE** 

My own country, Canada, may want to spy on the developing ability of Sherpas to play ice hockey, if only on vertical skating rinks.

hazard of this profession concerns intelligence and not the kind between the ears. No, I refer to spooky behaviour involving trench coats, rendezvous on dark street corners and vodka martinis, shaken not stirred. Yes, dear reader, I mean spying. Now that a couple of publications from the squalid end of the local press have suggested that I am an agent for a Certain Neighbouring Country, it's time to lay the cards on the table. How should I start? I was thinking along the lines of "the name's Bond, James Bond," but somehow Daniel Lak doesn't carry quite the same heft. Nor does my mid-Atlantic baritone send the same sort of shivers down (largely female) spines as Sean Connery's Lowland Scots. Then there's the matter of disguise. I have—it is said unkindly but accurately—a face made for radio.

Don't rush to comfort me, and assure me that my passing resemblance to John Malkovich is somehow compensation for not having the unflappable rubbery good looks of the traditional television personality. Malkovich doesn't look pretty on the box either. If anyone should jump at the opportunity to disguise themselves, to at least dawn a toupee and cover up that, that...forehead, well, it should be me. But no, I am as I am. No mask, wig or surgeon's knife will be allowed to change it. Finally, a good spy craves anonymity—a way to lurk in the

background, one day a sweeper at a missile factory, the next a chauffeur to a minister. Being a broadcaster and columnist with at least some facial recognition makes it hard to sneak around unnoticed, especially in our dear small Kathmandu. I can't even miss paying for my round at the pub without drinkers all across town shaking their heads and saying, "Tut, tut, there he goes again."

One does run into the odd spy in my line of work. Generally, they work at foreign embassies and thev find it difficult to explain exactly what it is they do. You tend to hear phrases like "a little of this, a little of that", "jack of all trades, old boy, master of none", "oh, I just help out where I'm needed"—words to that effect. One such from some years ago was the "Counsellor, Economic" at a certain European mission in another part of the world. He was a jovial fellow with a good contacts book, but he knew nothing of either economics or



counselling. I wasn't surprised to see his name on an list of alleged agents that made the rounds on the World-Wide Web last year.

I have worked in a few places that are reputedly nests of spies—Kabul, Peshawar, Teheran. My last posting, Delhi, was supposed to be a place where you spoke very carefully at diplomatic functions. And you never, never leant too close to a vase of flowers or did anything distasteful in front of a mirror. But in 1998 the Indian capital was found to be devoid of competent intelligence agents when no one—and I mean no one—foresaw that India's newly elected, avowedly hawkish government would use a nuclear test to shore up its coalition in parliament. There were three heart attacks and a midnight disappearance at the American Embassy alone.

But it could be that I am missing the boat. Spying could be the profession of the 21st century, just as computer programming was in the 1990s, and stock brokering in the 1980s. Perhaps this is the century of the freelance spook who spies only for countries or causes that please him. I, for example, could offer some crucial information about Nepal to the Netherlands. Wake up you sturdy folk of Holland, Nepali cheese is as good as Gouda and it's only a matter of time before the Edam on your plate comes from a Yak in Langtang. Perhaps the Maldives needs someone here to monitor and subtly encourage scuba diving or tuna consumption. My own country, Canada, may want to know about the developing ability of Sherpas to play ice hockey, if only on vertical skating rinks. Taking a page from Graham Greene, I could be Our Man in Kathmandu, passing off schematic diagrams of my son's electronic toys as the plans for a Himalayan missile defence system.

Alas though, I am not cut out for such a life. For too long, I've given away my secrets and spread information, not distorted it for malevolent or paranoid ends. And my mother would not approve. I'll stick with forcing my face on an unwilling public, and leave the spying to the spooks.

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falling fast enough to take advantage of economic growth. At present rates of growth, the country's population will be 33 million by 2016 and perhaps 40 million by 2025. But if replacement level fertility is finally reached by 2020, then the growth will start slowing, but only very slowly.

With a population density of 150 people per sq km, Nepal is one of the most denselypopulation mountain regions of the world. Migration to the tarai and the cities counts towards an alarming urbanisation rate of 6.5 percent, which means the population of Nepali cities and towns is growing at nearly three times the national average. With contraceptive prevalence at barely 20 percent (compared to 50 percent in Bangladesh) all the present figures point to a doomsday demographic scenario. UNFPA in Nepal says that despite the decline in fertility rate Nepal's population is "still too big to be manageable." Economist Mohan Man Saiju, formerly with the National Planning Commission, agrees: "The present population growth rate is not sustainable in the context of economic and social progress.

Nepal is also lagging behind in commitments it made at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, which affirmed that population control is closely linked to the alleviation of poverty, the empowerment of women and environmental protection. The 20-year programme of action adopted in Cairo calls for improved and wider access to education, especially for girls, the provision of quality reproductive health care, and increased all-round efforts to end violence against women and redress gender inequality. Nepal's performance on all scores is poor, and despite the progress of the past 30 years, it still lags behind other South Asian countries in key development indicators (see table). The worst records are in infant mortality (seven times higher in Nepal than in Sri Lanka) and maternal mortality, which is one of the highest in the world. Population planners say these parameters are directly correlated to factors like female literacy and the status of women, and sure enough, Nepal's literacy rate for girls is the lowest in the region. In fact, illiteracy among women in Nepal is the same as in Talibanruled Afghanistan.

The government still hopes that last year's economic growth of six percent will trickle down and translate into a decline in the population growth rate. "If we manage to

### Projected population growth

keep the annual economic growth at 4-5 percent with the population growth rate pushed down to less than two percent, then we stand a chance to survive over-population," says Saiju.

But other experts warn that this year's economic growth was an aberration caused by better harvests due to a healthy monsoon, and not because of better infrastructure and management, and they doubt if this rate can be sustained.

Demographer Ram Hari Aryal says Nepal has both "quantitative and qualitative" problems with its population. Nepal's population pyramid has a very large base, with children under 14 making up 44 percent of the population. Aryal is sharply critical of the lack of urgency in the government's response. "With this kind of laxity in the government, national population targets are unachievable," he told us bluntly.

The large proportion of young children also means a slower decline in fertility rates because of population momentum. It is a global demographic trend that women are having fewer children than their mothers, but since almost half the total population is under 25, any real decline in overall population is unlikely soon even if the government were super-efficient in implementing a new strategy.

The other demographic factor is uneven growth. The cities and the tarai are growing much faster than the mid-hills and the high mountain regions. MOPE estimates that population density in the tarai is already 254 per sq km, compared to only 28 per sq km in the mountains. Central Nepal is also much more heavily populated (275 per sq km) than the mid-western region (68 per sq km)

It doesn't look too good for Nepal, but even—especially—when the odds are stacked in favour of disaster, a start has to be made somewhere. If all goes as planned, the 2001 census will provide population and development planners with vital building blocks. And then the really difficult part begins.

## Melamchi update

Loan negotiations between the Nepali government and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) concluded in Manila last week in preparation for the Melamchi Water Supply Project to appear before the ADB board in late December.

The loan document will be reviewed by Nepali government and ADB officials before distribution among the ADB board members who will make the final decision. Six other donors and

lenders (see Nepali Times #14 27 October) are expected to approve their respective shares for the \$441 million project once the ADB board goes ahead with its \$120 million loan.

If all goes as expected, the plan is to bring water from the snow-fed Melamchi Khola to the Valley by 2006. A 26.5 km long tunnel through the mountains northeast of Kathmandu will bring 170 million litres of water daily. Before that happens, however, water supply and distribution

must be privatised (by 2001), legislation passed to relocate industries that use more water and prevent illegal tapping of ground water, and an independent regulatory body set up, as demanded by the ADB loan.

## **Money for kamaiyas**

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) will spend \$3.5 million on a project for the sustainable elimination of the kamaiya system of bonded labour. The money comes from the United States Department of Labour and will be used to support the rehabilitation of 14,000 families (8,000 of whom have no land or homes) that were freed from bondage, following a government decision to outlaw the practice on 17 July earlier this year.

## **Downsizing government**

The Public Expenditure Review Commission, formed to suggest ways to downsize and to rationalise spending, recommended sweeping measures, including the scrapping of several ministries, in a draft report submitted to the government last week. These include the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, the Ministry of General Administration and the Ministry of Population and Environment. The Commission has suggested that a National Women's Commission be formed to manage issues handled by Ministry of Women, the Central Work Management should take over the work of the Ministry of General Administration, and the Ministry of Health should keep population records. It has also recommended that the Public Revenue Investigation Department be merged with an independent Investigation Bureau.

## Friends of the Bagmati

The London-based Alliance for Religions and Conservation (ARC) is to work with a newly formed group called the Friends of Bagmati (FOB) to conserve, clean and restore the holy river. The FOB, still in its formative stage, is open to anyone interested in trying to restore the river to its original glory. The idea is that everyone does his or her little bit, with goodwill and faith, to clean up the river, though it may appear to be an insurmountable task. ARC will help mobilise friends abroad, and guide the work of the new group.

## **EVs in Bharatpur**

Bharatpur Municipality has decided to introduce five electric three-wheelers to serve the Shahid Chowk-BP Koirala Cancer Hospital route. Martin Chautari, a Kathmandu-based advocacy group, says it has been asked to prepare the groundwork in preparation of inducting the electric vehicles in the city.

Meanwhile, the Electric Vehicle Association of Nepal (EVAN) asked Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala to annul the government's decision to stop the registration of new electric vehicles operating within the Ring Road. EVAN maintains that the government should implement strong and effective emission standards to take polluting vehicles off the roads, and increase the carrying capacity of roads also, instead of placing a ban on EV registrations.

## **Parking full at airport**

Kathmandu aiport has run out of parking space for jets. Monday, 20 November, saw the worst-ever congestion, as scheduled international flights arrived to find there was nowhere to park because the apron was fully occupied. Arriving PIA, Qatar Airways, Royal Nepal from London, and Bangaldesh Biman jets had to wait up to one-and-half hours before irate passengers could disembark.

#### **SOUTH ASIA - DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS Total rertility** Infant mortality Maternal % Illiterate **Total population** (total per 1,000 mortality (>15 years) (millions (1995-2000) live births) male/female in 2000) ratio Bangladesh 79 49/79 1.7 3.11 Bhutan 2.8 5.50 India 72 410 32/56 3.13 1.6 540 42/77 Nepal 2.4 4.45 Pakistan 74 41/70 2.8 5.03 2.10 Sri Lanka 18 60 6/11 1.6

## The travails of a population billionaire

TV PADMA IN NEW DELHI

ndia has a long way to go before it can stabilise demographic growth, says the second National Family Health Survey. High levels of poverty, hunger, illiteracy, and poor basic health services continue to be the main hurdles for the world's oldest birth control programme. The survey is based on interviews with 90,000 women, between 15 and 49 years of age, from different parts of India and speaking 17 different languages.

Goa, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh have checked their population growth rates considerably. Their success is attributed to high levels of literacy, as women are made more aware of reproductive health issues. But further decline in fertility will be difficult, says TK Roy, director of the Institute for Population Studies, which carried out the survey. The new National Population Policy (NPP) announced earlier this year aims for a national average of two children per couple by the year 2010, compared with the current average of three to four, and zero level growth by 2045. The four large problem states, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, have shown little progress in reducing fertility levels and infant and maternal mortality rates. These states together account for 40 percent of India's population.

Contraceptive use by women is up from 41 percent to 48 percent, but most prefer sterilisation, and few use spacing methods like pills and condoms. V. Ramalingaswami, former chief of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), points to this, early marriage, and the deep-rooted preference for boys, as the major reasons babies are born in quick succession, within two years of each other.

Improved immunisation coverage has resulted in lower infant mortality levels in most states. Still, only 42 percent of

Fertility rates have declined in the last six years, but India's population program needs a review.

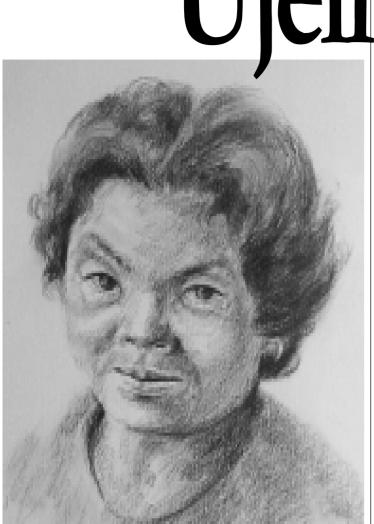
babies between 12 and 23 months get all recommended childhood vaccinations. Malnutrition has declined from 52 to 47 percent in the last decade, but the problem continues to be serious, with one in 11 Indian children dying before the age of five. "This is the highest level of under-nutrition anywhere in the world," says Fred Arnold of the U.S.-based 'ORC Macro', which provided technical support for the survey.

Mothers-to-be also lack basic nutritional and health care. Only 20 percent of pregnant women get the minimum needed, three health check-ups during pregnancy, supplementation with iron and folic acid, and tetanus injections, and one in 37 risk dying from pregnancy-related complications, according to WHO and UNICEF estimates. "Although access to professional delivery care is improving, nearly half of the women have no say regarding their own health care," says Sumati Kulkarni, who co-ordinated the survey. Only one in three births takes place at a proper health care centre, and only 40 percent of births are attended to by health professionals.

The Indian government announced the NPP on May 11, the day the country's billionth officially recognised baby was born. Two months later, it set up India's first National Commission on Population, a 100-member committee of experts and political leaders, headed by the prime minister. The number of seats in the Indian parliament has been frozen till 2026. States which have done well in birth control argue they should not have lesser parliamentary representation and a smaller slice in national development funds because of their relatively small numbers. ◆ (IPS)

**VILLAGE VOICE** 

by JAN SALTER



This portrait of Ujeli by the author was done after she returned to her village.

# Ujeli came to Kathmandu from Okaldunga, got lost and lived as the "madwoman" of Samakhusi for over two years.

homeless woman came to sleep on the streets of Samakhusi. Each day she would gather a few twigs together to light a fire under an old powdered milk tin and cook whatever came her way. While others thought and spoke of her as that 'madwoman', Bhim Dhakal, a resident of Samakhusi, noticed that despite being homeless she had a quiet dignity and did her best to keep herself clean. During the following months he grew to respect th independent woman's attempts to survive.

When the monsoon came, she could no longer find dry twigs to light her fire and it was impossible for her to stay dry. Bhim's concern grew. How would she survive the long monsoon? It was when she became sick that Bhim called me. "She might die," he feared. "I must do something. Please advise me what to do."

Ujeli Rai, who we guessed was about 45 years old, could tell us her name and little else. She had a problem with her hearing and seemed mentally disturbed, not surprising under the circumstances. She remembered nothing of where she came from or how she ended up homeless. Her damp clothes were so rotten they tore easily as she tried modestly to cover her body. She gratefully accepted the dry skirt and blouse offered to her with a winning Kirati smile. After making a few enquiries, I was advised to

contact Asha Deep, a home for mentally disturbed people. Asha Deep's response was direct and positive. They would help!

A very young girl was assigned to come with us to persuade Ujeli to accompany us to Asha Deep. I personally doubted that this youngster could obtain the homeless woman's trust, but she did so with amazing professional skill and tact. Ujeli was quickly seated in a taxi, and we were on our way. Asha Deep is well accustomed to coping with the problems of disturbed people, and while I watched, Ujeli was fed and offered a private place to bathe which she was happy to accept. In a very short time Ujeli adjusted to her new surroundings and made good friends with the staff and other inmates. Being a big woman, she enjoyed working in the garden and tending the cows. She liked children and animals and took

interest in caring for both. Many months passed, but all attempts at getting Ujeli to reveal her past were in vain. This normally friendly woman would become uncharacteristically upset and angry when questioned. Something was blocking her memory. Later, when Ujeli's health improved, Asha Deep talked to me about rehabilitation. We had to give it a try. I agreed to see what would happen if I took her home. As she liked animals, perhaps she could take care of my four dogs and two cats.

Ujeli was extremely reluctant to leave Asha Deep, a place she now called her maiti. I hoped that she would settle down in a few days. She loved my animals, even my black kitten. She cooked me delicious dal bhat, but she was never at ease. She had difficulties with my western loo. She was terrified of getting lost and being alone. So much so that through the night I would frequently hear my door being opened—Ujeli was checking if I was still there.

One day, in an attempt to reassure her, I telephoned Kumar, a staff-member at Asha Deep familiar with Ujeli. Perhaps a friendly voice would reassure her. As she put the phone to her ear, an incredible thing happened. She listened a moment, trying to hear. Suddenly she gripped the phone tightly and her body went rigid. Her eyes closed, her mouth opened wide and loudly she began calling into the phone, "I'm lost. I'm lost. Where are you? I can't find you."

Like me, Kumar realised something crucial was happening. It became clear Ujeli thought she was talking to someone else. But who? Kumar seized the moment, perceptively taking the opportunity to get Ujeli to speak. He miraculously succeeded in opening up her memory and within minutes she revealed the name of her village and her family. It all came tumbling out. She came from Khotang in Okaldunga.

Within days, accompanied by two staff members of Asha Deep, a very happy Ujeli made the journey back to her village, in the uncertain but expectant hope of finding her family. She was joyfully reunited with her delighted and amazed parents and her ecstatic eleven-year-old son.

Two-and-half years earlier, Ujeli had come to Kathmandu with her nephew to visit relatives. In the confusion and bustle of the streets, she got lost. Ujeli's desperate relatives panicked. They combed the lanes for many days, bewildered by the crowds. Finally, they gave up and went home. As time went by they thought she must be dead.

What happened to Ujeli during those hideous lost years before she was found by Bhim? We will probably never know. For me, this was a unique story. But for Asha Deep, this is just another day. Set up in 1994, the shelter has helped reunite many such lost people. Also, it helps households with disturbed family members cope with this growing problem of urbanisation. In a country where rapid development is creating a confusing world for many, understanding and sympathy for mental health is vital. It's all happening too fast, too suddenly for many Nepalis. Like Ujeli, many of these "mad" people are just lost. We see them everywhere. But, unlike Ujeli, not all of their stories have such a happy ending. ♦

Jan Salter has lived in Nepal for 30 years. She is an artist and coauthor with Harka Gurung of the book, Faces of Nepal.

## VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

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# The Indians aren't coming



### A NEPALI TIMES REPORT

order questions with India sometimes border on the absurd. There's much heartburn between the two neighbours on restricting the flow of people and merchandise, and now it is causing a lot of anxiety to Indian tourists visiting Nepal. They are told at Delhi, Calcutta or Banaras airport that they can't fly unless they have the proper documents. Ironically, the land border remains open, and only people flying in face the new restrictions.

The earliest guidebooks on Nepal advised travellers to visit the country during October-November and March-April, saying that at other times the kingdom was too cold, too hot or too wet. Then in the 1970s, Dick Tuttle, the American gambling

A new rule requiring that Indians coming into Nepal by air carry either a passport or a voter ID card is already affecting the number of Indian tourist arrivals.

pioneer in Nepal, triggered an Indian invasion with his "555" package for Indians. The seasonality factor vanished as the Indians with wads of money poured in. "India is the greatest market for Nepal—a billion people captive," says Dubby Bhagat, of Everest Hotel.

Then why is there a sense of foreboding now? Most Indians come overland, but a sizeable percentage of Indian tourists do fly in. It is this segment that could be diminishing. Indian tourist arrivals haven't really picked up since the Indian Airlines hijacking last December. And those

who do come are put off by the extraspecial security introduced at Kathmandu airport upon the Indian government's insistence where passengers have to wait up to 45 minutes on the tarmac for their third body check before getting on their Indian Airlines flights.

In addition is the requirement that Indians flying to Nepal need either a voter ID card issued by the Election Commission of India, a central or state government issued ID card, or a passport. (Nepalis flying to India also need to furnish proof of their nationality.) It remains debatable whether this new rule has actually improved security for India, but it has had a big negative effect on the tourism industry. Many Indians do have passports, but most don't. The trader from Chandigarh has a passport because he has been around. His wife has a voter ID card, but doesn't have a passport. Their two children have neither. They are stopped at Delhi airport and can't board the plane.

"Any restriction is bound to have a negative impact. To minimise such an impact we have started an information campaign in India telling people that they need these documents to travel to Nepal," Pradeep Raj Pandey of Nepal Tourism Board told us. But Pandey sees a positive side-effect in that Nepal may actually get a "better class" of travellers. A source at the Indian embassy too admitted that the restrictions have adversely affected the number of Indian tourists flying in.

Businessmen in the capital are crying foul. The Indians are just not coming. "Perse the India-Nepal connection has suffered," says Everest's Bhagat. "Indian tourists spend more than foreigners. This is vexatious." The president of the Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN), Narendra Bajracharya, feels the same way: "If this restriction stays in place it will affect us all in the long run."

The ubiquitous Indian travellers asking the way to Bishal Bazaar as soon as they get out of the airport are fewer these days. Says Randhir Manot who runs Abhinandan, a shop selling expensive silks, saris and designer

watches at Bishal Bazaar: "This has affected us. I would say business is down by half." There are those who agree with him whole-heartedly, such as the manager of Shoe Centre in the same market: "I am definitely affected. Indian tourists give me my profits."

But not all shopkeepers agree. A patently nationalistic one thinks the market is a place where "Indians sell to Indians" and Nepal doesn't actually benefit. He told us: "We really don't need the Indians to give us business. It is true that some shops are more tourist dependent they feel the

pinch." The manager at Bluebird Department Store couldn't hide his anger: "They ought to enforce these restrictions even at the land border. We have a population problem

already." He seemed to confuse his business with a perceived threat of

Casinos are high-end splurge destinations, so most of the clientele from India have passports and fly right in. But early trends show that five-star hotel occupancy has suffered. Not only is gambling tourism affected, but also dealer conferences, because they are now more difficult to organise as not everyone has the necessary ID. "The

Jalandhar (in Punjab) do not necessarily have a passport. And if they do, what prevents them from going to Bangkok. Thai operators have set up offices in Mumbai just to woo Indian tourists and conferencees," says another tour operator.

A drop in Indian influx will hurt on the other side of the border too. There are tour operators in India (some 200 of them), including names like Sterling and Explorers, that are going to be hit. But worst affected will be travel agents, resorts



at Nagarkot and Dhulikel, transporters and people who benefit directly and indirectly from the tourism industry. So far they have been riding the crest of the autumn season, but we are approaching a period—mid-December to mid-January—when Indians thronged the streets of Kathmandu and took time off at resorts. It is when the air seats begin to go empty that Nepal's tourism industry will feel the pinch. ♦

# Misplaced chivalry

HEMLATA RAI

espite Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's pledge last week that the government would soon lift its restrictions on women travelling to the Persian Gulf countries for employment, the Ministry of Labour and Transport Management (ML&TM), which the PM himself heads, seem in no hurry to end the ban.

"We imposed the ban to protect Nepali women from being exploited in the Gulf countries. And, we will not consider lifting it until we can make diplomatic arrangements to ensure their safety there," said LB Thapa, joint secretary at the ministry. He also said that the government is in the process of signing agreements with various Gulf nations to send Nepali workers there. "But legal agreements alone may not change the government's policy about women going to the Gulf for work. Cultural differences between the Gulf and Nepal will continue to make Nepali women vulnerable to exploitation," said Thapa.

The irony is that the ban has not stopped Nepali women from finding work in the Gulf countries (popularly known as 'Arab'). Nepali air hostesses working for Gulf Air and Qatar Airways fly in and out of Kathmandu airport all the time. When asked how it was that they could be working (technically, at least) in the Gulf

If you are a woman, the government says you can't work in the Arab countries.



with a government ban in place, Thapa said that the ministry is "not aware" of it. He added that the air hostesses have not taken permission from the ministry to work for the airlines, and should they land in any kind of trouble the government would not be in a position to help them.

Apart from the administrative weaknesses in implementation, all the ban does is close a legal avenue into the West Asian job market directly from Nepal. An open border with India and direct flights to Bangladesh provide plenty of opportunities for jobseekers to reach the Gulf. What the prohibition has done is make women more vulnerable to economic and sexual exploitation. Since the women now use illegal channels to reach their destinations, they remain invisible in official books and therefore unprotected by laws that ensure workers' rights.

Two years ago, a Nepali domestic working in Kuwait committed suicide in a hospital where she was admitted for treatment of injuries she had received from consistent sexual and physical abuse. Though various womens rights NGOs demanded that the government pursue diplomatic avenues to claim compensation for the victim, the government could do nothing for lack of proper evidence.

Women rights activists and trade unionists have criticised the government decision as chauvinistically imposed discrimination against women. "The ban has no practical meaning, women have been going

over and working there anyway. Instead, it limits women's rights to decide where and whether they want to work," says Brinda Pandey, a trade unionist. "Instead the government should regulate the channels Nepali women use to go to the Gulf for employment."

During her South Asian visit last month, UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women Radhika Coomaraswamy came down heavily on the government. Going beyond the Gulf ban, she described the legal provisions that require women to

acquire consent from husbands or parents for passport applications, clearances from respective village development committee authorities to travel outside their villages, and the government restriction against women seeking employment in the West Asia as "serious obstructions against women's mobility". "These provisions have seriously violated women's one right (of free mobility) in the name of protecting another right (against trafficking)," she said.

"Restrictions against their free mobility will not stop

trafficking in women for economic exploitation," says Tina Staermose of the International Labour Organisation in Kathmandu. An argument borne out by the fact that Nepali women cross the border into India by the thousand every year and end up in the brothels of Mumbai and Calcutta. The government has simply not been able to put an end to this trafficking, and by its across-theboard ban on women workers going to the Gulf has only succeeded in pushing an employment channel underground. ♦



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IZ NEW:

## **UML** wants bank 'reforms' stopped

The opposition Unified Marxists-Leninists has called on the government to stop the process of handing over the management of two of Nepal's largest banks to foreign companies. They want the government to find ways other than the two-year management contracts to address the banks' problems. The two banks together hold over 50 percent of all deposits in Nepal.

Forty-two companies, including several large multinational financial institutions, have expressed interest in managing the banks. Among these are KPMG Barnet, the auditors who declared the two banks "technically insolvent" earlier this year. KPMG's interest is one reason to suspect "foul play", claims the opposition, adding that the government's decision to involve foreign companies could lead to more losses.

## **FNCCI: Don't bomb businesses**

The Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) has issued a press statement calling for a cessation of attacks on business establishments. It has also demanded that the government ensure the security of industry. The FNCCI said the attacks on businesses by Maoists in Simara, Hetauda and the Kathmandu Valley have destroyed expensive machinery, finished products and vehicles, and clouded the investment climate. The statement was issued in the wake of a suspected Maoist attack on a distillery in Parwanipur of Parsa district.

## **Lawsuit against RNAC**

A group of lawyers have filed a lawsuit with the Supreme Court calling for a stay order on RNAC's recent decision to lease an aircraft from Lauda Air of Austria. The deal is also under investigation by parliament's Public Accounts Committee. The lease was signed after direct negotiations, rather than by inviting tenders, which the petitioners say was illegal. The lawsuit also casts suspicion on the payment procedure.

Hari Bhakta Shrestha, executive chairman of RNAC, has defended the deal saying, "Negotiations with Lauda Air were held only after we failed to lease an aircraft despite four tenders and one sealed offer." He added that backing out of the agreement at such a late stage would attract penalties and possibly litigation, and prove extremely expensive.

## **Gorkha Brewery wins award**

Gorkha Brewery Pvt Ltd, brewers of two Danish beers, Carlsberg and Tuborg, has been awarded the "Carlsberg Golden Words Award 2000" by its parent company. Company sources say the award is in recognition of Gorkha Brewery's ability to maintain the "high standards and uniform quality" the two brands take pride in.

Carlsberg is brewed in 66 countries and the award goes to breweries outside Denmark. In Nepal the two brands are jointly produced by Carlsberg and the Khetan Group. The venture claims to have a 60 percent market share, soon to be bolstered by a planned take-over of another Nepali brewery.

## **Cosmic expands fleet**

Cosmic Air has added a second SAAB 340 to its fleet and plans to get a third one next month. This expands the company's fleet of fixed wing aircraft to seven, with the three SAABs and four Dorniers. The company also flies two MI-17 helicopters. The new aircraft which arrived last week will be used to increase frequency in existing sectors and add new flights on the Bhairawa and Nepalgunj routes. The Swedish SAAB 340s fly short- and medium-distance routes in over 50 countries.

## **Nepal in Calcutta trade fair**

Over 40 Nepali business and trading houses are to exhibit carpets, pashmina, readymade garments and handicrafts, and also promote tourism in Nepal at an upcoming trade fair in Calcutta. The fair which runs from 22 December-1 January is organised by the Bangla National Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

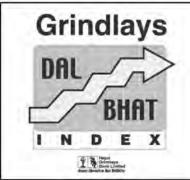
## Adidas showroom in Kathmandu

Roots Fashion Pvt. Ltd, the authorised distributor of Adidas sportswear in Nepal, has opened a showroom on Putalisadak. The outlet was inaugurated by marathoner Baikuntha Manandhar. Roots Fashion imports Adidas products from licensed factories in East Asia and India

## **Paddy procurement price fixed**

The Nepal Food Corporation (NFC) has fixed the procurement price for common paddy for the Western Nepal zone. Paddy will be bought at Rs 565 per quintal from Rajapur, Rs 575 per quintal from Nepalgunj, and Rs 600 per quintal from Dhangadi. No procurement price has yet been fixed for Mahendranagar.

The NFC's rates are slightly higher than the prevailing market price. The influx of cheaper Indian rice this year has lowered the price of local paddy, and farmers hoped that the government's support prices would offset their losses. But the NFC will probably only procure around six thousand tons of paddy and so not all farmers from Western Nepal will benefit from the new procurement prices. The prices are set by a paddy/rice procurement committee under the supervision of the chief district officers of the concerned districts.



In US\$	1 kg	1 kg	1 Litre	1 Litre	1 Litre	1 Unit	\$ Rate
Bangladesh	0.74	0.37	0.40	0.22	0.37	0.04	54.00
Bhutan	0.65	0.31	0.56	0.33	0.18	0.02	44.46
India	0.64	0.36	0.56	0.28	0.13	0.05	46.80
Maldives	0.25	0.28	0.40	0.30	0.42	0.21	11.82
Pakistan	0.42	0.44	0.53	0.23	0.12	0.04	57.05
Sri Lanka	0.74	0.37	0.62	0.24	0.19	0.03	81.21
Nepal	0.65	0.38	0.63	0.36	0.35	0.09	74.05

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

ECONOMIC SENSE

hy ARTHA REED

## Service charged



The service charge debate concerns labour-legislation as a whole, not just the extra item on your bill.

he service charge debate threatens to close down hotels again. This is part of a larger issue of labour legislation, and should not be seen in isolation.

In a country where politicians and bureaucrats levy a service charge for being the servants of the people, it is quite natural for the hotel industry to join the fray. After all, it is not called a "service industry" for nothing. The government and the hotel industry woke up at the last minute and have been able to postpone the threatened hotel strike for a while. But the big question is: have they really understood the issues?

Tipping is to be institutionalised through the levy of service charges in the hotel trade. Tipping is natural in Nepal. You learn to keep loose change in your pocket at all times. The pujari at the temple, the taxi driver, the guy who comes to read your electricity meter or allows you to pass the gate at customs, they all need to be greased to smooth the way. If hotel employees feel that the service charges they presently receive as gratuity should be fixed through a legal framework, then what is the problem with that?

The Nepal Telecommunication Corporation already levies a 10 percent service charge on their bills, but they don't distribute it among their employees. Is the NTC ready to part with 10 percent of its Rs 5 billion revenue? Levying a service charge is one thing, but sharing it with employees is quite other. Even in nations where a service charge is levied on hotel bills, the entire amount is not handed over to employees.

There has been no serious effort to understand what the hotel employees' long-standing demand means or what its implications are. The industry and the government only got their heads out of the sand when the workers' action committee gave them an ultimatum: Resolve the issue by 19 November, or we strike. Neither the government nor the hotel industry has done its homework to counter the well-researched issues raised by the team of labour unions. For the FNCCI, the fact that the Hotel Association Nepal (HAN) is not a member took precedence over the impact a hotel strike would have on the overall economy. HAN leaders were repeatedly asked about the impact of a strike on the four- and five-star segments. Clearly, the unions have been much better organised than anyone they've argued with.

The issue of a mandatory service charge is linked to the entire gamut of labour legislation in the service industry.

Performance- and profit-linked bonuses are governed by legislation, but labour feels that lack of transparency in financial disclosures by hotel owners makes

this system ineffective although Nepal's labour laws are radically socialist. Of course, strong labour unions constantly add to their list of demands, and so the managements are cornered and the legal recourse is always pro-labour. A service charge may therefore have to be a trade-off between an organised legal system of compensation, and constant bargaining and negotiations.

The additional service charges will not be passed on to customers, as they are always quoted the net rate. As the tourism sector is strongly competitive, hotel companies will have to absorb the extra cost. For a five-star hotel with revenues of Rs 600 million, the impact on profits would be very high. The profitability of hotels is already eroding, and their situation will only get worse. Employees should have incentives linked to profits, not revenue. Any payments dependent upon the appreciation of service received should be left to the personal judgement of customers, and not be forced on them. Further, service charges should be limited to areas linked to food and beverage. The hotel industry and the government should look at the entire spectrum of labour-related legislation in the hotel industry. The service charge debate is only a part of this larger issue, and should not be seen in isolation.

Readers can post their views at arthabeed@yahoo.com

## Grindlays Gazette INTEREST RATE UPDATE

Repo rate

NEPALI RUPEE	CURRENT%	PREVIOUS%
Call Money Avg	5.25	5.25
84 Days t/bill	5.08	5.04
91 Days t/bill	5.33	5.29
365 Days t/bill	6.18	6.16

The average rate of 91 days T. Bill rate improved marginally to 5.3314 percent compared to 5.2893 percent in the previous week due the additional fresh issue worth NPR 600M floated this week. Expected range for coming weeks 5.25 to 5.40.

## FOREIGN CURRENCY: Interest rates

		EUR			
LENDING	9.50	5.75	6.00	1.50	5.13
LIBOR (1M)					

BANK RATES (DE	Mkt Hi/Lo Mkt Avg	
S/A NPR	6.0/3.5	5.23
F/D 1 YR	7.5/6.0	6.73
OVERDRAFT	15.5/12.5	13.54
TERM LOAN	14.5/13.0	13.37
IMPORT LN	13.0/10.5	11.52
EXPORT LN	13.0/10.0	10.63
MISC LOAN	17.5/13.5	15.03

## CURRENCY UPDATE

AG/USD	CURRENT*	WK/AGO	%CHG		
OIL(Barrel)	32.88	33.55	- 1.99		
GOLD(Ounce)	266.35	264.80	+ 0.58		
GOLD (NPR *)	7040	7040			
EUR	0.8482	0.8582	- 1.16		
GBP	1.4231	1.4391	- 1.11		
JPY	110.12	107.84	- 2.11		
CHF	1.7915	1.7699	- 1.22		
AUD	0.5094	0.5203	- 2.09		
INR	46.80	46.78	- 0.09		
*Currency bid prices at 6.30 p.m. on 21/11 - Source Reuters					

**Oil:** Oil prices were slightly lower on Tuesday but the prices remain out of OPEC's target band of \$22-28 a barrel.

Currencies: The yen crumbled to 8-1/2 month lows against the dollar on Monday and remained under pressure after Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori's survival of a no-confidence motion failed to quell speculation on the leadership crisis. The dollar gained more than 1 percent to close at 109.94 on Monday. The single European currency also came under pressure as speculation that a Republican would occupuy the White House weighed on the Euro.

INDIAN RUPEE OUTLOOK: The Indian currency ended Tuesday marginally weaker on import demand. The Indian currency ended at 46.80/805 per dollar compared to Monday's close of 46.765/775. The confidence on the rupee improved as India's foreign reserve rose to \$35.413 billion in the week ended 10 November from \$34.737 billion a week ago, driven by inflows from the State Bank of India's Millennium Deposit Scheme, which raised \$5.5 billion from expatriate Indians.

## INTERNATIONAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR NEPALITIMES

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

marketing@nepalitimes.com

## Mountains and movies



**ENTERTAINMENT** 

#### **ANAGHA NEELAKANTAN**

e've all heard about Caravan. And revelled in its successful run around the world. But the first Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival is here to show us just how diverse films on mountains can be. From 1-4 December, the Festival will screen 49 films from 20 countries.

The festival received 102 entries, and finally picked three features, two docu-dramas and 44 documentaries. The geographic range of the films is far wider than the count indicates. Their subjects are as diverse as climbing and other extreme adventures, religion, music, tourism, natural splendour, development, hunting and fishing, and cross-cultural encounters of all manner, including one with a yeti.

The non-competitive Festival is organised by the Patan-based Himal Association with support from Eco-Himal, an Austrian organisation working in the Himalaya. Festival director Ramyata Limbu says, "The diversity of the films reflects the life and times of mountain peoples and places.

The opening film is Chickenshit and Ash: A Visit to Paradise. Austrian director Karl Prossliner records two Gurung men from Nepal's Dolakha district exploring Vienna, and meditates on the sudden alienness of the western world. Culture shock of a different sort is the subject of the French film Yeti, le cri de l'homme des neises (Yeti: The Call of the Snowman), filmed in the Langtang Valley. Tengui, a village doctor, falls into a crevasse while gathering medicinal plants in the high Himalaya. An enormous hairy arm lifts him out and that is the beginning of a beautiful friendship between the Sherpa and what turns out to be a Yeti.

A number of films reflect on the changes mountain regions have seen in the 20th century, including Nepal's Mukundo (Mask of Desire) in which director Tsering Rhitar Sherpa explores the delicate relationship between the mystical and the modern. A family is devastated after the death of its son and turns to a revered medium, Gita. Gita, who is going through her own crisis of faith, cannot help them. Less disturbing, perhaps, is Vision Man from Sweden, which profiles an 87-year-old Inuit hunter, Avike, who can no longer pursue walruses like he used to. Although he lives in a prefabricated cabin and sees his culture being eroded and his language dying out, Avike still has a wicked sense of



humour. Argentina's Agony of an Ethnos documents a school teacher's attempt to help people in a remote mountain village survive without having to migrate elsewhere.

The Festival has enough adrenalin-charged and visually stunning films to show that intensity, like mountain encounters, comes in many different forms. South African Oceans of Fear follows lunatic climber Andy de Klerk's free climb up a rock wall and base jump off the wall. Italian Foleo Quilici explores the mountains, valleys, flora and fauna of the eastern Alps and inspires climbers to find adventure in Alps-The Eastern Range: The Julian, The



Carnic. Yes, there are Everest films, three of them, in fact. Everest-The Death Zone has David Breashears, who made the IMAX film in 1996, go back to the Death Zone, the area above 26,000 feet, to undergo a battery of scientific tests to investigate the effect of high altitude on body and mind.

The biggest names at the festival are undoubtedly Caravan and the American Genghis Blues,



which won at the Sundance Festival last year and was a major art-house hit in the US. Roko and Adrian Belic's film follows the friendship between a blind African-American blues musician from San Francisco



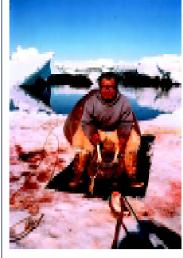
Next week, the first-ever international mountain film festival starts in the cultural capital of the highest mountain range in the world.

and a group of the famous 'throat singers' in Tuva, Mongolia.

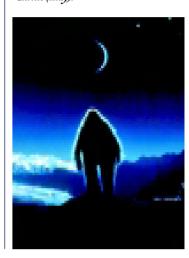
Although the Festival is noncompetitive, viewers will be asked to judge each film they see, and the votes will determine the winner of the Viewers' Choice award. Films will be screened all day and there will also be discussions, guest-lectures and presentations. The sheer diversity of subjects and genres is sure to

provoke great conversations for weeks after, and have Kathmandu abuzz. Keep your calendar free from 1-4 December. There are movies to watch.

Tickets and schedules will be available starting 26 November at Himal Association (542544), Patan Dhoka; Saraswati Book Centre (521599), Pulchowk; Mandala Book Point (227711), Kantipath; Map House (266060), Thamel; Suwal Music and Videos (421522), Lazimpat; and the Russian Cultural Centre (415453), Kamal Pokhari.



Clockwise from far left: Genghis Blues (USA), The Magic Mountain (UK), Vision Man (Sweden), Yeti: The Call of the Snowman (France), and Alps: The Eastern Range: The Julian, The Carnic (Italy).



## surya ad





24 - 30 NOVEMBER 2000 NEPALI TIMES

it's obvious when you see proof on the

streets—Indian-made compacts such

as Maruti 800, Zen, Matiz and Santro

are the highest selling cars here. They

cost anywhere from Rs 650,000 to Rs

However, Jai Singh Kothari,

General Secretary of Nepal

Automobile Dealers' Association

believes that cost alone is not the

1 million.











Nepal has more cars per pothole than any other country. And this week, an auto fair hits Kathmandu with value for money compacts, luxury sedans, loans, and car accessories.

SUJATA TULADHAR

tand at any traffic intersection for a few minutes on any working day and you'll see it all—bright red and pearly white, spacious sedan and tiny city cab, wheels, wheels and then some more. You may think you're hallucinating from all the fumes, but you're right: the days of the workhorse Corolla are numbered as new Indian car models dominate the market.

And now there is more coming: Auto Show 2000 at the Bhrikuti Mandap exhibition hall. The show, Nepal's second so far, has over 40 businesses bringing some of the best in the automobile industry. "For anyone with a car in mind, it is the right place to see, compare and make a decision," says Santosh Chhetri, director of Global Exposition and Management Services Pvt Ltd, the organiser of Auto Show 2000. He added that the exhibition is the only real platform that brings together automobile dealers, manufacturers and potential customers.

The exhibition has a fairly mind-boggling range of paraphernalia to choose from: tyres, tubes, paints, lubricants, window shades and vehicle décor, not to mention the cars you can actually book at the exhibition itself. If your choice is two-wheelers, there's a wide range to pick from. And close on hand are companies willing to finance your purchases.

"We don't often have such shows in Nepal, so it was a great opportunity for me to see the variety there is to choose from," says a visitor at the show. "They also tell you where and how to obtain spares. The best part for the mischievous mind is that competing companies also tell you about the downsides of their competitors." All is fair in the car business, and it sure is entertaining.

The show does not have all the brands you now see on the city roads but there is a fair choice of cars from the traditional sellers the assembly lines in India, Korea and Japan—and this year the exhibition is also showcasing models from Thailand and Malaysia. Of course, with so much talk about different vehicles, you may focus less on cars and more on the absurd names automakers bestow on their products. We name no names, but somewhere between the appreciative coos all the information will elicit, we suspect we'll also hear the occasional snort, giggle or chortle.

Some of the mid-priced attractions are the Tata Indica (Rs 763, 000 upwards) sold by Sipradi International Pvt Ltd, and the Alto (Rs 7,86,500 and up) and the Wagon R from the makers of the indomitable Maruti 800. The new Korean models at the show are Kia's Sephia, a luxury sedan costing Rs 1.6 million, and their sports utility, Sportage, that is only marginally more expensive at Rs 2.4 million. The sellers of Cuore, Golcha Organisation, are introducing Extol, a new car from the Daihatsu stable.

Toyota is showcasing Echo, a compact, Rav4, an upmarket sporty model, and a large off-roader produced for the Indian market, Qualis. Toyota will also present two Thai-made cars: Saluna and Tiger Pick Up. If the Corolla puts you off Toyotas in general, you can choose from Tata's Safari, Maruti's Baleno, Daewoo's Matiz, Daihatsu's Terios and Cuore, Hyundai's Santro and Accent, and the Malaysian Perdua Kancil.

Two-wheelers at the show include Hero Honda's CBZ, Street and Splendor, Kawasaki Bajaj's Upgrade Calibre, Eliminator, M-80 and Saffire scooter, and the more fancy Harley wannabes—Jialing and Daelim.

The organisers have also made space for shops that sell little accessories for your car. Our only fear is that driving in Kathmandu will become even more witless under the influence of bad car fragrances, or some tchotchke that is inexplicably a hit, like that small demented, head-bobbing dog cabbies love to perch on their dashboards.

It is always difficult for a prospective buyer to choose a car, and it only gets worse when you're confronted with such an array of options and distractions. To get good value for your money, first focus on knowing exactly what you need. If you're looking for a car to commute to work, a small city model—Zen, Cuore, Perdua or even Old Faithful (Maruti 800) may be what you are looking for. The car to take you on the occasional long drive to Nepalgunj or Biratnagar would be a four-wheel drive or even a luxury sedan.

Other factors that influence choice are comfort, mileage per litre of petrol or diesel, availability of spares, maintenance facilities, and after sales follow-up. But most important for most of us is the price tag. Cost does make a difference, and

the market. "Indian cars have also become more reliable and improved in quality after foreign collaboration," he says. "Spares are easily available and these cars have lower maintenance costs compared to other imported cars." Doesn't matter if some of us don't like Them, Their cars are pretty good, seems the general attitude.

reason why Indian cars are ruling

Another reason for increasing car sales in Kathmandu is the availability of consumer financing. Earlier only finance companies funded vehicle purchase, but now even banks have got into the act. Each financier offers a different package, whether or not you have

collateral to offer, and people invariably find "the deal" after they've already signed up for another loan. The catchword thus is shop around until you are sick of the financiers. By then you'll certainly know enough and can figure out the best deal. The best deal is often just getting vaguely affordable finance just when you need it. Afterwards, do not, I repeat, do not compare rates.

Car retailers say that commercial banks have better financing offers than finance companies—banks usually calculate what you pay back on the declining balance while many finance companies supposedly insist on all payments being calculated based on your original loan amount.

Check this out for yourself at Auto Show 2000 where Nepal Grindlays Bank and a finance company, Union Finance, have both set up stalls offering to pay for your wheels.

This may say something about the quality of Kathmandu's cultural life, but you should go even if you aren't in the market for a new vehicle. The exhibition is a place where you can walk around, check out some of the vehicles on display, grab a bite at one of the eateries (shopping for cars is hard work), incite stall-owners against each other, and watch people fight over the last hideous furry mirror ornament. For those who can't catch all the live excitement at the exhibition, Auto Show 2000 has a

## Toyota ad



#### **NEPALI ECONOMY**

# re cars



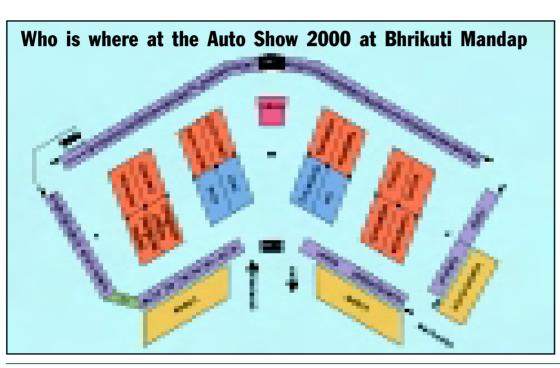
website with shopping information. Organisers say the website www.itnti.com\autoshow2000 is updated regularly and will have links to sites maintained by the major automobile makers and dealers worldwide.

There's also the flip side to all this. Kathmandu's streets are getting

crowded every day and traffic jams are increasingly common.
This is a major problem today but a solution lies in better vehicles and better traffic manage-ment.
Phasing out old gas-guzzlers and creaky vehicles could be reason even for policy makers to step into the exhibition grounds—it

Car	Price tag
Sephia	1,600,000
Sportage	2,200,000
Tata Safari	2,477,650
Tata Indica 2000 LEi	901,272
Tata Indica 2000 LXi	1,100,027
Baleno	1,750,000
Santro Zip Drive	1,030,000
Hyundai Accent GLS	1,550,000
Wagon R LX	896,500
Wagon R VX	994,400
Alto LX	786,500
Alto VX	968,000
Echo	2,200,000+
Saluna	1,600,000+
Qualis	2,150,000+
Rav4	4,000,000+
Tiger Pick Up	1,700,000+

could be an ideal place to see what type of cars Kathmandu needs.



## perduwa ad

## Maruti ad





# A sinking feeling

MARK LYNAS IN THE HAGUE

n the northeast Indian state of Meghalaya, the East Khasi Hills take the full force of the Asian monsoon. Deluged by a staggering 2,300 cm of rain a year, the small town of Cherrapunji is officially the world's wettest place. But it is also a desert. Only a few decades

The issue of 'carbon sinks' proves most divisive at the Climate Change Convention in The Hague.

(CDM), agreed upon at the Kyoto Climate Change meeting in 1997, rich countries can claim credit for

Climate summit's Caucus of Indigenous Peoples agrees that 'carbon sinks' is not the answer.

greenhouse gas emissions," he says. The US alone produces almost a

The reluctance on the part of some rich countries, led by the US, to face up to their responsibility for causing climate change seems to be at the heart of the 'carbon sinks' controversy. It has also led to a drawn-out battle with the European Union, which favours efforts to tackle emissions at source. But the possibility of securing new money for conservation is proving a tempting lure not just for governments like the US and Japan which stand to gain emissions credits, but for many in the developing world who are keen to see more forests grown.

bonanzas for international development money," explains Larry Lohmann of the UK-based research group the Corner House, which recently completed a major study of the 'carbon sinks' issue.

Oneworld.net specialising in climate change issues.)

commit themselves to reducing quarter of the total world emissions of greenhouse gases, with one of the highest per capita emission rates of carbon dioxide.

"This is one of the big potential (GeminiNews)

(Mark Lynas is UK editor of

## **Damning the dams** Confirming what dam critics have long argued, a report by the World Commission on Dams (WCD) says dams often fail to

deliver promised benefits while devastating the lives of millions in developing countries and degrading the environment. The WCD counts affected communities, dam builders, and governments among its members. There are over 45,000 dams worldwide.

Acknowledging the benefits of large dams, including electricity, flood control, water storage and irrigation, the report nevertheless says the social and environmental costs have been too high. Large dams often fail to deliver enough electricity, water or flood control. The inequitable distribution of the benefits of dams further diminishes their value in meeting water and energy-development needs when compared with alternatives.

Resettlement programmes for the 40 to 80 million people displaced by dams focus on physical resettlement rather than economic and social development. Downstream communities rely on natural flood-plain functions and fisheries, and the future of their livelihood is often endangered. Environmental impacts fish species extinction and loss of forests and wetlands-are also inadequately addressed.

Decision-makers—governments and financial institutions like the World Bank—are urged to approach water and energy development differently. No dam should be built without the agreement of affected people and there should be participatory assessments of the needs to be met. Periodic reviews involving all stakeholders must assess the impact of existing dams and

their possible decommissioning.

Last week advocacy groups released a list of projects which "clearly breach" the WCD guidelines, including China's Three Gorges dam, the dams on India's Narmada river, Turkey's Ilisu dam, dams in the Brazilian Amazon and the Uruguay River Basin, Uganda's Bujagali dam, and southern Africa's Lesotho Highlands Water Project.

Britain, Switzerland and Italy must now reconsider requests for export credit guarantees amounting to over \$700 million from companies planning Turkey's largest ever dam, Ilisu, on the Tigris near the Iraqi and Syrian border. Thousands of Kurds, who strongly oppose the dam, would be resettled, and key archaeological sites inundated. German, Swiss and Canadian export credit lending agencies support China's Three Gorges Dam, to be completed between 2009 and 2013. The project creates a gigantic reservoir in the middle of China's longest river, the Yangtze, displacing over a million people and permanently flooding 32,000 hectares of prime farmland, 13 cities, 140 towns, 657 factories, and hundreds of archaeological sites. ♦ (IPS)

## Climate change

Severnment positions on the noturation of forest laterty" in the Nost Latin American countries with

re hand to chart new horsets but warts to be allowed. o court memagement of existing forests United States

A Duramean Union says no rain 'sink' activities shou ne is more understanding differents measure errors

\* activities such as finestry projects, which absorb carbon.

ago these hills were densely forested. But trees were felled for timber and firewood and powerful rains swept the topsoil away. Now nothing can grow on the bare rock and stones.

According to the Meghalaya Environment and Wildlife Society, based in nearby Shillong, these hills hold a lesson for the United Nations Climate Change negotiations underway this week in The Hague. Through involvement of local people in reforestation and tree conservation, the destruction can be halted and even reversed. "Local people are the key beneficiaries," says the organisation's secretary Peter Thorose. "Protecting forests prevents carbon release.'

On the other side of the world, in northern California, Sri Lankan-born ecologist Ranil Senanayake is pursuing the same vision. As chairman of a tiny company called Carbon Trading & Trust, he has just signed a deal with a large logging company that promises to protect the endangered redwood forests that are unique to the area. But the agreement with Mendocino Redwood Co. will only be viable if climate change negotiators in The Hague agree that polluting countries and corporations can pay forestry projects to soak up carbon dioxide, the principal greenhouse gas that causes global warming.

The issue of 'carbon sinks'activities such as forestry, which absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere—is proving to be one of the most controversial and divisive ever discussed at an international conference on the environment. Under the so-called Clean Development Mechanism

emissions reductions achieved by funding environmentally friendly projects in the developing world. "Sinks are one of the few financial mechanisms by which people around the planet can be helped to rehabilitate it," Senanayake says. "For every hectare of forest standing today, a thousand have already been lost." This approach is beginning to gain cautious support from some green groups.

"Kenya now has less than two percent of its land under forest cover. At independence (in 1980) it was 20 percent," says Eric Osire, from the country's Forest Action Network. "There's an

"We're worried that not only does it allow pollution to continue unabated, but it also allows clear-cutting of native forests to make way for plantations and threatens the land rights of indigenous peoples."

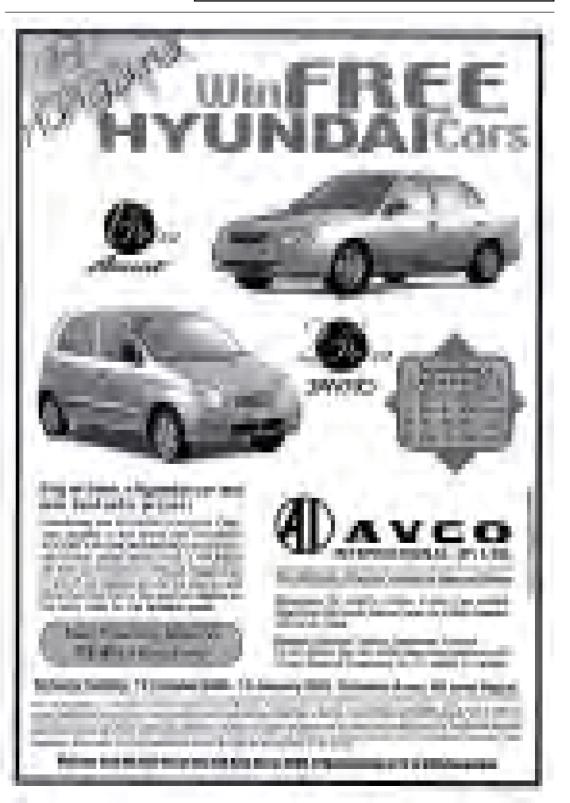
urgent need for tree cover." Others are more sceptical and point out that the Clean Development Mechanism could easily become another loophole by allowing polluters to avoid cutting carbon emissions from automobiles and factories.

"Every sinks credit you allow is one more fossil fuel emission," says Jennifer Morgan of the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF). "We're worried that not only does it allow pollution to continue unabated, but it also allows clear-cutting of native forests to make way for plantations and threatens the land rights of indigenous peoples." The

"These policies and mechanisms will permit developed countries to avoid their responsibility to reduce emissions at source, promote the expansion of global capital, and deepen our marginalisation," the Caucus states in a declaration. Marcial Arias of Panama's Kuna tribe explains: "We believe that everything that happens on our lands should be decided by our people themselves."

At a deeper level, the battle is over the essence of a forest. To the US government delegation at The Hague, forests represent a way to capture and store carbon dioxide. But native people's representative Bob Gough, from Rosebud, South Dakota, disagrees with this definition. "True forests are homes for many indigenous people, a tree plantation is not," he says. Gough cites the Menomenee Indian Reservation in Wisconsin, which has been harvested by its indigenous residents for thousands of years and has a variety of species found almost nowhere else.

The Caucus rejects the "worldview of territory that reduces forests, lands, seas and sacred sites to only their carbon absorption capacity." In addition, for many indigenous peoples, government "protection" of forests has often meant their forced expulsion. "We used to be hunters," says Kalimba Zephyrin, a member of Rwanda's Batua Pygmy tribe. "But now the government has installed nature parks, we are not allowed to hunt any more." Like all indigenous representatives at The Hague, Zephyrin is in no doubt about the best policy solution for tackling climate change. "The most important thing is that industrialised countries



# Electric future

SUJATA TULADHAR

🖰 oon some environmental organisation will proclaim Kathmandu the most suffocating city in the world. Vikrams were banned, sure, but the number of other vehicles in the city is increasing at such an appalling rate that it seems impossible to undo the damage done by those old smoking tortoises.

What's the solution? Go electric. Every year, Nepal spends a third of its total foreign exchange earnings to buy fossil fuel. Environmentally clean electric vehicles (EVs) are therefore good news, and the government slowly woke up to this. It has reduced the import tax on the chassis and batteries of clean three-wheelers to just one percent. Manufacturing or running EVs makes great business sense. It's no wonder the city's streets are crawling with Safa

But electric vehicles can be a lot more. "People think EVs are only three-wheelers but they can function just fine as fourwheelers," says Bikash Pandey, an electrical engineer with the Winrock Foundation, an



You're wrong if you think electric vehicles can only be tempos or very old Chinese trolley buses. EVs are versatile, smart and make good sense economically and environmentally.

provided the super-low import tax international organisation devoted to researching energy and is extended to these larger EVs as well. But for now the initial cost of power development. Electric a small clean vehicle remains at buses, taxis and even private cars are all possible. There are even least twice that of a comparable smoke-spewer. Consumers would electric bicycles that cut down pedalling by half. The major have to weigh the cost against the players in the EV business in prospect of not having a strato-Nepal EVCO (Electric Vehicle spheric fuel bill, and breathing Corporation) and NEVI (Nepal cleaner air in the bargain. EVs urgently need a positive Electric Vehicle Industry) are reluctant to reveal specifics, but industry sources say we could see them importing electric four-

push. Says Kiran Raj Joshi, electrical engineer at NEVI, "The king should start using an EV. All wheelers as early as mid-2001. our ministers and ambassadors

should promote EVs by using them. Right now they are the ones who can afford these vehicles.'

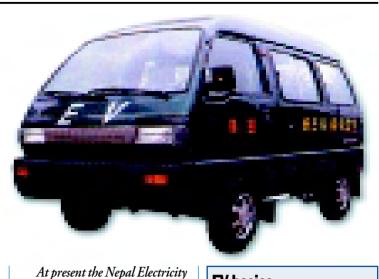
All very well, but to start with, at least a realistic discussion on the role of EVs should begin among economists, transportation and power experts, and urban and environmental planners. The entry of EVs could be planned to factor in the power glut that the country is going to see by mid-2001 when the 144-MW Kaligandaki A comes on-line.

Authority (NEA) earns an annual Rs 30 million from battery-charging stations for tempos. But in order to encourage more EVs, and thus make use of the surplus energy, the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) may first have to consider a longstanding demand of EV

maunfacturers and operators that since battery charging is done during off-peak hours, charging stations should be supplied electricity at reduced rates.

> tourism sector as a good entry point for their vehicles. Alternative energy has such appeal in the developed world that the widespread use of EVs would be an added attraction to the tourist experience in Nepal. Safa tempos have garnered a good deal of praise from visitors to Kathmandu and "Electric Kathmandu" could be the best ever PR for the city. The next step could be EVs in the shape of more and modern trolley buses—which could be the beginning of a sensible and much-needed mass rapid transport system. 🔷

The EV industry also sees the

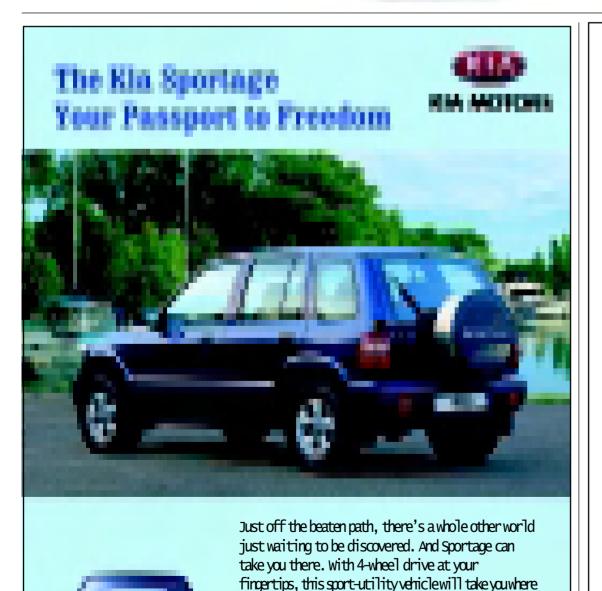


**EV** basics

An electric car runs on a set of lead-acid batteries that normally give you a 70 km ride and must be charged for 8 hours. The cover range of a set of batteries is not ideal for private EV users. It is not possible to drive long distance (at least for now). EVs are hampered by weight constraints, so forget about carrying an extra set of batteries. Domestic manufacturers hope that when clean four-wheelers enter Kathmandu, advances in battery technology overseas will make long-range batteries feasible. And if EV use takes off in a big way, increased demand for these supercharged batteries would certainly drive costs down.

Despite shortcomings, electric vehicles are the ideal choice for Kathmandu. EVs have limited top speeds, which would decrease accidents caused by reckless drivers, a wide enough range to cover the city, and none of that bilious smoke we accept, masks and all. It's hard to pick the best part of this scenario, but we might find it in the surplus foreign exchange we'll have. As for the personal cost, it may not be so high after all. And any-way, remember that old chestnut, no pain, no gain.





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ΔΝΔΙ VCIC

by **JOHAN GALTUNG** AND **DIETRICH FISCHER** 

## 2K = 2000

Healing the wounds left by the Japanese colonisation of Korea from 1910 to 1945.

NEW YORK – PeaceBoat, a Japanese non-governmental organisation, recently undertook its third voyage to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) with more than 200 participants. The first author of this article conducted workshops on reconciliation on board, and had the opportunity to hold dialogues with a number of well-placed North Korean officials, focusing on how their country sees the damage and suffering caused by Japanese imperialism, what kind of compensation they seek, and above all, what they mean by "real apology".

They mention six forms of damage or suffering: one million killed or tortured (including hibakusha, Koreans working in Japanese factories in Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II who died or were injured in the atomic bombing by the US); six million forced into war service, including 200,000 "comfort women"; economic looting; cultural treasures seized or destroyed; the situation of the zainichi, Koreans who have lived in Japan for several generations but never obtained citizenship; and Japanese responsibility for the division of Korea between the USA and the Soviet Union, as a Japanese colony.

For the North Korean officials, compensation depends on the type of damage, and would not be only monetary. Comfort women have to be compensated, but from the Japanese government, not from the Asian Women's Fund. For the economic looting, compensation in

the form of economic infrastructure and social services may be adequate. Cultural treasures have to be handed back or compensated for. The officials consider the zainichia question of human rights in Japan, and they demand wholehearted Japanese support in the struggle for Korean unification. And finally, the victim will decide how much compensation is enough, not the perpetrator.

The North Korean conception of "real apology" contains six elements: it has to come from a prime minister in power, it has to be in writing, preferably in a joint communiqué, it has to contain the word "apology", not only remorse or regret, it has to list specific damage and suffering caused in Korea, it must be "deep", that is, reflected in school textbooks, and it should reflect the general world trend of apologies and compensation.

Former Japanese prime minister Tomiichi Murayama made a vague apology to "Asian nations" in 1995 but failed to specify Korea, and was no longer in office. This was not good enough. A good model is the joint declaration of South Korean President Kim Dae Jung and Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi of 1998, but not the statement Japan offered to China because it contained no apology for the Nanjing massacre and for the "medical experiments" of army unit



North Koreans see compensation and apology as preconditions for the normalisation of relations with Japan. They feel humiliated when the Japanese offer them laissez-passer documents instead of real visas. They resent Japan's assertion that some Koreans were "abducted" to North Korea

and insist on the term "missing

discuss their missile programme,

but within the framework of a

people". They are willing to

nuclear-free zone for northeast Asia. And they reject US participation in military exercises on the Okinawa bases.

They also reject the Japanese argument that money has to be given directly to the individuals concerned and serve people's needs so as not to be diverted to build palaces or used for military purposes. Japan, they feel, is not in a moral position to dictate the use. The victim should decide.

North Korea's position seems reasonable, and Japan would make a major contribution to peace in East Asia by accepting. But the use of apology and restitution as preconditions for talking about normalisation of relations is bad diplomacy. Negotiations flow better with all issues on the table at the same time, in no particular order. The issue of how money is used may be resolved by Japan giving to infrastructure and to social services projects in general, not to particular persons.

But North Korea also feels that Japan is a client state of the US and so is not free to decide and does not dare normalise diplomatic relations with the country before the United States does. Instead it is searching for pretexts to delay. Only Japan can prove that this is not true. The two Kims showed the way in their historical 15 June meeting in Pyongyang. They opened a peace process for the century: 2K =2000, as they say in Korea. Kim Dae Jung thoroughly deserved the Nobel Peace Prize, but it should have been awarded to Kim Jong Il as well. ♦ (IPS)

## **India's 'Look East' policy**

BANGKOK - Visits by Indian leaders to key southeast Asian capitals this month have given a big push to New Delhi's engagement with the region, which is now keen to be a good friend of the South Asian nation. Government leaders and diplomats in these countries say that as an "emerging power", India has a greater role to play in southeast Asia.

Some see in New Delhi a "counterbalance" to China's growing influence in the region. Following up on diplomatic gains at a July meeting with southeast Asian foreign ministers in Thailand's capital, India is now giving a new thrust to its 'Look East' policy to get closer to a region with which it has centuries-old cultural, trade and political links.

Indian President KR Narayanan's 9-13 November visit to Singapore was the first by an Indian head of state to the city nation in three decades. Earlier, Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh's trip to Hanoi was the second by an Indian foreign minister to Vietnam. These trips are to be followed by visits to the region by Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee next year. Vajpayee is likely to visit Vietnam, Malaysia and has invitations from Singapore, Indonesia and South Korea.

Cold War divides had kept India, a close ally of the

former Soviet Union, estranged from much of the region until the late 1980s. New Delhi established institutional links with the region seven years ago by first becoming



a sectoral dialogue partner of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and then a full dialogue partner in 1995. Narayanan described his visit to Singapore as India's "re-engagement" with southeast Asia. Singapore's Foreign Minister S Jayakumar said New Delhi had a major diplomatic role to play on the "world stage".

According to Indian diplomats in the region, southeast Asian capitals are keen to get close to New Delhi, especially after its July meeting in Bangkok with the 10 ASEAN foreign ministers during the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)—Asia's only multilateral forum on security issues. • (IPS)

## Pilgrims progress

he crowded bazaars in this small town near Pakistan's capital city wore a festive look mid-November with thousands of Sikh pilgrims from across the world. It was the largest gathering of members of the Sikh faith in this Muslimmajority nation since the subcontinent's partition 50 years ago divided the homeland of the

community between India and

Pakistan.

An estimated 8,000 Sikhs from North America, Europe, the Gulf, southeast Asia, India, Sri Lanka, and neighbouring Afghanistan were in Hasan Abdal last week, to attend the 531st birth anniversary of the founder of the faith—Baba Guru Nanak Dev. The pilgrims attended religious ceremonies at the Punja Sahib shrine here before proceeding for the main rituals at Nankana Sahib, where the Guru was born.

Five decades of political tension between India and Pakistan, have denied this chance to thousands of Sikhs living in India. The Sikhs ruled the former Punjab province till the British conquered it in the mid-19th century. Pakistan's creation in 1947 by departing colonial rulers transferred to that country a large chunk of Punjab and with it, several important Sikh shrines. Partition saw tens of thousands of Sikhs migrating to India. Three times each year, the government of Pakistan issues travel permits to a limited number of Sikhs to

Sikh pilgrims travel to Pakistan and open up another avenue for peace between warring neighbours.

participate in special religious ceremonies. These include the November birth anniversary celebrations of Guru Nanak, Baisakhi (a wheat harvesting festival) in April, and the June death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the legendary Punjab ruler who fought the British in the 19th century.

Pakistani government officials say this was the first time so many Sikh families came to Pakistan.
Some 2,000 pilgrims were from India. Free meals and lodging were provided to most of the pilgrims by the organisers as part of religious tradition. A pilgrim said that were it not for the travel curbs on Indians, he would visit the religious shrines in Pakistan at least twice a year.

The Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan affects the Sikh pilgrimage every year. This time, Pakistani officials accused Indian authorities of preventing Indian Sikhs from travelling to Pakistan. They claimed that visas were issued to 3,500 Indian Sikhs and special trains were arranged to take them across the border, but the Indian government allowed only 2,000 to travel to Pakistan. Sikhs from other parts of the world did not have any problems coming here.

Local shopkeepers and hotels too eagerly await the annual pilgrimage as it brings them good business. Punja (hand) Sahib is named after a sacred rock, which the faithful say carries the handprint of Baba Guru Nanak Dev. The shrine also has a fresh water spring that, according to religious tradition, was created by Guru Nanak. Bathing in the spring is believed to cleanse the faithful of worldly sins.

The main ceremony saw the religious book of the Sikhs, the Guru Granth Sahib, being carried in a silver palanquin, accompanied by a procession of young dancers doing the traditional Sikh bhangra dance Pakistani President, Muhammad Rafiq Tarar, also attended the cereony, which he said showed that minorities in the country had full religious freedom. He said that the Pakistani government was taking care of the Sikh shrines in the country. In the last two years, the government spent about \$2 million on the repair and renovation of Sikh holy places.

South Asian diplomacy analysts attach much importance to the annual Sikh pilgrimages as a potent method of building trust between the two rival nuclear nations.

Senior Pakistani business leader, Waqar A Sheikh also urged the Pakistani government to do away with visa restrictions for Sikh pilgrims, pleading that this would pave the way for greater economic cooperation between the people of both countries. • (1PS)

## bhaju ratna

FROM THE NEPALI PRESS 24-30 NOVEMBER 2000 NEPALI TIMES

## "Elections under the Congress will not be fair"

Saptahik Bimarsha, 17 November (Interview with KP Sharma Oli, Deputy Leader of UML Parliamentary

Why do you want constitutional changes within 10 years of the constitution being

Time is no factor for bringing changes in the constitution. Changes have to be made as and when required, to change and rectify mistakes, to solve problems that have arisen, and so on. We feel that now is the time when certain changes have to be effected in the constitution and have asked that it be revised. The constitution is not something that can never be changed, nor is it any kind of "Dharma Shastra". It is there to provide direction to society, to help society function and grow properly.



Are there any grave problems that the nation is facing at the present moment? If there are no problems, is change required at the present moment?

For the upliftment of the people, practical and positive steps have to be taken, good governance has to be provided, security has to be provided, corruption has to be controlled, agencies that are at present working to control corruption have to be made efficient and effective. Free and fair elections have to be held. The government has proved incapable of solving these problems. The Nepali Congress will not be able to solve these problems. If elections are held with the kind of mentality the Congress has, they will not be free and fair. We need an all-party government for that. In the same way, changes must be made in the constitution regarding the formation of governments. Changes have to be brought about if we are to convince farmers, businessmen and labourers that something can and will be done for them.

If changes are going to be brought about in the constitution, is it going to be limited to only the one or two questions you have raised?

We have not stated how many changes have to be made. It can be 10, 15 or 20 changes. Questions pertaining to election areas, to free and fair elections and others related to it. Not only about a coalition government. Fair and just administration to control corruption, a guarantee of free and fair elections and other issues are being raised. Activities that are against the spirit of the constitution, issues not clear in the constitution, ambiguity in the constitution, side-lining of the constitution, ineffectiveness of the constitution and how these can be resolved are what we want to discuss. We are clear about this.

The Maoists want changes of a more extreme kind. They want to burden the people with an extreme form of constitution, want to bring about changes by unconstitutional means. We are not party to this. Another group, the extremist rightwingers, have been stating, since the time the constitution was introduced, that the constitution was framed under pressure from certain people and that they are not prepared to accept it. They do not accept that sovereignty rests with the people and do not care about the rights of the people. They want to put all of this aside and make the people powerless again. The UML does not support this view. The UML is not prepared to put pressure on the constitution, destroy it, or apply unconstitutional means to bring about changes. We have asked that changes be brought about by constitutional means. Only the people have the right to bring about changes in the constitution, by whatever means. If the ways in which changes can be brought about are blocked, then the people will bring about changes through a revolution as happened in 1990. Constitutional means are available for the people to bring about changes. There is no need for the people to use violence. We have said that to protect the gains of the 1990 revolution and to safeguard them, to protect and make use of the constitutional rights, changes have to be brought about.

What are the differences between your party and the Maoists?

What are the Maoists doing, what do they want to do? What is the UML doing and what do they want to do? If you look at this, then the differences between the Maoists and us become clear, don't they? Just because people use the term "communism" in the names of their parties does not mean that they believe in the same thing. If you study the papers of our 5th and 6th conventions, it becomes clear what we want to do.

When the constitution was being made, the UML agreed to support it, but critically. After that it said that it would use the constitution to move ahead. Have you really accepted the establishment of democracy? We have used parliament. The parliament is a body to be used. Parliament has to be used for the benefit of the nation and people. It must be used for national security. People are not there for the benefit of the parliament. Parliaments change, laws change, but people are always there. Only the nation and people remain.

## **QUOTE OF THE WEEK**

Selling revolutionary thoughts and begging mercy from the enemy is the worst thing any revolutionary can do. —CPN(Maoist) General Secretary Prachanda expelling Dinesh Sharma and Dina Nath Gautam from the party in Jana Awahan, 17 November



Oh...! So you also speak Nepali... but the minister has gone to Beijing to learn the language of negotiations. –*Drishti*, 21 November

## "Without us you are nothing"

Budhabar. 22 November (Open letter to Maoist leader, Comrade Prachanda, from Pradip Nepal, UML spokesman)

Action does not always count for political success. But every action of yours has humiliated the communist ego. Take into account the number of people that have died. What percentage of those really needed to be killed? It's not difficult to kill a man. The government has killed and you have killed. Even thieves and dacoits have killed. Therefore we cannot say that success in killing is political success. Political success means increase in the people's belief in you. It is people giving in to you. I say this with sadness, Comrade Prachanda, that even though you may have succeeded in killing many people in your battles you have not won the war which is winning the people's heart, their confidence.

Your power has decreased from what it was when you were leading a peaceful revolution. You were strong in Rukum then. Your party had won the two seats from Rolpa. Your faction was much stronger then any other communist party in Gorkha. You had a stronghold in Kavre and you were even present in Sindhuli and even now that is your stronghold. Elsewhere you have only fired a few shots. You have not succeeded in achieving political success. And even among what you consider your strongholds if you throw your guns away and let the 🌑 people decide you will see that you are in a weaker position than what you were formerly. Without our help you cannot stand firm in any district. This is not a boast, it's simply the truth.

## NC, UML workers in Maoist elections

Jana Awhan, 17 November

The Maoists have held village people's committee (VPC) conventions in areas under their control. They conducted elections to the VPCs in Purtikada, Garaila and Chiwang villages in Rukum district recently. During these conventions, discussions were held and plans formulated concerning village development programmes, road construction, drinking water, protection of forests, price of commodities, etc. People from all parties freely and actively participated in these elections and they did so without changing their political beliefs. People against the PM's coterie and UML policies participated in these elections even though they continued to remain within the Nepali Congress and the UML. Elections to these committees were more actively participated in than the national elections. Elections were earlier held in Rolpa, Rukum, Salyan and Jajarkot districts.

## **Newspapers galore**

Himal Khabarpatrika, 16–30 Nov

Nepali investors have proved that the 21st century is really the age of information. Till now [among Nepali-language broadsheet dailies] there were the more than 100 years old Gorkhapatra, the eight-year-old Kantipur, and later entrants

Himalaya Timesand Nepal Samacharpatra. Now a new paper called Spacetime Dainikhas been launched. Spacetime is published by Space Time Publication Ltd and contains 12 pages of which two are in colour. It is a sister organisation of Space Time Network, the strongest player in the cable TV arena. Bahadur Krishna Tamrakar is the chairman, Jamim Shah the managing director and Sri Acharya the chief editor.

The marketing strategy of Space Time has aroused everyone's curiosity. The Space Time network delivers more than three dozen channels to customers through its cable network and covers the whole spectrum of readers, age groups and interests. Space Time TV subscribers are going to get a free copy of Spacetime Dainik delivered to their doorstep for a year. Managing director Shah said that the monthly fee for cable TV (Rs 200) and the installation cost (Rs 1000) is not going to be raised for one year, which means that for the same Rs 200 per month, customers will be getting both cable TV and papers delivered home. It is estimated that there are more than 40,000 customers of Space Time TV in the valley. It will, however, be some time before all Space Time subscribers get their free copies since the printing press that is being used cannot print so

many copies. But modern "heat set web" presses are in the process of being ordered and Shah estimates that the paper will break even within a year. Total investment during that period is going to be around Rs 150 million.

स्पेसटाइम दैनिक

जपाल समाचारपञ

Gorkhapatra seems to be in the worst position among the dailies. It is under government control and the main reason for its poor performance is weak management. It has long had a monopoly over government advertising but once these ads started going out to the private media too, it had financial problems. Now, it too, is in the process of importing new and modern equipment.

Nepal Samacharpatra faced a crisis of capital from the very beginning and had not been able to grow to its potential. But now the paper is in the process of bringing in new investors. It is one of the many publications of Kamana Publications and Printers and the editor/owner, Pushar Lal Shrestha, stated that after restructuring and introducing new capital, his share in the new Kamana Publishing Group would be 40 percent. Thirty percent has been bought by Kumud Dugar of the KL Dugar group and another 30 percent by Pasupati Murarkar of the Murarkar Group. According to the new agreement, Dugar and Murarkar are going to look after the management while Shrestha will handle the production.

"We were breaking even earlier also but because of the competition we felt we had to make more investments and that is why we looked for new partners," said Shrestha. Besides the daily paper, the Kamana group also publishes Kamana, Sadhana and Mahanagan The infusion of money is already being seen in the Samacharpatra. From the earlier eight pages with

two in colour, it is now 12 pages and four are colour.

Ever since its publication Himalaya Times has always lagged behind. One reason is that it started off with old machines. How it is going to react to the changes taking place among the competition is still not clear. SP Singh, considered the backbone of the success of Kantipur, has now taken over the marketing of Himalaya Times and this indicates that this paper too is moving with the times.

Having established itself truly and strongly in the print media with almost half a dozen publications, the Kantipur Group is slowly moving into other areas. It already has an FM station and is in the process of getting permission for TV. This is the only private publishing group that is making a profit at present.

There are enough possibilities for the growth of readers, but growth is limited when it comes to advertising. This means that all the papers in the market today may not be successful.

## **Proposal to raise** land taxes

Deshantar, 17 November

A proposal to drastically increase land tax rates has reached the Land Reform and Management Ministry. According to the Centre for Development and Administration at Tribhuvan University, since the tax rates are very low, the amount of land kept fallow is slowly increasing. CEDA believes that once tax rates are increased people will start tilling their lands to earn the amounts they will have to pay as taxes. The amount of fallow land will decrease and this will lead to increase in production, which will in turn increase the country's internal revenue.

Experts involved with the study stated that the country was depending too much on foreign financial help, and to break the trend, increasing land tax would be the most appropriate measure. As of now the tax base in the country is very narrow. Only 11 percent of the total GDP is collected as revenue and the share of land tax is miniscule—only Rs 1.4 million was collected as land tax in 1998/99. Eighty percent of the country's people depend on agriculture which contributes almost 40 percent of the total GDP, but the tax collected from this sector is

Till now land and houses are being used as collateral while applying for loans from banks and other financial institutions. CEDA has come up with a proposal to take this land right into the capital market. According to the proposal, if the land is taken into the capital markets, the system of division of land will decrease or stop completely. In Nepal, land is looked upon and taken as ancestral property and as time goes by this land is divided into smaller plots. This in turn leads to decreased productivity. If land is listed in the stock markets it becomes a commodity like other industrially produced goods or services and buying and selling of land will be done through shares. This will help in the correct use of land, land will be made productive and its use will be optimal. CEDA states that ancestral property will also be bought and sold through shares and help reduce the division of land. ♦

**PROFILE** 

# Tiger in this neck of the woods

his sounds like the Nepali version of a story made famous by the Tiger Woods success story. Deepak Thapa Magar joined the Royal Nepal Golf Course as a caddie when he was 17 and today, 17 years later, he is the number one professional golfer in the country.

"I got interested since my house was close to the Royal Nepal Golf Course. I used to watch people playing golf there since I was a child," says Thapa about the early days. "Never thought I'd be a golfer."

Thapa, the first Nepali golfer to turn pro, is now on the verge of breaking into the Indian Circuit. His performance in the last two major domestic tourneys show why he is Nepal's numero uno. In the last two weeks, 33-year-old Thapa won both the Surva Western Open and the Surya Eastern Open. With these two titles in his bag, Thapa is confident of putting up a good show at the Surya Masters. "I'm now in form and mentally prepared," says Thapa. But being Nepal's best prospect is also burdensome. "Everyone wants me to do well, so there is pressure," he says.

His association with the Surya Masters started seven years ago when Surya Tobacco Company started the Surya Nepal Open in 1993. Thapa is the only Nepali professional who has participated in all the Surya Nepal Golf Championships since 1993, which was also the year he turned professional. For two consecutive years (1993-94), he was the country's lone

representative in the professional category. In 1996, he was runner-up in the professional category (the best performance ever by a Nepali in the Surya Open), winning a purse of Rs 86,000.

Born in Dhapakhel, Lalitpur, Thapa's family soon shifted to Kathmandu and settled near the airport. Thus began Thapa's fascination with golf. Responsibility as the eldest son led him to join the RNGC as a caddie. He was later promoted to

## "Never thought I'd be a golfer"

caddie-in-charge. Thapa owes his successful climb in the world of Nepali golf to RNGC and he hasn't forgotten it. Says he: "Without RNGC's support, I would never have come this far. I'm also grateful to Sonny Shrestha who helped me during my early days." And loyal to his putting ground as ever, Thapa still works there as golf instructor.

As caddie, he picked up the nuances of the game from up close. He agrees that his experience then has helped him a lot in his professional career but says there are few advantages of being a professional golfer in Nepal. "I was offered a chance to play in the Asian Circuit in 1997. But to participate I would have had to go to qualifying school and that is too expensive for a golfer like me. There should be more money in the domestic circuit,"



Surging ahead: Deepak Thapa Magar in action.

says he.

"When I decided to turn professional, I had to apply to the Indian Professional Golfers Association (IPGA)," recalls Thapa. "Now, we've formed our own association, the Nepal Professional Golfers Association (NPGA) and any Nepali amateur who wants to turn pro can go through this. We even organised a

tournament last year."

There are now 19 professional Nepali golfers. His favourite Nepali golfers are Deepak Acharya, Pashupati Sharma and Toran Shahi. "They have the potential to make it big in the international arena," says Thapa. Having shown the way ahead, it can be hoped that his confidence will not turn out to be misplaced.

# Nepal's cricket dream deferred

Last Tuesday was a special day for Nepali cricket lovers. For the first time they watched their national team live on the sports channel. And the stage was the semi-final match between Nepal and Hong Kong in the ACC trophy being played at Sharjah. But those who expected a good display from the Nepali team were in for a disappointment.

After an impressive performance in the league matches, expectations were high. But it wasn't to be. Nepal suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of Hong Kong in the first semi-final of the ACC Trophy. As usual, it was weak batting that let them down. Also, for the first time in the tournament, the bowling looked erratic as Hong Kong piled up a challenging score of 268.

Nepal put Hong Kong to bat after winning the toss. Having chased the targets successfully in the last two league matches against Japan and the Maldives, the Nepali team was confident of being repeating it once again. But they faltered in the semis. This comes as a big blow to Nepali cricket since entry into the finals would have given Nepal a berth in next year's Asia Cup.

Nepal began with a poor start as Hong Kong skipper Stewart Brew wrecked the top order in his opening spell. Only Ganesh Thakuri managed to reach double figures as Nepal was bundled out for a paltry 89. Earlier, Hong Kong's Rahul Sharma had demolished the Nepali bowling with his blistering knock of 145 off 136 balls (11 fours, 6 sixes).

Despite losing to a much better team, Nepal has reason to be satisfied. For the first time, Nepal managed to reach the penultimate round of the ACC Trophy. In their opening match, Nepal lost narrowly to UAE. After scoring 179, Nepal stretched the match to the last over as UAE batsmen struggled. But UAE prevailed in the end to win by just one wicket with three balls remaining. Had they performed a little better in that match, Nepal could have played a weaker Malaysia instead of Hong Kong in the semis.

For opener Kiran Agrawal, this tournament proved to be

good outing. Agrawal (right) scored two consecutive half centuries, confirming his status as a solid opening batsman. Raju Khadka and Ganesh Thakuri also batted well. But an injury to Dipendra Choudhary after the first match was a big blow to Nepal since he had been in great form prior to the tournament.

The ACC trophy is the only platform where Nepal can compete with other aspiring cricket-playing nations. But a triumph at the tournament needs a lot more

triumph at the tournament needs a lot more work. The defeat by Hong Kong showed where we need to improve—in our batting. This is the ACC trophy lesson.

JS tyres

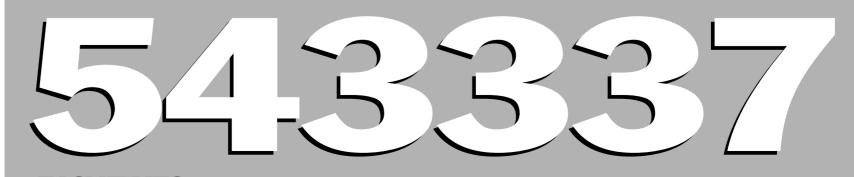


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The only all-correct entry was

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<sup>3</sup>T I E S

adolescent face (4)

Royal Naval Service (4)

dwelling (5)

by QUICK EYE

<sup>12</sup>A D I E U

<sup>30</sup>L A M P

32S L A Y



#### **ABOUT TOWN**

#### **FILMS**

#### Nepali

Aago - Ganga Chalchitra, Ranjana

Basanti - Plaza1

Darpan Chaaya - Biswajyoti, Krishna, Prithvi, Shri Nava Durga

Dhukdhuki - Goon (Ga)

## ❖ Hindi

Jung - Ashok

Kahin Pyar Na Ho Jaye - Tara, Metro, Mankamana, Goon (Kha)

Kurukshetra - Shivadarshan, Goon (Ka) Mission Kashmir - Plaza 2, Radha

Mohabbatein - Padma, Gopi Sikari - Kumari

#### Foreign

The Cup. A Bhutanese film (with English subtitles) about football crazy monks. 5.30 pm, GAA Hall, Thamel, Friday 24 November. Rs 50 (Rs 25 for students).

Best of British Film Festival presents five British movies for five consecutive days at the Russian Cultural Centre, Kamalpokhari, 5.30 pm. Free tickets available in advance from The British Council (next to The British Embassy), Lainchaur. 410798

Sunday, 26 November

Chicken Run. The latest film from Nick Park, Oscar winning director of Wallace and Gromit.

Monday, 27 November

Fever Pitch. A romantic comedy about a man, a woman and a football team.

Tuesday, 28 November

Baby Mother. A reggae musical film set in London.

Wednesday, 29 November Sliding Doors. A romantic comedy.

Thursday, 30 November

Sense and Sensibility. Emma Thompson, Kate Winslet and Hugh Grant star in the cinema adaptation of Jane Austen's novel.

#### **EXHIBITIONS**

#### ❖ Art

Hair Warp: Travels Through Strands of Universe. An exhibition of art and installation on hair by Asmina Ranjit. Displays the artist's varied work ranging from charcoal drawings of hair to a video-expression of the



NAFA exhibition hall, Bal Mandir, Naxal. Wood'n Motion. An exhibition of sculptures and paintings by German artist Beate Neumann showcasing an array of 20 wooden sculptures. Accompanying them are 16 paintings using elaborate batik techniques on Lokta paper which produces the illusion of wood-print. The show will be supported by a video that shows the artist at work.

concept. 24 November -6 December. 10am-5pm.

18-26 November, 10.30 am-4.30 pm. Patan Museum.

## Dance

Anokha - Dance of Gods and Men. A unique fusion of Kathak and hip-hop presented by renowned French group Accrorap. Saturday 25 November. 6:30 pm. Royal Nepal Academy. Rs 1000, 500, 250, 100. The group will also conduct a Hip Hop Dance Workshop, a day before their show on Friday 24 November at the Alliance Francaise, Thapathali. 9.30 am-12.30 pm for dancers and 2.30-5.30 pm for dance aficionados. Nominal participation fee Rs 1000. Limited seats. 241163, 242832

## **RIVER FESTIVAL**

Nepal River Conservation Trust (NRCT) in association with the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) hosts yet another annual river festival at the Bhote Kosi river at Borderlands Resort 1-3 December. The festival events include Kayak Rodeo, Friendship Float down the Bhote Kosi for all participants, down river race, slide show, talk programmes by experts of botany, environment, ornithology and river guiding. Live music and a river party will complement the festival. The festival is also a campaign to conserve the Nepali rivers and their resources and train river guides (500 plus) to also be river conservationists. Transport service to and from the venue. 426329. <nrct@wlink.com.np>

## **TALK PROGRAMMES**

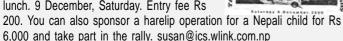
The Guthis of Khokaha: Traditional Structure and Cultural Change. Talk by Dr Silke Wolf on the Guthi system of Khokana. Dr Wolf, a research scholar at the University of Frankfurt, will refer to the Si Kali Jatra, the yearly festival of Khokana and will also outline the ability of the Guthis to sustain tradition. 30 November, Thursday, 4 pm, Royal Nepal Academy Library Hall, Kamaladi. Participation free. 231791. Dr Ram Dayal Rakesh. <saiktm@mos.com.np>

Public Hearing. Interactive talk show focusing on standards of the valley roads, road contracts, unhealthy competition among construction companies, irregularities pointed out by the Auditor General's Office. Participants will include representatives from various government departments concerned. 26 November, Sunday. 12.45 pm, Venue to be announced. Contact Pro Public, Anamnagar. 268681,265023

## RALLY

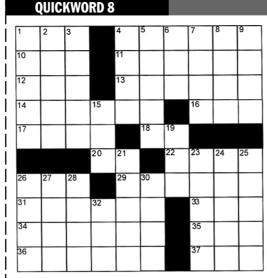
Beetle Mania for Charity. Volkswagen Beetle rally from Kathmandu to Dhulikhel organised by Ganesh Foundation to raise money for cleft lip operations for Nepali children. Owners,

drivers and a mechanic (if you need one) start from Hotel Yak and Yeti after breakfast and end at Himalayan Shangrila Hotel with lunch. 9 December, Saturday. Entry fee Rs



6,000 and take part in the rally. susan@ics.wlink.com.np

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





#### Terms and conditions

- The contest is open to everyone, except employees of Himalmedia Pvt Ltd and Infocom Pvt Ltd.
- In case of more than one correct entry, the winner will be decided by lucky draw.
- Entries have to reach Himalmedia, by 5 pm,
- 22 Nov, Tuesday.
- The winner will be announced in the coming issue.
- The prize has to be collected from Himalmedia within a week of the announcement. Please come with an ID.

## INF COM

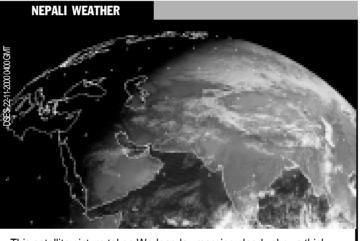
- 1. Papua New Guinea's earnings (3)
  - Afraid of the sacred (6)
- 10. Neither partner (3)
- 11. Naidu's tongue (6)
- 12. Lyric poem for the deer
- 13. Crimson the litmus test (6)
- 14. Landlocked South African state capital (6)
- 16. Electric shock treatment
- 17. Or, drink life to the lees
- 18. Baker, the tough one (2) 20. Less tension for the junior
- officer (2)
- 22. Can't get over the spat (4) 26. Cobbler's poker (3)
- 29. Put in the fizz (6)
- 31. Crunchy fries (6)
- 33. The original commie (3) 34. Came from the Loch, this
- girl (6) 35. Bored about the lode (3)
- 36. Insert, or come in (5)
- 37. North northeast (3)

- 1. Misshapen man, the banker of Zurich (5)
  - Terminal agency at stem
  - junction (5) 27. Bird with the Women's Clamp down on the
- media (5)
- 4. Rats, this is an actress!
- 5. Intestinal cul de sac (5) Ailing, boxer with
- Parkinson's (3)
- Impolite (4)
- Auspices, shorter American (4)
- Quiet flows the bile, passage (4)
- 15. Bruce did an underwater slither (3)
- 19. Always pronounced right, in April (3)
- 21. SE Asian mammal, long
- snout (5) 23. Ron's miracles with the
- rod, Aah! (5) 24. Inflexible, behind the boat (5)
  - sent in by Jemima Sherpa



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	 	



This satellite picture taken Wednesday morning clearly shows thick fog over the Gangetic basin and high-altitude cloud cover over Afghanistan. It is riding the jet stream and moving northeastwards, and could bring some cloud over the central Himalaya over the weekend. But westerlies this year have been weak, and the precipitation has fizzled out by the time they come over Nepal. This has been an unusually dry and warm November, but with a shift in wind direction we have seen clearer and cooler air over Kathmandu, bringing the temperatures down to 6 degrees this week. Western and northern Nepal will continue to have cloud-mass infiltration from the Tibetan plateau, but for Kathmandu the current trend of foggy mornings, and sunny days will continue.

## KATHMANDU

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
			-	***
24-06	23-08	23-08	24-06	24-05

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opel ad

by **DESMOND DOIG** 

**SAVING FAITH** 

There is a charming story about the **Bagh Bhairav temple raised in the** sixteenth century, which has a shepherd boy making a tiger of clay. Leaving it to find a suitable leaf for its tongue, he returned to find his sheep missing and the mouth of the tongueless tiger open.

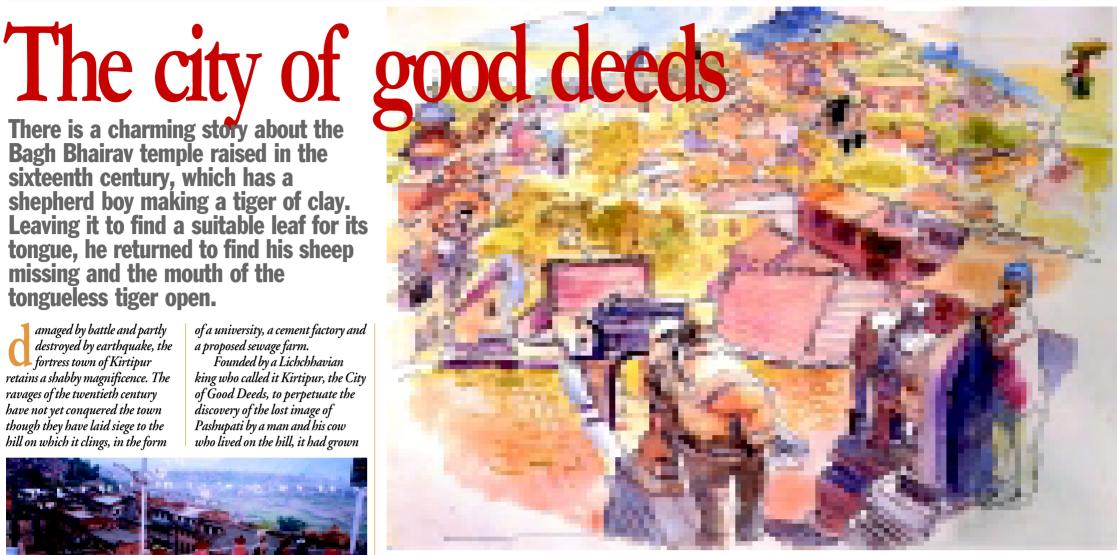
amaged by battle and partly destroyed by earthquake, the fortress town of Kirtipur retains a shabby magnificence. The ravages of the twentieth century have not yet conquered the town though they have laid siege to the hill on which it clings, in the form

of a university, a cement factory and a proposed sewage farm.

Founded by a Lichchhavian king who called it Kirtipur, the City of Good Deeds, to perpetuate the discovery of the lost image of Pashupati by a man and his cow who lived on the hill, it had grown



The headless riders have been reconstructed in concrete, and the elephants are spiked so people don't sit on them.



to importance by the time the Valley was divided in the sixteenth century. It became a part of Patan.

Kirtipur gained fame by withstanding successive onslaughts on Kathmandu by the Gurkha Prithvi Narayan Shah, and when it fell after six months of stubborn resistance in 1767, its gallant defenders met a hideous fate. Despite assurances that they would be treated with respect if they surrendered, every male except infants and those who could play wind-instruments had their noses and upper lips cut off. For a long while afterwards, the town was known as Nakkatipur, the place of severed noses.

Calamity threatened in 1966 when astrologers, finding the planets in destructive formation,

prophesied an earthquake that would destroy the town and much of Kathmandu Valley. All over Kathmandu, people slept in open spaces outside their houses. In Kirtipur, a parallel town of thatched huts rose to meet the threat. I went before dawn on the fateful day to the town wrapped in cold mist so that only the spires of its stupas and temples lanced clean. People muffled in white were already about and conches wailed.

The mist dissolved, day clearly etched the old, muddled buildings, narrow undulating lanes, shrines where people prayed and pools where children played regardless of doom. Perhaps the gods relented or the prayers of Kirtipur and the Valley were heeded. There was no earthquake and I wondered why all those who believe the legend that their city is built on a single rock worried at all.

On Kirtipur's highest point is the ruined temple of Uma-Maheshwor, built in 1673. It enshrines a beautiful image of Shiva and Parvati, or Uma-Maheshwor, and the stone stairway leading to it is guarded by two stone elephants with headless riders, trampling bodies underfoot. Here I sat to sketch the town, with an empty space where the old Durbar stood above the Bagh Bhairav temple. There is a charming story about this temple raised in the sixteenth century, which has a shepherd boy making a tiger of clay. Leaving it to find a suitable leaf for its tongue, he returned to find his sheep missing and the mouth of the tongueless tiger open. Believing the image to be possessed of Bhairav, devout townsfolk built one of the Valley's most perfect temples about it. Over the centuries this divine toy has been embellished with a silver mask, and a crown, and garlands of serpents.

On the other side of the hill and so not in my sketch, is a stupa. Adorned with a gilded finial, a metal canopy, and carved votive shrines, it is believed to have been built by the Indian Emperor Ashoka in the third century BC. I love the stupa for its slender proportions, its all-seeing eyes painted on black surfaces and the feel of space about it. Ashoka, we believe, came to the Valley in the footsteps of his master, Gautam Buddha, and built stupas at places of special Buddhist sanctity. Could it be that to this nowneglected town, which even guidebooks dismiss or hardly mention, came the Sakya Muni himself? 🔷

(Excerpted with permission from My Kind of Kathmandu, HarperCollins, 1994.)

Premium ad (b)



Radisson Hotel's winning team collects the cash prize of Rs 50,000 from the Australian Ambassador to Nepal, Crispin Conroy, at the close of the first Australian Culinary Challenge.



A Nepali-made Jeep called Sherpa at the Second Auto Show 2000. The show is on at the Bhrikuti Mandap Exhibition Hall from 22-26 November.



Nepal's top professional golfer Deepak Thapa Magar in fine form at the opening of the 2nd Surya Nepal Masters at the Gokarna Golf Club.

## Sharp ad



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LAST WORD



## **Under My Hat**

by Kunda Dixit

nbeknownst to most of us, there is a national crisis building up right under our noses, and unless the government acts immediately to resolve this issue, Nepal as we know it will cease to exist. I am, of course, speaking of the acute shortage of names for our institutions and businesses. Already, the number of new companies being registered in Nepal has fallen sharply because our entrepreneurs can't find names and trademarks for them. If we don't explore ways out of this names shortfall

pronto, it will ipso facto have a serious sine qua non for our quo vadis, not to mention on our status quo and, even more importantly, on our terra incognita.

Mt Everest is an all-time favourite, and we are fast running out of things to call Mt Everest. Mt Everest Steel Rods, Mt Everest Higher Secondary English-Medium Residential Boarding School and Academy, Mt Everest Ghee Udyog, Mt Everest Prawn Cracker Industries, Mt Everest Restaurant and Bar, Mt Everest

Min-Min, or Ra-Ra. Let me quickly assure prospective noodle-makers that they need not feel restricted, there are oodles of names for noodles still lying unused, and they all come with ready-made mottos: Meow-Meow ("Even your cat will love it!"), Ha-Ha ("Probably the world's funniest noodles"), or Ba-Ba ("The favourite noodles of the black sheep in every family").

Another highly popular brand name is "Sherpa". My friend Tashi Zangbu says no one asked him if they could borrow his surname, but Sherpa has been snapped up faster than any other ethnic group. Already, there are Sherpa pick-up trucks, Sherpa health soaps, Sherpa safety matches, and even a Sherpa brand muesli. Since Nepal is a multi-ethnic country, this opens up a whole new arena of nomenclature for the manufacturing

and service industries: Chhetri brand ketchup, Tharu brand photocopy

Mt Everest Prawn Crackers

Communications for STD, IDD and DDT, Mt Everest Brand Chewing Tobacco, Mt Everest Deep Tubewell Drilling Pvt Ltd (slogan: "We dig you from the top of the highest mountain to the bottom of the deepest hole").

So, if you are thinking of getting into the noodle business, then naming it Mt Everest is out of the question. Besides, according to the Ministry of Commerce and Taxonomy, it is mandatory in this country to have instant noodles brands consisting of one monosyllabic word repeated twice, like Wai-Wai, paper, Bahun dropsy-buster mustard oil, Lama Vegetarian Momo and Fastfood Franchise, KC's AC-DC Adapters. Which brings me to the acute name shortage in the domestic airline industry, since there are now a few thousand airlines registered. But even here, there is hope because we are lucky to have the entire Hindu pantheon available to us. After all, if we can have Buddha Air, there is no reason why there shouldn't be Hanuman Air Lines, Pushpak Biman, or Air Yamaraj. And the in-flight service can always consist of Bow-Wow noodles ("What's good for your dog is good for you.") \



# "Don't let them put you in a museum."

nehesh Shrestha, "just another student", is now rather special. Prince Philip personally awarded him the first Gold Award of the Duke of Edinburgh Youth Award Scheme to go to a Nepali.

The scheme gets young people interested in voluntary activities like community service, travel and art. Participating in them and attempting to qualify for the bronze, silver and then gold awards in a supportive and enjoyable atmosphere develops well-rounded personalities. Participants are judged on skill as well as perseverance. It's a bit like the Boy Scouts badge for service, but more inclusive and PC.

Snehesh, from Shuvatara

School in Patan, painted hospital walls with environmental messages, participated in a clean-up campaign around Jawalakhel Zoo, helped prepare a children's park in Patan Hospital, and assisted mentally impaired children from Jivan Kalyan Kendra. He has trekked in Helambu and tried his hand at public speaking, photography, and classical guitar. Loath to ignore any aspect of life, Snehesh always finds the time for the sports he loves, basketball and rollerblading.

Snehesh was thrilled to receive the award. "The award has been very encouraging. It will help me become even more goal-oriented in future," said the ambitious 20 yearold. What did the Prince tell him?

"Don't let them put you in a museum." Snehesh is too proactive for that.

uday tea

## **AMBASSADOR WHISKEY**

## **MAYOS**

