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-day 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 hotel industry and economy in a year,” says Bishnu Rimal of the General Association of Nepali Hotel (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 laws.

Buddha Air to Bhutan

Buddha Air planes have been flying to Bhutan’s Paro airport since 15 November. The airline has leased its Beech 1900cs aircraft to Buddha’s Druk Air for four weeks. 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.

Indian media on warpath

India did not take it when Nepal invited Chinese army over a decade ago, and promptly slapped a blockade that lasted more than a year. This time it is the Indian army, but frontier paras, staples and polyester fabric that is worrying the Indians. And just as in 1989, the Indian media has unleashed a full-scale. Nepal business stands accused of using subsidies provided by Pakistanis intelligence of enhancing the goods in undersold Indian manufacturers. The news report in print, television and Internet are obviously leaked by official sources under pressure from businesses hurt by the cheaper Indian goods. But what is striking is how the four major business groups have taken out full-page adverts in Kathmandu and Patan....

Indian officials in Kathmandu tried to defuse the tension and told to its media was “washing a mountain out of a mudball” and admitted that even if all of Nepal’s imports from China were to be smuggled into India, it would still be a negligible proportion of India’s domestic market. But that doesn’t suit with Nepal business, which is seriously shocked and angered by what it sees as a familiar Indian tactic of making up a fuss and then moving. Nepal put in an hearty letter to India with the official and looking for results this year.

“We’ve even got special measures now to regular trade with Tibet. The Indian media’s changes are heartening,” says Chaudhary Prasad Shrestha, spokesmen 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 liaison on this issue. (The Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry).

Indian imports into Nepal grew from Rs 24.6 billion to Rs 32.1 billion within three years since the treaty was signed, while Nepal exports to India grew from Rs 3.6 billion to Rs 12.5 billion.

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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 stealthily 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 have it, the entire political spectrum except for the centrist Nepal 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 self-serving 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 1980-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 the visibly partyless parliamentarians like Subhawar Devkota, who really has nothing left to lose by calling for major rectifications in the constitution.

It seems if you don’t like the Nepal 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 Rajewar 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, on the other hand, sees in the present certain provisions of the constitution as a balloon. They can’t be too serious about it, especially if they need to take such amendments to the House for ratification.

The Supreme Court has decreed that the constituent parliament of this country has the right to grant an allowance to its former members. The court’s interpretation of Clause 67 of the Constitution in effect has overturned MFs from taking away any of the welfare of their predecessors. The court decision was greeted with broad applause from all and sundry. Let’s face it, our four-wheeled drive lawmakers are not exactly very popular. So it was a very popular thing to do, to cut our housemembers in the House.

As a result of being called a knee-jerk reaction, one may lose perspective. 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 laws. 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 MFs illegal, the court has restored 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 revealing the wisdom of the ages. But just because they are not sitting parliamentarians, there was really no need to bestow 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 sesión a session-high. The Pajaro scandal, male MFs filing matrimony bills, all that got a lot of publicity. And we taxed all MFs 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 clattering 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 as unassuming former lawmakers whom (believe it or not) there are quite a few.

For Independently-elected MFs with Panchpattu passes, the allowance was small change in deep pockets. It is unlikely that Aryan Nareshwar KC or Kamal Thapa will miss it. When Shurab Singh Bhandari ceases to be an MF, he is unlikely to care that the bill will not get an MP’s pension. Then there are MFs who made fortunes in the Durbar from their ideas, like the ordinary people they represented. Is this the way we repay their ingenuity, by cutting off the little allowance they had? It’s a kind of socialist-subbers Ram Chandra Timaru, first time former-law MP from Malintra in Madhavpur and political organiser Mahendra Bhattarai not even getting a pension after their terms are over.

Nepalis aren’t prepared to give up the essence of the Constitution— that of creating a pluralistic society with a parliametary 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 Salone where they rattled off the daily scores of killed in action. Two marines, 80 Viet Cong. The reporting of the Vietnam War, they used to call them “five o’clock follies”: evening press conferences in Salone where they rattled off the daily scores of killed in action. Two marines, 80 Viet Cong. The reporting of the Vietnam War, they used to call them “five o’clock follies”.

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State of the State

By CR Lal

Bringing the House down

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 clattering 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 as unassuming former lawmakers whom (believe it or not) there are quite a few.

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Kathmandu’s urban middle-class PLUs (People Like Us) love to hate politicians. “Politicians have wasted the nation” is a common refrain at parties and receptions. The prime minister, who usually said the parliament is dominated by sloggers, but did nothing to head 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 formations of a cohesive, secure and self-assured political class that will not turn too inflation-diddling politicians than is worthy from parliament. We use it to the war, and we use it to our democracy.


“Peoples’ multi-party democracy offers a comprehensive alternative framework of governance”

We are still in an era of impudence and paternalism. The validity of Marxism and Leninism has not dissipated at all, though transformation changes its place in the world in the recent past. Both the authoritarian policies of the era and the political model of populist opportunism have caused harm to the communist movement in various countries. The communist party should exhaust all possibilities, including the political and international mass struggle and peaceful competition to direct society towards progress and to revitalize the correct political actions according to objective conditions of a given society.

The open mouth of several political leaders has created a wave of fear. As the former Soviet Union is a pointer of the adjustment of policies and tactics with a correct understanding of the world of time, without clear class stance and outlook and dialectical approach to manoeuvre mass and mass activity of socialism. Now the phase of fear and confusion is basically over and the focus of socialism and communists is gradually strengthening in the world. In various countries communist parties are leading a strong popular movement, including the labour movement. The so-called deregulations of labour laws support the ideological, political, cultural, religious, and undemocratic and undemocratic overthrowing and political sovereignty, cultural autonomy of nations and democratic framework of national institutions, including those in welfare and service sectors. The US-led world capitalism is paying attention to the economic benefits of developing countries. US-led interventions and exploitation of trade exchanges and black market is challenging. Small and underdeveloped countries face worldwide challenges made by Lenin about imperialism.

When China and India were engaged in earth-shaking liberalisations and independence movements, the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) was established to struggle against feudalism, anarchy, imperialist and capitalist and imperialism. In the first decade, the CPN carried out a massive mass movement along with the participation in parliamentary and local body elections. Even during the autocratic 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 palaces of ideological struggle, internal split and division the mainstream communists succeeded in unifying the movement and deepening its struggle.

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In the third period, the CPN (Unified Marxist-Leninist) received a substantial number of popular votes in the last general elections and won a majority of local bodies. After the mid-term term of 1994, the CPN-ULM 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.

Standing the experience of the past and fully examining the domestic and international situation, the Fifth National Congress of the Communist Party of Nepal ( Unified Marxist-Leninist) at the Time of Maoist law of 1998 we carried out a restless struggle against rightist monopoly capital are reflected in the exploitate and unjust productive relations in Nepali society. There is urgent and unalloyed ownership of land, and object 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. PDMD provides the answers to these questions by offering a concrete alternative framework of governance. Economical 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 patriots together and establish solidarity and cooperation with the world communist and socialist movements. One of the major aspects of the PDMD is to increase the capability of the communist party by mobilizing the people in all circumstances and thus lead the communist movement in a sustained manner. The approbation of the constitution, rule of law, multi-party, open and plural society, the principle of separation of power and the system of multi-party competition, periodic elections and government of party in majority and opposition of the minority are the mechanisms to maintain order, social support and spiritual and creating the ground for social transformation to achieve socialism. We have adopted the peoples’ multi-party democracy model in a distinct feature of a new democratic revolution essential to a semi-fledged and semi-colonial country like ours.

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 success 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 programme 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. Guiding state conduct, PDMD will consolidate the people’s democratic movement, eliminating oppression and suppressing, developing the country both materially and spiritually.

Viewpoint

Nepali Times is a creative demonstration of the possibilities developing in the region. It is thus deeply disappointing to find such an article in the Nepali Times.

Gabriel Campbell
Director General, CIOMD

KOW-TOWING TO KORALA

OK, let’s column, 11 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 Koraila is a professional necessity, I suppose. If you get his rewards as a cojig-up to the powers that be (or soon to be) does. OK, let’s piece has to some extent damaged your credibility. A columnist’s view is not necessarily reflect a paper. It be official standing, but no paper can do the same time absolute still completely from the day it prints.

Dr SM Dixit
Patan

LETTERS

CIOMD

While on official travel outside Nepal I was dismayed to bitterly receive a copy of your article “CIOMD Densities”. This article contains errors of fact and opinion, which were neither true nor attributed. These statements have hurt the reputation of highly esteemed professional colleagues in CIOMD. The failure to correctly identify the internationally recruited staff, who are separating by virtue of having completed two or more terms with CIOMD, is highly irresponsible. The one line correction in the following issue does not even clear that Atul Bhatta and Narpal Jha are no longer among whose contracts are expiring. Likewise, her correction continues the error that CIOMD is responsible for the Board of Governors decision. CIOMD is not 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 caliber of our departing colleagues through the untimely quotation. The professionals who are completing their assignments with CIOMD 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 CIOMD’s recent Centre’s Day with its Board of Governors and Support Group. Your unsupported and unaided remark disdains these professionals, and is unfair to them and CIOMD.

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

Gabriel Campbell
Director General, CIOMD

yak and yet
HELMATA RAI

It is only a matter of time that Nepal's current population growth is seen to be a problem that is not only increasing too fast, and that it will double in about 25 years. The estimate for Nepal's present population is to increase by about 2.5% per year 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, in conjunction with the National Planning Commission, have already been working on this year's pre-test questionnaires and the results have already been used to fine-tune data tabulations. The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) in Kathmandu claims that the 2001 census will be the most scientific of all censuses since the first National Census conducted in 1911 (when Nepal's population was a mere five millions), and a virtual treasure house of valuable data compared with the last one in 1991. 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 reducing 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 sheer drop in death rates of the still high birth rate has opened a yawning gap and turned Nepal's demographic transition into a serious challenge.

The government machinery and the politicians to use the figures properly and meet population targets. The current Ninth Five-Year Plan has prioritized a 20-year 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, a woman in Nepal will have on average 2.4 children. But demographers like Bal Chand Baral are former member of the National Planning Commission, admit that this target may be unrealistic. "To get to replacement level by 2016 is very ambitious," Baral told us.

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 programme combined with family health services and economic growth. In Nepal, the government's 20-year strategy barely exists on paper, and it is to be adapted and implemented will clearly take time. Meanwhile, the clock keeps ticking. The Ninth Plan has also recommended intervention packages like family health services, child survival strategies, and contraceptive provision as effective tools for population control. But this would cost 20 percent of the total national budget outlays for public health, and no one in the Ministry of Population and Environment (MOPE) seems to know where that money is going to come from. MOPE, it seems, has plenty to moan about. Nepal's population growth rate has been a steady 2.5 percent per year since 1995, but experts caution that it is simply not

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.

CENSUS 2001

THIBISSAN UNIVERSITY population expert Bal Krishna Mahabang 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."

Mahabang says, just one example of the wide disparity in figures is the 1958 census that showed Nepal's population in the 1951-1951 decade grew by 2.3 percent annually. But the National Planning Commission's calculation for the same period is 3.8 percent. After the 2001 figures come in, the Central Bureau of Statistics is planning to conduct a micro-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, and availability and opportunity, distribution, and comprehensive trends on population mobility. But the problem of proper statistics is only part of the problem. The really big challenge is to get the...
falling fast enough to take advantage of economic growth. At current growth rates, the country’s population will be 332 million by 2026 and perhaps 400 million by 2035. But if population levels are kept low, the country’s population could be 260 million by 2035. Unfpa points out that the current population growth rate is 1.7% per annum. The United Nations believes that the population could be reduced to 260 million by 2035 if population levels are kept low.

With a population density of 150 people per sq km, Nepal is one of the most densely populated mountain regions of the world. The country has a total population of 28 million people, and the capital Kathmandu has a population of 1 million. The government has set a target of reducing the population growth rate to 1.0% by 2025. However, the actual population growth rate is much higher, at 2.0% per annum.

The government has introduced various measures to control population growth, including the use of contraceptives, family planning clinics, and education campaigns. However, access to family planning services is still limited, especially in rural areas. The government also provides financial incentives for couples who practice family planning.

The government has also set targets for reducing the population growth rate to 1.6% by 2030 and 1.0% by 2050. However, achieving these targets will require a sustained effort and a commitment to improving the lives of people in Nepal.
Ujeli came to Kathmandu from Okaldunga, got lost and lived as the “madwoman” of Samakhushi for over two years.

A hopeless woman came to sleep on the streets of Samakhushi. 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”, Bhima Dhal, a resident of Samakhushi, noticed that despite being homeless she had a quiet dignity and did her best to keep herself clean. During the following months he grew in respect this 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. Bhima’s concern grew. How would she survive the long monsoon? It was when she became sick that Bhima called me. “She ought 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 awkwardly to cover her body. She gratefully accepted the dry shirt and blouse offered to her with a welcoming 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 youngest 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 melancholically 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 home. I hoped that she would settle down in a few days. She loved my animals, even my black kitten. She cooked me delicious dal bhhat, 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 realized 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 delightful and amiable parents and her erratic 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 streets for many days, bewildered by the crowds. Finally, they gave up and went home, thinking she might be by they thought she must be dead.

What happened to Ujeli during those hazy last years before she was found by Bhima? 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 countless 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. He is an editor and author with Harik Gagung of the book, Faces of Nepal.
The Indians aren’t coming

NATION
24-30 NOVEMBER 2000 NEPAL TIMES 7

MisplacedChivalry

By Mehlata Rai

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

The women want to go too.

With a government ban in place, Thapa said that the ministry is “not aware of it”. He added that the air services have not taken permission from the ministry to work for the airline, and should they land in any kind of trouble the government would not be in a position to help them. Apart from the administrative weakness in implementation, all the bans do 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 job-seekers to reach the Gulf. What all prohibition has done is make women more vulnerable to economic and sexual exploitation. Since the women now are illegal channel 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 sexual and physical abuse. Though various women 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 unions have criticized the government decision as chauvinistically imposed discrimination against women. “The ban has no practical meaning, women have been going over and working there anyhow. Instead, it limits women’s rights to decide where and whether they want to work,” says Brinda Panwar, a trade unionist. Instead the government should regularize the channels, Nepal women should be allowed to go to the Gulf for employment. During her South Asian visit last month, UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women Buddhabutti Comanorasamy came down heavily on the government. “Governments have undermined the Gulf ban, she described the legal provisions that require women to acquire consent from husbands or parents for passport applications, to work outside their villages, and the government restriction against women seeking employment in the West Asia as unsuitable occupations against women’s mobility”. These provisions have seriously violated women’s rights (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 Sainirole of the International Labour Organisation in Kathmandu. An argument forms out by the fact that Nepali women cross the border into India through the thousands of 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 cross-boarded ban on women workers going to the Gulf, they are only accentuating pushing an employment channel underground.

MIN BAJRACHARYA

A NEPALI TIMES REPORT

Under questions with India continues border on the头脑。 There’s much hatred between the two neighbours on restricting the flow of people and merchandise, and now it is causing a lot of anxiety in Indian tourists visiting Nepal. Are they told in Delhi, Calcutta or Bengaluru airports that they can’t fly unless they have the proper document. Ironically, the land border remains open, and only people flying in face the new restrictions. The earliest guidelines on Nepal adopted to travel to the country during October-November and March-April, saying that at other times the kingdom was too cold, too hot or wet. Then in the 1970s, Dick Butler, the American gambling pioneer in Nepal, triggered an Indian invasion with his “555” package for Indians. The reason was fear of flighting war. Most Indians come overland, but a sizable percentage of Indian tourists do fly in. It is the argument that could be dismantling, Indian tourist arrival hasn’t really pulled up since the Indian Airlines hijacking last December. And those who do come are part of the extra-special package 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 flight. In addition to the requirement that Indians flying to Nepal need either a special ID card issued by the Election Commission of India or a passport. Indians flying to India also used to feel proud of their nationality. It remains debatable whether this new rule has actually improved security for India, but it has had a big impact on the tourism industry. Many Indians do have passports, but don’t use. The trade from Chandrapur has a passport because he has been around. His wife has a 10-year ID card, but doesn’t have a passport. Then 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 minimize such an impact we have started an information campaign in India telling people that they use their regular documents to travel to Nepal,” Pushpa Ray Pandey of Nepal Tourism Board told us. That Pandey uses 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 to India. Businesses in the capital are crying foul. The Indians are just not coming. “For the India Nepal connection has suffered,” says Dinesh Bhagat, of Engineer Hotel. Then why is there a sense of flighting war? Most Indians come overland, but a sizable percentage of Indian tourists do fly in. It is this argument that could be dismantling. 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The service charge debate threatens to slow down business 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 keep 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 issue?

Tipping is a business institution through which key service charges in the hotel trade.

Tipping is natural in Nepal. You learn to keep tips in your pocket at all times. The pupils at the temple, the taxi driver, the guy who helps you to read your electricity meter or allows you to pass the gate at cutouts, they all need to be granted to insinuate the cash. If hotel employees felt the service charge they generally receive as gratitude should be fixed through a legal framework, then what is the point of the tipping system worldwide that attracts such a lot of work?

The Nepal Telegraph Communication Corporation already levies a 10 percent service charge on their bills, but they do not distribute it among their employees. It is the NRL's turn to part with at least 10 percent of its Rs 5 billion revenue! Laying a service charge is one thing, but forcing it on employees is quite another. Even in countries 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 employers' longstanding demand means or what its implications are. The industry and the government only get their heads out of sand when the workers' actions committee gave them an ultimatum: Break off the discussions by 19 November, or else strike.

Neither the government nor the hotel industry has done its homework to counter the well-researched issues raised by the workers' union.

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 on the four-to-five-star segments. Clearly, the unions have been much better equipped then anyone they are argued with.

The issue of a mandatory service charge is limited to the entire gamut of Legislations in the service industry.

Performance- and profit-linked bonus is another form of legislation by labour laws, that fail to have transparency in financial disclosures by hotel owners makes this system ineffective although Nepal's labour laws are currently socialist. Of course, strong labour unions contribute to a lack of demand, and so the management are cornered and the legal system is always pro-labour. A service charge may therefore have to be a trade-off between an organized legal system of compensation, and constant bargaining and negociations.

The additional service charges will not be passed on to customers, as they are always quoted the net rate. As the taxation 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 order of magnitude would be very big. 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 dependant upon the appreciation of service received should be left to the personal judgment of customers, and not be forced. Further, service charge should be limited to amounts linked to food and beverage. The hotel industry and the government should look into a part of a group of labour-related legislations in the hotel industry. The service charge debate alone is a part of a group of labour-related legislations in the hotel industry. The service charge debate alone should not be seen in isolation.

Readers can post their views at artheed@yahoo.com

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**Grindlays Gazette**

**INTEREST RATE UPDATE**

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| Export | 13.00 |

**Misc.**

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**CURRENCY UPDATE**

- Reserve rose to $35.413 billion in the week ended 10 November
- Yen crumbled to 8-1/2 month lows against the US dollar
- OIL (Barrel): 32.88
- AG/USD: 32.98
- NIC: 0.33
- FID YRD: 7.00
- OVERCRAFT: 12.50
- TERM LOAN: 12.50
- IMPORT: 13.00
- EXPORT: 13.00
- MISC. LOAN: 15.00

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**S/ECONOMIC**
Mountains and movies

We've all heard about Caravans. And roved 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 182 entries, and finally picked three features, two docu-dramas and four 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 phenomena, development, hunting and fishing, and cross-cultural encounters of all manner, including one with a yeti.

The non-competitive Festival is organized by the Future-based Himal: Association with support from Eco-Himal, an Austrian organization working in the Himalaya. Festival director Ranjana Limbu says, “The diversity of the films reflects the life and times of mountain peoples and places.”

The opening film is Chedebit or Ask: A Visit to Paradise, Austrian director Karl Potschnig's record of two Gurung men from Nepal's Dolakha district exploring Vienna, and meditating on the sudden alienation of the western world. Culture shock of a different sort is the subject of the French film Yeti, a tale of the son of an American who married a Sherpa and went down the mountain trails of the western world. Culture shock of a different sort is the subject of the French film Yeti, a tale of the son of an American who married a Sherpa and went down the mountain trails of the western world.

The Festival has enough adrenaline-charged and visually stunning films to show that intensity, like mountain encounters, comes in many different forms. South African Oceans of Fear follows climber Andy de Klerk's free climb up a rock wall and how jump off the wall. Italian Fede Quilici explores the mountains, valleys, flora and fauna of the eastern Alps and upives climbers' head adventures in the Alps. The Eastern Range: The Jomon. The

Surya ad
Cars, cars, and more

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

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Some of the mid-priced attractions are the Tata Indica (Rs 76,000 upwards) sold by Sipradi International Pvt Ltd, and the Alto (Rs 76,500 and up) and the Wagon R from the makers of the indomitable Maruti. The new Korean models at the show are Kia and Sonata, a luxury sedan costing Rs 1.2 million, and their sport utility, Sportsage, that is only marginally more expensive at Rs 1.4 million. The sellers of Coore, Golcha Organisation, are introducing Emule, a new car from the Daewoo 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: Suzuki and the Tiger Pick Up. If the Toyota puts you off Toyota in general, you can choose from Tata’s Safari, Maruti’s Baleno, Daewoo’s Matiz, Daewoo’s Terron and Coore, Hyundai’s Santro and Accent, and the Malaysian Perusahaan Konsel. Who.

Two-wheelers at the show include Hero Honda’s CBZ, Street and Splendor, Kawasaki Biz’s Upgrade Caliber, Eliminator, M-80 and Saffire series, and the more fancy Harley Harleys—Jalting and Dambil.

The organizers 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 untenable under the influence of bad car fragrances, as some inchoate that is inexplicably bit, like that smell denouement, head-hoarding dog cables love to perch on your dashboard.

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—Zee, Coore, Peruda 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

Toyota ad

it’s obvious when you see proof on the streets—Indian made compacts such as Maruti 800, Zen, Maruti and Maruti are the highest selling cars here. They cut anywhere from Rs 650,000 to Rs 1 million.

However, if the Indian cars are ruling the market, sellable 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 import cars.” Doesn’t matter if none of us don’t like them. Their cars are pretty good, serves the general attitude.

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 this 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 awkwardly affordable finance just when you need it. Afterwards, do not, I repeat, do not compare rates.

Car dealers 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 apparently insist on all payments being calculated based on your original loan amount.

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

This may say something about the quality of Kathmandu’s colourful life, but you should go even if you aren’t in the market for a new vehicle. The exhibition is a place to walk around, check out some of the vehicles on display, grab a bite at one of the stalls (shopping for cars is hard work), interact with owners against each other, and watch people fight over the latest hatchy fancy mirror ornament. For those who can’t catch all the live excitement at the exhibition, Auto Show 2000 has a
More cars

Organisers say the website www.ndtv.com/autoexport2000 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 management. Phasing out old gas-guzzlers and crummy vehicles could be reason enough for policy makers to step into the exhibition grounds—at least could be an ideal place to see what type of cars Kathmandu needs.

Who is where at the Auto Show 2000 at Bhrikuti Mandap

Maruti ad
The issue of ‘carbon sinks’ proves most divisive at the Climate Change Convention in The Hague.

Climate change’s ‘carbon sinks’ of Indigenous Peoples offers that ‘carbon sinks’ is not the answer.

ICDM, agreed upon at the Kyoto Climate Change meeting in 1997, 2 rich countries can claim credits for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, “he says. The US alone produces about a quarter of the total world emissions of greenhouse gases, with one of the highest per capita emissions rates of carbon dioxide. The reluctance on the part of some rich countries, led by the US, to face up to their responsibilities 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 grow.

“This is one of the big potential benefits for international development money,” explains Larry Lahnmann of the UK-based research group the Corner House, which recently completed a major study of the ‘carbon sinks’ issue.

(Mark Lynas/UK/Lead author for the International Forum on Climate Change issues.)

A sinking feeling

Mark Lynas is in The Hague.

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Age these hills were densely forested. But trees were felled for timber and firewood and peaceful views swept the tawny spot. Now nothing can grow on the bare rock and stones.

According to the Meghalaya Environment and Wildlife Society, based in nearby Shillong, these hills held a boon 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 organization’s executive secretary Peter Thorson. ‘Protecting forests prevents carbon release. ‘On the other side of the world, in northern California, US Lassen-born ecologist Paul Soman says he is pursuing the same vision. ‘As chairman of a tiny company called Carbon Trading & Trade, 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 forest 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,’ Soman says. ‘For every hectare of forest standing today, a thousand hectares already have been lost. This approach is beginning to gain cautious support from some green groups. ‘Kenya saw has less than two percent of its land under forest cover. At independence (in 1960) it was 20 percent,’ says Eric Oier, from the country’s Forest Action Network. ‘There’s an urgent need for tree cover.’

‘We’re worried that not only do 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.’

‘These policies and mechanisms will perpetuate developed countries to avoid their responsibility to reduce emissions at source, promote the expansion of global capital, and deepen our neocolonialism,’ the Caucaus states in a declaration. Manusal Amin 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 representatives Bob Gaugh, from Breadalbane, South Dakota, disagrees with this definition. ‘True forests are home for many indigenous people, a tree plantation is not,’ he says. Gaugh cites the Mesopotamian 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 Caucaus rejects the ‘worldview of an ideology that reduces forests, land, sea and sacred sites to only their carbon absorption capacity.’ In addition, for many indigenous people, government ‘protection’ of forests has often meant their forced expulsion. ‘We used to be hunters,’ says Kalubha Zephyrin, a member of Rwanda’s Banu Pogoy 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 industrialized countries...’

Mark Lynas

The dams

Creating what dam critics have long argued, a report by the World Commission on Dams (WCD) says dams often fail to deliver promised benefits while devasting the lives of millions in developing countries and degrading the environment. The WCD looks at the impacts of dams, including China’s Three Gorges dam, and comments on the future of their livelihoods. ‘Little is being done to safeguard the environmental integrity of the Yangtze,’ says the report. ‘Many dams are today thought to be environmentally and economically unsound. The report suggests that the Yangtze will remain a major source of flood relief, but also calls for more research into the long-term effects of flooding.’ The report also highlights the importance of managing water resources. ‘A comprehensive water policy is needed that will take into account the needs of all stakeholders,’ it says. The report calls for a new era in dam-building, one that focuses on sustainable development. The report urges governments to consult with affected communities and to ensure that they have a say in the decision-making process. The report also highlights the need for better monitoring and evaluation. ‘A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework is needed to ensure that the benefits of dams are achieved and that they are sustainable in the long term,’ it says.
Electric future

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.

At present the Nepal Electricity 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 NEA may have to consider a long-term standing demand of EV manufacturers and operators that since battery charging is done during off-peak hours, charging stations should be supplied electricity at reduced rates.

The EV industry also sees the 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 tourism experience in Nepal. Safe tempo 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 newer and modern trolley buses—which could be the beginning of a sensible and much-needed mass rapid transport system.

international organization devoted to researching energy and power development. Electric buses, taxis and even private cars are all possible. There are even electric bicycles that cut down pedalling by half. The major players in the EV business in Nepal are EVCO (Electric Vehicle Corporation) and NEV (Nepal Electric Vehicle Industry) are reluctant to reveal specifics, but industry sources say we could see them importing electric four-wheelers as early as mid-2001. The flip side is that clean vehicles currently make a big dent in your wallet. You could pay anything upwards of $20,000 to import one of these babies. The good news is that Nepal companies believe that if EVs are manufactured domestically, or even overseas but sold at local needs, prices could drop to reasonable levels.

Provided the super-low import tax is extended to these larger EVs as well. But for now the initial cost of a small clean vehicle remains at least twice that of a comparable smoke-generating automobile. Consumers would have to weigh the cost against the prospect of not having to worry about a stratospheric fuel bill, and breathing cleaner air in the bargain.

EVs urgently need a positive push. Says Kiron Raj Joshi, electrical engineer at NEV, “The king should start using an EV. All our ministers and ambassadors should promote EVs by using them. Right now the owners 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 in a manner that the country is going to see by mid-2001 when the 144-MW Kathmandu A comes on-line.

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 anyway, remember that old chestnut, no pain, no gain.
New York—Peaceful, a Japanese non-governmental organisation has submitted a petition to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) with more than 20,000 signatures. The author of the 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 could benefit from suffering caused by Japanese imperialism, what kind of compensation they seek, and above all, what they they seek by “real apology”.

They mention in formal damage or suffering, one million soldiers killed or tortured. Including human rights. North 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, in million forced into war. Including 400,000 “comfort women.” Economic looting; cultural treasures seized or destroyed. The situation of the Koreans who have lived in Japan since several generations but not received citizenship, and the responsibility for the division of Korea between the USA and the Soviet Union. 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

Healing the wounds left by the Japanese colonization of Korea from 1905 to 1945.

the form of economic infrastructure and social services may be adequate. Cultural treasures have not only been handed back or compensated for. They consider the nationalisation of national Japanese interests, and they demand wholesale reparations. Japanese support is crucial for Korean unification. Accordingly, the victim will decide how much compensation is enough, not the perspective of the North Koreans.

The North Korean conception of “real apology” contains six elements: it has to come from a prime minister, it has to be in writing, preferably in a joint cooperation statement, and it should contain the word “apology”, not only remove 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 Taro Yamasaki made a vague apology in “Asian nations” in 1997 but has been severely criticized. In 1998, he said, “Japan should apologise to the Asian nations for the normalisation of relations with Japan. They feel humiliated when the Japanese offers them lavish, paper-documented instead of real events. This year Japan’s economic relations with Korea were “abducted” in North Korea and insist on the term “wrongdoing people.” They are willing to discuss their missile programme, but within the framework of a

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

They also reject the Japanese argument that money has to be given directly to individuals concerned and serve people’s needs so as not to be directed 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 is reasonable, and Japan would make a major contribution to peace in East Asia by accepting.

But the use of apology and restitution at 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 social services projects in general, used to particular purposes.

But North Korea also feels that Japan is a client state of the US and 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 partners to protect. 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. 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.

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 to the South Asian nation. Government leaders and diplomats in these countries say that an “emerging power.” India has a greater role to play in southeast Asia.

Some see in New Delhi’s “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 divisions had kept India, a close ally of the former Soviet Union, estranged from much of the region until the late 1990s. 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 Bangalore with the 10 ASEAN foreign ministers during the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)—Asia’s only multilateral forum on security issues.

NADEEM IJAZ IN HASSAN ABAD

The crowds baying in this small town near Pakistan’s capital city were 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 Muslim-majority 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 across Europe, the Gulf, southeast Asia, India and Pakistan converged at the 534th birthday anniversary of the founder of their faith—Sacha Guru Nanak Dev. The pilgrims attended religious ceremonies at the Punjab shrine here before proceeding for the main visit at Nandneshwar, 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 Sikh ruler the former Punjab prince tried to link the British empire conquered it in the mid-19th century. Pakistan’s creation in 1947 left more than 2 million Sikhs divided. The partition was a two-thirds of Sikhs migrating to India. Three times each year, the government of Pakistani issues travel permits to a limited number of Sikhs to

Pilgrims progress

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-first anniversary celebrations of Guru Nanak, Baisakhi (a harvest festival) in April, and the June death anniversary of Mahanand Ratan Singh, the legendary Punjab ruler who fought the British in the 19th century.

Pakistani government officials say this was the first time as many Sikh pilgrims came to Pakistan. Some 2,000 pilgrims were from India. Pakistanis and Hindus were provided to most of the pilgrims by the organisers as part of religious tradition. A pilgrim who said that he came to see the shrines in Pakistan at least twice a year.

The Kadmiu 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 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 expected the annual pilgrimage as it brings them good business. Punjab (Nand) Sahib is

named after a sacred rock, which the faithful say carries the footprint of Sacha Guru Nanak Dev. The shrine also is a fresh water spring that, according to religious traditions, was created by Guru Nanak. Bathing in the spring is believed to cleanse the faithful of their sins.

The main ceremony is the religious book of the Sikhs, the Guru Granth Sahib, being carried in a chariot, accompanied by a procession of young dancers doing the traditional Sikh dance. Langar dance. Pakistan Prime Minister, Muhammad Rafiq Tavak, also attended the ceremony, 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 $1 million on the repair and renovation of Sikh holy places.

South Asian diplomatic analysts attach much importance to the annual Sikh pilgrimage as a peaceful method of building trust between the two rival nuclear nations. Senior Pakistani business leader, Wajun 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.
“Elections under the Congress will not be fair”

Saptari, November 17

(Open letter to Manmohan, Chairmman, Congress Pradesh from Pradeep Nepal, UML spokesman)

Action does not always count for political success. But every action of yours, says the Congress, is in vain. 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 something that can never be changed, nor is it any kind of “Dharma Shastr” in the Shastras. There is a desire to order society, to help society function and grow properly.

Are there any grave problems that the nation is facing at the present moment? If so, then it is required to change it at the present moment?

For the enlightenment of the people, practical and positive steps have to be taken, good governance has to be provided, security has to be provided, arrogation 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 labor about something and be able to do for them.

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

We have not stated how many changes have to be made. It can be 15, 10 or 20 changes. Questioning pertaining to election areas, to free and fair elections and others related to it. Not only against a coordination government. Fair and just change is thus in control over, a guarantee of free and fair elections and other issues are being raised. Activities that are against the spirit of the constitution, issues that impair the constitution, inconstancy of the constitution, inefficacy of the constitution and how these can be resolved are what we want to discuss. We’re clear about this.

The Manuvi 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 extreme right-wingers, 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 Manuvi?

What are the Manuvi 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 Manuvi and us become clear, don’t they? Just because people want to be called “communists” in the name of their parties does not mean they believe in the same thing. If you study the papers of the 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 more. Have you really accepted the establishment of democracy?

We have worked parliament. The parliament is a body to be used, Parliament is the means 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. Processes change, law change, but people always are. Only the nation and people remain.

“Without us you are nothing”

Buddhak, 22 November

Nepali has brought people’s committee, UCPN Committee, or in areas under their control, the people’s elected programmes are held and plans formulated concerning village development, road construction, drinking water, protection of forests, price of commodities, etc. People from all parties actively and actively participated in these elections and did not change their changing their political beliefs. People against the PM’s eastern and UML policies participated in these elections even though they were not able 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 Rupak, Rohan, Salayan and Jalebaiti districts. If there is a move to reduce corruption, some say they are set to be called the best. If you study the papers of the 5th and 6th conventions, it becomes clear what we want to do.

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Himal Express

November 17

Nepali has not proved that the 21st century is really the age of information. Till now [among Nepali language brokers] there were more than 100 years old Giriprakash, the eight-year-old Manmohan, and late extravagant.

Himal Magazine

November 17

Nepali has not proved that the 21st century is really the age of information. Till now [among Nepali language brokers] there were more than 100 years old Giriprakash, the eight-year-old Manmohan, and late extravagant.
Tiger in this neck of the woods

by MUKUL HUMAGAIN

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 Dhangadhi, Lalitpur, Thapa’s family soon shifted to Kathmandu and settled near the airport. Thus began Thapa’s fascination with golf. Responsibility as the oldest son led him to join the RNGC as a caddie. He was later promoted to caddie-in-charge. Thapa won 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 Sunny 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 choice 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,” 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 organized a tournament last year.”

There are now 19 professional Nepali golfers. His favourite Nepali golfers are Deepak Acharya, Pushpati Sharma and Tanay Shrestha. “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.

Surging ahead: Deepak Thapa Magar in action.

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 bowled 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 repeating it once again. But they faltered in the semi. 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 semi.

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 work. The defeat by Hong Kong showed where we need to improve—in our batting. This is the ACC trophy lesson.
**Films**

- _Nepali_
  - _Aap_ — Ganga Chakicchra, Ranjana
  - _Basanti_ — Plaza!
  - Darpan Chary — Biswaoyoti, Krishna, Prithivi, Shri Nava Durga Dhruvahi — Goon (Ga)
- _Hindi_
  - J boss — Ashok
  - Kahir Piyar Na Ho Jaye — Tara, Metro, Manikama, Goon (Kha)
  - Kurukshetra — Shishadarsan, Goon (Ka)
- _Foreign_
  - Baby Mother.

**Best of British Film Festival** presents five British films 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), Lamchaur. 417988

**Venue to be announced. Contact Pro Public, Anamnagar.**

**General’s Office.** Participants will include representatives from various valley roads, road contracts, unhealthy competition among Thanpathali. 9.30 am–12.30 pm for dancers and 2.30-5.30 pm for their show on Friday 24 November at the Alliance Francaise, November. 6:30 pm. Royal Nepal Academy. Rs 1000, 500, 250, 100.


**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 artist’s hair. 23 November. 11 am-5 pm. NAPA exhibition hall, Bait Mandir, Nasal.
    
  - 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 Loka paper which produces the illusion of wood-prints. The show will be supported by a video that shows the artist at work. 18–26 November. 10 am–4.30 pm. Patan Museum.
  - Dance of Gods and Men. A unique fusion of Kathak and dance presented by renowned French group Acropolis. 24 November. 10.30-5 pm. NAPA exhibition hall, Bait Mandir, Nasal.

**RIVER FESTIVAL**

Nepal River Conservation Trust (NRCT) in association with the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) hosts yet another annual river festival at the Bhotte Kosi river at Borderlands Resort 1-3 December. The festival events include Nayak Roster, Friendship Float down the Bhotte 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 Nepal rivers and their resources and train river guides (500 plus) also to be river conservationists. Transport service to and from the venue. 483829. vrit@eNepal.com.np

**KATHMANDU**

**NEPALI WEATHER**

- **Friday**
  - 24-06
- **Saturday**
  - 23-08
- **Sunday**
  - 23-08
- **Monday**
  - 24-06
- **Tuesday**
  - 24-05

**opel ad**

**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 Shangrala Hotel with lunch. 9 December, Saturday. Entry fee Rs 200. You can also sponsor a rally entry for a Nepali child for Rs 6,000 and take part in the rally. susan@cs.wink.com.np

**QUICK EYE 8**

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**Across**

1. Misspoken man, the banker of Zurich (5)
2. Terminal agency at stem junction (5)
3. Clamp down on the media (5)
4. Rate, this is an accent! (4)
5. Intestinal cul de sac (5)
6. Ailing, boxer with Parkinson’s (3)
7. Impole (4)
8. Austpick, shorter American (4)
9. Quiet flows the bile, passage (4)
10. Bruce did an undergraduate (3)
11. Always pronounced right, officer (2)
12. The spirit of love (6)
13. Landlocked South African state capital (6)
14. The latest film from Nick Park, Oscar winning director of Wallace and Gromit. (6)
15. The Guthis of Khokaha: Traditional Structure and Cultural Change. (6)
16. Volcanic activity on the Tibetan plateau (4)
17. The prize has to be collected from Himalmedia within a week of the announcement. Please come on ID. (4)
18. The most convenient and economic way to surf the internet (3)
19. The only all-correct entry was sent in by Jemima Sherpa (3)
20. Less tension for the junior officer (2)
21. The most accurate entry was sent in by Jemima Sherpa (3)
22. Cobbler’s poker (4)
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24. The latest film from Nick Park, Oscar winning director of Wallace and Gromit. (3)
25. 2000s (4)
26. Genesis (3)
27. Bird with the Women’s World Cup (3)
28. Itemises, inclined to show (3)
29. The cup (4)
30. The prize has to be collected from Himalmedia within a week of the announcement. Please come on ID. (3)
31. The Guthis of Khokaha: Traditional Structure and Cultural Change. (3)
32. The most accurate entry was sent in by Jemima Sherpa (3)
33. The original comic (3)
34. From the Loch, the girl (6)
35. Bobet about the loch (3)
36. Inset, or come in (5)
37. North northeast (3)

**QUICK EYE**

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**17 CITY**

24-30 NOVEMBER 2000 NEPALI TIMES
The city of good deeds

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.

Damaged by battle and partly destroyed by earthquake, the fortress town of Kirtipur retains a sturdy 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 Licchhavi king who called it Kirtipur, the City of Good Deeds, to perpetuate the discovery of the last image of Padmapani by a man and his cow who lived on the hill, it had grown 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 Gorkha 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 Nakharipur, the place of severed noses. Cremeously threatened in 1966 when asteroids, 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 studded beeves 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 fancied clean. People swaffed in white were already about and coaches wait. The neat dissolved, day clearly existed the old, walled buildings, narrow undulating lanes, shrines where people prayed and pools where children played regardless of doors. Perhaps the gods venerated or the propers of Kirtipur and the Valley were headed. There was no earthquake and wondered why all those who believe the legend that their city is built on a single rock wrinkled at all.

On Kirtipur’s highest point is the ruined temple of Uma-Maheshwor, built in 1672. It enshrines a beautiful image of Shiva and Parvati, or Uma-Maheshwer, 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 that of Bhairav, devouts translated 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 dish, a metal canopy, and carved verses, it is believed to have been built by the Indus Emporer Ashoka in the third century BC. Like the stupa for its slender proportions, its alluring eyes painted on black surfaces and the feel of it, Ashoka, we believe, came to the Valley in the footsteps of his master, Gautam Buddha, and built stupas at place of special Buddhist sanctity. Could be he to this nuns-neglected town, whose guidebooks dismiss so hardly mention, came the Sakyas Mass himself. (Excerpted with permission from My Kind of Kathmandu, HarperCollins, 1994)
Sharp ad

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Under My Hat
by Kunda Dixit

Unknown 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 companies being registered in Nepal has fallen sharply because our entrepreneurs aren’t finding names and trademarks for them. If we don’t explore ways out of this names shortage pronto, it will soon find itself in a serious time quo non for our quota system, not to mention on our rating quo and, even more importantly, on our term inaccuracy.

Mt Everest is an all-time favourite, and an apt running out of things to call Mt Everest. Mt Everest Steel, Mt Everest Steel, Higher Secondary English-Medium Residential Boarding School and Academ. Mt Everest Ghee, Udhyog, Mt Everest Prawn Cracker Industries, Mt Everest Restaurant and Bar, Mt Everest

Mt Everest Prawn Crackers

Communications for STD, IDD and DDT, Mt Everest Brand Chewy Tobacco, Mt Everest Deep Tubewell Drilling Pvt Ltd (slogan “We dig you from the top of the highest mountain in 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 Industry, it is mandatory in this country to have instant noodle brands consisting of one monosyllabic word repeated twice, like Wai-Wai, paper, Bahun dry-gusty-bitter mustard oil, Lamsa Vegetarian Noodles and Fastfood Franchise, KC: AC-DC Adapters. Which brings me to the acute name shortage in the autoimmune industry, since there are now a few thousand automobile registered. But even here, there is hope because we are lucky to have the entire Honda pantheon available to us. After all, if we can have Buddha Air, there is no reason why there shouldn’t be Hanzo Air Lines, Padupok Bisan, or Jhau Yowari. And the in-flight service can always consist of Bo-Bo Wun noodles (“What’s good for your dog is good for you.”)

Mino-Mino, or Ra-Bi. 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 images: Mino-Mino (“Even your cat will love it.”), Ra-Ha (“Probably the world’s fastest noodle”), or Ra-Bi (“The favourite noodles of the black sheep in every family”). Another highly popular brand name is “Sherpa”. My friend Tashi Zangpa says no one asked him if 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 branded whisky. Since Nepal is a multi-ethnic country, this opens up a whole new era of nomenclature for the manufacturing and service industries: Chhutor brand, Tharu brand, Nepali photographic

Sudhesh 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 in a Nepali.

The scheme gets young people interested in voluntary activities like community service, travel and art. Participating in shows and attempting to qualify for the bronze, silver and gold awards is 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.

Sudhesh, from Shwatan

“Don’t let them put you in a museum.”

School in Patan, painted hospital walls with environmental message, participated in a clean-up campaign aroundpantsed Zo, helped prepare a children’s park in Patan Hospital, and assisted mentally impaired children from from Kelphone Kendra. He has trudged in Helambu and tried his hand at public speaking, photography, and classical guitar. Loath to ignore any aspect of life, Sudhesh always finds the time for the sports he loves, basketball and rollerblading.

Sudhesh 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-year-old. What did the Prince tell him?

uday tea