The ruling party’s vicious internal power struggle is now in its final round, and the outcome will be decided at the party’s upcoming convention in Pokhara. But before that, there was the small matter of the no-trust vote against Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala that wannebe Sher Bahadur Deuba wanted to settle first. The vote was set for 20 December, and both factions did some grandstanding about secret or open ballot to hide the fact that they were both terifically at losing.

Both sides met for the duel in the murky fog-shrouded Singha Durbar on Thursday morning. The rebels led by Deuba boycotted the vote when the Kanalai camp insisted that the voting should be open. Allegations of monetary incentives for floor-crossing loyalists have been rife. Initially, the rebels looked for a way out of the situation, but when Deuba didn’t agree that people with the arithmetic in his favour, he and his supporters staged a face-saving walkout.

But when the Prime Minister returned from his customary bowl of soup and siesta, Deuba was addressing a corner meeting for the press. “We didn’t agree because it was to be an open ballot, he said. The voting went ahead anyway, and the final scores: 69 for Koirala, 41 Deuba loyalists who walked out, 2 abstentions and one absent (Deuba’s mentor, Krishna Prasad Bhattacharji). So another brinkmanship taking us to the edge of an intra-Congress crisis. The question everyone is asking is: wouldn’t it be better to just split the party and get it over with?

EXCLUSIVE

POST-MORTEM

In the 36 hours of mobocracy that ruled Kathmandu’s streets last week, we caught a glimpse of an area of darkness in our country’s soul.

BINOD BHATATA!

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26-27 December, Nepal had no government. Legitimate political parties, covered, citizens were afraid to speak out, the public undertook an anorexic lovers’ walk. It wasn’t the more dreary kind — because we have been brought up to believe that things like this weren’t supposed to happen in peaceful Nepal. It wasn’t the same as again. Nepal of all places, castes, clans and ethnicity would be aware of their physical appearance. Our multi-ethnic lands which prized itself on unity in diversity suddenly descended into politically inspired tribulations. For the first time, Nepal was in the halls like those from the sarai, or Nepal in the sarai who look like they are from the halls were forced to feel like foreigners in their own land.

The government, when it did act, made things worse. We had an Information Minister who went on an ascendancy, an apology from the actor without configuring whether the statement attributed to him was true. The leader of the Marxist-List party refused to believe the actor’s denial. Five young Nepalis were dead, and then the unanswerable question began to capitalise on the fallout.

“Last week was one of those times in the history of tragedies when even recent issues conspire,” explains Chaitanya Mishra, professor of sociology at Tribhuvan University. “The government was not our at a critical moment.” It was only on Wednesday that things began to get out of control that the Prime Minister’s office began taking stock. The only party that showed some empathy was the left, the Maoists — were more interested in bending the evidence to suit their agendas.

Manik Upreti’s Communists had fulsome praise for those who took to the streets to protest “Indian exploitations, capitulation and the fascist Naxals’ clip.” But even he seemed worried about the spectre of conscription violence: “It is the Indian government that is expansionist, not the Indian working class (i.e. the vegetable vendors, etc., in Nepal).”

As in any poontang of a visit of this type, there is no shortage of conspiracy theories. But there are no slogans, and news can work haphazardly by analysing motives. The first anti-British protest occurred in Bharatpur and was reported by the Chitwan Post. It spread to Dhulikhel, still more after student-police clashes. Kathmandu papers did not start reporting it till 27 December. And despite the government’s attempts to pin the blame on “the specious Doi”. Such low key so-called public order or the various headlines in the other newspapers.

By this time, all kinds of left and right-wing groups were ready in Kathmandu with busses, pamphlets, and tracts wound up into a frenzy. All government targets were fair game, and businesses were looted. But the most organized and vicious attacks were on Indian targets. There was an outpouring of funds up anti-Indian feeling accumulated over the years. The configuration lie the force of Pakistan-Madhepura’s discord. The solemnities from strategically located the terrain town where there was some real tangible violence. There were underlying causes that made the frustrations of the Nepali people fertile groundwork for various power centres to cash in on. Aside from jostling, inflations and shortages, ten years of democracy have also made Nepalis aware of their rights. Without policies that address the needs of the people to be heard, grievances pile up. Says another U preti ally Krishna Bahadur Bhattaheen: “Our rulers have taught us to put our short-term periodic protests, demonstrations, domination, exclusion and domination of the weak. But with growing awareness in the masses and the Ministries permitting them, we could be heading towards worse problems under the rulers need their way.”

The public had high expectations that democracy would take some of these issues with time, but after a decade of waiting patience is running out. And there comes a point when all need is a reasonably human reaction to stifle a chain reaction. Political scientist Dhr Raj Dahal sees a crisis of confidence between the rulers and the ruled: “There is a large gap between what political parties say they need, what they actually do,” he says. To the social problems add power centres that face public frustration on scapegoats and you have a recipe for disaster.
Beyond borderline insanity

By CK LAL

I against my brother
I and my brother against our cousin
I, my brother and our cousin against the neighbours
All of us against the foreigners

Af ter Prithvi Narayan Shah created Nepal by extending the territory of his tiny Gorkha principality, he faced an even greater challenge. Nepal now existed, but how about Nepal? Forging a national identity for such a diverse land was more difficult than checking the hegemonic forces of the East India Company. So he tried to build a two-faced, one stone to be defined Nepal nationality in terms of distinct people from the south. Seeds of xenophobia were sown by the founding father himself. To this day, we see Nepali nationalism defined solely as anti-Indian.

The Archetype Rana continued this policy even though they socialized mostly with Indians and hired Indianagographers, like the rulers had done earlier, in truce their ancestry to the royal houses of Rajasthan. Over a period of time, this love-hate relationship with India geet embodied in the psyche of Nepali people. When Ranas were overthrown with the help of Indians in the spring of 1915, New Delhi came to be regarded with a mixture of fear and hope by the elite of Kathmandu.

King Mahendra replaced the fear when he staged a bloodless coup by impressing the prime minister, dismissing the entire cabinet and dissolving the first elected parliament of the country in 1960. To create solidarity around the crown, he installed the fear of Indians in the face. For King Mahendra, “we” were those who supported his Panchayat, all others were ‘they’—Indians or their images. Nationalism became the rallying cry of a regime that needed India to define itself.

Those were also the days when the National uprising was sweeping eastern India. In Calcutta, students protested the Vietnam War. To deflect attention, court ideologues rediscovered the old bogey of ‘Indian expansionism’ and served it on a platter to the Nepali leftists. For the followers of Neatdal in Nepal, the Nepali communists, Indian expansionism thus became a louder cry than American imperialism. Indra Gandhi moaned loud on Sishu snabba later. The fear of Indian expansion in Nepal predates that event.

This brand of what came to be called ‘Manadali-Mat’ nationalisms (an unabashed fusion of extreme right and extreme left ideologies) was so pronounced on Nepal’s college campuses during the seventies that when students’ leaders thundered, “We will blow up the East borrows and wash Bihar into Bay of Bengal”, we actually took them seriously.

Then reality began to fall. When the Indians imposed an economic blockade for about two years in 1988-89 it suddenly dawned on us that ‘Bhutia-India’ was a very fragile foundation of Nepal nationalism. Anti-Indiaism lost some of its charm when the neighbour up north refused even moral support during our fire-off with India. The resulting economic turmoil hastened the People’s Movement.

During the decade of democracy, no event captured the fervour of anti-Indiaism of the seventies, Mahabali, Kalapani, Lamanpani. IC 41 and even the scrupulous publication of “Nepal Gameplan” by the Indian media failed to rally Nepali people against the Indian state. It appeared as if Nepal had seen the futility of fanning at an enemy outside when most real enemies were within. All that was proved wrong by the events of last week. Proof is the ‘I hate-India’ sentiment, increasingly cultivated by interest groups for decades. That poor Hindi film actor was just an excuse. In all probability whoever started the rumour knew that the spark had a receptive dry hay waiting to catch fire. And how the caper burned—and continued to burn even after the statement was proven to be fake.

The media was one of the reasons the fires refused to abate. It is easy to dismiss the complicity of the Chinese media, who first picked up the story, by attributing it to small town sensationalism. However, the complicity of national broadsheets who followed up on the story without once double-checking is unforgivable—especially when the infamous interview was available on the internet. The national media forgot that fact. No rule of journalism seems to die. Everyone was not to un-spoo the competition by playing up the story with inflammatory headlines and sensational captions. So the unadorned, last week’s deadly fire, still hasn’t been inclined. But we know that there has been a serious rupture in ethnic relations within the country caused by a situation that got out of hand because of a serious crisis of governance.

Hypothetically, let us examine what would have happened if events were allowed to run their course. As the evidence escalated, the army could have taken over the streets in order to enforce peace. In all probability, this would have happened after the dismissal of the present government on charges of incompetence. As even worse outcomes could have been the arrival of Indian troops supposedly upon the “request of His Majesty’s Government of Nepal” because of the threat to “Indians and people of Indian origin in Nepal”.

Considering such a conspiracy, it doesn’t look very surprising that the rumour was spread deliberately, carefully followed through, and its after-effects well-organized. Protest was too well organized to be spontaneous.

The only consolation is that things could have been worse. As the Madhesi who were repeatedly abolished and threatened during the winter of discontent last year, let us say this: King Prithvi Narayan Shah did not mean this country to be the exclusive domain of any one racial group, ethnic community, cultural cluster, economic class or dominant caste. He meant Nepal to be a garden of diversity.

The moment that diversity is disturbed, we all are doomed. If one can’t hang together in adversity, we will all be hanged separately by forces that do not want to live alone or live together. The moral of the story—nationalism that is hatred towards others is self-assimilation. We must build an inclusive nationalism. ☎
Homeward bound?

There is light at the end of the tunnel for 100 Bhutanese refugees in Nepal as talks in Kathmandu last made progress on verification.

HARTHIK

Your story “Is not about HARTHIK anymore” (G92) compels me, as an Indian, to respond. The question, which immediately springs to my mind, is: “Is it about HARTHIK at all?” During the last two days, I have been witness to a remorseless outpouring of violence targeted at the Indian community. All of it is an alleged remark which HARTHIK vehemently denies he ever made. He has only been made a scapegoat. I wonder why the perpetrators of the violence did not stop to think that even if HARTHIK said what he was rumoured to have said, clearly he did not really confirm his views. The only logical conclusion is that they did not want to risk their future by having any such doubts.

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Srivas Gauri’s piece on the king’s constitutional role is well deserved (“Thirty years of King Birendra’s reign” #92). However, there is one aspect of his role which has not been strictly constitutional, the nomination of members to the House of Representatives. The Constitution states: “Ten members to be nominated by His Majesty from amongst persons of high reputation who have rendered prominent service in various fields of national life.” The supposition that the representation of particular interests will not be possible through the competitive system of election. Does this not imply that those nominated should be non-political or non-partisan nature? There have been a number of cases in the past ten years of politicians who have attempted to have no chance of entering the House, and even those of dubious character, have been nominated. As constitutional monarch, the king is above partisan politics. Shouldn’t his nominations also be the same?

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**Women, rights, and the law**

The government is organising seminars to discuss the new women’s bill “at the grassroots”. But women’s rights activists are unhappy with the process and the provisions of the bill.

**MANJUSHREE THAPA. . .**

In the last days of 2006, the government made an unprecedented move: the Parliament’s Law and Justice Committee sent the 11th Civil Code Amendment Bill, informally known as the “women’s bill”, for discussion to the grassroots level. Five teams headed by MPs from different parties were set up to conduct seminars in 14 districts (one for each zone) on the controversial bill. According to Committee Chairperson MP Malhadev Madhukar, the teams will solicit opinions from approximately 60,000 citizens in each seminar, including district, municipality and VDC officials, members of women’s NGOs, women in local government, and other significant personalities. The seminars were slated to start on 31 December in Nepalgunj and last ten days, with the final and possibly largest seminar taking place in Kathmandu. The seminars are primarily concerned with the inheritance rights provisions in the bill, the subject of much criticism and debate, “states” MP Madhukar. “Our aim in conducting them is to gather a popular vote on the bill.”

None of the prominent women’s rights activists has been invited to the seminars so far (though the Women’s Security Press Group is trying, on its own initiative, to attend as many as possible). It is not that they find many reasons to feel sceptical. It is that a womanizer aims at removing the law’s inheritance rights provision, says Shanta Thapaliya. “This is not uncharacteristic about MP taking initiative on women’s rights. There is much conservation in those involved, but maybe, by some luck, some good people will prevail in these seminars.”

Manjushree Thapa is more blunt: “Why seek a popular vote only for a law on women’s rights? Other equally important bills, like the citizenship bill, weren’t put through this process. The committee’s members would rather see this bill fail than succeed, and so they’re preparing the ground to reject even the limited rights it grants women.”

Draconian surging results could emerge from biased target groups and flawed methodologies. What do the questionnaires to be used in the seminars ask? MP Madhukar says, “That information won’t be released beforehand. To do so would be like leaking test questions.”

There are fair grounds to question the government’s fancy footwork. Eleven years after democracy, the Constitution, the Madhukar Civil Code, and even new acts and court rulings remain stubbornly unresolved to give women equal legal equality. One part of the Constitution states: “No discrimination shall be made against any citizen in the application of general laws on grounds of religion, race, caste, tribe or ideological conviction.” But lawmakers in Parliament and in the courts are blind to the discrimination in that very document, and in the Madhukar Civil Code, an often unachieved code which, in compliance with Hindu law, holds women below men. It’s a tribute to the small and overworked group of women’s rights activists that the present bill has even made it to Parliament.

The first movement towards such a bill began in 1995, when lawyer Pradeep Dhungana filed a writ petition against the Supreme Court asking that the term “son” in Clause 16 of the Madhukar law’s inheritance law be repealed as it discriminates against daughters. Current inheritance laws allow women to inherit parental property only if she is over 35 and unmarried. By contrast, all men over 15 enjoy the right to inherit parental property in Nepal’s prevailing system of agnatic, or birthright inheritance.

The Supreme Court issued a ruling with urgency. It agreed that Clause 16 be abrogated against daughters, but declared that repealing it would obstruct their parents’ and husbands’ properties, and thus discriminate against men. The Court ordered Parliament to submit a “just” bill within one year. The Nepal government, however, failed to update current laws that “could affect the patriarchal order” of Nepal. The Court explained: “Society cannot accept it when social values are changed suddenly.”

The government’s answer was to amend the Supreme Court’s decision. It did not amend the Supreme Court’s decision. It was this kind of legal reasoning that the government has employed in the Madhukar bill: “The law must be ‘reformative’ to prevent women from the peer pressure of patriarchy.”

In one provision of the bill, women are not allowed to inherit any property unless they are married before their 35th birthday. If they marry after this age, they will lose all their property.

These provisions violate the spirit of the Constitution. Women have the right to own property, regardless of whether they are married or not. The bill also violates the principle of equality, which is a fundamental principle of the Constitution. The bill also violates the principle of non-discrimination, which is another fundamental principle of the Constitution.

The bill also fails to address the issue of women’s property rights. Women are not allowed to inherit property unless they are married before their 35th birthday. This provision is discriminatory and violates the principle of equality.

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women bore greater punishment). Yet in many of these cases, Malla points out, as for example, the bill fails to define rape more broadly than original penetration.

The present bill touches on very few of the 54 separate discriminatory laws in the Constitution and in the Madhia Asis which are identified by the Forum for Women, Law and Development report. Even some Parliamentarians criticize it as a conservative over 70 amendment proposals have been submitted on it to date, including proposals by MPs of the CPN (UML) and other left parties who hold, among other things, that women should not return inherited paternal property upon marriage. As for the Nepal Congress party, which is responsible for drafting the bill, it has never been in a rush to take up the issue of women’s equal rights.

Equal inheritance rights have always been the rallying cry of the left. A will system, which would be an obvious alternative to Nepal’s birthright system of male inheritance, is sporadically raised by left leaders, but they’ve displayed no initiative in discussing this option recently.

A recent study by the Forum for Women, Law and Development shows that women are claiming far less than 95 percent of the women interviewed felt that existing property laws discriminated against them; 90 percent felt the same way about citizenship, marriage and divorce laws, and 60 percent felt that laws related to legal and court procedures were discriminatory. And as the “women’s bill” goes all over the country for discussion, activists must ask themselves whether to support it. Many feel that activists need’s better lobbying to pass this bill in present state—it is preferable to work for a bill that unambiguously grants equal inheritance rights. Others feel that the bill is at least the beginning of a long struggle, and that it must be supported as such. “We should lead it as a conditional support,” says Malla. “But we must continue working for other important rights which it leaves undone.”

In fact most women’s rights activists are not focusing on this bill but on other efforts, like following through with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Ratified without reservation by Nepal in 1991, this convention unilaterally provides legal avenues to overturn discriminatory national laws.

Meanwhile, Mr. Madhokar says the suggestions gathered by the five teams will be compiled into a report, which will then be considered by the committee as a draft of the 1st Madhia Asis Amendment Bill. There is nothing to prevent this process from dragging on for months, or even years. Many activists feel the government is simply acting in good faith, at best trying to pass only token amendments, and at worst to endlessly delay the passing of any amendment at all. How long will it take for the redrafted “women’s bill” to be tabled for voting? “To send this bill to Parliament in a timely fashion is our main responsibility,” says Madhokar. So it will be tabled in the upcoming session? After a pause, Madhokar says quite confidently, “Yes, I believe it will.” And if the redrafted bill contains no new provisions for inheritance rights? That isn’t quick to answer: “Let’s see what the committee does. We are also prepared to respond.”

Nepal-Bhutan talks inch ahead

Nepal and Bhutan have finally taken a step forward towards resolving the refugee problem involving about 100,000 people. Last week the two sides agreed to form a joint verification team (JVT) for validating of family relationship as well as verification of the status of ‘people in the refugee camps’. The JVT is to visit the camps this month to make “logistical, security and other arrangements”. This basically means that work will begin to see if the people in the camps are actually Bhutanese evicted from their homeland—as Nepal has been maintaining—or economic migrants—as Bhutan claims.

“There may be delays over technical matters but this is a step forward,” says Gyan Chandra Acharya, spokesman at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The plan is to verify refugees as members of a family group for those up to the age of 25. Those above 25 will be assessed later. The two governments are silent on what to do with refugees not living in the camps.

From the refugee problem moves towards other, perhaps more contentious, issues such as classifying them into four categories as agreed in October 1993—boma ride Bhutanese evicted forcibly, Bhutanese who immigrated, non-Bhutanese people and Bhutanese who have committed criminal acts.

Nepal and Bhutan did not meet for seven months after the last meeting but Foreign Ministry officials say they noticed a marked change in the Bhutanese attitude towards the refugee issue. That was partly a result of pressure from donor nations like the US and the EU. The European Parliament’s resolution in September was the most scathing: it said Bhutan had delayed finding a solution to the problem and that the people in the camps were victims of arbitrary deprivation of nationality and forcible eviction. “Shocked by the sudden and arbitrary” resolution, which it said was “highly partisan, unsubstantiated and ill-timed,” Bhutan wrote to the EC saying that the bilateral process was close to reaching a solution.

In the past Bhutan squared off the blame for delays on the frequent changes on government in Nepal. In the same note Bhutan also said the origins of many people were in question as they cannot be separated from “the hundreds of thousands of wandering people in the region who have been displaced by demographic, environmental and economic circumstances in Nepal.” The verification process could shed light on this issue.

Hearings on pork barrel funds begin

The Supreme Court has begun looking into a petition seeking the cancellation of Electoral Constituency Development Programme funds which MPs have been spending on projects of their choice. MPs get Rs 1 million every year to be used at their discretion. The petition was filed by the self-styled anti-corruption activist Bharat Jangam, who was also successful in getting the Court to order the cancellation of pensions for former MPs a few weeks ago. The petitioner argues that the funds from the central coffers are used to fund partisan projects.

Winter mountaineering round-up

Only four climbing expeditions decided to try their luck in the Nepal Himalayas this winter. Five climbers from the Himalayan Guide Winter Amadablam Expedition and three from the Jagged Globe Winter Amadablam Expedition reached the summit of Mt. Amadablam in the first week of December. Two members of a Korean expedition also made the summit of the 6812m peak the same week.

A 10-member Polish International Makalu Expedition is presently attempting to climb the world’s fifth highest peak considered by many the most formidable and inspiring mountain in the Himalaya. Expedition leader Krysztof Wielicki will attempt a repeat ascent on the 8463m peak. “Wielicki is attempting the west pillar, a seldom tried route. It is exceedingly difficult, a very steep pillar,” says Kathmandu-based mountaineering correspondent Elizabeth Hawley.

Wielicki, one of the first group of climbers to accomplish a winter ascent of Everest, is the fifth person to summit all 14 eight-thousand-metre peaks in the world. Seven people have climbed the world’s 14 eight-thousand-metre peaks since Reinhold Messner managed the feat in 1986. “One other person claims to have done all fourteen. But one ascent is not confirmed,” says Hawley.
Banking on social responsibility

SAGAR SJB BANA

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Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) issued a notice in The Economic Times, its quarterly report proposing that banks be submitted applications for the contract, and the government is preparing to hand over fees and to close the chapter of banking.

This rapid development is in line with the policy of privatization, with the government efforts to reduce the control of the state-owned banks. The result is that the two banks are no longer state-owned, and they have been engaging in private sector activities, especially in the small and medium-sized enterprises.

Some banks are more equal than others. If private banks all flock to choice areas, who is going to provide banking services to remote underdeveloped districts?

There is no government bank anywhere in the world that is profitable. It is quite incorrect. Nepal Bank Ltd in fact managed steady growth under joint ownership; majority share holdings and management controlled by the government, and only a minority share held by private sector investors. And this occurred despite having to serve the needs of remote areas through expansion of branches covering all but a few districts of the country.

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The next day, the Government has been informed that there was no sign of the change that their friends had died to bring. They were aware of the pressure to make a decision which restricted even the possibility of change in the system, but could not accept the extent to which things remained the same, even worsened, under the new, supposed “democracy”. People soon began to refer to the new regime as, “the multi-party Punjab system”. It retained much of the old mentality and many of the old anti-democratic laws, but lacked the Punjab experience in governing. It did not address and/or punish the human rights abuses, corruption, and lack of justice inherited from the Punjabi system, all of which were well documented in the Malhotra and Rana reports. Instead they allowed, or even facilitated, appalling and all-pervasive increase of all the abominations of the regime they had supposedly overthrown. So much so that today, there is a nostalgic longing for the redemptibility and reliability of the “good old days”.

And so, after about seven years of “demo-crazy”, devoid of real progress in providing jobs for the youth and basic needs for the poor, an attempt of students to protest a seemingly non-existent insult to Nepal by an American actor, and the usual police over-reaction has again erupted, to nobody’s surprise, into full-scale street battles. The new and troubling element in the present conflict is its specific targeting of Thugs Indus.

Kathmandu, 27 December 2000

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But the other reason for the decline of NBL is the entry of new commercial banks which are not bound by the condition that they have to provide credit to the best profitable remote areas of the country. This burden is confirmed to government-owned banks while new banks could choose prime areas of business and claim the cream of profitability. This is not an argument against privatization per se. But if the decision-making authorities, in their wisdom, see no other alternative to handing over management to private holders, there should at least be responsibility of providing banking services to less affluent and remote areas should be shared by all commercial banks.

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Keeping warm

Salim Subedi

The sajuhi swears he’s selling you an “original” heater. Soon, you’re swearing at him—they’re still freezing.

Salesmen insist that the heat generated by one of these last-ditch devices as the heater has been turned off.

Electric heaters are growing in popularity and there are different kinds. Leave the Indian and Nepali coil heaters to make tea and snacks in offices and kitchens. They cost only Rs. 200, but consume an amazing amount of electricity and pose many safety hazards. A serious electric heater could be a fan heater (Rs. 5,000-6,000), a storage heater with heat-conducting segments (Rs. 10,000-15,000), an electric coil heater that was thermal oil radiators (Rs. 10,000-15,000) or a fast-warming connecter heater (Rs. 5,000-6,000). Most electric heaters are 2,000 watt devices, which means every house of size adds Rs. 12 to your electricity bill.

Three years ago, LPG-powered heaters from Europe started showing their appearance here. You can smell the gas and they hiss a bit, but they heat very fast. As long as you can keep your hands on the protesters, you can keep warm.

Each of these heating systems comes with its own set of problems that strain your budget, health or the environment. Kerosene heaters are made out of carbon monoxide fumes which any not tell you can cause respiratory problems. People dislike the smell of LPG and worry about an explosion. As for electric heaters, the low-end one can be unsafe, and electricity is expensive. Really expensive.

So how do you choose? First, decide what kind of heat you can afford. You can use your heater, keep it to yourself. But the point of these devices is more efficient and last longer if they were treated better.

To start with, one of the most common and widely bought—false. Deserba for Tulabahat, a heater dealer in Mahabandu, says, “They come with big tags that say JASON PRODUCE or MADE IN JAPAN.”

Demand increased and competition over the last five years has spurred Nepal traders to go to the Guwahati area in China, also called “electric town”, and order cheaper products. Unfortunately, here, no-name-on-quality. Other ways to tell a fake are checking to see the suck-back is stayed, looking for chromium-plated base and a well-printed catalogue.

As for the high electricity tariffs here might be a way out. In winter, power consumption drops about 20 percent from 300,000 to 350,000 NAV authorities say it’s difficult to stop people using electricity during the peak hours, 5-9 pm. But as one expert from Kathmandu’s says, “Electricity is a high-quality energy—Nepal makes sense to use Time of Day (ToD).”

ToD is a billing option that doesn’t just count the units the cost, but also keep track of the time of day they’re used, and offer peak-use pricing of Rs. 250 for a replacement. It also helps in buying to the “original” as possible. Chinese-made “Japanese” kerosene heaters are among the most-panned—among consumers. People have to come and ask to change their billing systems. “All very strange, but worth a shot.” Architects and energy experts insist that all the heaters in the world won’t keep you as warm as chopsticks as many planning and construction experts can say. Pantaly, “We haven’t incorporated the concept of achieving ambient temperature in rooms.”

Architect Punya Saras Maruthi, theory lecturer at the Engineering Colleges, says, “Windows and doors does not affect the wrong direction and the use of cold retaining materials like marble for floors is rampant. It is fashionable to construct big concrete blocks.”

But there are ways to make even a concrete block warmer. If you don’t have any south-facing windows, you’d like, double-shutters the north-facing ones. Even this cotton and wash mats help, if you have concrete or, put a bead, nail heard, brick, earthen walls, narrow spaces, and rare trees in doors and windows with cotton and wash mats. If that doesn’t help, buy a heater.

Charcoal and gold

Making charcoal isn’t the most lucrative, green or legal enterprise, but in many villages on the Valley rim, people have made charcoal to keep up at.

Some villagers say they produce mainly to arrange the chopped branches to the top in the pots and cover them up with damp green leaves so that the flames do not flare up to the woods in ashes. After setting the leaves slightly, the fire. To about 300 kg, the charcoal, ready to produce a large sack of charcoal 10-12 trees are required.

On Champekhati hill, also known as Bhairaveshwar Danda, and similar places on the Valley rim have upholding charcoal to the Kathmandu areas for decades. But, with the growth of alternative technology and the introduction of community forestry, it’s getting harder for people from Valley rim villages to support the community—nay—sell their own fine charcoal, and have been going down under government jurisdiction.

It’s all done very quickly.

Villagers must be friend in demand in the city for barbeque or roasting ears of corn, but go goldsmiths’ workshops. There are three kinds—brown, white and red. Goldsmiths use the brown one as it burns very slowly and produces less heat. A charcoal producer from a very rare tree like the agur. The white and red varieties burn very quickly without producing much heat. The temperature is small 20 cm furnace around 200 C. Goldsmiths don’t seem to think it’s the ideal fuel, but say it’s the only thing use. “It’s expensive, but we don’t have another alternative,” say one supplier from Pantan. “We could use LPG or electricity. But the gas machine is very noisy and also dangerous to handle. As for electricity, for electricity, it’s good. But it’s not a good one.”

Charcoal retail here at Rs. 600, or Rs. 450 for a 25 kg sack. Lamsa say the charcoal business doesn’t supplement his income as much as he’d like to do. “We earn around 2,000 to 3,000 a year. But that doesn’t make him rich in Kathmandu, “Bro. Lamsa can raise his price closer to January, because the demand for gold jewellery is down. So, I think the price will go up.”

Neither the villages nor the urban people are happy with the situation. But no one
Economic mark sheet

At a time when everything is going wrong, consumer prices continue
to rise,逼迫 the public budget and the fiscal year. The
economy is ailing, and the situation is getting worse. The
government is struggling to find a solution to the
current financial crisis, and the situation is likely to
deteriorate further in the near future. The government is
considering various measures to stabilize the
economy, including fiscal and monetary policies, to
improve municipal services.

Tourism slumps

It was a bad year for Nepali tourism. As feared, the numbers are down by about 11
percent, from 11.5 million to 10.3 million. The number of tourists from India has
increased, but the number of tourists from other countries has decreased. The
government is trying to boost tourism by offering various incentives, but it
remains to be seen whether these efforts will be successful.

Hotel blues

The 10 February ‘deadline’ trade union had given government to resolve the
dispute over the 10 percent service charge is nearing and so is the beginning of the new
tourism season. But there is no word yet on what’s happening on resolution of the
dispute. The government is considering various measures to boost tourism, including
an increase in the tourism tax, and it is expected to announce its decision soon.

Bhaktapur visit dearer

Tourists visiting Bhaktapur from 1 January on will have to shell out a $10-dollar fee—
twice the fee until last week. The municipality has fixed a Rs 50 entry fee for visitors from
the South Asian region. The city government is considering increasing the entry fee
further to discourage tourists from entering the city. The government is likely to
announce its decision soon.

ECONOMIC SENSE

There is no right to strike against the public by anybody, anywhere, anytime.

BIZ NEWS

The recent strike action in the city has been declared illegal, and the government is
considering legal action against the leaders of the strike.

The Nepal Police has warned that it will not tolerate any illegal strike actions, and it
will take action against those who violate the law.

ECONOMIC SENSE

The government has announced that it will not grant any more licenses to
private schools, and it will close down all illegal private schools.

Grindlays Gazette

Interest rate update

Nepali Rupee CURRENT RATES
CURRENCY UPDATE

04 Days MCLR 5.05
91 Days MCLR 5.25
182 Days MCLR 5.53
364 Days MCLR 5.47

Bank rates (Depositing)

SBI/NRA 6.25
IDBI 4.60

Current Account

US$ 65.00

INR 50.00

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Trade in tatters

Unless the government acts quickly, last week’s riots will have a long-term impact on Indo-Nepal trade and investment.

BINO BHATTAI

We’ve learned that in last week’s riots in Kathmandu was that for the first time it was an organized and targeted attack on Indian interests in Nepal. It ended Indian business, India-Nepal joint ventures, and Nepali of Indian origin. Unless the government acts quickly to assuage the feeling of insecurity, worries of this announced edge will drive away Indian companies who are now scared and frighten those who are considering investing in Nepal.

Even before the riots, pressure had been building on India to amend the 1996 trade treaty. There has been a barrage of articles in the Indian media about how Nepal is being used as a conduit for everything from smuggled/biological waste vegetable oil to cheap Chinese consumer items to flood the Indian market.

There are other outstanding issues for Indian investors:

- Security threats from Maoists.
- The government has not refunded millions in duty to large exporters, mainly Indian joint ventures for duty on raw and packing material imports.
- India’s smuggling from Nepal is hurting its industries and not re-export of goods repackaged by fly-by-night Nepal-based companies.
- Poly Indian traders in fringe markets across the border are also hurt because cheaper imports from Nepal and China are hurting sales.

Not only is our machinery dysfunctional, politicians are now actively taking popular anti-Indian feelings as an ace-in-the-hole. This means investors are essentially left to fend for themselves against everything from labour disputes to Maoist threats. By now almost everyone, labour unions, students and the Maoists, have taken part in this industry, Indian joint ventures included. A protracted labour dispute forced Nepal Battery Company (a Unison Carbide India venture) to pull out in November leaving over 80 workers jobless. Most businesses have been regularly making “contributions” to the Maoist cause. Some larger Indian joint ventures like Surya Tobacco, Nepal Lever and Colgate-Palmolive were concluded last year in suspected Maoist attacks.

Any investor would first think about security of the investment and safety of workers,” Rishi Bhadra Shrestha, a senior president at the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI), said in a radio interview this week. When the first Indian companies came to invest in Nepal after 1996, the main attraction was the relatively lower wages and the lack of unrest here compared to the Indian states of Bihar, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. Other attractions were proximity in the market, cheap unskilled labour and duty free exports to India. By now many companies have realized that proximity comes with hidden costs resulting from India’s landlocked situation: the added expenses of raw material import, freight and back freight of finished goods. Then there are security problems and the political situation. Every duty free importer is as straightforward as we’re seen from the Maoist-led Nepal experience.

Nepal’s attitude about “big brother” comes from a perception that we are overwhelmingly dependent on the southern neighbour for just about everything. But it is actually inter-depending. Especially since 1996, and it is not just Nepal’s exports to India that have increased. Trade figures for the last five years show both Nepal and India have gained from business and Nepal’s trade deficit with India is actually narrowing. Since the signing of the trade treaty until India in 1996, Nepal’s exports to India has grown six-fold from Rs. 5.68 billion in 1999-2000. Import from India have also grown from Rs. 26.4 billion to 49.9 billion. There are plenty of opportunities to increase Nepal’s exports to India, but there plans will surely be delayed by last week’s events.

Ask one frustrated FNCCI official, “How do you convince your Indian counterparts to do business here when we go about attacking them even for unsolicited statements about what one Indian out of one billion may have said?” Aside from visa and Maoist, even official ineptitude discourage investors. The unannounced delays in duty drawback refunds has angered business. The late says the claims should be settled within 60 days, but some companies like Nepal Leve have been waiting for three years for the refund. The government owes Rs 163 million and Rs 70 million to another Indian investor, Dahan Nepal, in duty drawback refunds. Says T.K. Gupta, director, Dahan Nepal, “We’ve already invested Rs 840 million here and sometimes

A billboard advertising a Tata car vandalized by anti-Indian last week.

We’re convinced smuggling helps one and we’re ready to cooperate with both governments to stop it. The battle over copper wire, ball bearings, zinc wire, and plywood has may end soon, now that Nepal has agreed to enforce a last-dig change in the four-digit Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding system for Nepal goods to qualify for zero customs duty. (This is an international system that codifies the extent to which an industrial product has changed from an earlier stage. For instance, the harmonized code for cotton is 1501, yarn made from it becomes 1502 while the fabric woven out of it becomes 1508.) The issue of HS coding was raised by India last year but the row over the still unresolved issue of Kodak was raging. “The enforcement of a change in HS code will force companies to add value to their products, thus creating more jobs in Nepal,” says one Commerce Ministry official.

That may help convince some New Delhi-based officials to act on trade policy. But after last week, we may have more trouble for our officials to discuss the “urge” of some issues that India has begun to talk about. However, the most difficult part may be persuading our own who have put money into Nepal projects.
Forever Ambar

Ambar Gurung aroused nationalism and nostalgia in the Nepali diaspora with his Naulakha tara ude.

Similarly, Bipagram Prabhu stayed away for many years. The nostalgia that the Nepali artisti diaspora looked for a weapon to come to thought of as reality in the course of time. But the imagined reality dashed with their dreams for the future, and was accompanied by the pain of disillusionment. The Indian annexation of Sikket, the forced eviction of Bhutanese Nepalis and the creation of a surrogate nation for them in refugee camp towns in Jhapa district, caused another shift in the song of the Nepali diaspora.

Ambar Gurung’s Naulakha tara ude is thus an expression of nostalgia that has assumed a new dimension today—its relevance revived by new discussions about nationalism in Nepal itself. The loss, pain and other complex emotions of exile are now more powerfully in the songs of Ambar Gurung and the lyrics of his collaborators. The re-release of his song is not only a beginning but the recapitulation of the transnational history of non-resident Nepal. It is full of unfulfilled housewives, the pains of being uprooted, the ecstasy of creation, and the challenges these conditions pose.

The title song, Naulakha tara ude, marked Ambar Gurung’s association with the late Agam Singh Giri. The experience and feelings of the diaspora in India are the dominant theme. The conditions of the original recording were difficult. It was hard to arrange as a whole; there was only one microphone, and Ambar Gurung could not record the song that had to be dropped while recording.

The words, melody, and music were in the single microphone, the context—all its signifiers—address the tragedies of being belonging. The song is intense, and listeners react to the song’s words and the music with raw emotion. This writing and the question of identity have historically inspired reactions as well as equal pains to Nepal. This nostalgia was defined by the overwhelming presence of India in shaping the feelings behind the music. The Indian nation-state did not tolerate these emotions, and Nepali-Indians were unique because they were (and are) the only nationality in the union which felt the gravitational pull of a neighbouring nation that didn’t have a history and memory of colonization. Their language and identity were considered suspect since they evoked Nepali history to claim their identity. They also criticized their nostalgia.

Naulakha was the only weapon they could effectively use. And effective it was to the subsequent recognition of hill rule and the incorporation of Nepal in the Indian constitution’s list of official languages. The strategy worked because the artists evoked a history in space: a geographical entity which was remote in our time, but also instantly near and immediate.

The Ambar Gurung CD contains the following songs apart from Naulakha tara.

1. Dhera bhasak: (There have been many) was issued by Bishal Bahadur, and addresses a woman’s yearning to capture memories of the good old days.
2. Batasaal (Worried) by Keshav Khatiwada: “A Song from the village” is about Ambar Gurung’s music. He blames karma for every thing, accompanied by a wistful tune.
3. Danapari (Beyond the mountains) by Indra Thapaliya is a purely romantic number. Ambar Gurung provides mandolin and fiddle.
4. Kajre (Lettuce) by Priyanka Shrestha: A lazy and carefree by poet Bishal Bishara is a modernist shift from romanticism. The tune is one of assertion and confession.
5. M Ambar tur (I am Ambar) by Ambar Gurung himself is a remarkable work of introspective lyricism.
6. Brespan (Forgetting) by Ambar Gurung is another song about relationships.
7. Yo jindagiko ke kura by Bishal Bahadur: His words ruminate on existence with the music and lyrics giving it a charming authenticity.
8. U pari ko thak by Ambar Gurung evokes a sense of humanism and tolerance calling on Nepalis to accept Nepalis from outside.
9. Masa suruti thak: just how powerful a writer Ambar Gurung also is. The flow of words and poetic rhythm find fitting expression.


The Nepali chho-nationalism in the Darjeeling hills turned violent in the late seventies and early eighties. By that time Ambar Gurung had long left Darjeeling for Kathmandu and Agam Singh Gurung was dead. Hari Bhusal Katwal’s lyrical nationalism did not have an audience in Darjeeling, and he also came over to Nepal (although he returned later). Ambar Gurung and Agam Singh Giri represented Nepali-Indian’s resistance to a prejudiced Indian identity. But when he came to Nepal, Ambar Gurung encountered another kind of nationalism here. It was founded on praise of the king, and there were territories and historical contexts different from those he knew intimately in India. Still, his songs fit the paradigm of Nepali nationalism at the time, and King Mahendra asked him to stay on. He was now in the land that had for so long shaped the fundamentals of his art. Nepalis rejoiced in Ambar Gurung’s music, but for the singer it was a mixed experience.

I first met Ambar Gurung in 1968 when he was on a visit to Kathmandu, staying at the Green Hotel in New Road. I asked if he could give us Tribhuvan University students a performance. He agreed, and the concert was amazing. People lived both sides of the road at the University’s Kittaphur campus to greet him. Ambar performed to a packed Education Hall. He also sang Jugaadi samudra (Nepali Treaty) which blew the minds of Nepali history students whose sense of nationalism until then had been defined by patriotic songs that ran radio Nepal. He worked at the head of the music department at the Royal Nepal Academy, but the academy did not give him recognition as a praga, academiac. He presented an unusual “chho” composition for which Katta Sunuwar Thapa and he wrote songs, but unfortunately it wasn’t recorded properly and we don’t know how the songs are now. He trained young musicians and singers. He set to music lyrics written by songwriters he met here like Thapa and Narayan Gopal. He was a great in Aarun Leimad and Shweta Pradhan, Gopal Tampa, another disciple, also came over, married and settled in Kathmandu. Gopal Tampa was an acolyte of the diaspora, and he also sang songs about anti-totalitarian identity, and patriotism, punctuated with references to the Nepalis’ glorious past of blood flowing in the 1814-16 Anglo-Nepal War. For his part Ambar Gurung did not compose music for nationalism of royal glorification for two reasons: he was not a sympath and didn’t identify with the glib “entertainment value” of patriotic songs as they were in Nepal at that time. Young people today see nationalism in a different order, and their interest in Ambar Gurung is itself a kind of nostalgia for a time they didn’t experience. The question was: does this generation have an Ambar Gurung to give musical expression to a new Nepal?
A rough guide to Nepali World Music

**Folk Music:**

**Instrumental**

Fusing traditional instruments with modern electronic sounds, this genre is immensely popular among the younger generation. It is characterized by a mix of traditional Nepali instruments and contemporary Western electronic music. Some popular artists in this genre include Hemanta Muzungu and Suman Booi.

**Vocal**

This genre is known for its rich vocal melodies and harmonies. It is deeply rooted in the traditional Nepali musical heritage and is often performed in local festivals and community gatherings. Some notable artists in this genre include Laxmi Prasad Devkota and Santosh Thapa.

**Fusion**

This genre is a blend of traditional Nepali music with Western popular music. It is characterized by the use of traditional instruments alongside Western guitar, drums, and keyboards. Some popular artists in this genre include Dinesh Bahadur Shrestha and Mrinal Joshi.

**Generation Next**

This genre is characterized by a younger generation of artists who are influenced by a mix of traditional and contemporary music. It is known for its use of modern electronic instruments and is popular among the younger audience. Some notable artists in this genre include Shreejina Shrestha and Neha Shrestha.

**Dhruti—Deep Shrestha’s Modern Songs**

Deep Shrestha is a well-known Nepali singer who has been prolific in the Nepali music industry. His music is characterized by its modern twist on traditional Nepali melodies. His songs are popular among the younger generation and have gained a lot of popularity in recent times.

**Dhrutika—Santosh Thapa’s Modern Songs**

Santosh Thapa is another well-known Nepali singer who has been active in the Nepali music industry for several years. His music is known for its modern twist on traditional Nepali melodies. His songs are popular among the younger generation and have gained a lot of popularity in recent times.

**Dhrutika—Nirmal Shrestha’s Modern Songs**

Nirmal Shrestha is a young Nepali singer who has been active in the Nepali music industry for several years. His music is known for its modern twist on traditional Nepali melodies. His songs are popular among the younger generation and have gained a lot of popularity in recent times.

**Dhrutika—Jani Shrestha’s Modern Songs**

Jani Shrestha is a young Nepali singer who has been active in the Nepali music industry for several years. His music is known for its modern twist on traditional Nepali melodies. His songs are popular among the younger generation and have gained a lot of popularity in recent times.

**Dhrutika—Suvarna Shrestha’s Modern Songs**

Suvarna Shrestha is a young Nepali singer who has been active in the Nepali music industry for several years. Her music is known for its modern twist on traditional Nepali melodies. Her songs are popular among the younger generation and have gained a lot of popularity in recent times.
Son of HAL lives

ANTHONY BROWN

IT could think for itself, lip-read, scheme and murder. Now HAL-9000, the infamous computer in 2001: A Space Odyssey which turned on its operators and tried to kill them, is being brought back to life.

Sir Arthur C. Clarke, the author of 2001, is backing a colourful British computer entrepreneur Joseph de Saro to launch the Clarke Omniputer, a multi-million-pound re-creation of the artificial intelligence of the HAL-9000 computer, the real star of the film. (See box)

The global adulation of Sir Arthur is a world away from his unassuming school years on a farm in Minawak in Somerst, where his father ran the local police force. His memory of his father, who died when he was 15, was when they were riding a donkey cart, and Clarke's eldest brother, Arthur, a cigarette card with a picture of a dinosaur on it, working his interest in science.

An engineer uncle gave him electrical fittings to play with, and when he wasn't attempting to fit five mean-minded rockets from his garden, Clarke spent his time for his school friends. When the war broke out, he joined the RAF and worked with an American team on a top-secret radar project. At this time he made the prediction that established him as a visionary. Often, when he was anything global about communications, he wrote a paper suggesting that 'general-purpose satellites (in orbit above fixed points on the Earth's surface) could be used to broadcast a nationwide telephone system around the world. His paper, 'Extra-Terrestrial Ray', in 1960, impressed the science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke.

The film preceeded the actual advances, but became an instant sci-fi classic. Its depiction of the HAL computer (each letter one place before IBM in the alphabetic) insisted on trying to kill off the crew of the spaceship. Discovery, and then digging for its life but boasted more than one generation. Clarke, published in 2001 with a 2016 Odyssey Two, which was released as a film in 1982, and then, 2001: Odyssey Three. Then a few years ago, 2030: A Final Odyssey. In that book he predicts the "small battery" micro-chip that can accommodate the essence of human personality, human life and downloading it from computers at will. Such predictions - he calls them extrapolations - would be easy to scoff if Clarke hadn't been right in so many times before. He predicted the main landing to be within a year, as well as the method of landing - having a ship move up to the moon, sending a smaller pod down to the surface. He predicted satellite space stations circling the earth decades before the International Space Station that is currently being assembled in orbit. His personal life has been as unconventional as his professional one, but more mysterious. His only public relationship was a married marriage in the 1950s that lasted less than a year and was finally dissolved in 1964. He is widely thought to be gay, although he never publicly acknowledged it. When directly asked the question, he says he is "sincerely not disclosure.

The life of the deceased was published in 2001.

In an 83-year odyssey, Arthur C. Clarke had predicted satellite communications and the landing on the moon, and written 60 books. Now he'll see the big party in 2001.
Milosevic’s legacy remains

The new government of Serbia and Yugoslavia must now deal with the fallout of the last decade.

The worst situation is the Serbian economy, devastated by a decade of international sanctions imposed by the UN and Europe due to Milosevic’s role in funding former Yugoslav republics. Additional devaluation came with 11 weeks of hyperinflation in early 1999. Most experts do not define the economic reforms as a shock therapy,” Djindjic said. “The economy is already in a state of shock and there is no magic wand that can bring it back to life. With the help of international assistance and through our own efforts, we must be engaged in hard work in many years ahead of us.”

The recently announced reduction in Serbia’s debt to the international community, which would be 14 billion dollars, has brought first-draft reforms to the economy, and Djindjic says that “the reforms of the country’s judicial, political and economic system will be his primary task.”

The new interior minister, Dragisa Jovicic, Belgrade police chief, and lawyer Grajadin Radovic, wants a thorough reform of the police sector, which used to be one of the pillars of the former Yugoslavia. He said, ‘‘First of all, the reforms of the police will be done to inform former police officers, and then, in spite of the protests and the danger to the police, and does not go against it. Second, the police will be brought close to the people and those who could call all the numbers of former officers, who abused power, into the hands of justice. In the past decade, unemployment reached 40 percent in Serbia and salaries fell to $140-$200 per month, and the situation was not better in the Yugoslav republics. Business in Serbia is only 43 percent of the production in 1990. Tourism, which was a driving force in the early 1990s, has reached $15 billion. UN officials say Yugoslavia urgently needs some $800 million in aid.”

Heavy weather

The world witnessed extreme weather and climate events and made dire predictions for the future of the planet last year.

Climate Change

The IPCC is looking for the New York Times. The report, compiled by hundreds of the world’s most respected climate scientists, suggests that greenhouse gas emissions are already “concentrated substantially to face the challenges over the next 50 years.” The report also suggested that the “worst-case scenario is that global temperatures may rise by an average of 3.6°C by 2100.”

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The BNP may pay a price for street protests and allying with religious hardliners and ex- dictators.

The BNPs political opposition has been a source of tension and conflict with the government. The party has often been accused of inciting violence and engaging in illegal activities. The BNPs leader, Sheik Hasina, has been a key figure in the opposition movement, but her leadership has divided the party. The BNPs anti-government stance has earned it a significant following among the Bengali speaking population.

Bangladeshis are divided on the issue of Bangladeshi nationalism, with some supporting the idea of a separate state for Bangladeshis, while others believe in integration with India. The BNPs stance on this issue has been seen as a threat to national unity.

The BNPs anti-Indian foreign policy has also been a source of concern. The party has been accused of supporting terrorist groups and engaging in activities that are detrimental to national security.

The BNPs political influence has been significant, but its tactics have been controversial. The party has been accused of using violence and intimidation to suppress opposition voices.

The BNPs anti-Indian foreign policy has been seen as a threat to national unity and security. The party has been accused of supporting terrorist groups and engaging in activities that are detrimental to national security.

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Bam Dev refuses to accept Hrishik denial

During this week’s protest against rumour mongers by Indian film actor Hrishik Bhakun, BNP Sphere leaders Rabindra Mithal intervened Bam Dev Gatin, General Secretary, Communists Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninists), and Editor Pushpa, member of the Central Committee, Communists Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninists). Pushpa follows:

Bam Dev Gautam. I think the reaction in Nepal and Kathmandu is natural and correct. Whatever is happening now is the feelings against Hrishik Bhakun’s wrong damaging and involving comments which has now taken the shape of a nationalistic wave. The government tried to impede the expression of the nationalistic feelings of the people by living at the protestors, and that has left few innocent people dead.

BNP: You say there was natural and appropriate and you do not have any proof that he had actually made the comments?
BG: No. I don’t need to give proof about whether he said it or not. The Nepali people have already done that. If we were to say anything I would say he should not have made such things.

It’s different to say he should not have said it but when students close to your party and others are protesting, all we are asking is whether he has or not?

HPM: How can you take Hrishik Bhakun’s side who are we staying in London? His remarks were heard on television channels, it was in the papers. Just because Hrishik Bhakun has denied ever making such comments today and on us, can we say that is true? Can you give proof of that? Therefore whichever he has written is wrong. The insulting things done against Nepalese in India by some Indians are very saddening, shameful and worst persecuting. Does it suit you, a Nepali living in London, to ask for proof of whether he said it or not? Let’s not talk about that. He definitely said it. For proof you have the TV channel.

When we contacted the television channel it was not confirmed, and Hrishik Bhakun has issued a statement denying ever saying the words and has said he did not.

BDG: That is what he is saying you. How can you reach any conclusion on what he has said now?

BNP: I am not making a judgment. I don’t even have that authority I am only trying to question you by staying in the middle.

BDG: You should first find the facts and say he has not said it at all. He said it but now denies doing that. The channel that broadcasted it may have tried to erase it but there must be some proof of what has already became public. It was on the basis of that proof that the sentiments of the Nepalis were hurt.

BNP: If he said it and many people consider the reaction as natural but it is right to stage protest which has caused so much damage and even live human beings without having solid evidence? Don’t you need solid proof to have your proof on.

BDG: He has definitely said it. He has definitely insulted Nepal and Nepali. The Nepali people poured their sentiments against that insult and that should have been allowed. But the government—which is used to mangling to tend in front of Indian rulers—this issue too crashed the protest, that them...

(BCS’s to intervene)

BDG: What you want? Only thing you want (to hear). Take what the Nepali state want. Today the Nepalese government, the Nepalese government has shot and killed four innocent, unarmed people for what? For saying that the Indian actor should not have made those insulting comments against Nepal.

BNP: Always many agree with that aspect but no one whoematically you passionately feel about, when so many journalists have not found solid proof to damn his claims.

BDG: We found it in the Star Channel and on that basis newspapers published the remarks...—

Pushpa Pokhrel: The public have reacted to what Indian cine artist Hrishik Bhakun said. I am not aware of any political party having made any significant importance to the issue to make it the main reason for protest. What our party feels is that the remarks, which we have been told of, are not appropriate and even related to its nationalistic sentiments. But the government’s action to crush the protest, where fist filled even killed people in their homes is a very irresponsible and uncondonable act.

What we are saying is that the Home Minister should resign immediately to take responsibility for these acts.

BNP: We talk about resignation later. You say Hrishik Bhakun’s statements were irresponsible, do you have any basis on that he actually said it?

BP: From what we have heard, you might ask whether I heard it myself or whether I watched the interview but we have been about the people that heard it, official institutions. Even the government has officially denounced his statement saying that until apologies for the irresponsible statements his films will not be screened in Nepalese cinema. But also proves that his statements are true, it does not matter if I watched or watched it not.

BNP: Hrishik Bhakun has issued a statement saying he’s never said that and he lives Nepal and Nepal. And that his competitors may be doing that to damage his image.

BP: If he has said that then we need to take it in account, it could be true. But I have not read his statement or heard about it, but I have heard about his denial in the news.

BNP: Do you think it was right to stage nationwide protest without confirming if the statements were made or not?

BP: I should contradict you here and say that there were no nationwide protests to counter what he said. Some students had expressed their resentment against the statements, protested it through statements, some people, unorganised as they were, went to cinema halls to ask them to stop screening his movies, that is what we have come to know. We are also surprised by the way the situation was handled. The type of people involved in the protests, the way they are targeting others, the way the protests have taken a communal angle, launched an attack against the democratic system itself, this is really suspect and we are observing it seriously.

BNP: What will your future reactions be? Are you in favour of the Home Minister resigning?

BP: At the moment we are not thinking of the long term. Our focus now is that killing has taken place, the home minister should take moral responsibility for it and resign, one thing, usually actions should be taken against those that were responsible and the injured should be treated and families of the dead have to be provided compensation. And a powerful, high-level commission needs to be formed to investigate the whole issue.

More on Rthik...

We fully support those brave students who are protesting and all to remove the Nepali republicanism and leftist to help us unseat this government of India.

—Communist Party of Nepal (Maraist-Marinist 연구파의대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장년호대표장연시에 대한 답변ья름

When a bullet is fired, the bullet cannot differentiate between a minister and a child. A bullet is a bullet and the policeman who fires it remains a policeman. A bullet does not have eyes...

—Nepal Congress Central Committee speaker and former water resources minister, Laxman Prasad Ghimire, speaking to Jane Arkhe, 1 January, defending the police firing on 26 December.

—Himal Bhattarai, 31 December, 2000 to 1 January, 2001

THE PAGE CONTAINS MATERIAL SELECTED FROM THE NEPALI LANGUAGE PRESS

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

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NEPALI WEATHER

16 CITY

5-11 JANUARY 2001 NEPALI TIMES

Nepali Weather

The huge masses of ground fog over North India (seen above) are caused by the moisture brought in by this weekend's rain. In Nepal, the first precipitation of the season brought snow down to 1,300 ft. All caused by a cyclone in the Arabian Sea that pulled in water vapour to Nepal from Central and West Asia. Now, patches of cloud layers are looming over the southern foothills of the Himalaya. Conclusion: more clouds which may bring snow in the Western and Central Himalaya. Sunny days in the hills may be interrupted by these cloudy patches. Kathmandu will have clear days, but expect cold and foggy mornings. The unusually balmy temperatures of the early part of the week will give way to a drop in the mercury.

KATHMANDU

22-02 20-04 21-03 21-02 20-03

ACROSS

1 Pass to take a bath (4)
2 Hold the horse, commander (4)
3 Headless beach (4)
4 Lo-call eggs; boil, poach, or fry (7)
5 Reconsidering, successful car (7)
6 Member of Aristarchus' sect (5)
7 Sophisticated, blondie (6)
8 Sloe-eyed or _-eyed? (3)
9 Former dog-duck/henhouse (2,5)
10 False move (4)
11 Sunset in the morning (4)
12 Rani (5)
13 Bartender's past (3)
14 Not quite extinct (6)
15 Resoundingly successful car (5)
16 Pass to take a bath (4)
18 Check it off scientific instruments (6)
19 Fiji plane (5)
20 For screens, and in discount stores (5)
21 Origins of the coelacanth (5)
22 False move (4)
23 Wall art (5)
24 For screens, and in discount stores (5)
25 Expensive form of address (4)
26 Sneeze, mucus, inhumanly (2,2)
27 Bells past (3)

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4 Holds up the beeches (6)
5 Child's eternal question (5)
6 Fundo to the south (4)
7 Belegueux's family (5)
8 The shape of triumphant, in the past (5)
9 Checks out scientific instruments (6)
10 Checks out scientific instruments (6)
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For inclusion in the listing send information to editors@nepalitimes.com

MOBILES
Movie bookings online at <www.nepalshop.com>

EXHIBITION

- Angkor: A black and white photography exhibition by Jaro Porcar from Prague. The focus of the exhibition is the temple complex Angkor Wat regarded as one of the architectural wonders of the world. December 20—January 20. 8 am to 6 pm. Indigo Gallery, Naala.

MUSIC

- Jazz: Cadenza at Upstairs Restaurant, Lazimpat. Every Saturday, 7:30pm—10pm.
- Robin ‘n’ Lozza play rock, blues, soul, and Nepali tunes at The Bamboo Club, Thamel. Every Friday evening.
- Chakra The Piano Lounge at the Yak & Yeti Hotel. Every evening, 7 pm onwards. 248999
- Unplugged Syrshu Lama plays guitar at the Coffee Shop, Hotel De‘l Amnepana. Everyday 7:30pm ~ 10pm. 221711
- Classical Guitar Kishor Gurung plays classical favourites at the Chimney, Hotel Yak & Yeti. Everyday 8 pm onwards. 248999
- Classical Musicians from Nepal and abroad at the Kiratneswore Mahadev temple, Pashupatinath. January 9 from 4pm—6pm. Free entrance, but charges may apply for special guest appearances. Organised by Kiratneswore Sangriet Ashram. 492139

DANCE

- Classical Nepali Dances based on Buddhist and Hindu epics and the Tantric pantheon at the Great Pagoda, Hotel Vajra. Every Tuesday, 7 pm onwards. Rs 300. 271545
- Ballads and Dances of Old Tibet performed by Teering Gurney and Teering Paljor at the Naga Theatre, Hotel Vajra. Every Thursday, 7 pm onwards. Rs 400. 271545

THEATRE


EVENTS


FESTIVAL

- Swasthani Fastival The annual festival of Nepali Hindus, Swasthani Bartha, begins Tuesday, January 9 and extends till Thursday, February 8. This month people gather and read the story of Swasthani in their homes. While listening to the story, devotees make offerings of flowers and food to the holy book. It is believed that even hearing the story releases one from bad omen.

MARTIN CHAUTARI

- Classic Nepali Discussion Series 2: Indra Bahadur Rai's 'Aaja Ramita Chha!' Sangita Pandey and Asutosh Toward will lead the discussion forum. Tuesday, January 9, 5:30 pm. Unless otherwise noted, presentations are in Nepal. Write or call for directions: chautari@mos.com.np. 246965

QUICKWORD 14

Across

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12 Peripheral remarks (6)
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Terms and conditions
1 The contest is open to everyone, except employees of Himalmedia Pvt Ltd and Infocom Pvt Ltd.
2 In case of a tie, the first correct entry will be declared the winner. In case of a tie, the entry with the earliest entry date will be the winner.
3 Entries have to be collected from Himalmedia will be in a second place after the winner.
4 The winner will be announced in the coming issue.
5 The prize has to be claimed within 2 weeks of the winning entry.
6 There is no cash alternative.

The lucky winner is Alan Etherington
In the heart of eternity

The centre of Patan is its Bahal Bazaar, a massive, living museum of architecture and art that is essentially unaltered. For here, treasure is housed on treasure. Palaces and temples stand harmoniously together as if the builders of many centuries were following a plan conceived when the city was young—a time unhistorically described as when gods walked the earth. Historians have the city rebuilt by King Vira Deu in the year AD 299. It was a flourishing city when the Emperor Ashoka visited it in about 250 BC, and an impressively large area as measured by the steps that Ashoka had raised at its cardinal points. The city was apparently built in the shape of a chakra, one of the sacred wheels of Vishnu. The placement of its streets and its water and sewage system were ahead of the time. For such beauty it was untold. To this day, one has only to stand at the entrance to the Durbar Square to appreciate the architectural splendours and the city as applied by Tibetan traders of olden times.

Along one side of the far-reaching square is the Royal Palace, apparently begun in the 16th century. It almost certainly rests on older foundations. What an incredible pile it is—a street—of brick and carved wood pierced with golden doors and exquisite windows. Pagoda roofs, mostly Chinese and Nepalese, tower above the other to culminate in the seven-storied temple of Taleju, the royal goddess. Opposite the palace, almost filling the square, are temples in stone, brick and wood that are each a masterpiece of particular age and style. Two stone Shiva temple types, both dedicated in Krishna, commemorate two widely differing events. One, the set of eight queens, the wives of King Yagnaarendra Malla whose golden statues sit atop a stone pillar in the square, and the other a king’s romantic dream. The latter temple tells, in exquisite stone carving, the entire story of the Mahabharatata and the Kamasutra. It is built on what Siddhi Siddhi Nuni Singh Malla decreed he saw Krishna and his consort Radha making love. Before it, on a high step platform set the most beautiful of garlands with luminous crystal eyes. The present contributes palating love life to what could be an intimidating square. A modern breed of tussle dealers spread their wares under huge guardian stone lions and elephants on tiered temple plinths or as platformers designed for public performances and public entertainment. I have often noted heroic dramas being performed in front of the Taleju temple by peasants lamps and intricate electric lights. By day, huge tourists coaches force the square and camera-laden foreigners are almost as numerous as locals. About the sattu temple hill people innumerable congregate in a riot of unidentifiable colour. The women wear bright headbands and veil necklaces. Sauri-sized gold earings. Flower-shaped nose rings. Gaudy head-dresses. Vivid waist bands. Men sport jaunty caps and rough woollen jackets, their songs and dances proper to both a warming drink and the intoxicating atmosphere of Patan. The other, more splendid Krishna temple of the royal dreams, is as surely thronged with devotees from much India, mainly solemnity, often garrulous. Children well versed in the ways of modern tourism and speaking a mattering of several languages pious happily for photographs after the inevitable introduction of Hells, one rape. This salutation is not to be confused with begging. It is a mere threat into the great unknown world of the outside and is invariably followed by a conversation something like this:

You worship shop?

U.S. You American!

Yes, Capital Washington D.C. Right on.

Okay, bye, bye, one rape.

I stood in the shade of two temples to do my sketch, one dedicated to Narayana, another to the other, the royal love temple, dedicated to Krishna. In no time it was surrounded by the curious man my eye was well guarded by a large Naadi that was from time to time used as a grandstand by children. Ahead of me, in golden silhouette against the tall rise of the Taleju temple, was the lovely Garuda, browsing reverently in prayer, hands and wedding gold, serpents paired about his face. Beyond him, also on a lofty pedestal, was King Yagnaarendra Malla, shaded by a rearing serpent. On the head of the serpent sits a bird and thereby hangs a tale worth telling. The king, tired of his royal living, decided to go into retreat in a distant place from which he never returned. But legend has it that before he left his surounding court and people, he promised would return as long as the gilded bird perched upon the serpent’s face. A window of this palace is still kept open against his return and until a few years ago his bed and bookstand stood ready for his instant use.

A humbug scaffolding begins to spread across the face of the old palace, giving you a warm assurance that this treasury of Nuaran art is being restored. If the bird knew where to go, it might fly wildly away to tell the old Malla king the good news. And return again to add its romantic tale to a wonderously romantic space.

(Excerpted with permission from In the Kingdom of the Gods, Harper & Collins, 1999)

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BOOK REVIEW

Mapping the Tibetan World

by MARK TURIN

It is surprisingly rare for the content of a book to live up to its exciting title, but Mapping the Tibetan World published in December 2000, does just that. The beautifully produced and quality bound guide to the “Tibetan Cultural Region” (their chosen term) brands itself as being suited for the ”budget” traveller, but this claim is understandably—one anyone interested in exploring the Tibetan world, budget backpacker to five-star organised group member, would do well to have this volume in their pockets.

There are several features of the guide which deserve both special attention and praise. First of all, the writers and editors have meticulously tackled a notoriously difficult geographical issue: who defines what Tibetan culture is and how far does it stretch? As the editors of the guide are able to explain on page 4, the framework is clear: “We have included all of the areas that can be placed as being within the “Tibetan Cultural Region”, a framework that can be seen as encompassing the whole of the Tibetan Diaspora and encompasses the areas where the people share a common ancestry, culture and religion. “As a result, along with carefully thought-out route descriptions of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), there are sections on Western China, Northern India, Bhutan and Nepal.

Second, in the process of addressing the “what counts as Tibet?” conundrum, they have offered judicious presentations of both the pre-Chinese and pre-Tibetan points of view. From page 30 to 34, two competing histories of Tibet are offered side by side. From the Chinese and Tibetan viewpoints respectively. This approach is to be applauded, not least because the editors make it clear that their attempt may have been a “reckless one for a guidebook” (page 30). In fact, despite a sensor of impartiality, the whole book is distinctly pro-Tibetan. This respect and appreciation for Tibetan culture that rings loud and clear in the writing may make it difficult for tourists to consult the book on the way travelling in Tibet proper, even though there are no explicitly pro-Tibetan political statements.

The introductory cultural and historical sections of the guide are well written and beautifully illustrated. Although short, the editors have managed to pack a generous amount of valuable cultural information into very little space without making it seem overcrowded. The five pages charmingly entitled Unravelling the Tibetan Maze are truly informative and offer an excellent schematic representation of the various elements of Tibetan Buddhist iconography with which the user is so frequently confronted when travelling in the Tibetan Buddhist world.

While Nepal does feature in the guide, it is only present as in much as some parts of the country are distinctly and obviously Tibetan. The sections on Nepal appear with the Tibetan word for Nepal, Astangled superimposed on a photo of the steps at Boudha, and the short section entitled The People of Nepal explicitly lists only the groups of “Tibetan descent”, under which the editors include “Garwhals & Magars” (page 319). Throughout this section there is the slight feeling that Nepal is worth visiting because it is an important element of the Tibetan prophecy, not because of the antiquity of the Tibetan way of life which falls within its borders. As a result of this Tibetan-Cultural-centre prospective, reader of the guide coming to Nepal or India for the first time would be forgiven for wondering where all the Hindus came from.

A welcome touch, and a sign of good sense and humility on the part of the editors, is a short section on Other Guidebooks. Rather than assuming (absurdly) that this is the only travel guide available, the pros and cons of six other Tibetan guides are listed.

The single most useful and unique feature of Mapping the Tibetan World is the abundance of beautifully drawn line maps. Credit must go to Shawn Towsmore for the precision and artistic simplicity of the 280 maps in this guidebook, embellishing the very best of Japanese graphic design. This guidebook is a perfect travel companion for anyone journeying in the Tibetans. It can be purchased through Amazon.com and Snoo Lion Publications (www.montagupcom).
Free fall

Imagine a bridge over a 160m (500ft) tropical gorge with the Bhote Kosi, one of Nepal’s wildest rivers, raging below.

Now jump.

You’re almost 200m away from the bridge. This isn’t the end of the madness. The second thrill is the jump and the spin. When the cord is first extended to its limit, it jars and you move upwards—against gravity—with the same speed you came down.

Now, the thrill is to elongate your eyes open. There are about five cycles of this procedure. Once you move closer to equilibrium and it’s quite soothing actually. Then, the jumpmasters on the bridge slowly lower you down, and you wonder what if the foot-locks break? People in the bridge jumping business and enthusiasts will tell you time and again that safety isn’t an issue, jumping doesn’t require a particularly high level of physical fitness, but you shouldn’t be of your head or have high blood pressure, serios, dedicated joints or ectopy.

The Ultimate Bungee managed by Last Resort is the only bungee-jumping operation in Nepal and some say it’s one of the most spectacular on the planet. The drop is the longest free-fall in the world. The whole set up is designed, constructed and operated by experienced Koswos to international standards. The operation is taking a break right now and will re-open in March. But, if you can’t wait to fling yourself off a cliff, just give them a ring (383990). Nepalair offer a 20% discount for Rs 2,500 on the normal rate of USD 168. This includes transportation between Tham and the jump site. One jump and lunch. There’s also a two and jump gap offer for voyeurs (Rs 700).
Ram Mandir facelift

The Ramchandra Mandir at Butepatri, north-east of Kathmandu, was crumbling, moribund, surrounded by concrete blocks and a haphazardly parked car. In 1992, Dr. Govinda Tamang of the Ramchandra Temple Trust, a non-governmental organisation, received Rs. 64,000 from local residents to repair the leaking roof. This immediately inspired him to undertake the temple's renovation. The temple was dismantled and rebuilt using traditional materials. The temple was completed in 2007, and the final cost was Rs. 10 million.

The temple now consists of 1000 devotees, with the temple's daily rituals and festivals attracting a large number of tourists. The temple also has a small museum dedicated to Lord Ram and his relatives. The temple is a popular pilgrimage site for Hindus and is visited by people from all over Nepal.

The temple is also a centre for social and cultural activities, with regular events and performances held throughout the year. The temple also has a library with a collection of books on Hindu mythology and philosophy.

The temple is open to all visitors, and a donation is requested to support the temple's upkeep. The temple also has a small shop selling traditional Nepali handicrafts and souvenirs.

The temple is an important cultural and religious site in Kathmandu and is a testament to the rich history and culture of Nepal.

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Win some really cool prizes!

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It doesn't cost EXTRA to add exclusive value to your lifestyle with Sharp

Pulchowk, Lalitpur, Tel: 546949, 546950 Fax: 525019, E-mail: tosharp@mos.com.np
The year has got off to a flying start with two Nothing Doing days already. This book is well for 2001, and Nepal can now look forward to an easy-going new millennium in which there will be plenty of lazy days that can be devoted to cleaning up our works and transit, something we have no time for in the mad rush of a normal office day. There will finally be time on our hands to extract wards of lust from inside our belly buttons which can be sold in bulk as raw material for our nation’s dollar-earning panda industry. We can use matchsticks to nurse for glories of ways from deep inside our earuffs, and we can at last gain access to hard-to-reach blackhoads and quash them before they are ripe for erosion.

I don’t know what you did on January 1-2, but I did nothing. I was stunned. Doing nothing is finally going to save our landlocked Himalayan kingdoms of high mountain ranges, beautiful matters, and much flora and fauna from self-destruction. We meet up everything we do, so not doing anything leaves the chances of doing something wrong. In the same manner, the chances of our rulers doing the right thing are so remote that the leftist opposition thinks it is a much better idea to have them just sit at home and not lift a finger. That way the likelihood of someone somewhere wreaking something is reduced. Through trial and error over the past 50 years we have finally hit on the right formula for governance in our country; it is better to allow our rulers to goof off than to have them actually rule. For example, if our Minister of Revenue and Revenue has stayed home to enhance our wives with a matchstick instead of trying to declare war on India, this country may still have some spare tires left. What a relief it was, therefore, that on Monday and Tuesday we could more street barricades.

April: Hotel guests throughout Nepal go on a week-long strike to demand that their right to tip waiters and staff be restored. They threaten to stay on in Nepal indifferently as that hotel occupancy will be 100 percent for the rest of the year.

May: Petroleum price increases to demand that it desteased by adding more Himalayan spring water. Jowar Journalists pen down to protest increased workload caused by Congress infighting.

July: The Rotary Club of Kathmandu (Rotary) declares a three-hand-bound to demand more handbales because Botanicus doesn’t have enough tourists to keep their woods and resources sparsely clean, and the drop in the number of Nothing Doing Days is seriously affecting the pulpminia industry.

Nothing Doing

ambassador whisky

It has become a mandatory ritual for most climbers in Nepal to meet and brief Elizabeth Hawley on their expeditures.

LIZ

She was the first to climb the South Face of Lhotse alpine style! In which year was Dhaulagiri climbed for the first time? Who was Alex McLeod’s climbing partner during his attempt on Annapurna in 1983 in which he died? For answers to these questions and many, many more, just ask Elizabeth Hawley, Nepal’s walking encyclopedia on mountaineering in Nepal. When she first arrived in Nepal in 1990, five years after the first tourist came to Kathmandu, Liz Hawley never thought she’d stay so long. Forty years later, she has firmly established herself as a legendary chronicler of mountaineering. She has been living in her bungalow in Dhili Basako for most of the time here driving her trademark blue 1963 Volkswagen Beetle to and from the airport to interview mountaineers as they flew back from expeditions. It has become a mandatory ritual for most climbers in Nepal to meet and brief her on their expediions.

Liz: Sometimes it’s as boring as hell. There are 25 trains on Cho-Oyu you get bored with it. But fortunately now, I don’t have to meet all of them. New routes, new attempts, something new is always happening.

Word has gone around among mountaineers and others in Kathmandu that Liz does not suffer fools. She can be blunt, bawdy and impatient. After all, she has a deadline to meet.

Today, Liz employs two assistants to meet expeditions, there is just too much happening during the mountaineering season. But at a surprisingly Liz still does many of her interviews herself.

Liz Hawley’s database of mountaineering is the product of a lifetime of meticulous interviews, reporting and collection. Much of this information, plus original statistical analyses of trends in climbing in the Nepalese Himalaya will be published in a book that Liz is working on along with fellow American, computer expert and climber, Richard Sallonsky. “We have no idea when we will really finish–we hope possibly by the end of the year. But I’m not sure, I wouldn’t hold my breath waiting,” says Liz. She says the growth in the number of expeditions in Nepal is due to a free political climate in Eastern Europe, the easy accessibility of foreign currency, and to increasingly more affluent societies like Japan and South Korea.

Seated in her study, surrounded by books, journals and reference work on mountaineering, Liz acknowledges the guidance of climber and explorer Colonel Jeremy Robbins, who enabled her to become an authority on the Nepalese Himalaya climbing scene without ever setting foot on a mountain. “I like mountain Korea. I’ve been in it. I want it to change. It’s so different, it’s so different,” she adds. Liz enjoys Kathmandu’s climate (“Kathmandu is not under a fault like New York is in the summertime”) and its evergreen lifestyle where it is possible to live comfortably and frugally. When she first came to Kathmandu she had quit her job as an editorial researcher for Fortune magazine in New York and had travelled extensively through Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, the West and South Asia. “I took back on purpose in September 1960 because I thought it would be interesting to see how Nepal was going to cope with the 20th century,” she says. A year earlier, KP Kirat had become Prime Minister under a democratic constitution promulgated by King Mahendra. This exercise in parliamentary democracy was short-lived and 15 months later Kirat was put in jail. Writing about it began Liz’s career as Kathmandu-based foreign correspondent for Reuters and Time. Her reporting spanned the Punyachhet years, the subsequent political upheavals, the death of King Mahendra, King Birendra’s assassination, and through it all hundreds of successful mountaineering expeditions and tragedies on the mountains. Liz gave up political reporting for Reuters after her stories on the 1963 bomb blast raised hurdles in the government. But she still reports on mountaineering and writes for climbing journals in nine countries. She also continues to manage Sir Edmund Hillary’s charity, the Himalayan Trust and serves as the honorary consul for New Zealand in Nepal.

“Nepal is still experiencing growing pains with parliaments, I think it’s great. I just don’t need to climb them,” she adds. Liz enjoys Kathmandu’s climate (“Kathmandu is not under a fault like New York is in the summertime”) and its evergreen lifestyle where it is possible to live comfortably and frugally.

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“Nepal is still experiencing growing pains with parliaments, I think it’s great. I just don’t need to climb them,” she says. In 1994, the American Alpine Club, of which she is a member, presented her its literary award. And in 1998 she was awarded the King Albert Medal of Merit presented by a Swiss foundation to “persons or institutions who have distinguished themselves in some way in the mountain world”. The rapid growth in satellite technology and the live coverage of climbing exploits on the web may have underlined her role as a mountaineering correspondent, but it doesn’t seem to prevent Liz from always having the definitive last word: “I am getting older. But my reports give me an assessment, quite often, of the significance of a climb. They put it in perspective.”