EXCLUSIVE

Palace and Paramilitary

After five months of ping-pong, King Birendra has approved the ordinance for setting up a crack paramilitary force to be deployed to tackle the Maoists. We hear he took over 20 meetings between the Prime Minister and a hard-to-convince king before all the questions were cleared. Even though there was no official word on the ordinance till Wednesday, we were told that only “formalities” remain.

Nevertheless, there is word that some last minute changes have been made, what they are will be clear only when the sashkar Gazette is published next week. The earlier draft was silent on arms procurement; the final version is said to define a procedure. The draft had a clause allowing the armed police to search any premises or vehicle if they had reason to suspect wrongdoing.

We’re not sure if that has been retained or erased in the versions between Narayanshahi and Sringha Darbar.

Immobile?

The Supreme Court is hearing a case filed by employees of Nepal Telecommunication Corporation (NTC) seeking to bar the Ministry of Communication and Information Authority (NTA) from issuing a license to a private mobile operator. The employees are banking on provision 22.2.1 in the Telecom Act 1997, which says no other licence will be granted for five years for operating the same telecom service. On the other hand, the same law also states that a licence can be granted if “additional service” is required. The Telecom Policy (1999) is clear on the government’s intention to have two mobile telecom service operators, one of them the NTC. Officials at NTA told us NTC was granted a “preferred” license without having to go through the nine-month bidding process. They also argue NTC employees could have sued earlier if their interest was being unfairly neglected. On the other hand, the delay is depriving private-sector competition.

Meanwhile, the NTC has suspended issue of new mobiles due to “congestion” of its network and plans to add capacity with another 10,000 lines within four months. The Corporation has also sought bids for setting up 50,000 mobiles to be distributed along the highways from Kathmandu in the east to Pokhara in the country’s centre.

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WHICH YOUNG TURK?

With a race for leadership coming up in Pokhara, the Nepali Congress may finally be evolving into a true political party.

BINDU BHATTARAI

... individually, the membership in the ruling party reads like a political Nepali Who’s Who. Among them are leaders who’ve spent the best years of their lives in jail for the sake of the people, technocrats with unswilled experience and specialization, grassroots workers risen up the ranks, and even Panchayat-era politicians made good. As a party, however, the 50-year-old Nepali Congress is still struggling to emerge as an entity that is not constantly crippled by power struggles at the top.

Two weeks ago, the party, now headed for its 10th General Convention on 19-22 January to be held in Pokhara, staged its comeback drama. A recap: as Nepal was recovering from the rampage over what was not said by young Indian satirist, a Congress faction—instead of calling behind the government to restore dharma—made a grab for power. By the end of the week the rebels were back kicking their own and the NC government of Girija Prasad Koirala went back to work, pretending nothing had happened.

All eyes are now on Pokhara, where history is going to be made as delegates from all over gather. Whereas in the past the elected party president nominated all the members in the NC’s Central Working Committee (CWC), this time half the numbers will be elected from the floor. (Nominating the other half will still be the prerogative of the president.)

The election of half the delegates is sure to transform the inner dynamics of the ruling party. To begin with, the relative strengths of the different factions and factional leaders will be clearer than in the earlier situations when the party president chose one and all. Also, it is not clear how the relationship between those who have been nominated and others who have made it on the strength of votes cast will evolve.

It is likely, however, that this first true election for CWC membership will point to the likely successor(s) after the argumentative dons Koirala and Krishna Prasad Bhattarai retire. This would be much better, and a more ‘democratic’ process, than having to choose successors only from among those already assisted by the preceding das.

The Congress has always been a president’s party. Delegates to the General Convention elected him, and it is he who nominated the entire CWC.

A CWC appointment, meanwhile, has always been at the first step towards a ministerialship. All the way changes after Pokhara, making it possible to gauge a leader’s popularity among the party rank and file.

For years a subject of ridicule for its inability to hand over power to the second rug, the NC realizes that Bhattarai (77) and Koirala (78) cannot go on forever. Bhattarai, the now-you-see-him-now-you-don’t ‘leader of the anti-Koirala camp, is actually semi-retired. Even Koirala has set a deadline for himself: “I will quit both positions within three years,” says the prime minister and party president in Himad Kherpaktara’s forthcoming issue. “The younger generation must be more patient.”

Laughably, that younger generation is itself in its mid-to-late fifties. But even then they quaver like boys (and a girl... there is Shalaja Acharya) see a new top. In fact, Bhattarai and Koirala have borne the burden of leadership mainly because there has been no clear front-runner among the ‘junior’ wannabes. The Pokhara convention may be regarded as the primaries for the leadership round among this second rug, where the wheat will be sifted from the chaff.

Among the top leaders in this generation are Ravi Chandra Prasad, Sher Bahadur Drakul and Shalaja Acharya.

Earthquake coming

"As exactly 24 minutes and 22 seconds past 2 a.m. in the afternoon, a great rumbling was heard deep in the earth and with that began the earthquake of 2 Marh 1998 (15 January 1994). Because of the strange sound from down below, at first no one knew what was happening. Then the land moved like waves in the water. It seemed at first that the earthquake was moving east to west. Then the ground soared in twist and turn, and buildings and monuments began to topple over... Houses collapsed with sounds like church bells. The dust made everything dark... Thousands were crushed to death under the rubble; thousands others were injured; the soldiers parading in Tundikhel could not stand and crumpled on the ground, a portion of the Tundikhel to the east erupted and water erupted. Just then, Dhurukhan and Ghatiganj both broke into pieces and fell dawn like a sawed-down tree..." —From Nepalko Mahalakshmisampura (1990) by Budha Shumsher Jbr Rana, 1953.

One of the most visible legacies of the Great Quake of 1934 is today’s New Road. Seen in the picture taken from Basantapur Darbar in 1934 is a section of the street that was widened while reconstruction was taking place. Raja Prime Minister Juditha Shumsher named the road after himself and had his statue installed at its western end.

(See also: Waiting for the Big one, p 11,12)
Long march to nowhere

The dawn of the hour of the Peace March (Revolutionary) bodies for the lazy amongst our peers and would-be leaders. The call of the hour is walk, walk, and then walk some more—for peace, which we will see in the near future, and spouting messages of hope we are beginning not to believe in. Why does it take something like the chaos with which we ushered in the new Gregorian millennium to bring our self-righteous many to their feet? And it could be argued that it’s fitting punishment that those who either fanned the flames, or did nothing to stop the folly, should be made to inhale the dust and carbon monoxide. First we fiddle while the Valley burns, then we go on padayatras while the Valley burns, then we go on...
ON BANACHS

H undreds and thousands of Nepali friends ask me about the current situation in Nepal. The image and the documentation are somewhat similar to what is being deployed, instead of being a suitable policy that is not sufficient. They are asking me to move as far as I can to suppress the violence in the streets.

Nepalis are fed up of bandh and want to see us to end them. So, why don’t we declare a bandh on all the streets for a day and see what happens. Most people are going to welcome it because it will mean an end to the bandh violence and normal life will not be permanently disrupted. We have imported this form of protest from the West. The people of India have imposed it on Nepal. They have been treated well for a long time, but, with the two-day strike last held in the country, no one wants to be treated this way too. We have also imported a political culture that spouts a hate and violence, and not democratic rights, or may be it is not possible to do away with them suddenly. But we can bring some order, accountability and common sense to bandh. First we have to be clear on the definitions of a bandh: it should be directed by legitimate demands; it should be voluntary; and it should be peaceful. A bandh cannot be a cheap substitute for a programme of action to achieve something. But that is exactly what it has become — announce a bandh through a press statement and then a three-wheel going around town with a loudspeaker, and a conditioned public will comply by staying off the streets because they don’t want their motorcycle smashed or their shops stoned. This violates the basic freedom of citizens and dilutes the importance of the issue because it is enforced by force. Our country has a ground to hold a half for 34 days in the past five years, with estimated cumulative losses to the tune of Rs 1.3 billion. Who paid the price? Besides the country’s economy, manufacturing, tourism, shops, and businesses, it is the ordinary citizen who faces immediate hardship. The risk of emergency medical care, students who want to study, daily wage earners, the self-employed, small shopkeepers, and tourists all suffer. The affluent can get by. Top government official travel around under police escort, and the main argument of the strike is generally under custodial or droning from off streets. If they get their demands fulfilled they thought, though that has almost never been the case. About all they get to do is create a public nuisance and embarrass current rulers and manage their own ego. An agitation which called a bandh is only returning the favour, because when it was in the opposition the present government perhaps did the same thing. This structural fix to further problems the rightfulness of a cause can do it the consent of the people. It is cynical to use a threat of violence to politicians for whom the end justifies the means. We have to call a halt to the chain reaction of bandhs and counter-bandhs and arrest the epidemics of forced strikes before it taint the fabric of our economy and business.

It has been argued that a democracy, people have a right to protest, but not forever enough, that the right to protest is guaranteed, in a democracy you cannot force people to protest for you. Bandh organizers argue that their cause is legitimate and that a general strike is the only way to put pressure on a ruling party to listen to their demands. Again, that could be true if people closed their shops and didn’t bring their vehicle out without fear of a repeat. Most citizens or trade unionists should perhaps be at the forefront of challenging the bandh culture because it disrupts their work and makes their lives and their work stressful. We cannot call down on the drivers in the city because the原理 of accountability, and ending a truce to all political parties.

Freedom does not mean the freedom to deprive the public of its freedoms, including the freedom to disagree.
The gobar economy

Don't laugh. The future is in cow dung. Biogas is already producing as much power as a medium-scale hydroelectric plant, and we haven't even begun to scratch the surface.

Say power expert Bikash Paley, director of the research organisation Wืนnch-REPSO Nepal. "We know that forests can't be saved with electricity. Biogas is the only true alternative renewable energy source." Besides reducing pollution and biogas, biogas also helps forest regeneration by requiring forests to be secondary which means forests have a chance to regenerate because there are no more trees to cut. "In addition, the by-product of biogas can be used to provide clean fuel for the cooking and heating needs of the household. The biogas energy from our feedstock is what makes a difference. We are using the by-product of biogas to provide clean fuel for cooking and heating needs of the household. The biogas energy from our feedstock is what makes a difference. We are using the by-product of biogas to provide clean fuel for the cooking and heating needs of the household. The biogas energy from our feedstock is what makes a difference. We are using the by-product of biogas to provide clean fuel for the cooking and heating needs of the household. The biogas energy from our feedstock is what makes a difference. We are using the by-product of biogas to provide clean fuel for the cooking and heating needs of the household. The biogas energy from our feedstock is what makes a difference. We are using the by-product of biogas to provide clean fuel for the cooking and heating needs of the household. The biogas energy from our feedstock is what makes a difference. We are using the by-product of biogas to provide clean fuel for the cooking and heating needs of the household. The biogas energy from our feedstock is what makes a difference. We are using the by-product of biogas to provide clean fuel for the cooking and heating needs of the household. The biogas energy from our feedstock is what makes a difference.

Four years we have paid back the loan, and we have saved about Rs. 1,000 every month in fertiliser and kerosene. But more than that, it has given us pride and made us self-sufficient," says Prasad of his biogas plant.

Nepal has one of the lowest per capita energy consumption in the world, and most of this is used by burning agricultural waste and firewood, known as biochar. Still, the country spends nearly 40 percent of its hard-earned foreign currency to import petroleum products to meet merely urban demand. Nepal is better known for its enormous hydropower potential, but hydropower is capital intensive technology and the energy is too expensive to use for heating. On the other hand, a 10 cubic metre biogas plant for a family of eight can be built for Rs. 30,000 and will pay for itself within a year or two. The beauty of biogas is that it has no moving parts. The cow dung goes into the circular pit, bacteria arrive inside the cow's stomach to go break feeding down the waste into methane which is piped to the kitchen and lit just like any other gas stove. And that is all that ever by-product of gas generation is the digester slurry that comes out of the pit which is prime fertilizer that can sometimes double vegetable production. "At a time when our electricity grid is having a hard time meeting demand in remote areas, here is an energy source that is already generating the equivalent of 120 megawatts."

The gobar economy

By DANIEL LAK

(Bio)Degraded in Bangkok

Sometimes you have to go away to really appreciate what you’ve got at home.

As I'm walking through one of Bangkok's markets, I come across a stall selling piles of fresh flowers. The vendor is busy arranging them in small, round containers and labeling them. It's a typical scene in Bangkok, with homeless people selling flowers and3 goods outside the major temples and shrines. But this scene is different. These vendors are not homeless; they're actually part of a local community project that helps keep the city clean. They collect waste and turn it into compost, which they sell to local farmers. It's a sustainable solution to a problem that affects many urban areas around the world. It makes me think about how fortunate we are to live in a place where nature is so abundant and clean. Sometimes you have to go away to really appreciate what you’ve got at home.
**Immobilising the nation**

In response to the government decision to ban old and polluting vehicles, transporters’ unions threaten to bring all public transport to a halt.

This could impact economic activity in the capital.

**ALOK TUMBAHANGPEY**

It has to turn into the number of all striking. Favored by a government decision to ban old, nearly 4,000 vehicles now working in the public transport, the Federation of Indian Transporters’ Associations (FITA) says it is determined to do anything to stop the government from implementing the ban.

The decision was taken because the ban will take away the livelihood of one million people. There is no way we are going to get our vehicles off the roads. If they don’t revoke the decision we will take it to Supreme Court and ultimately the government will fall down or go up,” warns Bhutan KC, one of the best drivers.

The concentration and congestion caused by Kathmandu’s aging vehicle is no secret. Research by an environment forum concluded that Kathmandu has at least 50 times more traffic congestion than the level specified by the WHO. Most of it is due to two stroke engines like the ones used by Bajaj’s three-wheelers. But those competing for roads and paint being old, many drivers prefer to use their vehicles for the last few years.

The government has announced a deadline of November 30th for all vehicles to be replaced with newer models. However, many people are not able to afford to buy new vehicles.

**Women have benefited most fromangi. It has cut down time they used in spreading firewood for cooking, and cutting blackened pots. The mode fire first also helps to reduce the amount of poisonous smoke from kitchen stove.**

**FOREST LADIES:**

A month after Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation added a Boeing 767 aircraft to its three-jet fleet, it seems clueless as to how to use the new addition. The operation plan—or lack thereof—as witnessed on Wednesday, January 4, is a case in point. The government have assigned more than 100 flights to the new aircraft, but so far it has not added any new routes.

Instead it has been using the B-787 in routes that were adequately covered by the corporation’s two B-757s and one leased B-757. The New Delhi connection has been RNAC’s most profitable route but of late, because of the post-hijack publicity and regular bad press in the Indian media—has not had enough passengers even to fill up the smaller B-757s.

Presently the leased Laudia aircraft is doing two Osaka flights, one to Frankfurt and one to Singapore.

Where’s the LPG?

First it was the price of kerosene, and now with Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) becoming scarce, winter can’t be worse. The Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) has repeatedly said that supply has improved but there’s just no LPG at the distribution outlets.

The NOC maintains it could be seasonal demand and the increase in LPG-run vehicles that could have skewed its assessments. “We’ve increased monthly imports to 3,500 tons since December. We think that should be enough to meet the demand,” says Madan Raj Sharma, General Manager, NOC. “The scarcity is not due to any real shortage but related more to matching demand and supply.”

Businesses say the hike in kerosene prices late last year may have led to more people using LPG for cooking, one reason for the increased demand.

Besides, not just microbuses and three-wheelers but even many taxis use subsidised cooking-gas as a substitute for petrol. Part of the problem, most LPG storage capacity, which nationwide adds up to about 835 tons.

**Well done IOE**

Nepal’s Institute of Engineering, the top ten engineering colleges in Asia, according to the Bangkok-based Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), was listed as the third college in the world based on the performance of its Masters level students in 2000. The Institute, established in 1972, has produced 885 civil, 64 electrical, 61 electronic and 46 mechanical engineers, and 21 architects so far.
WHICH YOUNG TURK?

For now, Deuba represents the vortex of anti-Koirala sentiment, through his one-point agenda of forcing Koirala to relinquish one of his two responsibilities. Deuba’s strengths are his support in the Far West, his having been prime minister once, and the fact that Koirala caretaker has caved in around him—the power brokers Khus Bahadur Khadka and Bijaya Kumar Gauchal are in particular. Disadvantage: efficiency in Nepal’s former ruling elite, including a clique within the Royal Palace. Koirala’s main rival since Shaliji Acharya began politics well before both Deuba and Poudel. Without popular or regional support and having lost her parliamentary seat, Poudela’s vote is her only chance of re-entering parliament. Her well-known disadvantage: fraudiously shrouded uncertainty.

The other underdog is Ram Chandra Poudel, described as a hard fighting candidate. Known to have a limited, Tamang-centric vision, Poudel lacks the strong regional support which is Deuba’s trump card. By siding with Koirala since March 2000, however, Poudel has improved his chances. He can carry the delegates that Koirala controls in Pabitra. Besides, serving as home minister is said to be good for your political career.

The other Congress outlooks to watch is which party general secretary Sudh Koirala and Khus Bahadur Khadka. Of the two, Sudh is said to have a firm grip on the party machine, but he prefers backroom negotiations to taking the reins. Dinu for Koirala, a one-time home minister who is now said to be masterminding Deuba’s challenge. However, the cake may not be as tempting as the Pabitra delegation looks like it will mark the beginning of the end of the NC’s two-man oligarchy—an insidious situation that was maintained with all its trappings of artificial parity—mainly because the strength of the

Dharan at 100

This village of settlers has grown to be a center of excellence in education and development. It now wants tourists.

DUMBARRISHNA SRETHSH

The accompanying photographs are testimonies to how rapidly a place can change in a short span of only four decades. An asphalt highway and concrete brick buildings have replaced the rural dirt road and the tin roofs of years. Only the small tin-roofed house seen in the right corner of the new picture remains unchanged.

Dharan, a city in east Nepal, is celebrating its 100th year of establishment this year. It was first established around 1894. They were settlers who lived in clusters of small huts near the forests and made a living by filling trees from what was at that time the thick forests of the Chaur Koshi shed. In fact the city got its name from the Nepali word for a platform on which wood is sawed, because these settlers used the platform to saw the trees they chopped in the forest.

Ramarchandran Shrestha, who announced the formal settlement of Chauri Nagar (now called Deuba Bazaar) in 1901, is credited for the beginning of planned human settlement in Dharan.

It took another 150 years for the neighboring human settlement to emerge, which is partly due to the war. In 1938, under the Rana rulers, the Shroff-Shrestha establishing Chauri Nagar (now called Newa Deuba Bazaar) and established the Jhadora Nagar (now known as Chauri Nagar). The town-cum Dharan Hospital to encourage people from the eastern hills to migrate and settle there. After the hospital came Dharan’s first

primary school, which was set up in a local tea shop. By the early 1940s, Dharan had developed into a small gateway for people migrating from the eastern hills to the fertile tarai plains. Economic and commercial activities intensified, accompanied by a rapid increase in population. And by 1964, with two weekly markets on Friday and Saturday, the city had grown into a center of commerce for the entire eastern tarai.

During the 1950 revolution, Dharan was a hub of living political activities. Around the same time, the city began to grow into a center for arts, literature and education. The city has come a long way since, especially in the field of education. It now has 12 secondary schools, 70 lower secondary schools and 60 public and private primary schools, in addition to seven colleges and one

medical college. The British set up a Gurkha recruitment camp in Dharan in the early Fifties, after which it grew into a hub for the entire Eastern Development Region. Today, the BP Koirala Institute for Health Sciences, one of the leading teaching hospitals in all of South Asia, is the infrastructure left behind by the British when the camp moved out of Dharan about a decade ago. When Nepal was divided into 14 administrative districts and 75 districts in 1965, Dharan was designated the capital of Koshi zone.

Bijapur, the capital of Koshi kings on a foothill east of the city, was a planned settlement long before Dharan was established. Likewise, the Bhatbhum Singh Darke, and the Buda Suthe, Dantadaha and Pandrahu temples all have historic dating back hundreds of years. The ancient city of Bijapurag, Bhagia Camp (British Camp) and the Bajura college development committee in the south, all come under Dharan’s municipal boundaries. Even after the devastating earthquake about a
decade ago Dharan remains a beautiful and vibrant city. Dharan is about 350 meters above sea level. The city, which spreads across 1,233 hectares, is home to 125,000 people. Dharan, where the flat plains start merging into the hills, has a moderate climate with temperatures ranging between 31 degrees Celsius during the summers and 14 degrees in winters.

Dharan is already a leader in different areas of development and planners now want it to also become a center for tourism, and excellence in health and education in the next two decades.

(Adapted from Himad Khusbhupantika)
**Cancer refuge**

The BP Koirala Cancer Hospital provides excellent treatment and spreads awareness to help prevent thousands of cancer deaths each year.

With cancers of the cervix, breast and other parts of the body in rising numbers, the BP Koirala Cancer Hospital (BPCHKM) in Bhaktapur, Nepal, is facing a serious problem. It has been estimated that 90% of cases of cancer are caused by environmental factors, the rate being attributed to genetic factors. Nepal lacks a comprehensive study on cancer prevention, but in emerging as one of the lead non-communicable diseases in Nepal—there are an estimated 30,400 cancer patients in the country. Deaths are approximated at 12,000 per year.

In the absence of a comprehensive study on cancer prevention, the rate of cases being attributed to genetic factors is rising. Nepal lacks a comprehensive study on cancer prevention, but in emerging as one of the lead non-communicable diseases in Nepal—there are an estimated 30,400 cancer patients in the country. Deaths are approximated at 12,000 per year.

The BP Koirala Cancer Hospital provides excellent treatment and spreads awareness to help prevent thousands of cancer deaths each year.

Doctors believe that most of these deaths are preventable. Studies show that a third of cancers are preventable and another third to four are variable. The finding of smoking, which can be prevented, exists at about 30% per case of cancers triggered by environmental factors, while another 35% require regular and constant dieting. Age is the most important factor of all. The current rate of deaths due to smoking is about 60 deaths per year. The rate of deaths due to smoking is about 60 deaths per year. The rate of deaths due to smoking is about 60 deaths per year.

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Business is bad, and could become worse

The Federal 10 deadline labour unions have given government to resolve the service charge hotel workers are demanding expires in under a month. The threat of a strike looms large and companies are bracing for the impact. But even this is no longer an issue, businesses say, given how the investment climate in Nepal has deteriorated over the past year.

Last week (Trade in letters, July 24) we wrote about how bad things were—it could now be getting worse. Large multinational companies are getting increasingly edgy about doing business in Nepal, wondering if it’s worth their while at all. “Last week we had a meeting and they were very awkward,” says Pratibha Rana, chairman of the Soa State Group, which also runs Surya Tobacco. “That’s more worrying to us because they can afford to just pack up and go.” The Nepal operations of a company like Unilever—whose Indian operations even account for nearly 2% of the global business—doesn’t mean much to the conglomerate. But businesses know that a company of that scale packing-up means irreparable losses for Nepal as a whole, and a dark shadow over business prospects.

It all just looks at some of the problems they already face: The government is sitting on over Rs 400 million of money belonging to companies like Unilever. Worse still, it shows no signs of being willing to pay it back. “At the very least, it could promise to pay back in instalments,” Rana says. The government has now used the money already, a business source said. “Instead they refer us to one ministry or another and keep us going in circles.”

Now businesses say there are other issues the government must decide. Chief among them is whether it wants a liberal business environment. It indicates nothing of the sort, and is far from amending a number of regressive clauses in the Company and Labour laws. “If the government should declare that we want to go back to agriculture and we’re prepared to pick up the spades and get to work,” says Rana. This middle-of-the-road vaccination won’t get us anywhere, he adds.

The coalition of 16 business and industry groups that came together to fend off the unions was another of the few instances of unity, and another to underscore the lack of governance, which has become clear in recent weeks. The coalition has commissioned two studies, one to look into the socio-economic impact of the 10 percent service tax demanded by the worker’s unions, and another to unscramble the legal tangle governing business and investment. The report is to be submitted to the government in the coming weeks.

Rajendra Khetan, the chair of the Employer’s Council at the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries, says he does not mince words: “The labour law needs to be balanced, we want inclusion of the no work-no pay principle and the right to fire as needed.”

Art of the week

The art work the annual report of a hotel company was circulated to its shareholders. A majority was attached to the report that stated that no, money or food would be forwarded to the company until the matter of the annual meeting is settled. It really made people think whether shareholders have fallen into too casual a trance with the conglomerate. But businesses knew that a company of that scale packing-up means irreparable losses for Nepal as a whole, and a dark shadow over business prospects.

“Instead of the problems they already face: The government is sitting on over Rs 400 million of money belonging to companies like Unilever. Worse still, it shows no signs of being willing to pay it back. “At the very least, it could promise to pay back in instalments,” Rana says. The government has now used the money already, a business source said. “Instead they refer us to one ministry or another and keep us going in circles.”

Now businesses say there are other issues the government must decide. Chief among them is whether it wants a liberal business environment. It indicates nothing of the sort, and is far from amending a number of regressive clauses in the Company and Labour laws. “If the government should declare that we want to go back to agriculture and we’re prepared to pick up the spades and get to work,” says Rana. This middle-of-the-road vaccination won’t get us anywhere, he adds.

The coalition of 16 business and industry groups that came together to fend off the unions was another of the few instances of unity, and another to underscore the lack of governance, which has become clear in recent weeks. The coalition has commissioned two studies, one to look into the socio-economic impact of the 10 percent service tax demanded by the worker’s unions, and another to unscramble the legal tangle governing business and investment. The report is to be submitted to the government in the coming weeks.

Rajendra Khetan, the chair of the Employer’s Council at the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries, says he does not mince words: “The labour law needs to be balanced, we want inclusion of the no work-no pay principle and the right to fire as needed.”

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Here come the Flying Trucks

Nepal is finally entering the Age of the Helicopter, and there is nothing to match the lifting capacity and affordability of hardy Russian-built choppers.

Sharpa, founder of Asian Airlines, headed for the former Soviet Union in 1993 in search of a helicopter for his fledgling airline. He found the Mi-17, operated by two Mi-17 operators along with a Russian crew, “Kazan, the Russian manufacturers, were keen to test their craft in Nepal’s terrain. They thought it would be good for promotion,” says Tapas Sherva. The Russian choppers were a resounding success, and since then, 200 passengers have flown over 20,000 flight hours in Nepal without a single accident. There are now six Mi-17 operators in Nepal, while a few others are awaiting their delivery.

The Russian helicopters are cheap, easy to operate, and ideal for heavy-lift work,” says Nepal’s first commercial helicopter pilot, Jitendra Saha. The range of the Russian choppers is impressive—the Mi-17 can fly up to 2,000km, and pilots swear by the craft’s high-altitude performance. This capability has proved salubrious in several rescue operations: An Air India aircraft crashed in 2001 on Mount Everest, and the Mi-17s were put to work. Similarly, in 2005, a大地震 left the entire country in turmoil. The Mi-17s were the first to arrive on the scene, providing relief to thousands of people stranded in the hills.

Sherva, who is also a commercial pilot, says that the Mi-17s have become an integral part of Nepalese aviation. “One of our helicopters was shot at in western Nepal. The bullet went through the baggage compartment. Fortunately, no one was hurt,” he adds. The bullets are among the most common injuries in the country, and the Mi-17s are well-equipped to deal with such incidents.

With the Mi-17, the future of aviation in Nepal looks brighter than ever. Sherva, along with his team, is working towards making Nepal a hub for aviation, with the Mi-17s playing a crucial role. The future looks promising, and Nepal is poised to take its place among the leading aviation nations of the world.
Waiting for the big one

DEEPAK THAPA

Walking past the Bhaktapur Darbar Square, one comes across a tiny whitewashed dishahe-style temple, all out of proportion with its large, newly-tiled platter. What could have happened? There did once stand a grand pagoda on the site, but it came crashing down in the Nepal earthquake of 1934. The dishahe was put up as a “temporary” fix for the sad.

Talk about earthquake, and conversation inevitably turns to the Nipal said the dishahe. It has become the paradigm against which all earthquakes, large and small, are measured. There are still plenty of witnesses around who can recount the horrors of that fatal day, and every inner city family has a tale in its memory chest. But there is nothing as meticulous as the description by Bratba Shumsher-JB Rana in his book Nepal Earthquake (1934).

From writing to citizens, the nepal statistics, as the 1934 event was known, scattered 84 on the Richter Scale. In Nepal alone, it killed 8,994 and damaged more than 80,000 homes. The Valley was hit hard, with 4296 dead and 12,397 houses totally destroyed. Among the dead were two of King Tribhuvan’s daughters and a granddaughter of Rana Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher.

The Eight Richter Earthquakes are a natural phenomenon for the Himalayas, where tectonic plates twist and fold to push up the mountain ranges. Records show that between 1994 and 1999, Nepal experienced an average of eight earthquakes every day of a magnitude 6 (M6) on the Richter Scale. These are slight tremors that cannot be felt by humans. The ones that can are also pretty regular in occurrence: M4-M5 - five per month; M5-M6 - six per year; M6-M7 - one in six years. (The difference between each point on the Richter Scale is 3-fold.) Earthquakes of M7 plus are rare, but they do strike with geological regularity.

There are two contiguous plates under Nepal’s northern border, with the Indian plate from the south trying to burrow under the Asian or Tibetan plate to the north. With the two plates forever pushing against each other, something has to give and it does at a tectonic slip along faultlines—and we get an earthquake. (The 1994 Seismic Hazard Mapping and Risk Assessment for Nepal found 32 such active faults in or near Nepal, and five of them within Kathmandu Valley alone.) According to experts, the Indian plate is creeping northwards at a speed of at least 2 cm per year, which means that every 200 years there is a 4-metre slip ready to happen. But if a major earthquake has happened for 500 years the slip can be 10 metres, enough to trigger off an earthquake of M6 plus. In the past hundred years or so, four M6 plus earthquakes have struck different sections of the Himalayas (see map, above). A segment which has just suffered such a tremor is relatively secure for centuries to come.

What worries geologists is that the 1980’s has seen between Kathmandu and Delhi (including all of middle and west Nepal) move out to 8 to 16 mm per year, an M8 earthquake for a long time. There were big tremors in 1983 and 1833, but there were most likely in the M7 range. Says Roger Bilham, the University of Colorado geologist who first raised the warning with an article in Himal magazine in 1994, there could even be a potential up to 20 metres of slip ready to go anytime between now and 2150.

Grave reaper Kathmandu Valley is at grave risk in the event of a big earthquake because of the population density of both its old and new neighbourhoods. The epicentre of the 1934 earthquake was near Changu, around 200 km to the east of the Valley. But even back then, when the Newar towns were a fraction of today’s size, the devastation was more fierce in Kathmandu. That was mainly due to the relatively large population of the Valley, but equally so due to the confluence of the Valley’s former lake-bed that made the intensity of the earthquake greater. Within the Valley itself the silted and eastern parts was affected more than the north where the line is more compact (see map, above-right).

The houses will be much greater when the next earthquake hits. The population of the Valley was 360,000 in 1934; it is now 1.5 million. Simple extrapolation from the proportion killed in 1934 would give us 20,000 Kathmandu residents killed were an M8 quake to strike today. But that would not be taking into account the tall buildings that have come up in every pole and plank, with bad construction and poor materials. The occupancy rate of the residences is also much higher. And so it is not surprising that the Kathmandu Valley Earthquake Management Action Plan, 1998, estimated that up to 40,000 people could be killed outright and close to 100,000 injured if a 1934 intensity earthquake strikes Kathmandu—what it will overt or later.

The likely aftermath would be even deadlier. Around 60 percent of the houses in the Valley (75 percent in Bhaktapur to the east) will be severely damaged. Many of the houses will topple because of liquefaction, when the soil acquires a liquid consistency. The effect of liquefaction is likely to be more pronounced in the river valleys where a majority of the new settlements are, such as along the Bhishnavati, Ghode Kunda and Bagoati.

Fire

There then is the danger of fire, which was greater then than in 1934. Gas leaks will start configurations, as well electrical, and the

What to do

During an earthquake

If you are inside:

• Stand in a doorway, or crouch under a sturdy desk or table.
• Get away from windows that could shatter.
• If on the ground floor, find an exit, leave the building quickly and calmly.
• Never jump from windows.

If you are outside:

• Move away from power lines and buildings.
• Move away from glass windows.
• If the street is narrow and the buildings tall, stand in the doorway of a nearby building.
• If driving, pull off the road and stop in a safe place.

After an earthquake

• Immediately after the shaking stops, leave the building. Be prepared to take cover in case aftershocks.
• Provide first aid if necessary.
• Control fire.
• Turn off gas and electricity mains.
• Listen to the radio for reports and instructions.
• Do not enter any building unless you are sure they are safe.
• Do not use the telephone—leave it for emergency professionals.
• Gather in an open space.

(National Society for Earthquake Technology-Nepal)
greater use of synthetic materials materials will spread across the land and the fire will spread. For the fire to start, the spark must be visible to the people. If the spark is not visible, the fire will not spread.

FIRE CONTROL

When a fire starts, it is important to control it as quickly as possible. This can be done by using water, sand, or other materials to smother the flames. It is also important to call the fire department as soon as possible so that they can extinguish the fire before it spreads.

BUILDING DISASTER

JITENDRA BOTHARA

All around us are examples of how exactly one should not build in a seismic zone.

Studies show that on a world average more than 75 percent casualties due to earthquakes are because of building collapse. That figure could be as high as 95 percent in the case of Nepal. The risk from earthquakes in Nepal, and in Kathmandu Valley in particular, has increased because of urbanisation and the consequent rise in population density, unplanned development of new settlements, and settlement in high-risk areas.

Traditional masonry buildings are generally defective for a number of reasons: height (four- or five-storied buildings in mud mortar are common in the valley core area), weak construction material (brick or stone in mud mortar), lack of connection at wall junctions (making do with either a false joint or just a vertical joint), and no connection between wall and floor and wall and roof. Since the 1960s modern materials (cement, reinforcing steel) began to be increasingly used in buildings but the inherent weakness of buildings remained pretty much the same. Besides the fact that constructing quality has gone down over time (such as no wetting of brick before laying in cement mortar, leaving joints of masonry units unpatched, no little curing of cement work), new building practices have also contributed to making buildings prone to earthquake damage as traditional structures: irregular shape of houses, increased heights of buildings and individual floors, wall-to-wall windows, and prominent use of cantilevers. Then there is the fact people have in the typical Nepali framed (pillar) buildings, believing they can even pierce the sky with such buildings. Framed buildings are preferred in seismically active regions like Nepal because of their ductile (flexible) behaviour and light weight. But the typical Nepali framed buildings severely lack both strength (because of very small columns on disproportionately small foundations, very little reinforcing steel, virtually no control, height irrespective of strength) and ductility (because of wrong reinforcing steel placement, wrong ring shape, many times undesired load path). Moreover, walls in frame structures are not anchored to the main frame and that makes them susceptible to collapse; walls above cantilevers are particularly dangerous. Such buildings will not be able to shake and are expected to behave no better than masonry buildings, and in many cases even worse.

Earthquake-resistant construction is the only solution against earthquake risks. Technology exists for such construction. And it is not very expensive either, since it involves extra cost of 5-10 percent more if modern materials are used and up to 20 percent in the case of traditional materials. Existing buildings can also be retrofitted against future earthquake risk, although obviously this will cost more than implementing seismic strengthening features during construction.

Building disaster

Safe building

General

Make building shape as regular as possible, maintaining a vertical load path (i.e. walls should always be on top of another wall). Height should not be more than three times the width. Avoid extended wings.

Masonry Buildings

Control number and size of openings. Openings in opposite sides of wall should be same. Wall junctions should be 'stitch' together. Provide vertical steel bars from foundation to roof at wall junctions. DPC/silt/lentil bands needed on all walls. Connect wall and floor and wall and roof. Provide bracing to floors and roofs if made of timber/steel.

Reinforced concrete frame buildings

Make pillar stronger than beam (preventing practice is contrary) by using more steel in pillars than is generally used now and making them wider than beams. Use rings of proper shape and at closer spacing. Overtapping of bars should not be less than 56 times the bar diameter. Walls should be integrated with the frame. Frame buildings require very stringent quality control.

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(Jitendra Bothara is a structural engineer with the National Society for Earthquake Technology.)

Checkwall from top left: Ghantaghar before the 1934 earthquakes, and after; the destruction in Patan Durbar Square; Dharahara before, and after; the Tundikhel test city for the sheltering.
As the US cuts interest rates in a bid to stave off recession, Thomas Frank explains how the “New Economy” was always based on a dangerous myth...
Supremiser Superpower

The US economy is booming, but American overseas aid is at its lowest level since World War II.

Official development assistance: the fading target

| Aid as % of GNP | Official US aid target for donors: 0.7% of GNP. Industrialised countries now prefer to emphasise private investment flows rather than aid. | $Total aid in 1995: $56.8 billion (down from $80 billion in 1980). Largest single donor: Japan $14.5 billion. |

Steam your want a revolution

Lennon comes home to Cuba, unveiled in bronze by Castro himself.

"That memorable concert in 1963," when Lennon said the front row audience, instead of applauding, could just rate their jewelry.

"The time he remarked the Order of the British Empire in 1969 to protect the Vietnam war and colonial interventions in Africa.

"His refusal to perform before an exclusively white public, in Florida in 1966, or in apartheid South Africa, and.

"He called for peace in the Middle East and support for the Irish struggle.

The F.B.I., CIA and Immigration Service, investigating directly by Richard Nixon, the thickest tenant the White House ever had, spied on him and harassed him and tried to extort him from the United States," said Alarmed. Noting that these agencies still refuse to release many of their defenses on Lennon, he said that in a column.

"A Beefalo Colloquium was held in the centrally located Faballo-Cuba in 1996, sponsored by the Fascist and Stalinist political managers, and Beatles imitators. Some of Cuba's most famous musicians have performed their

vocations of The Beatles' music, and the youngest and least-known musicians performed the best reproductions of the Beatles. This time around, the event was bigger, and political.

When Lennons asked Castro to sit on the bench next to the life-Lennon bronze for a photograph, he demurred, saying it would be "a dangerous thing to do. Now 74, the aging leader said he had heard about The Beatles at the height of their success, but didn't listen to their music back then. "I really didn't have much time... we had so much going on here," he said.

"I went beyond, explaining that they were very ignorant about music and many other subjects at that time. 'We had a lot to learn,' to Castro admitted.

"His response was evident by the pronouncement of Cuba's own political leadership at the unveiling of the statue. As it happened, it was unveiled by both Castro and Silvio Rodriguez, well known Cuban musician. Although Castro lauded the new sculpture, he followed his usual and Stalinist music, style and culture, his fellows never understood his love for music, often illogical, with other things, even stopped him.

Rodriguez, a swing-state in the contemporary new Song Movement at the time, avoided those bullets by that sadistic, fed by a strong disdain. So when Castro made his appearance, along with other leaders of the Cuban revolution, it was a way of saying: "We were wrong then, and we are making it up for it."
AsiA
12-18 JANUARY 2001
NEW DELHI - When a massive power failure hit north India affecting over 200 million people, the state-owned electricity utility managers rushed for help to a big power plant run by a leading global energy company. But they backed off when the energy firm had based Enron Corporation demanded three times the normal rate for supplying power from its Daibir thermal plant in western India, to re-start the stalled electricity stations. Electricity was finally sourced from the government's own units to partially restore power to north India the next day, but losses of hundreds of millions of dollars were caused.

This was perhaps biggest power failure in the country so far, and has added urgency to the demand that India's inefficient state-controlled power utilities be privatised soon. But it has also shown the costs of rushing heading into privatisation, says critics of Enron, which runs the world's largest private power project in Maharashtra.

Enron was forced to renegotiate its earlier power sale deal with the state government, scrapped following a sustained campaign by people's groups and protests by opposition parties. But the new contract threatens to bankrupt the state's electricity utility, Maharashtra State Electricity Board (MSEB), and the state exchequer itself. Under the new deal, the MSEB can ask Enron to cut production only if it picks up the bill for capital costs and interest on a minimum of $220 million a year whether it needs the power produced or not. The deal also places on effect of revenues culation and hikes in international petroleum prices to the MSEB. Over the past year, both things happened, pushing the cost of DPC power to two cents a unit, since the 1995 rate.

Grish Sant, researcher of the people's group Prayas: "The project was negotiated in a non-transparent, non- competitive manner and the MSEB highly inflated its power demanding projections." The MSEB's hydro-electric plants in the state produce power at a third of what Dabhol charges. But the state utility has been forced to back down production and even shut down some of its units as a result of the Enron deal, says Sant. MSEB tariffs are so high that many energy intensive industries in Maharashtra have switched to captive power plants, causing a glut of expensive power in the state.

Experts argue it would be far cheaper in the long run to make state-run utilities more efficient than to bring in foreign investors who have little interest in India's energy generating system. Ashok Rao, a top executive at the Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited (BHEL), says affordable electricity has been recognised as a major ingredient of India's food safety and sufficiency because it is used to power irrigation pumps. State-run utilities have raised power production in India from 1.365 MW 50 years ago to some 88,000 MW today. Rao blames for liberalisation of electricity followed by successive governments in the last decade for starving the government power utilities of funds. (PS)

BANGKOK - Thaksin Shinawatra, Thailand's next Prime Minister and reputed as one of its richest, once likened himself to Genghis Khan, the Mongol leader who conquered China. "I'm the sort of top leader type," remarked Thaksin during an interview published on January 13 in The Nation.

"Thaksin has a strong and confident bearing, and he's not afraid of making decisions, although that at times can be a bit pushy," he said.

The statement fits the man who wants all wealth and power to fall under his control. But he also said what he really meant under "Genghis Khan" is that the country was made the same way he made himself and controls his Shinawatra business empire, for it is "an extremely different business".

But many of his other CEO qualities will prove useful in administering the country. People close to Thaksin say he has a good eye for recognizing people who is suitable for what job. He delegates well, but still doesn't easily trust people, and has become sensitive and cautious during his persecution and criticism lately, because of anxiety over the election.

His wife Paja Phukpattaranont, a former Shinawatra group manager of Consumer Co., says her husband is "too careful and too much a worrywart".

Many of those leadership qualities are understood by his tendency to think that money solves all problems, and his occasional rudeness to country's other leaders. Two aspects and the National Counter Corruption Commission's indictment of his family's activities indicate the seniority of the Thai But Thaksin party, a key economic adviser of the Finance Minister and former president of the Thai Military Bank.

Police said his first for, but his business empire was built in it. He earned politics because "spending in the current economic situation is better than to be in money to the political party," Thaksin is a never afraid of making decisions, although that at times can be a bit pushy," he said.

In the past, he was seen as politically naive because he talked on all subjects, including those about which he knew little. But he's fast-learning and talks more continuously, though he still pushes issues he is passionate about.

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Can a Nepali live in Nepal or not?
Front page edited by Shree Acharya (who has since been replaced) in Space time, 31 December, 2001.

"Mr Janbush Manjhi Managing Director Space Time Danilo Fomshahlaya Kathmandu
This is to inform you that we have some questions to ask you, so please contact this office at 10:30 AM on 5 January, 2001." This was the signed statement sent to our office by 31 December, 2001.

On 5 January, the Subsidiary Chief Officer of Kathmandu, E. M. Manjhi, issued a statement. In the statement, he received this letter on the same day as you did in the evening. As soon as I received that letter, I appear in the Kathmandu office and informed him that we were not managing to get a response from you. We were in the day of Eid, he must be busy meeting his relatives and friends. If the managing director cannot be reached today, I should come in or it is possible that he, the MD, present him sometime tomorrow as a representative.

"You should not come, it won’t help. He himself must come, tomorrow at 10 AM. Please inform him about it anywhere.

"Then the next day, our MD, our lawyer, Hari Nuparka, arrived, and we went to the CMP office. Nepal was not in the hall at that time. Neither was CMP Tika Bhati. After some time Nepal came. Around 10:15 AM I met him and informed him that we had come and were ready for any discussion. He asked which one of us was Janbush Manjhi. We introduced ourselves and after some small talk, he indicated that our MD was to come into another room for questions. I said, “if a statement is to be taken, then our lawyer, who is with us, will also like to be present.”

He replied that he was used to ordinary and extraordinary and therefore the presence of the lawyer was not necessary.

The questioning went from 10:30 AM to 1:30 PM. They took a written statement and it is concerned with the Helen Bishjal Shrestha incident, which our newspaper had reported. They asked about all the issues concerning this incident. Where the news came from, how it came about, how it was printed, what was the basis and origin of the news, the source and so on. Meanwhile we got clear indications that the CMP were calling up regularly and giving directions. In the end the CMP started pressuring us over the telephone and asked that Janbush present himself against the CMP on the following Monday.

Thus we were handed a legal notice regarding the case.

Why did all this take place and for what reasons, we are all. We all did not want our incidents to be hidden. The news that the Nepali media printed was collected from places where the events took place or were collected from different agencies or organisations. For example, we printed the news on 25 December, 12th anniversary of the Sankata South Federation, under the leadership of the chief of that federation, Yogendra Shrestha, seizures of Helen Bishjal Bhandari were buried. In another case, the statement of the ANSFUP, Nirmal District Committee, was printed. We did not create this, we printed it on the basis of events taking place or on the basis of statements.

It is the responsibility and duty of the government to find out where the news originated, to separate facts from fiction and to make public the truth. We all did not want different events to cross three. On 15 December, a leader of the political party Shrestha, also in this context, the chief of the Helen Bishjal Bhandari was the first to report that there was no involvement of三角.

Children lived in fear when pensions were frozen upon the police. The CMP himself released statements counting what had been attributed to him and stated that it was hurt by all the evidence and destruction that had taken place. All our responsible information minister had told us that theCMP’s minister should not be screened. On what basis had he been the CMP’s minister? If anyone is to be charged for the massacre, it can only be the government, the information minister and we one...

Those who should be held responsible are not holding that responsibility, that the accused are being forgiven and all the blame is being directed towards the media. This is the start of new confusion and the first target is our paper, Space Time. The letter sent to us and the interrogation is a prime example of this. On the one hand, they say it is a simple questioning and then conduct an investigation in a closed room. They take signed statements and announce it with great pride in the official government newspaper. The official news agency, RNS, released a statement stating that Janbush Manjhi had been arrested and released in the name of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ).

What had happened was that the government secretary of the FNJ, Tanka Nath Dhakal, issued a statement to our minister on an event that had taken place. Zair Aslam also added to this statement of the government and sensationalised it. The President of FNJ, Sarvet Acharya, called up, asked us to proceed and said that the FNJ had given no such statement. He stated that some of these events took place and that if the government tries to blame the FNJ or the press in any way, then the FNJ and other press people will not. The CMP had ordered the minister to come to the first place...

We have realised that people are being benefited from all in some way and they are being directed by the government to raise and create trouble. Does this mean that a Nepali cannot live in Nepal? Some people are becoming jealous of Space Time, which has become very popular among Nepalis in a short time, and are not trying to calm down our reputation and this is what we are doing. Everyone should ask one question and that is, what was our fault in the Helen Bishjal incident and where did we go wrong? Why is this conspiracy being hatched against us? Why is the government conspiring against us? It is up to the government and the information minister to provide answers.

Can a Nepali live in Nepal or not?

Bandshe and the Nine Left

CPN/UML spokesman Pradip Nepal in Nepal/ Samacharpatan, 5 January

Three kinds of people really benefited from the recent bandshe—the bandshe organisers, government employees, and black-marketeers. The bandshe was to make a profit. The organizers benefited participate in great numbers and with enthusiasm.

The bandshe of 1980 played an important part in that process and their role was appreciated. After the restoration of democracy, bandshe started to play a major role and not only has been used to bring democracy. Therefore bandshe called after 1990 have not been seen as meaningful bandshe. Calling bandshe on the smallest pretext has proved to be counterproductive, and they seem to have lost their meaning.

Those in the Nine Left will now have to analyze their mode of functioning. It seems that their programmes are either helping pro-India parties, or the extremists. It has been proved twice that some unknown power is controlling them. The calling off of the bandshe called during the rise in prices of petroleum products raised questions. The Nine Left parties should have further supported that. The Nine Left will now have to question their existence and also the way they think.

Case against Maoist leaders

A case of dacoity has been filed in the Parbat district court against 10 Municans, including Baburam Bhattarai

Baburam Bhattarai and Prachanda, leaders of the insurgency. According to sources, the Municans are accused of looting the Phulchok branch of the Ananta Bonya Bank one year back. They had looted money and goods worth almost Rs 6.5 million.

UML is irreleva

Conrad Prachanda in Spacetime Datine, 4 January

We do not see the infighting in the Congress on the basis of any new

This page contains material selected from the Nepali Language Press

12-18 January 2001 NEPAL TIMES

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QUOTE OF THE WEEK

The parliament is meeting in a month. There was no discussion on the topic in the previous sessions and neither has the government shown any interest in discussing the full this time round. To propose an ordinance just before a parliamentary session is not only disordering the parliament but also a tactic to by-pass it.

—Madhur Kumar Nepal, General Secretary of Communist Party of Nepal (UML radical Marxist Leninist), commenting on the recent ordinance to raise arms and armless force in Kathmandu, 19 January.

So this is how democracy is strengthened in the Congress party.
ARTICLE 15

**Nepal Tourism Board.** 1998 and has already cycled through 21 countries in South Asia and the Asia-Pacific. Organised by the G76/G20.

**Bamboo Club, Thamel.** Every Friday evening. Kishor Gurung plays classical favourites at the Chimney, Hotel Yak & Yeti. Everyday 8pm

**Technology-Nepal.** 15-19 January. 10am-5pm. Exhibition Hall, Bhrikuti Mandap. 474192

**Swasthani Fasting.** February—March. 15 days. The men fast throughout this period. 474192

**Classical Nepal Dances**

1. T est, measure, scale (5)
2. Try it, I say (5)
3. Shine-on, pots and soufflés (5)
4. Stridknocker's protective cover (4)
5. Weak! (5)
6. Not just a time, an age (5)
7. Oat's better half (4)
8. Otherwise as a Nordic (5)
9. Use to detect ET (3)
10. Partially visual signals (3)
11. Official in-training (5)
12. Gone, hand, mercenary (5)
13. Web-critic says, "I surf and _ _" (1,4)
14. Noise it! (5)

**Ballads and Dances of Old Tibet**

1. T est, measure, scale (5)
2. Try it, I say (5)
3. Shine-on, pots and soufflés (5)
4. Stridknocker's protective cover (4)
5. Weak! (5)
6. Not just a time, an age (5)
7. Oat's better half (4)
8. Otherwise as a Nordic (5)
9. Use to detect ET (3)
10. Partially visual signals (3)
11. Official in-training (5)
12. Gone, hand, mercenary (5)
13. Web-critic says, "I surf and _ _" (1,4)
14. Noise it! (5)

**Classical Music**

1. T est, measure, scale (5)
2. Try it, I say (5)
3. Shine-on, pots and soufflés (5)
4. Stridknocker's protective cover (4)
5. Weak! (5)
6. Not just a time, an age (5)
7. Oat's better half (4)
8. Otherwise as a Nordic (5)
9. Use to detect ET (3)
10. Partially visual signals (3)
11. Official in-training (5)
12. Gone, hand, mercenary (5)
13. Web-critic says, "I surf and _ _" (1,4)
14. Noise it! (5)

**Jazz**

1. T est, measure, scale (5)
2. Try it, I say (5)
3. Shine-on, pots and soufflés (5)
4. Stridknocker's protective cover (4)
5. Weak! (5)
6. Not just a time, an age (5)
7. Oat's better half (4)
8. Otherwise as a Nordic (5)
9. Use to detect ET (3)
10. Partially visual signals (3)
11. Official in-training (5)
12. Gone, hand, mercenary (5)
13. Web-critic says, "I surf and _ _" (1,4)
14. Noise it! (5)
A monument to an angry god

When one sits and dreams in the shadow of the Nyatapola temple a coffee or Coke can be the slowest drink on earth.

The magnificent Nyatapola temple as it stands today.
MUKUL HUMAGAIN

as a four-week-month delayed result voters at the National Sports Council (NSC) will finally receive their salaries. The NSC was hit by a severe financial crisis as the Finance Ministry had blocked its regular budget and it was unable to provide salaries to its staff. It was only after the NSC agreed to downsize that the Finance Ministry cleared its regular budget.

For employees at the NSC it has become regular to receive salaries after a delay of three or four months, particularly in the last year. The NSC, which has been forced to use its development budget to pay salaries at its regular budget, was just not enough, received.

A further blow to when the budget for the current fiscal year was announced, it was allotted a total budget of Rs 100 million, a total 32 million less than last year. To make matters worse, the Finance Ministry directed the NSC to stop using its development budget to pay salaries.

The present crisis at the NSC goes back a long way. It has to do with services rendered to athletes who have played the country’s top sports body, in particular the large recruitment of staff in the last 10 years. Every time a new sports minister or member-secretary came to power, their cronies were appointed to the NSC. It all began when Krishan Shalat, the current mayor of Kathmandu, was appointed as the Secretary at the Sports Council. Four hundred new jobs were created during his tenure. This tradition continued during the tenure of Bad Bahadur KC, the current president, and Kamal KC, who has the distinction of being the first sports minister of the country. There are now 274 staff in the Council. But the Council never thought it necessary to inform the finance ministry about the increased budget. So, until the present crisis crippled the Council, the Finance ministry had been allocating the regular budget for the 370 staff that the NSC reported in 1992.

The crisis did not present itself just as there was enough money at the NSC for post operations for the post SAF Games. It also had money coming from “late”, a lottery scheme, and shares on casino magnate RD Tandel to help the SAF games, and a 0.5 percent sales tax that was levied on goods coming into the country prior to the SAF games. Revenue from these sources provided salaries, but after the SAF Games concluded, the Council finally faced a severe financial crunch.

To increase its regular budget the NSC then began lobbying for its 1,176 employees by meeting the Prime Minister, and the ministers for education, so that the Finance Ministry remained firm in their demand that NSC staff be relieved before it would even correct the Council’s regular budget. When recruitments were made during Shalat’s and KC’s time, the NSC, that said it would provide salaries to its employees from its own resources. But that was just big talk.

Finance minister, and the minister of Education and Sports was forced to seek the matter. The NSC was advised to cut staff that differences remained between the NSC and the Finance Ministry over the number of staff it was to retain.

Before Dasain, the NSC sent a proposal to the Finance Ministry stating that the number of staff would be reduced to around 1100, and sacked 158 permanent staff. In December, it fired another 100 staff of which 40 were permanent. But the Finance Ministry was not satisfied and it even filed a petition with the court. Before the petition was filed a petition challenging the decision.

Shalat, who had previously been re-elected as the head of the NSC, now faces the court.

Savon is asking the high court to overturn his life ban from cricket.

CAPE TOWN—Disgraced former South African captain Hansie Cronje is asking the high court to overturn his life ban from cricket, saying that it has curtailed his work with underprivileged children. Cronje, who was banned from all activities of the United Cricket Board of South Africa (UCBA) and its affiliates last year, has filed papers at the Pretoria High Court in which he says he wants to make friends by resuming coaching underprivileged children.

Cronje said he accepted that the board would not employ him as a professional cricket but felt they were powerless to dictate his playing of the game or control his participation in other matters related to cricket.

“I am anxious to make amends for my conduct which has led to the termination of my cricket career,” Cronje said.

“The best way in which I can do that is to use the talents, skills and expertise which I have acquired in cricket and promote the game in the field of coaching and developing, particularly in the coaching of underprivileged players.”

Cronje said he had donated cricket kits to Geethbomboh Primary School. The school is in a poor area close to his home in Fancourt, an exclusive golf estate. Cronje said he had been invited to a match but had been unable to go because of the severity of his ban.

Before the ban, Cronje said, he had always been involved with the wider cricket community. “All these activities were undertaken on a purely voluntary basis, without remuneration,” Cronje said. “I very much wish to continue with these activities... I offer no relief, I seek in these proceedings, it is my intention to extend my activities along these lines.”

The South African Cricket Board has until 15 January to submit an answering affidavit.

Savon hangs up his gloves

HAVANA—Three-time Olympic heavyweight boxing champion Felix Savon announced his retirement from the ring but he will help train Cuba’s fighters for the 2004 Athens Olympics, Cuban television reported last week.

Savon was already obliged by international amateur boxing rules to stop competing in September when he turns 34 years old, but the official announcement means he will not take part in the new world championships in Ireland in June. The 1988 world champion had originally intended to fight in Ireland in a final appearance of a glittering career that transformed him into a popular hero at home and one of the world’s boxing legends.

Cuban television did not say why Savon decided to cut short his remaining active career by several months. But, it said, he would join the national boxing squad as a coach. Cuba’s sports authorities had unsuccessfully lobbied the International Amateur Boxing Association (AIBA) to raise the competitive age limit in the heavyweight category to 40.

In another surprise announcement, Cuban television said that long-time national boxing coach Alcides Sagarra, who trained the Olympic squad for three decades, was being replaced by Sarvello Fuentes, another experienced teacher. Sagarra was being put forward to represent Cuba in the AIBA, the official said. Savon, a staunch supporter of President Fidel Castro’s government, was hailed as a national hero, not only for his success on the world stage but for repeatedly rejecting lucrative offers to abandon his country’s amateur-only sports system against financial, and professional. Prior to Savon’s success at the recent Sydney Games, only Teofilo Stevenson, another Cuban boxing legend, had won three Olympic golds in the same weight category when he dominated the division in the 1972, 1976 and 1980 Games. Savon’s previous Olympic gold medals came in Barcelona in 1992 and Atlanta in 1996. In a prolific amateur career, Savon boasted a record of 358 wins and only 17 defeats.

Cuban television also announced that three other Olympic boxing medalists—mainly Hernandez Sierra, Enrique Carron and Hector Vilan—were ending their active careers.

The best boss in the world

The arrival of Sven Erikkson as England’s first foreign coach has the FA jubilant, and some others sceptical.

If he will be the man to guide the team to the World Cup finals, then England will have a chance in 2002.

The FA have already taken their leave of Glazer’s mayhem. Along with the axing of Alex Ferguson and Anne Weong have been brought in a new manager to guide the team to the World Cup finals, then England will have a chance in 2002.

“Ford” coach has the FA jubilant, and some others sceptical.

“I am not an easy man, nor an easy situation. But let’s get things straightforward — this is not an easy game, nor an easy situation for Sven. We are bottom of our World Cup group and that has had to do with him. We have not looked like winning a championship for a long time and the first job is to qualify for the World Cup. Erikkson has been in constant touch with England and Sven will be waiting to join the squad on 31 October and is glad to finally have his man. He said: “It was a relief. The uncertainty has not been good for anyone. His stock hasn’t fallen just because he has resigned from Lazio. A failure? Oh, come on! Sven has won titles in Portugal, Spain and Italy. And Lazio are fifth in the Italian League, are in the second phase of the Champions League and are holders of the Italian League title. But what are we asking the man to do? Erikkson’s contract is up in June and he may want to look elsewhere.”

It is fair to say he has been one of the best bosses in the world.”
Independent cycling through 150 countries over 11 years—Pushkar Shah is one determined man.

33-year-old Nepali cyclist Pushkar Shah is taking off again on 13 January to start the next leg of his 150-country bicycle tour after a month-long break in Nepal. When Shah left his home, Chhortati, in August 1998, many conflicting thoughts crossed his mind as he pedalled towards the border. “But I remained very determined. I confronted all my doubts about whether I could do it or not. One of the things that kept me focused was the unique challenge that lay on the road ahead,” recalls Shah.

After reaching Kathmandu, he headed towards Pokhara and then on to the sacred Buddhist site Lumbini. “I collected Buddha’s nail from there and kept it with me as a talisman,” he says. As the journey unfolded—hot, humid, dry, dusty, breezy and sometimes pure Zen—it was that very nail that helped him connect with all sorts of people. Little by little, by gifting it away, Shah hit upon the idea of a bicycle-tour because he wanted to spread the message of “peace and love from the Himalayan country of Nepal”.

The combination of Buddha’s spirit and the sheer will to pedal carried him after, starting from India then to Pakistan, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, China, Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Indonesia, even East Timor, and finally, Australia, from where he flew back home to take a break. In all, Shah covered 28,500 km in 21 countries on his mountain bike.

“I took a break to rest and plan my future trip. I’ve had no official sponsors from Nepal and some Nepali embassies had been very unfriendly,” he says sadly. “In China they rudely told me—‘We don’t have any obligations to help you, please go away.’ Shah gets encouragement and many positive vibes from a growing number of young Nepal who read his monthly updates in Wave magazine, which has carried details of Shah’s tour from day one. Financial support has been hard to come by, although Shah considers himself a professional cyclist.

For the upcoming leg of his journey through Australia, New Zealand and the U.S., the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) has agreed to help out. ‘We have provided cycling gear like track suits (with the NTB logo) and Rs 40,000 for miscellaneous expenses,’ says Dinash Jena, Assistant Manager of the NTB. ‘We have also prepared a formal letter establishing him as a promoter of Nepali culture and world peace. The letter will be a house gift for Shah during his travels.’ However Shah has also asked for daily travelling allowances, which the NTB declined to give him, saying it would be too long a term of commitment—Shah plans, if all goes well, to cover 150 countries over 11 years.

Shah cycles 10 hours a day on average daily when on tour, consuming some 10 litres of water and covering about 100 km. The tireless cyclist holds a Master’s degree in education and was active during the 1990 People’s Movement. 10 years from now, Shah would have cycled more than 330,000 km and had incredible experiences. “I have two missions in life. Cycling and preaching peace,” smile Shah.

To support Pushkar Shah and learn more about his dream, email nepalcyclist@yahoo.com, or call 892553, 431765.
Very, Very, Very, Very Important Person

Mongala decides to visit Nepal to declare a chukha jhum and temporarily shut down civil aviation.

One useful indicator of the importance of a visiting dignitary is the number of hours that the Ring Road or Tin Kheury is gridlocked. Anything below two hours and you can be sure it is just a Very Important Person (VIP) passing through, for example the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister or the Prime Minister of Togo. But really Big Guys will block the Kotevaur intersection for a minimum of four hours, or more. This usually means that it is a Very, Very, Very Important Person (VVVIP), flying all the way here to receive Kathmandu’s Keys from our Mayor. Now, I’d think twice about giving the keys of my town to complete strangers. Never know what they’d do with it.

Anyway, a VVIP arrived at a signal to get the hell out of this city and that is what we tried to do, but it was too late. The whole city was already grinding to a halt. Going by the bumper-to-bumper traffic jam on Sunday that stretched from the Satt Dhaba to the airport, our preliminary assessment was that the State Visit of the Mongolian President could be classified as a moderate intensity visit.

The really Big Ones are Magnificent Ten Disruptions reserved for SAARC Summits, Greek Foreign Ministers and US First Ladies—that is when the entire Ring Road and the airways come to a standstill for the duration of the visit as a mark of respect for the presence in our city of the distinguished visitors.

Anyway, to cut a long story short, by the time we got to the airport we found out we needn’t have been worried—because all flights were running late, air traffic had been affected for the same reason that ground traffic was at a standstill. As I write this, we have finally taken off, and before long we are already into our second Jhapa Bhabhis with rum and juice, and we have raised a toast to the age-old ties of friendship and good will between Nepal and the good people of Outer Mongolia. The flight attendant comes on the intercom to ask us to turn our luggage in the oval head roomers, and to inform us that the pleasure in the cabin is automatically controlled and that in the unlikely event of the pleasure falling, oxygen masks will drop, and we should then clench our nose and mouth and bleed normally.

Dhapakhet, Surkhet and Khokana making elaborate wooden frames for doors and windows for new houses. “There’s a booming international market for such crafts nowadays if quality is maintained,” says Hira Kaj. “But the thing is, these things are not appreciated where they’re supposed to be used—in Nepal.” He says. “But then wood is very expensive and there are very few canals left, so not many Nepalis can afford it.” he says.

Before joining Dwarika’s for their Nepali Heritage Architecture Conservation Project, Hira worked in places like Bungama,

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