

THE CIA'S SECRET WAR IN TIBET

Excerpts from the book *Orphans of the Cold War*



GO ORGANIC 4-5

10-11



EXCLUSIVE

Peace talks

Maoist leader Comrade Prachanda said this week that the dialogue between his group and the "fascist Girija government" was still possible. Fine print: provided the government met one pre-condition. The government says it hasn't been "officially" told what this pre-condition is. Most of us know: Maoists want to know the whereabouts of their arrested comrades. Prachanda's latest offer comes soon after the government decided to go ahead with plans to set up a crack paramilitary unit, and amidst rumours of a major offensive to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the uprising on 13 February. Peace through talks may still be possible, but both sides seem to be trying to bolster their military preparedness so they can negotiate from positions of strength. Mediator of the aborted talks in November, Padma Ratna Tuladhar, told a meeting this week that Prachanda and then prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba were agreeable to talks as early as 1996 and recently Prime Minister Koirala also held out the possibility of general amnesty should talks succeed. So what are they waiting for?

NEW IN NEPALI TIMES

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BINOD BHATARAI

The accumulated neglect, mishandling and bad planning of the past ten years is finally catching up with Nepal's tourism industry. This is when the chips are counted, and it does not look good. Flights on the money-spinning Kathmandu-Delhi sector that had to be booked months in advance flew nearly empty in January, hotels are vacant, the squares of Bhaktapur and Basantapur are deserted. Thamel is in deep gloom. No one wants to gamble with Nepal anymore: the casinos are empty.

The reasons range from political instability to labour unrest. Here is a brief list of things that have gone wrong:

- The hijacking of IC814 in December 1999 and the sustained bad press
- Suspension of Indian Airlines flights, and Royal Nepal Airlines' inability to increase capacity during the worst crunch
- A series of crippling *bandhs* dampened arrivals in the autumn season just as business was picking up
- Hotels evicted guests on 11 December, adding more bad publicity
- The riots of 26-27 December wiped out whatever was left
- The lingering threat of a hotel strike after next week has left tour operators undecided, and
- Threats of more political instability in 2001 is making the travel trade nervous

"I think we're beginning to see the impact of everything that happened in the past, culminating from breakdown in security to strikes," says Prasadha Panday, Managing Director of Shangrila Hotels and Resorts. The first month of this year was worse than even the post-hijack period. Overall, tourist arrivals in 2000 went down by 11 percent, Indians by 32 percent. Indians have traditionally made up a third of the over 400,000 tourists who visit Nepal annually, and free-spending Indian visitors pump in a

Flying on empty



Q: How do you take a country ideally suited for tourism, and quickly wreck it beyond repair?

A: Just do what Nepal has done to its travel industry.

sizeable chunk of Nepal's roughly \$160 million annual income from tourism. Even assuming an average annual growth rate of seven percent, it will take two whole years for Nepal's tourism to make for last year's lost business.

"So many things have gone wrong in the past year, we now have to redesign marketing and focus on India," says Pradip Raj Pandey, CEO at the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB). The trouble is that Pandey's promotion body does not even have a board at the moment, and only a sit-in tourism minister since the last one resigned over a controversial jet lease deal.

And it's not just Indians, even third country arrivals have dwindled. "The normal occupancy range in December should be about 70 percent. It was about 50 last month," says

Ribhu Chatterjee, general manager of Soaltee Crowne Plaza. Other hotels are reporting less than 30 percent occupancy. But the worst may still be ahead: shutdowns planned by transport workers this month, and the looming threat of another hotel strike after 11 February. The industry bought time to sort things out with a two-month reprieve, but positions have actually hardened and neither side seems ready for compromise. There is a sense of déjà vu about this brinkmanship, by the time the two sides reach an agreement or even a postponement of the strike, there will already have been massive cancellations and it won't really matter whether the hotels remain open or not.

NTB says it is working on strategies to counter the adverse publicity that followed the December riots, especially in India where there was widespread coverage of the violence. A normal January sees as many as 9,000 Indians in hotels in Pokhara and Kathmandu. The post-hijack January 2000 count was just 4,000. Official figures are not in yet but the January 2001 numbers are expected to be much less. With no Indians in the hotels, there are fewer gamers at the casinos. "December-January last year were complete washouts because of the hijacking, this year could be worse," says Rakesh Wadhwa, executive director of Nepal Recreation Centre that runs the casinos.

The Everest Hotel, where Indian guests make up nearly half of the business, has seen a 30 percent drop in December-January arrivals from India. Hotels have slashed prices. In fact, it has never been cheaper for Indians to visit Nepal—something NTB could use as a selling point in its promos. A roundtrip Bangalore-Kathmandu flight costs Rs 16,000, five-star hotel stays for three nights in Kathmandu

come for Rs 5,999. "The feedback we're getting is that people are still wary, but a few have finally begun to make inquiries," says Raju Bikram Shah, Everest's resident manager.

NTB is launching a marketing blitz in India, and a group of Indian journalists are being brought over on a familiarisation junket. NTB derives its income from a 2 percent tax on all sales in the industry, but it is a vicious cycle: if tourism is down NTB has less money to promote tourism. Some trade officials say Nepal can learn from countries like Sri Lanka which gets half a million tourists despite a raging civil war because of its coherent promotion and an efficiently-run national airline. "Our hope is to revamp Royal Nepal Airlines and use it to cash in on NTB's promotion," says Shangrila's Panday. "We can take in a million tourists, but someone has to get them here."

But the national airline is paralysed by politically-inspired corruption. There's talk of privatising it but no one seems sure if politicians would actually go so far as to cut off this perennial source of slush funds. "A management contract of the RNAC may be the immediate solution," says Shangrila's Panday.

The industry wants more solid efforts to lure Indians and overseas visitors, but all the

**Editorial p2
SUICIDE**

marketing in the world is not going to make a difference as long as Nepal continues to get bad press, is plagued by strikes and is stuck with a national airline that is not allowed to take off. Says one exasperated hotel owner: "We need political stability. Without that, all promotion efforts is just a waste." ♦

It's not over yet for Girija

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala may have thought the going would now be smoother since he worsted his rivals at his party's convention in Pokhara. But it looks like his worries are far from over. The challenge this time is from the main opposition Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist-Leninist (UML), which had become so cosy with Koirala that the headline left has even come up with a pejorative term for it: "bhai-Congress".

The local level elections are approaching, and the UML probably wants to show its cadre that it still has some fangs left. That is why the powerful Standing Committee of the UML hurled some accusations against Koirala and served him an ultimatum: resign or we will force you to go. The main charges against the prime minister are: a) corruption in giving cabinet approval for the controversial Lauda Air deal; b) bypassing parliament to enact the Armed Police Force ordinance; and c) failing to maintain law and order. "We feel a solution to all these problems is the prime minister's resignation," says Subash Chandra Nemwang, a UML central committee member who is rallying other opposition parties to edge Koirala out. But even the UML is unsure of how this new anti-Koirala initiative will pan out. It has scheduled a party meeting on 6 February to strategise what to do in the winter session of parliament scheduled to begin on the 8th.

"We will make a strong call for his resignation in parliament, and take every parliamentary measure, even preventing the prime

minister's entry into the house and surrounding the rostrum," warned Raghuj Pant, another UML MP. "If that does not work, political parties may have to think about how Joseph Estrada was forced to go," he added ominously.

The Congress bonding in Pokhara seems to have triggered an equal and opposite reaction. The UML has responded to a somewhat re-united Congress by putting up a stiff challenge, while the Congress factions seem to have been pushed closer by the prospect of a UML threat. Reactions from the Congress, preoccupied with behind-the-scenes manoeuvrings ahead of its own cabinet reshuffle and appointments to the central working committee, were muted. "We've not seen chargesheet yet to make an official comment," an engrossed Congress source told us.

The UML's anti-Congress campaign has brought out into the open fissures within the party between the moderate KP Oli faction which doesn't want to needle Koirala too much, and the more hardline Madhav Kumar Nepal group which wants to keep the pot boiling to make Koirala feel the heat. Sources say the UML's internal analysis is that a period of relative calm would work to the advantage of the Congress. But they need not be bothered; given the Maoists and the threat of strikes in the transport, tourism and education sectors, the government will have its hands full.

Comrades Oli and Nepal



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NEPALI Times

NEPAL'S TOP NEWSPAPER

SUICIDE

The decline in Nepal's carpet exports began with a decline in quality: inferior yarns, inconsistent knots, dated designs, irregular sizes and dumping. Then there were concerns about cheap chemical dyes and the use of child labour. The Nepali carpet industry first tried to dodge these charges, but finally bowed to green and child-free labels. But it was too little, too late. The damage had been done, others overtook us, and the industry never really recovered.

Something similar happened to our garment exports. Unscrupulous exporters used Nepali quotas to stick 'Made in Nepal' on products from countries which had saturated theirs. They took little interest in building indigenous capacity by training and increasing long-term competitiveness. As quotas are replaced by new free-for-all World Trade Organization (WTO) rules, there is no way we can compete with countries in the region who have invested in equipment and training to boost productivity. The latest was the pashmina wave which peaked in the US last winter but is rapidly waning as (don't we know it) inferior quality and slipshod delivery affected orders.

It is always easier to blame others. Our exporters searched for convenient scapegoats among Indian and Chinese exporters bent upon undermining their market. They blamed green and child-labour activists. When that didn't work, they blamed the media. Unless the industry puts its own house in order, no one least of all the government, can do anything to help in a cruel and globalised world.

And where went carpets and garments, it seems, tourism is sure to go. The short-sightedness of those who benefit most when tourism flourishes are the ones who seem to be bent on wrecking it. Tourism is one area where Nepal has some competitive advantages—Mt Everest, Buddha's birthplace, temples and the gentility of the people. These are formidable assets. Others couldn't destroy it even if they tried. But we can, and we have proceeded to effectively demolish tourism, the last remaining hope for the economy. As if frequent bandhs, reports of Maoist violence and chronic political instability weren't enough, hoteliers and their labour unions took it upon themselves to complicate matters beyond redemption. If it weren't so true, you wouldn't believe it: some hotel owners actually evicted guests from their own establishments on 11 December. This must belong somewhere in the Guinness Books. News like this spreads like bushfire across the world via the Internet, and that is exactly what happened.

Then there were the riots. Hoodlums went around hotels targeting Indian tourists. With patriotism like that, who needs enemies? So, no surprise that arrivals have plummeted and everyone seems to be bent on preventing a recovery. Hotel owners are not listening to the unions, the unions are not talking to the hoteliers about the ten percent surcharge, and all the while the 11 February deadline looms. Most bookings for that week and the rest of the month are already cancelled. So, while they haggle over ten percent, tourism is showing an 80 percent downturn.

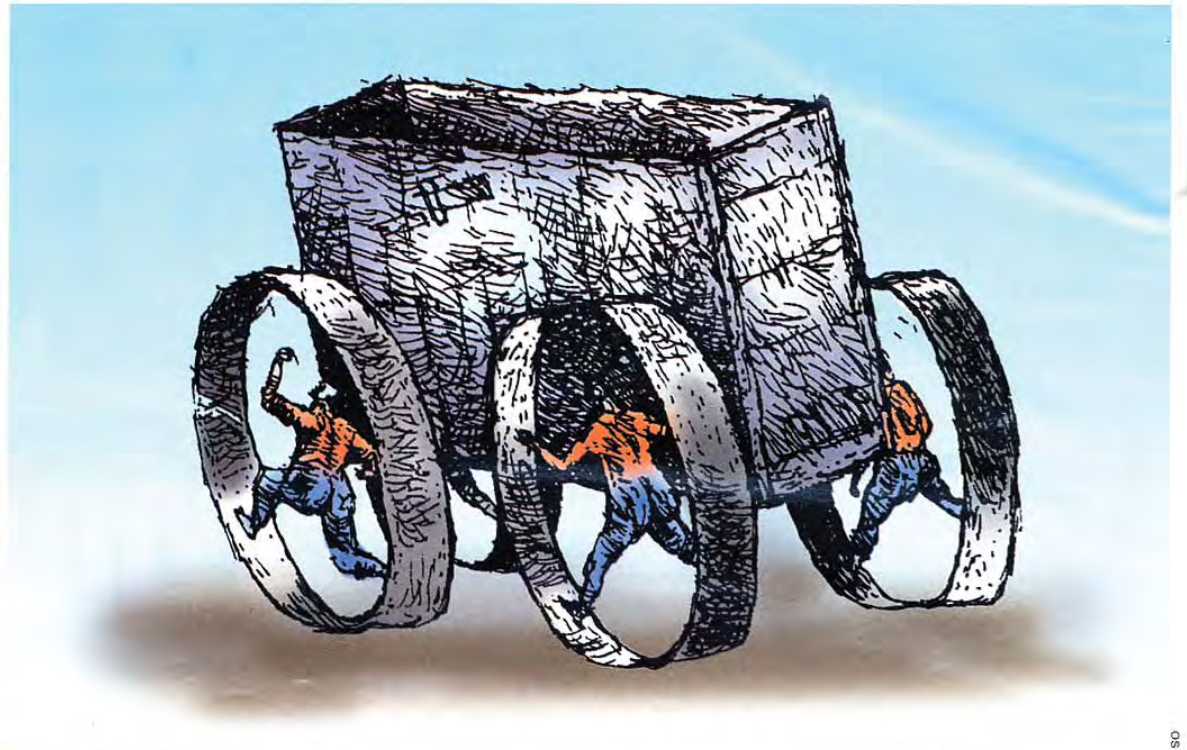
There is only one word for this: "Suicide".

BE WARNED

Nepal's tourism industry has another foe, and it is the United States State Department, the global policeman which has given itself the role of sending out circulars and "travel advisories" to all and sundry at the slightest hint of trouble anywhere. While this may get State off the hook lest any American citizen decides to sue it for not warning them that there are head-hunters in New Guinea, it does incalculable harm to the tourism industry of countries like Nepal. Given that Nepal attracts trekkers who mix among the people, the impact of these ill-thought advisories are especially cruel to the national economy. Perhaps the US Ambassador, who was so forthright in a speech to our rulers about Nepali ills the other day, should alert the folks at Foggy Bottom about what such "preventive" advisories do to Nepal. Why do circulars for American diplomats warning against travel outside Kathmandu Valley have to be released to wire services in Washington—can't they just be posted on the bulletin board of the embassy in Panitanki? Maybe Shital Niwas should start sending out advisories warning Nepalis to not visit certain parts of inner city Los Angeles.



MIN. BARNICARNA



STATE OF THE STATE

by CK LAL

Political pornography



*Bee to the blossom,
Moth to the flame;
Each to his passion:
What's in a name?*

—Helen Hunt Jackson

It's a bit like hard-core porn. There is a sense of illicit anticipation, but once you see that nothing is left for the imagination, the result is revulsion, not titillation. Reports about corruption scandals in Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation (RNAC) have started having a similar effect. When the national flag-carrier's dirty linen started getting washed in public post-1990, any deal the airline involved itself in was automatically perceived to have been sordid.

Deposing before a US Senate Committee in 1975, Houghton, Chairman of the Lockheed Corporation, had stated: "If you get the contract, it is pretty good evidence that payments had to be made." World over, the aviation sector is believed to be hotbed of high corruption. It only gets worse in countries like ours where the elite has very few avenues of making easy money without raising the hackles of either the donor community or the general public.

Donors do not bother much about RNAC because they expect it to die a slow and painful death. And the Nepali people will respond to chakka-jams, not jet-jams, because so few of them can afford to fly anyway. Civil aviation is for the elite, of the elite and by the elite. And it is the capital's elite who take vicarious pleasure in using Royal Nepal Airlines to hit each other with, while making a certain Austrian charter company a household word in Nepal, just like the name of a Japanese four-wheel drive became synonymous with corruption.

The same bunch of politicians who have run a perfectly viable airline to the ground by interfering shamelessly with its functioning are the ones who will suck it dry and use it to embarrass their rivals. Since its inception, RNAC has been the employer of last resort for the unemployable protégés of Kathmandu's elite. Meritocracy, or social justice, has never been a criteria in the recruitment policy of this public sector enterprise. Mediocrity has. This means most employees are predisposed to interference by their benefactors. Interference in the affairs of the corporation is not just tolerated, but expected. You get less overt political interference with the Herbal Corporation simply because you can't make big bucks there.

The result: general sales agents who don't pay their dues are habitually hired,

leasing aircraft is a hush-hush activity, even the renewal of the maintenance contract for 757s attracts the attention of the high and mighty. Following a grand tradition started during the Panchayat era (but not so blatantly) the powers that be will not let this milch cow alone. The only difference is that unlike during the Panchayat there is more than one centre of power, complicating things slightly. The notorious Dhamija scandal was the visible symptom of this terminal disease of institutionalised corruption. Chase Air was next: money was paid to a bogus agent who ran away with it, and only the vigilance of a lawyer of Nepali origin in New York saved some of the money. Today, even a contract to supply tissue paper or mineral water to the airline can be the source of fierce competition among political power centres.

The trouble is that scandals are fanned by rival groups that stand to lose if the deal goes ahead. And if this is the kind of dog-eat-dog competition that accompanies a leasing arrangement, wonder what would happen if the airline decided to actually buy brand-new planes. Governments would topple. No surprise, therefore, that the powers that be do not trust the airline with anyone except their near-and-dear. And everyone is in the act: tycoons with fingers in several juicy jars, intelligentsia at the beck and call of the aviation mafia, politicians beholden to big business houses, investigative journalists for hire—all attracted like bears to RNAC's honey pot. It would be highly unrealistic to expect Royal Nepal Airlines to be an island of efficiency when the rest of the country is so rotten. The airline only reflects the country's rot.

So, if the root of the disease lies in the governance of the country then there is a need to tackle it there, not just focus all our energies on the symptoms. The treatment (overhauling the national flag carrier) is so drastic that the elite rent-seeking class of the capital will never allow it. Why should they let go of this source of easy pocket money? The sooner this realisation dawns on the strategists of Nepal Communist Party (UML) the better. Poor Niki Lauda lost his job in Vienna, but he has become an excellent political weapon in Kathmandu. This cannot be part of an opposition

strategy during the winter session of the parliament—there are too many more vital issues at stake.

KP Bhattarai meant it as a warning, but his recent public prognosis that the Nepali Congress may lose the next general elections may just turn out to be prophetic. If the ruling party does not succeed in getting its act together, and there is little indication that it will, then there is a very strong possibility that Nepal Communist Party (UML) will form the next government. Even otherwise, the main opposition in a parliamentary democracy is considered to be a government-in-waiting. Cheap sloganeering should not become the main plank. The prime minister would need more than an airline leasing agreement to tender his resignation. This scandal may be a major preoccupation for the Valley elite, but it does not catch the imagination of the subsistence farmer in Dang. Most Nepalis are more concerned about their safety—physical and fiscal.

In the colloquial, the word Lauda has lewd implications. But obscene deals are best left for investigative agencies. The Commission for the Abuse of Authority, high-profile corporate lawyers, public interest litigation activists and nosy journalists are better suited to carry out an investigation. The UML should concentrate on more pressing issues instead: the complete collapse of governance, the worsening law and order situation, the danger of corruption becoming a way of life rather than just a fact of life.



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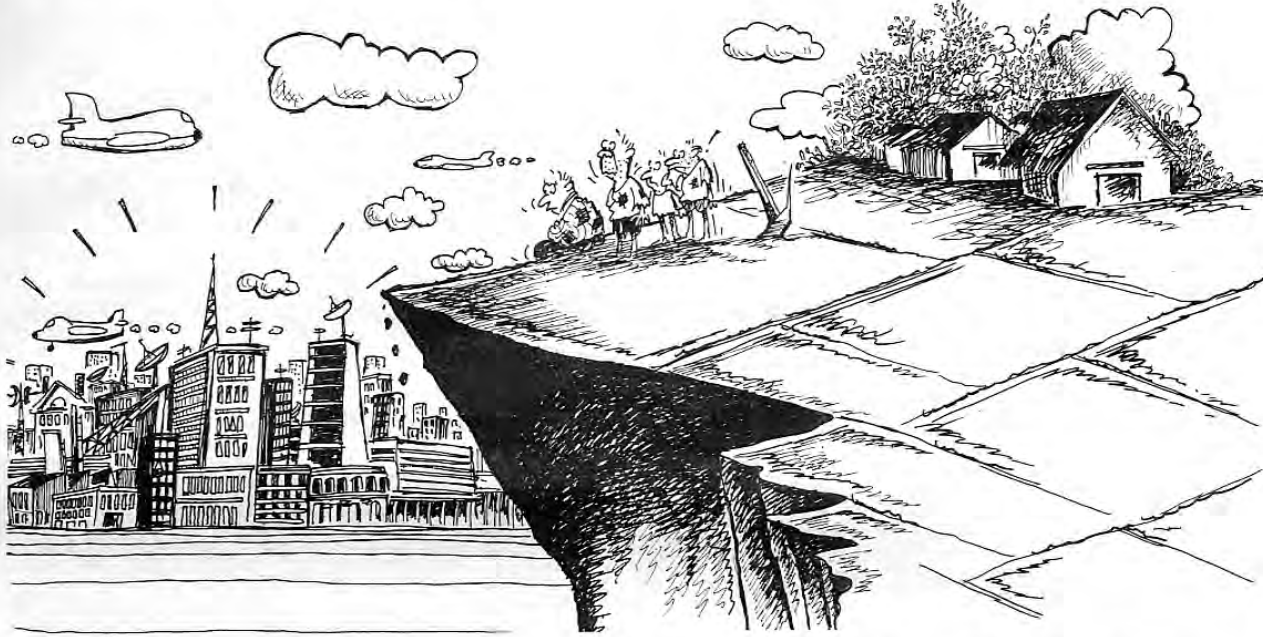


Why leap the digital divide?

It is a bit of an irony isn't it that those of us who are most sceptical about the potential for new information technologies to somehow leapfrog development are the ones who use this technology most intensively. Here we are writing about why a computer attached to a phone line is not the panacea it is made out to be to solve problems of poverty, and these very words are inputted into a computer and transmitted along a phone line to the newsroom.

Not all cybersepts are Luddites. The questions we have about information technology also apply to previous technological breakthroughs which we were told would save the earth. We are so desperate to find a clean, quick solution to the problems of poverty, the ecological crisis, the growing gap between rich and poor between and within countries, war and social injustice that we will jump at anything that offers a glimmer of hope. We are conditioned to look for technological fixes. Technology is easy, it is something you can lay your hands on, you buy it and the problem is fixed. But many of Nepal's problems are political, economic, socio-cultural. They demand complicated and sequenced interventions, the outcome is often unforeseen and messy, and the process of change will be slow.

After a decade of bonanza, the massive power of dot com startups to generate cash, and the hype, we now seem to be settling down to a more sober assessment of the limitations of information technology. Even *The Economist* carried a cover earlier this year with the strapline: "What the Internet Cannot Do"—and they were not even talking about the Third World. Bill Gates is the latest unlikely cyberseptic: at an IT conference in November in Redmond, Washington, he spoke passionately about how the Internet was not any use to the world's poor. Said Gates: "The world's poorest two billion people desperately need health care, not laptops, or wireless



At Davos this week, everyone spoke of the digital divide. What about the school divide, the hospital divide, the housing divide, the wealth divide?

Internet connections or a bridge across the digital divide." Many people couldn't believe that the guru of the cyberspace was having doubts.

Potato chips to microchips

We haven't escaped the hype in our own region. India's Minister of Information Technology, Pramod Mahajan, has given up his homespun cotton shirt for a smart suit and a slick tie. He says India missed the bus on the industrial revolution, it can no

waiting for dial tones. All of South Asia is struggling to solve infrastructure bottlenecks, but it is a question of priorities. What is more important at the present time: a high-speed data trunk line or a network bringing safe drinking water to villages? The 700 million South Asians who live below the poverty line, the 53 percent of children who are malnourished, do not make the headlines. And yet the question we must ask is: how are the few thousand well-educated cyber-

Nepal are leaping on to the business of data inputting across continents.

The Internet is supposed to level the playing field and make information freely available to everyone. There is a basic fallacy here: the Internet cannot do that simply because it is priced way beyond the reach of even the middle class. Only five percent of the world's 6.2 billion people have ever logged on, and nine out of ten in industrialised countries. A computer costs one fourth of the monthly household income of an average Finn, whereas it represents ten years' earnings for an average Nepali. It is not surprising therefore that one in every three Americans uses the Internet, but only one in every 10,000 people in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh do.

No doubt, there is a need to level the playing field. But with a digital divide like that, information technology is not going to do it for us. There is now a whole industry that is growing around the self-perpetuating world of development aid, which puts information technology forward as the panacea where all else has failed. The argument goes: the global gap between those with access to information technology and those

without is growing, therefore the only way to catch up is to buy people computers and hook them up to the Internet.

Internet ≠ Freedom

The other problem with presenting the Internet as the answer to all our ills is the belief that information will set us free. All the gigabytes of information whizzing around the world in nano-seconds is not necessarily spreading knowledge. Even if the Internet were distributing information widely and cheaply, what results is not necessarily greater wisdom. For information to be useful, it has to get to where it is needed as cheaply as possible, it needs to be relevant to the daily needs of the people it is meant for, and the information must be packaged so that it is easily understood. Information must help people communicate and participate, and allow them and their rulers to make informed choices. It must be affordable, it must make sense, and it must be user-friendly. Otherwise it is just junk mail. It is background radiation of inane digital trivia whizzing about at the speed of light. The other question to ask about information is whether there are any filters: who produces it,

who controls it, who benefits? Technology is never value-free.

We tend to get all worked up about information technology, we are dazzled by the latest gadgets, gizmos and its glamorous manifestation. It's a bit like the automobile industry: whose car looks sleekest, whose is fastest, who's got the biggest hard-drives?

What all the talk of convergence eclipses is that a good, old-fashioned short-wave radio is also information technology. Developing countries that have completely wasted the power of radio to spread information and to communicate have no right to go on about "leapfrogging" into the Internet age. Our born-again digirati may snobbishly wave away AM radio, but no other medium in Nepal today comes close to matching the reach, the accessibility and affordability of shortwave radio. If there is one medium that will do all the things we want the Internet to do in Nepal (spread knowledge to the disadvantaged, make useful everyday information available to them) then radio is it.

And yet, what have we done with radio? We have used it shamelessly as a public address system for government propaganda, we have insulted the nine million or so radio listeners in Nepal by making shortwave and medium wave broadcasts so boring that people listen to it only because there is little else on the airwaves in Nepali. Radio, in fact, has become a symbol of official neglect and proof of an unspoken strategy to deny the weak a voice. If the information superhighway is full of potholes, an ox cart may be more suitable than a Sports Utility Vehicle.

Then, take education. How is the Internet going to help us leapfrog in education if we have made such a mess of our existing school system? Before sticking a computer into a school, how about building a roof over it? Why not first ensure children are properly fed? Provide textbooks? These things need to be fixed first, but the mechanism by which important political and economic decisions are made have not changed, decision-making is in the same hands, value-systems are the same. It is doubtful that the Internet can do it for us. ♦

What is more important: a high-speed data trunk line or a network of safe drinking water supply lines for villages?

longer afford to do the same with the information revolution. He wants to take his country from the potato chip to microchip, and the country has seen investments in the software industry double in the past year. But how is a country in which only 0.5 percent of the population has a PC, and less than three percent have phones, and where six-hour power cuts are commonplace, leapfrog? The joke is that 95 percent of Indians are waiting for phones, the other five percent are

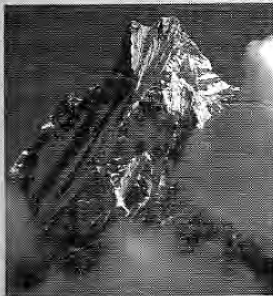
savvy South Asians going to make a difference to the billion compatriots who are not so fortunate?

South Asia is a land of contrasts. Despite infrastructure problems, most of the software engineers and programmers in Silicon Valley are from South Asia, and India's low-cost English-speaking young people with good education have firmly hitched their wagons to the information revolution. Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and even

LETTERS

FISHY TALES

I read with interest Dr Harka Gurung's "To Climb Or Not To Climb (#27)". I agree with most of what he says about Machhapuchhre, but there is one nagging question: "Is it really necessary to open up this peak for climbing?" It may not be a holy mountain or a mountain of much importance to the people who live under it, but letting mountaineers climb all over it just because "it is there" is not justifiable. Wouldn't it be better to keep at least one peak virgin so we can point to it and say: "That is one of the few



peaks that has never been climbed?"

And I doubt whether the fees accruing from climbing permits for Machhapuchhre will contribute to our national development in a big way. We already have so many higher peaks with larger fees opened for expeditions. It would be wiser to wait and leave it to a future generation of Nepalis to decide on this matter. Our generation has done enough damage by selling our mountains to the highest bidders. Is money more important to us than our national pride? Let us take pride in

the little that we have left, and let the next generation thank us for it. As it is, they have so little to be thankful for.

Narendra Pradhan
Baneswor

WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

As an expat, the only thing I have to complain about is Daniel Lak's cardinal rule of expat behavior: "Do as you would do at home..." (White man's burden, #27) If I were to abide by his cardinal rule, I would kiss my wife in public, wear shorts and tank top (and encourage my wife to do the same), skinny dip in Pokhara, wear my shoes into other people's homes, cuss, and flirt! As an expat who grew up in an expat



community I find that integrating with the locals is best achieved by behaving like them, doing as they do, and following their customs. Besides, in Italy we ignore red lights all the time!

Paolo Bonetti
Bishalnagar

WE WANT TO HELP

We always enjoyed reading your refreshingly honest columns when we lived in Kathmandu last fall. You certainly portray the pain and struggle of the Nepali people. You also told both sides of the

story. Clearly, no one seems to care about the people of Nepal, and the authorities seem to want to give a hard time to foreigners who want to help. The present government is taking bribes and extortion money from your own people and then using the money for their own selfish purposes rather than for the benefit of the people they are supposed to be serving. The Maoists are hacking your people to death with khukris if they have a different political view. I can't believe that those in government or in the Maoist movement are really Nepali—they are so different from the warm, generous and friendly Nepalis we know. Both are working to destroy the country and hurt their own people.

Meanwhile, the government is doing all it can to discourage people like us who have left lucrative jobs back home to help as volunteers with nothing but restrictions and red tape.

(Name withheld on request)
by email

YOU CAN

From your very first issue you have given us a newspaper of international standard. Your hard copy really gives buyers their money's worth (Rs 20). Your last issue with the Infotech Special did not disappoint, thanks for the special information on information technology.

Abhas Parajuli
Kathmandu

Organic growth

SALIL SUBEDI

Every Sunday and Wednesday morning, a group of vegetable farmers from Dadhikot village outside Bhaktapur wait for a pick-up van from neighbouring Thimi to collect their vegetables. The van carries the crisp, dewy-fresh vegetables to the bi-weekly organic vegetable market at Hotel Summit in Lalitpur, where organic vegetable connoisseurs can choose from the produce—broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, lettuce, coriander, fennel, kale, and arugula.

Kathmandu Valley is traditionally renowned for the veggies grown on its fertile soil. And this time of year is a productive period. The Summit market sells 30 different varieties of fruits and vegetables worth Rs 5,000 a week. This doesn't seem like an awful lot of business, and in fact it isn't. Explains Dadhikot farmer Bishnu Batas: "Here's the irony. Since a large number of our buyers—80 percent, in

fact—are expatriates, during our peak productivity season they are mostly out of town on holiday. When they return, there's less variety to choose from."

The informal network of organic buyers and sellers came about after the cooperative the farmers were part of collapsed when the international organisation backing them backed out. The income from lean periods are set aside for purchase of seeds, and upkeep of farms rather than providing sustenance to the families of these small farmers. The Summit market is where you find home-made pickles, rye from Lo Manthang, wild bee honey, Japanese Mochi rice grown in Gorkha, organic tea from Panchthar and fruits like kiwi and strawberry from Kakani.

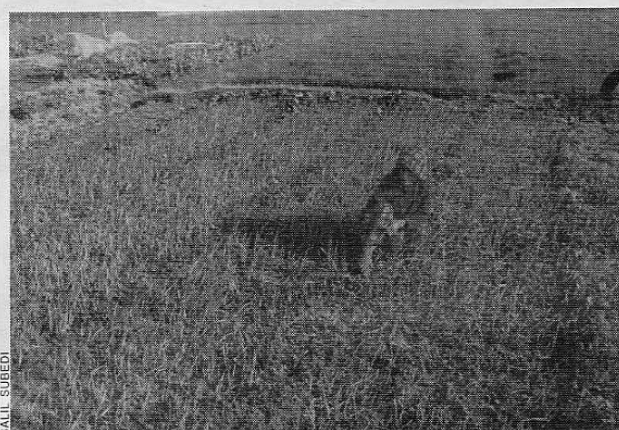
"But then during the dry seasons—May through July—we do business worth Rs 20,000 in about two hours," says Batas. Farmers say sales could be relatively consistent and dependable throughout the year if there were better storage facilities. But even greater help would be Nepalis waking up to the ill effects of eating vegetables soaked in chemical pesticide, herbicide, vermicide and other hazardous agro-chemicals.

For the moment, the reason is economic. Organic vegetables at the Lalitpur market cost nearly 20 percent more than the normal market price. But Batas says: "If people buy organic as much as

possible, farmers will produce more. An increase in production will lead to a decrease in price." Organic vegetables and fruits cost more to grow, and the yield is less. The Ministry of Agriculture is waking up to the potential of organic farming and organic products are not subject to VAT or sales tax.



SALIL SUBEDI



SALIL SUBEDI



THANKOT ORGANIC

Home-made pickles, rye from Lo Manthang, wild bee honey, Japanese Mochi rice grown in Gorkha, organic tea from Panchthar, kiwi and strawberry from Kakani. No artificial colours or preservatives added. Yum-yum.

The six-year-old Thankot Organic Farm was the first organised attempt at commercial organic farming, but it has since given up trying to be 100 percent organic. "Either I had to run at a loss, or expand my business. I was forced to switch to using some non-organic methods of farming,"

admits Dharma Das Amatya, a school headmaster who turned to farming 20 years ago. But Dharma Das says he has not given up on trying to run an organic farm. He is trying to cut down on chemical inputs by expanding a bio-gas plant and avoiding the use of artificial

colours and preservatives in products like jam, juices and candy. Thankot Organic Farm is the only manufacturer of home-made blackberry jam in Nepal produced from a very small processing unit. The products are marketed through a shop in Pulchowk.

Vijay Shrestha, Programme Manager of the Agriculture Enterprise Centre of the Federation of Nepali Chamber of Commerce thinks Nepal has the potential to export quality organic fruits and vegetables. "The demand and supply will gain momentum once things start



SALIL SUBEDI

HERE AND THERE

by DANIEL LAK

From Bhuj to Kathmandu

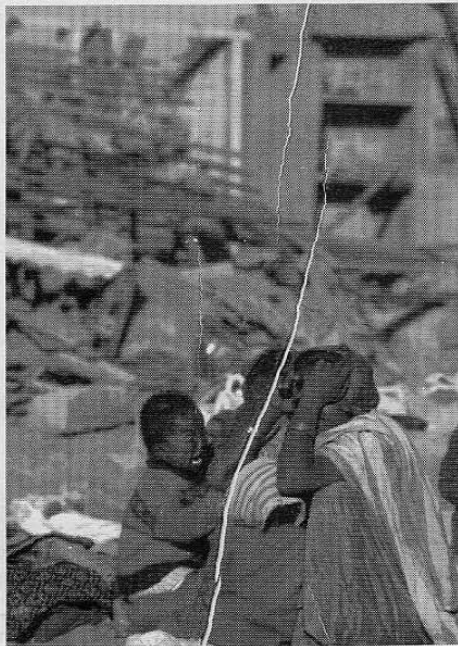


There are stark choices before Nepal: social unity and self-help versus cynicism about bad government and a culture of entitlement.

AHMEDABAD There are lessons for Nepal in the aftermath of the earthquake in Gujarat—not least, the value of a central government that's politically motivated to be seen to be doing well by the affected people. But there's more, much more, than that. I covered the 1999 supercyclone in Orissa, and now I am a small cog in a vast media machine spewing pictures and words to a shocked world from Gujarat.

The contrast between the two disasters could not be starker and perhaps this is where politicians, leaders and residents of Nepal need to make a choice: should the country be like Orissa, or Gujarat? These are the two extremes of South Asian development. Here, amid the tragedy, damage and despair is a powerful spirit of self-reliance, and a strong sense of community. I've met countless local people, rich, poor and middle class, who are "doing something". Women are cooking meals for those who've lost their homes; men are using their bare hands to move concrete slabs and try to rescue people in the absence of lifting equipment; doctors are volunteering medical services. Even bankers are raising money from friends and clients.

There were, amid the unparalleled devastation of Orissa in 1999, a few similar scenes but not on any sort of scale. Far more common was the sight of devastated people squatting by the roadside, awaiting assistance, and doing little to arrange it themselves. Nor were the urban middle class and elite of Orissa pitching in to help the devastated people of the countryside,



or send word for help. I'm not suggesting that victims of the cyclone were in any way responsible for their immediate plight. But an overwhelming sense of helplessness and despair gripped the vast

majority of those affected in Orissa. not at first. The media and political opponents of the government in Delhi leapt on the three day delay in starting relief efforts, some even suggesting that the BJP-lead coalition administration was motivated by partisan politics. In fact, the cyclone was of such overwhelming intensity that it cut all communication and transport links. It took three days to get telephone connections re-established, and the airport functioning.

There was also criticism of the fact that Ersama, the hardest hit area where more than ten thousand died, received its first emergency aid a week into the crisis. Again, the problem was one of infrastructure and logistics. This district with the highest death toll was remote, swampy and unknown to be in such dire straits until outside relief workers actually arrived there. Yet Indian army soldiers, who first discovered the mass carnage, said nothing was being done on a local scale, even to cremate bodies, arrange temporary shelter

majority of those affected in Orissa.

As ever, the problem is developmental, not cultural but it is curable. Orissa is one of India's poorest states, Gujarat among its wealthiest. The ties of community and family in the western state are powerful. Orissa is beset by caste and communal divides that have forged little sense of collective well being, despite an ancient culture. Gujaratis abroad, and they are invariably successful in foreign settings, invest heavily in their homeland; those who escape Orissa usually do so for menial jobs that don't pay well enough to remit money back home. And Orissa was traditionally one of India's worst governed states, if its woeful development indicators were any indication.

So these are the stark choices before Nepal: a combination of social unity and self-help versus cynicism about bad government and a culture of entitlement. The media has been warning that a huge earthquake is overdue in Nepal. Seismologists agree, but in the grip of self-indulgent gloom and reluctance to come together, the onus is being placed on the authorities to "do something". Their inaction is just further proof of incompetence, or so we say.

Instead, why don't we take matters into our own hands; prepare local disaster plans; form neighbourhood groups to arrange secure caches of food, water and fuel; force schools to do earthquake awareness training; circulate information about preparation and coping. Enlist medical people, local police, merchants and everyone else to get ready for the big one. In short, get off our butts and don't wait for government.

We can be like Gujarat, or Orissa. It's up to us. ♦

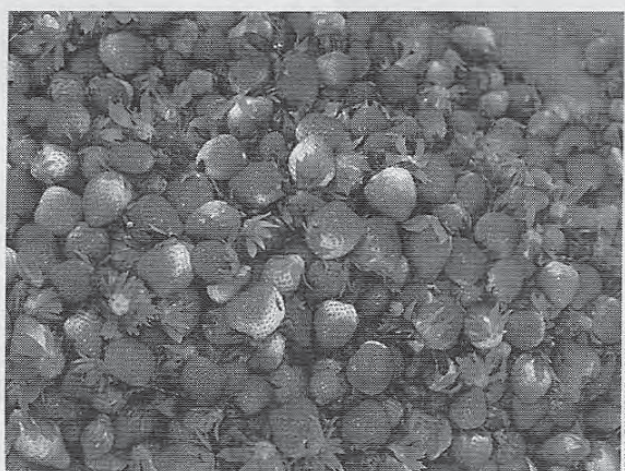


THANKOT ORGANIC FARM

coming out in the market, and there will definitely be demand for quality organically-grown products," he says.

The Kangchenjunga Tea Estate at Ranitar in Panchthar in eastern Nepal is another fine example of an organic agriculture enterprise that is booming. It is one of the first Nepali organic agricultural enterprises to achieve the EU standard 'Organic' certificate in 1997 from the National Association of Sustainable Agriculture Australia (NASAA). It got the recognition after two years of inspection and tests on its product, and is the first Nepali cooperative tea estate, started by local farmers in 1984. More than 100 farmers are members and have put together their small holdings into a plantation totalling 90 hectares. "Our basic aim is to improve the living standard of farmers in a remote village and give them a common aim of practising organic agriculture," says LP Rai the General Manager of KTE. Besides encouraging the farmers in tea plantation, the KTE is also promoting organic agriculture for other crops used in daily life of the farmers.

"We practice organic agriculture using locally available farm yard manure and traditional pest management system," says Rai. Apart from direct employment for farmers, it also takes on contract labour during the plucking season. KTE produced 30 tons of black and green tea in 2000, and expects a gradual increase in production by 25 percent every year till 2005. At present, it exports 95 percent of its



THANKOT ORGANIC FARM

production to Europe and Japan, and the organic tea bags are gaining popularity among tea connoisseurs in Nepal as well.

The advantage of doing organic agriculture is that it runs completely on local resources. Organic farming uses green manure, cow dung, chicken manure, ash, mustard cake, bone mill and compost made from the biological waste. "It only requires about 10 minutes of work in an organic farm after everything's been set," says Batas. There are now seven organic farms in Nepal. But, as with the Thankot farm, many are finding it difficult to remain purely organic. In Dadhikot, 33 farmers are still accredited to the grower's collective, but there is a problem with selling the product. "Others are also interested but since there is no market, we cannot include everyone in the group," says Kancha Prajapati from Dadhikot.

After a good early start, therefore, organic farming in Nepal is in crisis. Farmers are tempted by higher returns using chemicals, and feel the higher

price of organic products does not offset the lower yield. And a buying public unaware of the dangers of chemicals does not demand their product.

So, the indiscriminate use of chemicals goes on, and our investigation showed callous use of Dirty Dozen agrochemicals banned in most other parts of the world. Tomatoes are dipped in diluted DDT, cauliflowers are sprayed with a pesticide cocktail the day before they are plucked, and chemicals like Aldene and Metacid are regularly used. A recent report issued by the Cancer Relief society has shown that cancer rate in Kathmandu has raised the alarm about carcinogenic risk posed by chemicals in vegetables and fruits.

Says Batas: "Our forefathers were healthy because they ate healthy organic foods." He is right, but until there is greater awareness and it makes economic sense to grow organic foods, Nepal's nascent organic food industry will remain just that: nascent. ♦

Do your roofs leak?

Ten years after the first Lotshampas began arriving at the Kakkarvitta border post, Nepal and Bhutan have begun the preliminaries for verifying refugees. Nepali officials in the Joint Verification Team (JVT) that visited the refugee camps last week say the actual screening could begin as early as late February. The Nepali JVT is led by Usha Nepal, joint secretary in the home ministry and the Bhutanese team by Sonam Tenzing, director at the home ministry.

Bhutanese officials visited the camps and spoke to their countrymen who've been in exile for a decade. We're told the Bhutanese asked some refugees where they came from, and when told seemed to know exactly what camp residents were talking about. They also asked the refugees why they left Bhutan, if camp rations were adequate and if their roofs leaked.

Foreign ministers of Nepal and Bhutan agreed on the refugee "verification mechanism" last month and the JVT was a result of the agreement. The two sides also agreed to frequent home secretary-level talks to smoothen the verification process and eventual repatriation. Even so, it is uncertain where refugee repatriation talks could head from here.

Refugees began arriving in Nepal in late 1989-early 1990 and have been living in seven UNHCR-run camps since. Mass eviction of ethnic Nepalis from Bhutan's southern regions began after it enacted a retroactive citizenship law in 1985 that qualifies only people having proof of land taxes paid in 1958 for citizenship. Nepal says it has been agreed upon that refugees under 25 years would be considered part of a family unit for verification. Bhutan, which had been insisting on screening each person individually, has not come out openly on the issue. Also we have not been told what documents would be admissible as proof of residence during verification.

An organisation of Bhutanese in exile says 95 percent of refugees have either citizenship papers or land deeds or both to prove residence in Bhutan. Nepal says because all refugees have some proof of residence in Bhutan, verification is the only hurdle keeping them from going home.

It may not be as simple though because screening can take months, involving piles of paperwork. There are also chances of repatriation especially if Bhutan insists on categorising refugees as was agreed upon in October 1993. By that agreement the plan was to categorise refugees into four groups: bona fide Bhutanese evicted forcefully, Bhutanese who have emigrated voluntarily, non-Bhutanese people and Bhutanese with criminal records.

The Nepal Red Cross Society numbers say that at last count there were 98,886 refugees from 15,025 families living in seven camps in Jhapa and Morang districts. Three camps in Beldangi alone house 49,000 refugees. Between 1992 and 1999 the UN and other donors have spent \$92 million on the care and upkeep of the refugees.

Six Green 'ayes'

Six non-governmental organisations have come out in support of the government decision to ban old vehicles, a Martin Chautari statement says. The six "pro-environment" NGOs that want the government to go ahead and enforce its decision are Leaders Nepal, Martin Chautari, The Explore Nepal Group, Pro-Public, Clean Energy Nepal and the Citizens' Monitoring Group.

Meanwhile, transport entrepreneurs have announced a protest programme to force their demands, which include, among others reversing the government's 10 November decision that seeks to ban all 20-year-old vehicles in public transport, and two-wheelers, from the streets. The industry argument is that their vehicles pollute not because they are old but because of the poor quality of fuel sold.

The six Greens have asked the government not to allow any new vehicles into Kathmandu Valley without conducting a proper environmental study and to assess the "repercussions" of its earlier decision to subsidise replacements for the diesel three-wheelers. They say the government not only lost Rs 400 million in revenue but also put more polluters on the streets.

Killer kilns

Ask anyone who polluting Kathmandu's air, you'll be told it's the old car—six wheelers, two wheelers, three wheelers and all. It's true to an extent but there are other culprits that are as, if not more, guilty. Welcome to the Valley's booming brick industry, which has grown with urbanisation, unchecked and unquestioned.

Environmentalists say Kathmandu residents breathe less oxygen and more pollutants throughout the year. Toxic intake touches a high December-May, which is when all the bricks needed for the city's expansion are baked.

Kathmandu has been growing every year and the kilns feed the construction. A 1992 study on kilns by the Metropolitan Environment Improvement Programme (MEIP) says there were 200 registered brick-makers in the Valley and none with any pollution control devices. Of these, 134 were operating in Lalitpur, 60 in Bhaktapur and six in Kathmandu district.

Clean Energy Nepal, a newly formed group that advocates reduced use of fossil fuels and promotion of renewable energy, is urging Valley residents who think this is a problem to speak up. The kilns burn anything—coal, rice husk, fuel wood, sawdust, lignite and sometime scrap tyres. Coal accounts for 65 percent of the total fuel burnt. Also there seem to be no rules governing where one can set up a kiln: you find them next to schools, residential suburbs and dense settlements on the Valley's outskirts.

Pollution from the kilns is worst during the dry season when there's no wind to dissipate the dust and smoke released by brick making. In addition to air pollution, the brick industry also degrades land. The report circulated by Clean Energy Nepal says one kiln occupies about 0.45 hectares of land for its smoke shaft and another 3.5 hectares to prepare mud and organise brick making. This land serves brick making for a few years after which it is rendered useless for agriculture.



Education, Language and Development Training Programmes

Training Events, Kathmandu Valley, February 2001

Event	Location	Dates	Fee
□ Project Proposal Workshop	ICIMOD	Feb. 6, 7, 12, 14, 15, 16	6000
□ Professional Writing Workshop (INGO)	To be confirmed	Feb. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23	4000
□ Presentation Skills for Programme Managers	ICIMOD	Feb. 26, 27 28 & Mar. 6	4500

Chun Devi Road, Maharajganj, PO Box 21413
Tel: 430741 Fax: 411519 E-mail: eld@eld.org.uk
Full programme details available at www.eld.org.uk
ELD is registered in the U.K. as a charity no. 1083385

⇒ from p1



with banners for the first public meeting of the underground party to announce the setting up of the "District Peoples' Government". By noon, there are thousands of people from all over Rukum in the field, and squads of "People's Army" dressed in combat fatigues identical to army uniforms are squatting in the middle, their faces partly masked. One company that was in action against the police in Kalikot and Baglung last month during which 12 policemen were killed also arrives.

By afternoon, there are around 200 guerrillas and they stage a march past with rifles slung over their shoulders. The rifles are all .303 captured from the police, and some of the butts even have registration numbers on them. One is inscribed with the name of a police post in Jhapa. There are about 25 female guerrillas in the company, and they carry the lighter shotguns. The commanders have revolvers in their belts, and one even sports a sub-machine gun. The lower-ranking militia are not uniformed and carry long home-made muskets. The Maoists tell us that they are arming themselves with more modern weapons because they know they have to take on the Army.

As night falls, the function marking the launch of the Peoples' Government gets going under electric lights powered by a government-run hydroelectric plant that also supplies power to the

district headquarters of Musikot three hours' walk away. This is the irony of the Maoist-controlled areas, bridges are being built by the government, a health post is under construction, the post office still functions, the schools still have classes, the army is busy with highway building. The only absence is of the police, who withdrew after Maoist attacks on their remote posts and the guerrillas moved in to gradually take over.

The invited journalists are taken up on the stage and garlanded by the leader of the Maoist district government, Purna Bahadur Gharti. In their speeches, Gharti and others criticise the media for being sensational and incorrect. But they are more than solicitous towards us, praising what they say is our professionalism and commitment. "We used to be ruled, now we are the rulers," said the red-sashed Gharti in his speech, speaking clearly and forcefully with a fist slamming the night air. In an interview later, he tells us: "We are psychologically and physically prepared to take on the army. And we will declare a People's Republic of Nepal when we defeat the Royal Nepal Army and get rid of the Narayanhi Palace."

The speeches go on till ten at night and are followed by a cultural programme with revolutionary performances

In Maoland

patterned after local folk music and dance. This goes on till six in the morning, the villagers sit, huddled around, yawning and shivering with their children, but they watch the show in the chilly air. After 18 hours of non-stop speeches and performances, the programme ends, and the entire proceedings are broadcast over the Maoists' own 'FM station'. The Maoists are at pains to point out that they allow participation of representatives of other political parties at their rally. Local leaders of the UML and RPP are present, but there is understandably no Nepali Congress.

One cadre is shooting the entire function with a Sony digital video camera. Female Maoists are actively involved in the preparations at Banphikot, both as militia and as "People's Army" soldiers. Kamala Roka is the district president of the Maoists' women's wing, and she says: "The peoples' war has emboldened us women, it has given us confidence, and we are treated equally. However, once in a while you do see male dominance in our movement."

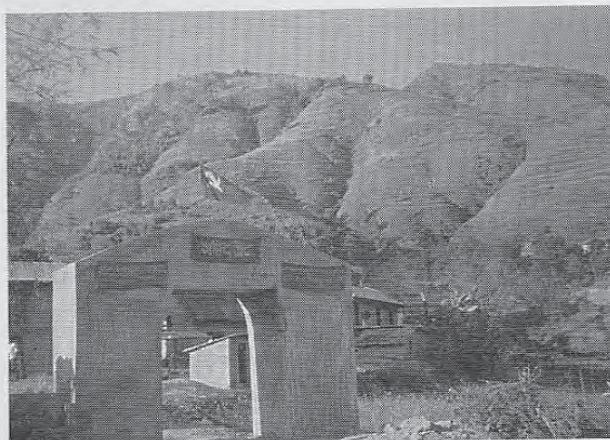
We snatch a few hours of sleep and at mid-morning are summoned to a press conference inside the classroom of a local school. Some of the questions are sharp and blunt, and the Maoists look a bit taken aback, and they hedge queries about strategy and tactics. The Maoists' local commander, Kal Bahadur Nath, is a deserter from the Royal Nepal Army, and he briefs journalists on the "People's War" saying: "We are forced to fight because we are exploited by feudal lords."

After the press conference, we are treated to a feast of rice and chicken curry, and the Maoists walk us down to the banks of the Sano Bheri river. The river forms the border dividing the "peoples' side" from the "reactionary side". Once we get over to the

government-controlled bank, there is still no sign of any police presence, but on the far bank we can see Maoists in the sentry boxes waving back at us. We have left the armed world of Maoists, a district which regards the government in Kathmandu as its mortal enemy, and which is nurturing the next generation of Maoist supporters. But one question we cannot answer even after this three-day stay in Maoist territory is this: have the people turned Maoist because they believe in Mao-Tse Tung thought or because of the sense of power they get with a gun in their hand?

The district headquarter of Musikot is normally a three-hour walk uphill. But nearing the town, we hear firing in the distance—the police is shooting as it does nightly to show its presence, and the Maoists return sporadic fire from the surrounding hills. The locals along the way are too scared to let us stay, they are caught in the crossfire. Finally, we take refuge in a house where we are given corn patties with nettle soup. Next day in Musikot, we interview the local Chief District Officer, Netra Prasad Neupane, who sits at a desk with the Nepali flag behind him. "Unless the political parties become active at the village level, there is no way we can begin to solve the Maoist problem." ♦

Clockwise from top left: Women Maoist supporters at the launch of the "people's government"; Communal farm terraces in Salyan; Maoists stitch camouflage uniforms; Militia escort at the sano bheri, the border between Maoist and government-controlled areas; the 18-hour mass meeting at Banphikot gets started; the "martyr's gate" for which army cement was used.



Hot showers

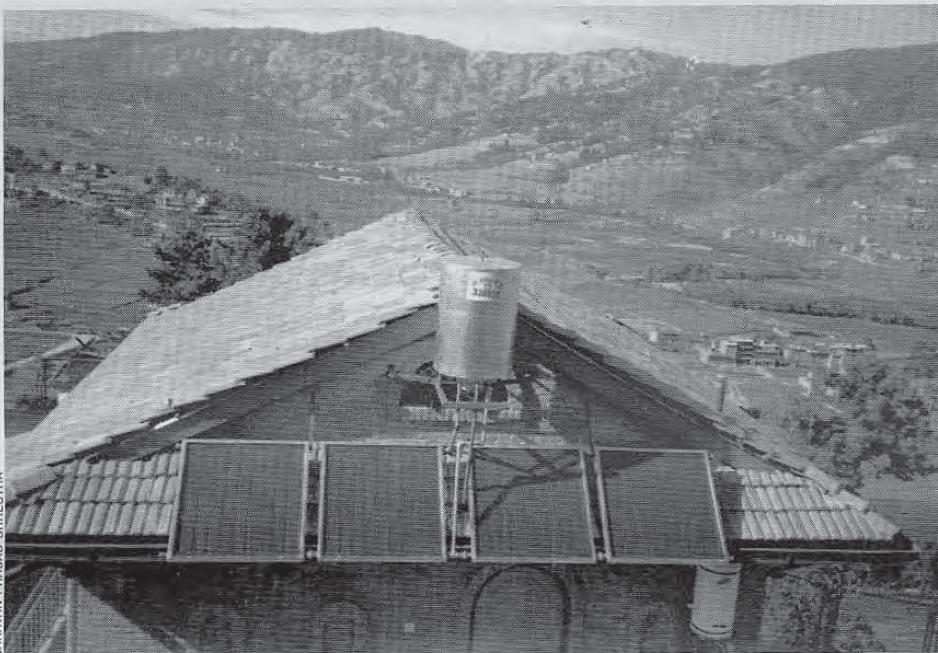
HEMLATA RAI

"A choice between solar water heater and geyser is like choosing between an aluminium utensil and pressure cooker. Pressure cookers save fuel and money, but the initial investment is much higher than that for aluminium pots," says Rajendra Bahadur Adhikary of the Centre for Renewable Energy. Sure, an electric geyser is cheaper, but it takes an hour to heat enough water for about one-and-a-half people running on some of the most expensive electricity in the world. Studies show that the pay-back time for investment in a solar water-heater is four to five years. But factoring in the benefits of "green" warm water throughout the day and the frequent hikes in electricity and fossil-fuel prices, the actual time-frame is shorter.

There are neither laws nor monitoring agencies to regulate the industry, and manufacturers have been known to be economical with the facts. So you need to arm yourself with important information before you have a solar water-heater installed to get a better bargain and to ensure the creature actually works.

The Valley is well-situated for the use of solar water-heaters, as it has 280-290 sunny days annually. A 200 litre water-heater costs Rs16-35,000 depending on the kinds and thickness of metal-sheets, pipes and insulators used. For a family of four, a water-heater with a 200 to 300 litre-capacity is sufficient.

About 100 of Nepal's 120 solar water-heater manufacturers are in the Kathmandu Valley. Solar water-heaters are pretty low-tech and your neighbourhood metal worker might now be putting his welding and wiring skills to manufacturing them. "The technology is easily



Trekking in Mustang, you pay Rs25 for a "sun bath". Fancy name for something many Valley residents are familiar with: solar-heated water.

adaptable and needs no formal training, and the business doesn't require a huge investment—anyone can turn entrepreneur," says Tri Ratna Bajracharya, renewable energy expert with the Institute of Engineering in Pulchowk. A really cheap deal in this case probably means you'll be hit with various hidden costs in the future—inefficiency, frequent servicing and repairs.

Solar water-heaters for domestic use are low-temperature devices that heat water up to 65 degrees. The average efficiency is 30 percent—not terribly high, and it depends on the materials used to make the collectors, coils and

insulators. Copper sheets and pipes, and good insulators like glass-wool and thermocole, can push efficiency up to 40 percent, while aluminium sheets and GI pipe can lower it to 20 percent. A 200 litre heater using light or medium GI pipe with aluminium sheets for collectors and cloth or sawdust as insulation, costs Rs16-18,000. It's cheap, but may be of no use in the winter.

The same size heater with heavy-gauge aluminium sheets and Nepal Standard-certified pipes, costs Rs24,000, while a 300 litre heater similarly high quality is Rs26-35,000. A really superior 300 litre heater with three or four standard collectors or two double collectors

measuring six square metres costs between Rs35-50,000. Potential buyers also need to look into the size of the collectors: standard ones are 1x1.5 m. For comfortably warm water on foggy December and January days, an electric booster helps. Some manufacturers supply boosters as part of the package, others charge an additional Rs2,500. It depends on how well you bargain. The same goes for installation and delivery in the Valley. Slick Australian solar water-heaters are also available at ATC Private Limited, which says it fulfils order within a week. They cost a fortune, though. A two panel 300 litre water heater costs well above



Rs100,000, while a three panel heater of the same capacity is Rs200,000. They're also available in 125 litre and 440 litres capacities.

The government doesn't offer subsidies or other incentives like soft loans or tax breaks to solar water-heater fabricators and users because, according to the Alternative Energy Promotion Centre at the Science and Technology Ministry, it's against government policy to subsidise commercial-scale industries. Even finance companies don't offer hire-purchase or deferred payment schemes. Import tax is levied on all solar water-heater parts, but manufacturers claim they still sell at low margins. The only real break

consumers get is no VAT, part of the government's attempt to promote renewable energy use. What you can do is buy a large capacity heater initially and add new panels later. This does cost more than if you pay for the whole thing at one go.

Good companies give you an 8 to 10 year guarantee against manufacturing defects. Keeping the panels clean, maintaining the black paint and rubber shields, and flushing the heater every two years is enough. Manufacturers provide servicing facilities to their clients, but are of little help if your plumbing is defective. Consulting a solar water-heater manufacturer or ensuring your architect plans for installation of a solar powered water-heater is important. ♦

How it all started

Nepal's first solar water heater was installed at Budanilakantha School in 1974 by the then Swiss government-supported Balaju Yantra Shala Sanitary Engineering Ltd. (BYS). The school initially wanted to import a solar water-heater from Australia, but turned to a Nepali manufacturer because of budget constraints. Since standard insulators like glass-wool and thermocole weren't available in Nepal, the manufacturer used *sukkul* (a traditional mat made of hay) and sawdust. A year later, a second small-capacity water-heater was installed at Nagarjun Darbar. But solar heated water didn't really catch on until 1978. "People found it hard to believe that the sun's heat could be trapped to warm litres of water," says Co-General Manager of BYS Gautam Shrestha.

Public demonstrations were organised to motivate people to use the heaters. But the real boost for the industry came from the US government's decision to install solar water-heaters in all its diplomatic institutions using the local technicians. BYS got the job in Nepal. "After the Americans installed our solar water heaters, senior bureaucrats followed suit, and then others started to believe in the technology," says Rajesh Prasad, General Manager of BYS. BYS transferred the technology to private sector after 1985. ♦

Is Melamchi watertight?

ADB has sanctioned \$120 million for Melamchi, but questions about distribution remain.

commitment to Nepal in 2000 to \$173 million—up from \$50 million in 1999.

The good news is that there is now money to start building the headworks, the tunnel, and the water treatment and management plants which have been on the drawing boards since 1988. The bad news is that even if Melamchi water arrives on schedule in 2006 the leaky and obsolete distribution network would not end the water shortage. And then there is the worrying question of what we are going to do till 2006.

The reason for Kathmandu's water shortage has nothing to do with not having enough water inside the Valley for current consumption. The Nepal Water Supply Corporation (NWSC) estimates that it has a supply of 60 million litres a day even during the dry season. Factoring in the official figure for system loss from leakage (40 percent) leaves roughly 36 million litres for distribution each day. Divide that among the roughly 100,000 households and that means 360 litres, or 24 buckets, of water per

family. But Kathmandu consumers are not getting that water.

"So where is the water?" asks Dipak Gyawali, an engineer who studied the NWSC extensively in the mid-1980s as member of the Pokhrel Commission. The Commission was formed to look into why the NWSC's efficiency did not improve even after several million dollars spent on World Bank projects.

Says a senior water supply expert at a multilateral institution in Kathmandu: "It is like putting the cart before the horse, we are going into Melamchi even before we know whether we need this water or not, and if we do when it should come, and when it does how expensive it is going to be."

NWSC does not even have a complete picture of the distribution system it manages, which is made up of a spaghetti-like network of consumer connections, some of it about 100 years old. Sources at NWSC say the only maps that exist are those prepared under a German project some years ago, and these

have not been updated even though 3-4 inch secondary lines have been added since. The source said NWSC does not even have an idea where to dig if it wants to disconnect connections to households that have defaulted on their water bills.

NWSC is inefficient because it has a politicised management and staff, with 10 general managers in the last 10 years. How such an organisation is going to efficiently oversee Melamchi distribution by a private operator is difficult to comprehend. But the plan is that Kathmandu customers will pay (a higher rate) for the water, and the money will be used to pay back the loan and to fund development work in the Melamchi valley.

The World Bank, which is contributing \$80 million—mainly for upgrading the distribution system, knows very well that the problem is not about increasing supply. Having spent Rs 1 billion between 1974 and 1989 on improving distribution it is said to have become convinced that putting in more money without serious reforms of the management

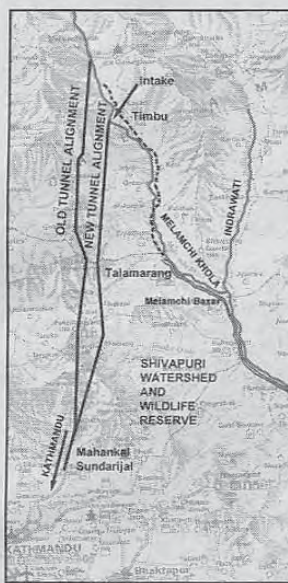


and distribution would be like pouring water into the sewer. The Bank has prepared a Project Concept Report and only after its approval by the bank's senior management would the money be released.

The ADB itself has several time-bound conditions which would have to be met to be able to use the loan. These include enforcing major policy and legal reforms, creating a new institution to manage water resources in the valley, relocating water-intensive industries, limiting ground water extraction and putting in place a tariff adjustment mechanism based more on economics and less on politics. "These reforms need major, serious political commitments," a donor source told us. "On our part we're convinced that good management and effective distribution are as important as digging a new tunnel

to bring in water."

The Melamchi Water Supply Board—the body created to implement the project—is not unaware of these problems. Dinesh Chandra Pyakurel, head of the Board, admits that the problems resulted from infrastructure-driven planning the country had been following all the time instead of plan-driven infrastructure building. "But Melamchi is a vision for the long term and it has to be built even as we address the institutional problems." We have six years to see how committed the project is to his words. ♦



BINOD BHATTARAI

In a burst of electioneering enthusiasm, as the Nepali Congress candidate from Kathmandu-1 in 1994, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai had boasted that if elected he would "wash the streets of Kathmandu with Melamchi water". Many had scoffed. Now, it looks like Bhattarai's promise will come true, but not for the reason he had intended. Kathmandu's water supply network is so antiquated and leaky that if Melamchi water was sent through the pipes at high pressure they would indeed flood the streets.

Last week in Manila, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved a \$120 million loan for the Melamchi Water Supply Project (MWSP) to bring glacial melt through a 26-km tunnel to Kathmandu to augment the valley's water supply. The approval came just in time for end-of-fiscal-year disbursement and raised the bank's

BIZ NEWS

NRB report card

The private sector is borrowing less, food prices have slumped, resource mobilisation has slowed and the budget deficit is gaping. That's the simplest possible translation of the economic jargon in the central bank's five-monthly report on the state of the economy.

Things are bad, even though the decrease in food and beverage prices has kept the National Urban Consumer Price Index (NUCPI) low. Overall, prices increased by 2.6 percent compared to the corresponding period a year ago. What the dip in food prices also means is that farmers have been getting less for their produce. The price rise was quickest in the Kathmandu Valley and the hills while in the tarai prices grew by just 0.7 percent, due mainly to a sizeable slump in the cost of food and beverages in the plains. The overall decline in food and beverages prices was 1.3 percent compared to last year's slump by 0.4 percent.

Private sector credit grew slowly, by 6.3 percent only, compared to last year (8.8 percent) while government borrowing went up (the bank does not say by how much). The Nepal Rastra Bank says demand for credit by the private sector was "sluggish", which in turn points to a deteriorating investment climate. The government was able to generate less resources, meaning it has had to borrow more to keep up with expenditures, which have kept growing. The government borrowed Rs 2.08 billion, issued treasury bills of Rs 563.5 million and obtained an overdraft of Rs 1.53 billion.

The only sector that seems to be doing well is export, which grew by 29 percent to Rs 24.6 billion, though the growth was lower than that last year. Imports grew by 12 percent to Rs 46.5 billion and though there was a reduction in the overall deficit, that is mainly because we imported less and not because the real trade gap had been narrowed by more exports.

The Balance of Payments account registered a current account deficit of Rs 1.60 billion, attributed mainly to declines in services and transfer income. But as always, the foreign exchange holdings of the banking system continued to increase, by 30 percent, to Rs 105.5 billion in mid-December.

Exports grow

Nepal's exports registered a 25 percent growth in mid-November, says the Trade Promotion Centre. Overseas exports reached Rs 9.6 billion in the four months since July. Nepal's mainstay export—woollen carpets—has stagnated while pashmina sales continue to grow—by 170 percent to reach Rs 2.18 billion and lentils have begun reappearing on the export statistics. Nepal exported Rs 196 million worth of lentils during the first four months of the fiscal year.

Cyberlearningnepal.com

Mercantile Communications (P) Ltd. and Surya Tobacco Company (STC) have joined hands to collaborate with Cyber Learning Universe, a non-profit organisation that pioneered distance learning on the web, to launch Nepal's first Internet-based IT and business management education initiative.

The new venture, www.cyberlearningnepal.com, is a joint initiative between one of Nepal's largest companies and Mercantile, the company a pioneer of Nepal's IT industry. The US-based Cyber Learning Universe specialises in providing web based training world wide. "The success rate in distance learning is far higher than that through traditional methods," says Sanjib Rajbhandari, CEO, Mercantile Communications. "We're attempting to convert the economical digital freeways into educational highways," adds DB Ramaswamy, Managing Director of Surya Tobacco. Cyber learning combines the best teachers, state-of-art technology, high quality courseware and motivational rewards to help students learn faster and better, the companies say.

Designed for beginners the web-site aims to make available 300-600 advanced IT- and management-related courses. All the students need for enrolling are an Internet connection and a willingness to explore. For now, the tab for e-learning is Rs 12,000. This provides you with instructor-led or self-study options as well as access to a free online reference library. Initially, the learning opportunity will be available in nine locations and expanded later to 25 centres all over the nation.

e-accounting

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), one of Asia's largest software groups, is launching financial accounting courses through authorised training centres in Nepal. Area Marketing Manager of TCS, Suprio Choudhury, says the accounting training courses are geared for the home segment—housewives and college students who aren't necessarily computer literate.

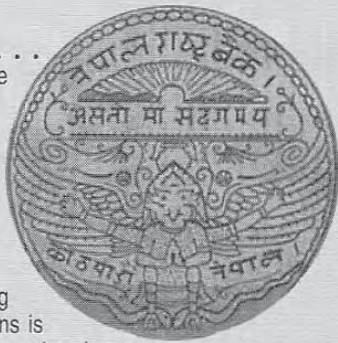
The course will be based on TCS's own Ex-Next Generation software which the company says already has a user base of 100,000 in South Asia, including Nepal. Of these there are about 500 users, mainly non-governmental organisations in Nepal, says Amrit Bahadur Thapa of Mazda International Computech, the Ex-Next country franchisee.

Urea prices shoot up

The Agricultural Inputs Corporation has increased the price of urea by about 35 percent to Rs 1,400 per quintal. The new rates will be applicable to Biratnagar, Birgunj, Nepalgunj and Dhangadi. The price at other locations would depend on transportation costs. AIC says the urea price was raised to take into account the price at which it imported 12,500 tons of the fertiliser from China. The hike comes less than a month after AIC had upped it by about 16 percent. The price of urea sold by the AIC three years ago was Rs 740, but that included the government subsidy that ended December 1999.

IFC buys 24.4 percent ILFC shares

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) is joining the International Leasing and Finance Company as a 24.4 percent equity partner for which it is putting up \$300,000 (about Rs 22.3 million). The new ownership structure at the International Leasing and Finance Company, a Nepali-Korean venture, will be as follows: Nepali promoters 36 percent, Korean 21, IFC 18 and the general public 25.



ECONOMIC SENSE

by ARTHA BEED

Waning Shangri-la



The root causes of a languishing tourism industry are lousy marketing, a virtually defunct tourism board and, yes, over-supply.

The tourism statistics for 2000 are trickling in and the picture is bleak. Tourist arrivals have gone down by 11 percent, mainly due to a decline in tourists coming from India. (That figure itself is down by 31 percent.) The underlying factors are not just the aftermath of the hijacking or the frequent bandhs, or even the riots. The basic question is—why should anyone really come to Nepal? What are we doing right?

A recent Pacific Area Travel Association (PATA) publication contained a comparative study of the tourist arrivals in PATA countries in 1999 and 2000. Tourist arrivals to South Asia increased by 3.6 percent in 2000 compared to an increase of 18.1 percent in Northeast Asia and 14.5 percent in Southeast Asia. Malaysia registered the highest growth with an increase of nearly 50 percent in one year. Newer destinations like Cambodia and Laos have recorded growth of 39 percent and 26 percent respectively. It is sad—and telling—that when the entire industry is registering growth in the region, there has been a steep decline in the number of tourists coming to Nepal.

Nepal has never really been marketed as a destination anyway, and with problems of all crazy kinds constantly plaguing the tourism industry, the travel trade across the worlds is losing interest in us. Surveys repeatedly show us that Nepal is mainly a destination for first timers.

Repeat visits are low. The average revenue per tourist per day has remained at \$38 since 1980.

The major concern of course is the Indian market. We rely too much on Pashupatinath to keep the Indians coming. But in fact there are now many places they can go to relatively easily. The relaxed foreign currency rules coupled with strong marketing by other destinations means the Indian tourist is looking far beyond Nepal. And airfare between Kathmandu and major Indian cities is becoming increasingly more expensive than other



Mount Kinabalu, Malaysia: Not quite Everest, but somehow more attractive.

competitive destinations. In 2000 the number of Indians travelling to Thailand doubled and to Malaysia tripled. What's more, the total number of outbound tourists in India went up by 6.2 percent. We're losing out in every respect.

The government still doesn't take tourism as an industry. Over the last decade we've created over-capacity—1.5 million rooms chasing 400,000 arrivals. The free market has gone too far, while also forgetting to provide tourists anything more than the Kathmandu-Pokhara-Chitwan triangle.

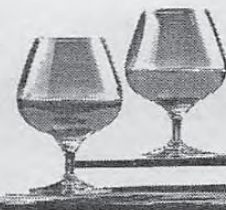
People will not keep coming just because "we have Everest".

Take Malaysians—they've been doing a great job marketing their country. Their tourism minister visits India every six months and does his job. In comparison, we have a Ministry that only understands airline deals and a Nepal Tourism Board that is quasi-defunct. The fact that there have been no nominees to the Board for several months shows exactly where tourism stands (or doesn't) on the government's list of priorities. The Board chases the Indian market with an advertisement budget of Rs 9 million, not very much at all, but then it doesn't seem as if they have high aims either—just log on to their website (welcomenepal.com/ntb).

The situation is grave and the impact of a languishing tourism industry affects 15 percent of our workforce, and a million who are dependent on this industry. The place to start is curtailing the supply situation—just don't allow any new hotel- or travel-related business to be started in areas that are already crowded. Offer incentives to promote the planned spread of tourism to places as-yet low on the totem pole. And hope that the private sector becomes pro-active. All of us have a role to play in uplifting this waning Shangri-la. ♦

Readers can post their views at arthabeed@yahoo.com

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Temple tops struggle to be seen behind brands of bottled beverages, cigarettes and home appliances.

RAMYATA LIMBU
"Bikash bhannu arthik kura matra
hoira. Butea maanawiya samasyaa
ho"—Shree Panch Birendra
(“Development is not only about
economics. It is a human problem”—
His Majesty King Birendra)

One of several *mahawanis*, or
‘Great Sayings’ put up at the busy
intersection of Tripureswar, the
installation of faded letters, peeling
paint and rusted tin is overshadowed
by huge hoardings screaming Pan
Parag Pan Masala and Caravan
Premium Whisky. In the background,
a jumble of other signs jostle for space.
They advertise everything from
tandoori to tutorials.

As commerce overwhelms the
Nepali capital, Kathmandu’s skyline
and its busy intersections have become
an unsightly canvas for advertisers
keen to draw an undiscovering public’s
gaze to their products. While temple
tops struggle to be seen behind brands
of bottled beverages, cigarettes and
home appliances at Thapathali
junction, in neighbouring
Tripureswar, King Birendra’s ‘words
of wisdom’ are visibly choked by coke,
beer, and whisky.

Kanasautra condoms, Close-up
toothpaste and Konica films occupy
three layers of wall space at Bhadrakali
Temple complex—a landmark in the
city’s centre. Drive or walk from
Tripureswar to Ranipokhari and loud
banners on overhead bridges
sponsored by the Hotel Association
Nepal shout the obvious—help keep
the city clean—little realising that
they are eyesores and driving
distractions the city can do without.

The private sector is not the
only polluter. The city’s Traffic
Police puts up its traffic signs
everywhere conceding little to
aesthetics. Despite its being illegal,
parties splash graffiti on walls that
are public (and private) property.

Renchin Yonzan has been involved
with Kathmandu city beautification
projects for the last few years, trying to
salvage what she can from a city that’s

fast turning into a commercial jungle.
“It’s appalling how visual pollution is
becoming permissible,” she says. “We
want to promote Kathmandu as a
heritage site, we invite tourists to
Shangri-la but what we have is a
jungle of TV antennae and half-
finished constructions, above which
hoardings loom. Of course,
advertising products and putting up
traffic signs is important. But with
some planning, we can find places
for commerce without destroying
the city skyline.”

The Kathmandu Metropolitan
City (KMC) says it’s seeking the best
of a bad situation. But there are no
guidelines in place and some real way
of controlling the menace. Even
worse, there’s no real sense that this is
a real problem. Hoardings fall under
the jurisdiction of the Security Section
of the Kathmandu Metropolitan City,
a group of city police persons
responsible for enforcing rules and
regulations, from collecting revenue
from advertisers to chasing off small
shop owners from the pavements.
And, occasionally, they go around
the city and pull down hoardings
from places they’re not supposed to
be in, like Tundikhel, Singha
Darbar, the area around the Royal
Palace, and 100 m around Heritage
Sites like Basantapur.

Anywhere else, hoardings can be
put up with impunity—for a price
though. The city cops can take down
hoardings that haven’t been paid for.
Advertisers are required to pay an
annual fee of Rs 60 per sq foot for a
regular hoarding, while neon costs Rs
75 per sq foot. A 16 sq foot glow sign
costs Rs 500, and every additional sq
foot costs Rs 75. To put up a 3x3 film
poster costs Rs 100 a week. Anything
bigger costs Rs 500. After the
government banned alcohol and
tobacco advertisements in the
national media, companies have
turned to hoardings, even though such
ads are charged 50 percent extra by
the City.

What is positively depressing is

Scarred cityscapes



ALL PHOTOS: MIN BAJRACHARYA

how many walls of residences, colleges
and Guthis are given over to the
persuasive power of moolah. If you
want to advertise on private space, all
you need to do is contact the owners,
negotiate a rate with them, and then,
if you’re conscientious, go to the City.
As long as the Guthi or the
homeowner doesn’t have a problem,
neither does the city, unless the ad
encroaches on public space, is a
driving distraction, or “is bad for
tourism”. The KMC even offers a 20
percent discount if you advertise on
private property. “We can’t tell
people what to do with their private
property, but we can make the most
of the situation and charge taxes,” says
Thapapati Sapkota, an enforcement
officer with KMC.

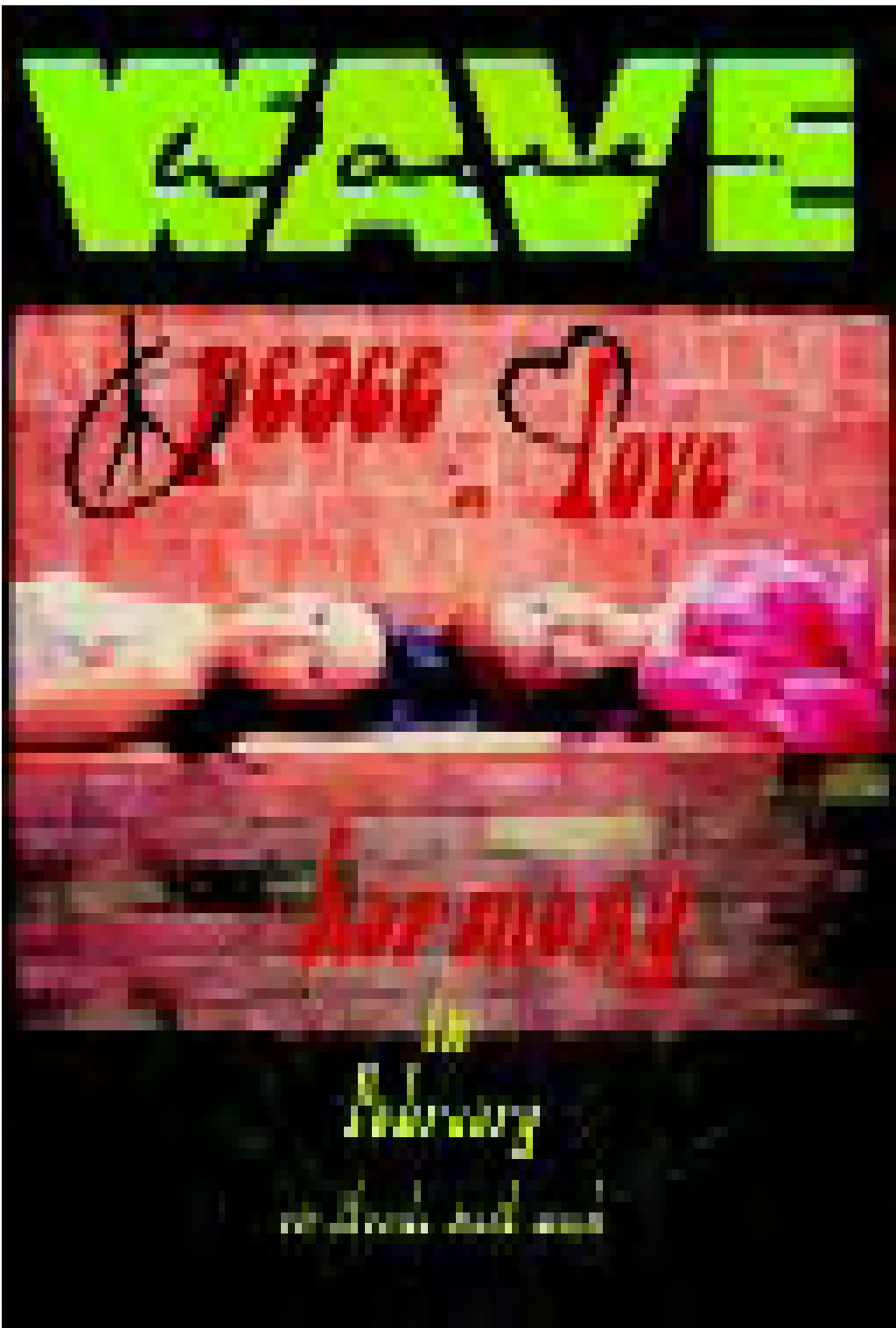
Last fiscal year, the City collected
around Rs 2.2 million as fee from
hoardings, and expects the amount
to go up this year. Advertisers who
used to pay Rs 3000–4000 for a
hoarding are willing to pay over Rs
35,000 to ensure that their (usually
uninspired) advertising is visible.
“The city increased the rates to
discourage advertisers. But they
keep coming,” says Kedar Karki,
another KMC official. “Unless
there’s a master plan which
clearly defines what is legal, this
unplanned mess will continue.”
Of course, the revenue collected
isn’t all that much for the
Kathmandu Metropolitan City
with its annual budget of over Rs
1 billion. Still, even the money so
collected could be put to better
use, for instance, for the
Kathmandu beautification
project. ♦

Case in point: the Bhadrakali temple complex

According to his five-year agreement with the Bhadrakali Guthi Sansthan, Babu Krishna Sapkota leases wall space belonging to the temple complex for Rs 495,000 a year. He rents out space to advertisers, pays the Guthi its fee and pays the City a fee based on the sizes and types of hoardings. And, yes, he gets a 20 percent discount. The largest advertisement is a 10x20 sq foot hoarding of a co-operative for which Sapkota charges Rs 35,000 a year.

“Everyone’s doing it. Colleges, private homes and Guthis are selling their space. I make a living, the municipality gets some revenue and the Guthi gets some extra money. If they don’t mind, why should I complain. It’s business,” says Sapkota.

Like the Nepal Electricity Authority and the trolley-bus service sell pole space to noodles and oil, and the Public Administration College provides space for Coke, the Guthi Sansthan, the owner of numerous temples and old monuments around the city, endorses everything except alcohol and cigarettes. “Hoardings are not a major source of income for the Sansthan,” says Haribol Acharya, the Sansthan’s representative at Bhadrakali. “But since they’ve been there for quite some time, I don’t see any harm in letting them be.” Acharya’s indifference is a widespread human problem, or as King Birendra puts it, *maanawiya samasyaa*, that the capital’s citizens, caught up in the commercialism of the city, fail to understand. Against the canopy of overwhelming commerce, it’s just not visible. ♦



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Venice of the Information Age

Building on the same foundation that marked an entrepreneurial and aggressive merchant economy, the UK is set to be the leading 'smart' economy in Europe.

SIMON MOORES

Tomorrow's e-business will be dominated by a relatively small number of successful service economies, themselves centred on hub 'smart' cities, such as Singapore or Dubai. They will sit astride the vital infrastructure of the communications network in much the same way that ports, such as Venice, dominated trade of the Mediterranean.

The UK government has set itself the task of making Britain an information superpower or, as Tony Blair says, "the best place in the world for business." Is this ambitious policy initiative realistic? According to a survey of European executives, Britain is viewed as the preferred location to start an Internet-related business, with Germany and France in second and third places. A third of European managers perceive the UK as the leading European information economy, followed closely again by Germany.

Professor Jim Norton, head of e-business at the Institute of Directors and author of UK e-commerce policy, would argue that the country is already the world leader in businesses trading online. But, he advises that the criteria supporting this claim should be viewed with caution for two reasons. First, the definition of trading online is too broad. Second,

the quoted percentages of businesses are weighted by employment, so larger companies dominate. "Where we need to do better in the UK is for businesses to overcome their instinctive aversion to new technology, looking beyond to the potential impact on their business models."

"This is not a 'new economy'; it is a new set of tools and freedoms, which are complementary and can be usefully deployed in almost any 'Old Economy' company. Last year's dotcom collapse is now focusing attention on strategies which leverage existing brands, focusing on traditional values, customer, creativity, changing and collaboration," says Norton.

The real winners, he believes, will be those companies which deal with their customers consistently and through a 'clicks and mortar' mix of electronic and physical channels.

Oliver Roll, director of enterprise

marketing at Microsoft, suggests one area where the UK has advantages because of government efforts. "This," he says, "is its support for universal access, a reduction in bureaucracy and through the creation of a digital framework capable of offering public services and transactional services, such as VAT returns over the Internet. As a nation of random entrepreneurs, I don't think that Britain has any inherent advantage in turning smart ideas into business successes. The great challenge lies in matching our existing industry and management skills with such new ideas and methods of doing business over the Internet," says Roll.

A report by Growth Plus Europe, the entrepreneurs' group, and Arthur Andersen illustrates the lead that the UK has over the rest of Europe in the entrepreneur contest. Behind Britain lies Spain, followed by Italy and the Netherlands. The two largest continental economies, Germany and France, rank near the bottom of the 10-nation survey. In addition, the UK and the US are considered equal in the business environment segment, which includes corporate and individual taxes, new business formation, and capital gains tax rates.

The report concludes that governments in Europe have long tended to award grants and subsidies in an attempt to foster growth and entrepreneurial spirit, but that this is not enough. The authors view the whole environment—legislation and regulation as fundamental. "Disregarding the needs or potential of entrepreneurs and growth companies, with their inherent impact on the economy as job creators, could severely limit the development of national economies," they say.

A rapid public sector acceptance of e-business and 'joined-up government' principles has quickly established the UK as an example that many other countries are starting to follow. More than 40 percent of UK government services are now available online, and this is set to rise to nearly 75 per cent by 2002. New research has revealed that nearly one in five adults—18 percent—who use the Internet do so to access web-based government services or information.

As a nation, the UK is unique in having an e-Envoy, Andrew Pinder, the government's "information age evangelist", responsible for coordinating the evolution and the delivery schedule for the many "joined-up government" services and websites. These include the new citizens' portal, UK-Online, as well as the Government Gateway and UK-Online for Business.

Pinder, who also has a broader responsibility for driving forward the digital revolution, may be encouraged by the December figures from NetValue, which show more than 11.5 million home Internet users in the UK. The Government, according to the e-Envoy, has also achieved its 2002 target of a million businesses online a year early, and it is this critical mass of small business use of the Internet that makes Britain remarkable.

Pinder believes the key elements for a successful Internet economy are found in a strong national infrastructure: "A good telecom infrastructure so that people can have access to the Internet through one source or another, whether that be digital television or personal computers at home or at work". Bandwidth is, he believes, a critical issue: "We need to ensure that people have the opportunity to take advantage of the bandwidth. If there is a key point, it is that the country needs to have in place all the infrastructure that allows those who wish to join in the information economy to do so."

Government is so convinced that websites accelerate the process of change within the public sector, that next week, in London, Lucian Hudson, the Cabinet Office's director of e-communications, will bring together Ministers, senior civil servants and those with front-line responsibility for producing sites and their content. "The Government," says Hudson, "already has a significant web presence. The challenge is to ensure that whatever we do with our websites not only reflects accurately what government can deliver but holds up the promise that government is becoming increasingly more responsive and approachable."

The Victorians might have recognised the chemistry at work here. Britain has always enjoyed a unique form of public- and private-sector partnership, one that fuelled the commercial and legislative foundation of an entrepreneurial and aggressive merchant economy. Times may change, but the principles and lessons of the past remain much the same, even in this early post-industrial period of our history. Sound policy, deregulation and inward investment offer Britain an advantage and an opportunity to benefit from the new wealth that will come from being the leading 'smart' economy in Europe.

Meanwhile, nations unable or unwilling to respond to the social and political challenges that accompany the information age may discover, to their cost, that equally rapid forces of economic disadvantage can also work at Internet speeds. ♦ (Guardian)

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Microsoft to bolster firewalls

JANE MARTINSON IN NEW YORK

The FBI is investigating a damaging computer assault on Microsoft after hackers overwhelmed the company's connection to the Internet, leading to the closure of several popular websites such as msn.com and expedia.com.

The attack came after a difficult week for the Seattle-based company. Its services, used by millions of people and businesses, also broke down for two days last week because of a technical error, prompting complaints from across the globe. Microsoft said the two problems were unrelated.

The company called in the FBI yesterday when it realised that its system was the victim of a "denial-of-service" attack on last week. Hackers had managed to overwhelm the company's extensive network with so much fake traffic that legitimate users were blocked. This increasingly common form of hacking is described as similar to hundreds of people calling one telephone line.

The company said in a statement: "It is unfortunate that an individual or group of individuals would engage in this kind of illegal activity." Microsoft blamed its earlier problems, which knocked out its main corporate site and its msn.com portal, on employee error. Complaints flooded in after the company's websites started producing unexpected results. For example, the central clock on Asheron's Call, a multiplayer role-playing game hosted on Microsoft's gaming zone, started to go backwards.

Microsoft said a technician made a "mistaken configuration change" to the computers that guide web surfers to its sites.

The Seattle-based company was subject to a daring hacker assault last October. Although the case is still under investigation, it emerged that the unidentified intruders had been able to study Microsoft's network unobserved for six weeks. Using stolen passwords, they then used Microsoft's Hotmail service to send snippets of the company's source code to an email address in Russia. ♦ (Guardian)

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FREE DISTRIBUTION

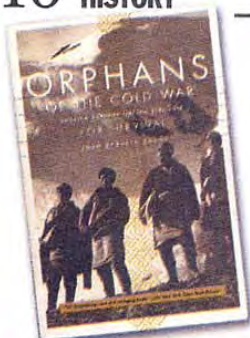
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In early 1960, CIA air operations supporting the resistance in the Kham and Amdo regions were at their height, and optimism both in Washington and among the Tibetan leadership in India about the prospects for maintaining the resistance remained high. The Chinese had not yet launched the blitzkriegs that were to decimate and disperse the resistance concentrations in the east. Gyalo Thondup kept his brother the Dalai Lama informed of the general terms of the CIA support, as it was no longer possible to preserve the screen of his official ignorance. While he was never asked to give his blessing to these operations (which necessarily involved violence), the Dalai Lama had little choice. He could only tacitly accept it as the necessary price of the fight for independence.

[Eisenhower] had taken a keen interest in these operations, as he had in all covert paramilitary operations developed as alternatives to a full military challenge to communism. Washington was therefore receptive

Mustang and Washington



(Valley field inside Lo Manthang)

Little known to the outside world but very much part of recent Nepali history, the CIA-backed Khampa insurrection against the Chinese from their bases in Mustang is brought to life by former Agency officer John Kenneth Knaus in his book *Orphans of the Cold War*. Excerpts follow.

when the CIA received a proposal from Gyalo Thondup early in 1960 to revive the resistance movement inside Tibet. He acted on behalf of the resistance leader, Gampo Tashi, who had taken refuge in Darjeeling after fleeing, wounded, with his resistance forces in 1959. Several thousand of his men were working on road gangs in

Sikkim or elsewhere along the Indian border, but they were ready to return to the fight. Gampo proposed that they regroup to operate inside Tibet opposite the Mustang kingdom in Nepal.

Gampo Tashi had become familiar with Mustang on trips he had made as a pilgrim and trader to western Tibet in former years. Even

then he had marked it as an area that would lend itself to guerrilla operations. At a meeting with CIA operations officers in early spring, Gampo, accompanied by Gyalo Thondup and Lhamo Tsering, proposed that members of the resistance force be reunited and establish a base in Mustang, from



MIN BALACHANDRA

ORPHANS OF THE COLD WAR

where they would send small guerrilla units into Tibet. While the CIA officers fully appreciated the advantage of using Mao's own classic tactic of a secure base offering a safe haven for retreat, the US government could not approve establishing a base even in such a remote region without permission from the Nepali government. Political and security reasons ruled out asking Kathmandu for permission.

A compromise was therefore agreed upon. 2100 men in good physical condition and literate in Tibetan would be recruited from the scattered forces of the National Volunteer Freedom Fighters that had fought under Gampo in central Tibet. Most were veterans of the Chushi Gangdruk, the original eastern Tibet resistance group, now joined by members of the much smaller Mimang Tsongdu resistance movement from central Tibet. This meant that approximately 70 percent of the force came from Kham, 25 percent from Amdo, and five percent from central Tibet. Eventually seven groups would operate independently from separate sites in the area south of the Brahmaputra River parallel to the Lhasa-Xinjiang highway. The CIA agreed to drop arms, trained leaders, and supplies to these sites as long as there was no public disclosure. This last point was critical, and the scheme would be abandoned if word leaked to the press.

Gampo Tashi selected twenty-six men to be sent for training at Dumra, including Lobsang Champa, a leader from Litang, who was designated by both Gampo and CIA to be the leader of the Mustang force when he returned from Colorado. Gampo then named Gyen Yeshe, a Khampa monk from Batang, to lead an advance party to Mustang. Gyen Yeshe accordingly set off in late spring. The plan seemed well underway when things started to go wrong.

The first setback had no direct connection with Tibet. On May 1, 1960, a U-2 high altitude photo reconnaissance plane flown by an American pilot under contract to the CIA was brought down by a rocket 1,300 miles inside the Soviet Union. After demanding and not receiving an apology, Khrushchev stormed out of the summit (in Paris), and the "Spirit of Camp David" was dead. Consequently, Eisenhower ordered a stand-down on intelligence operations

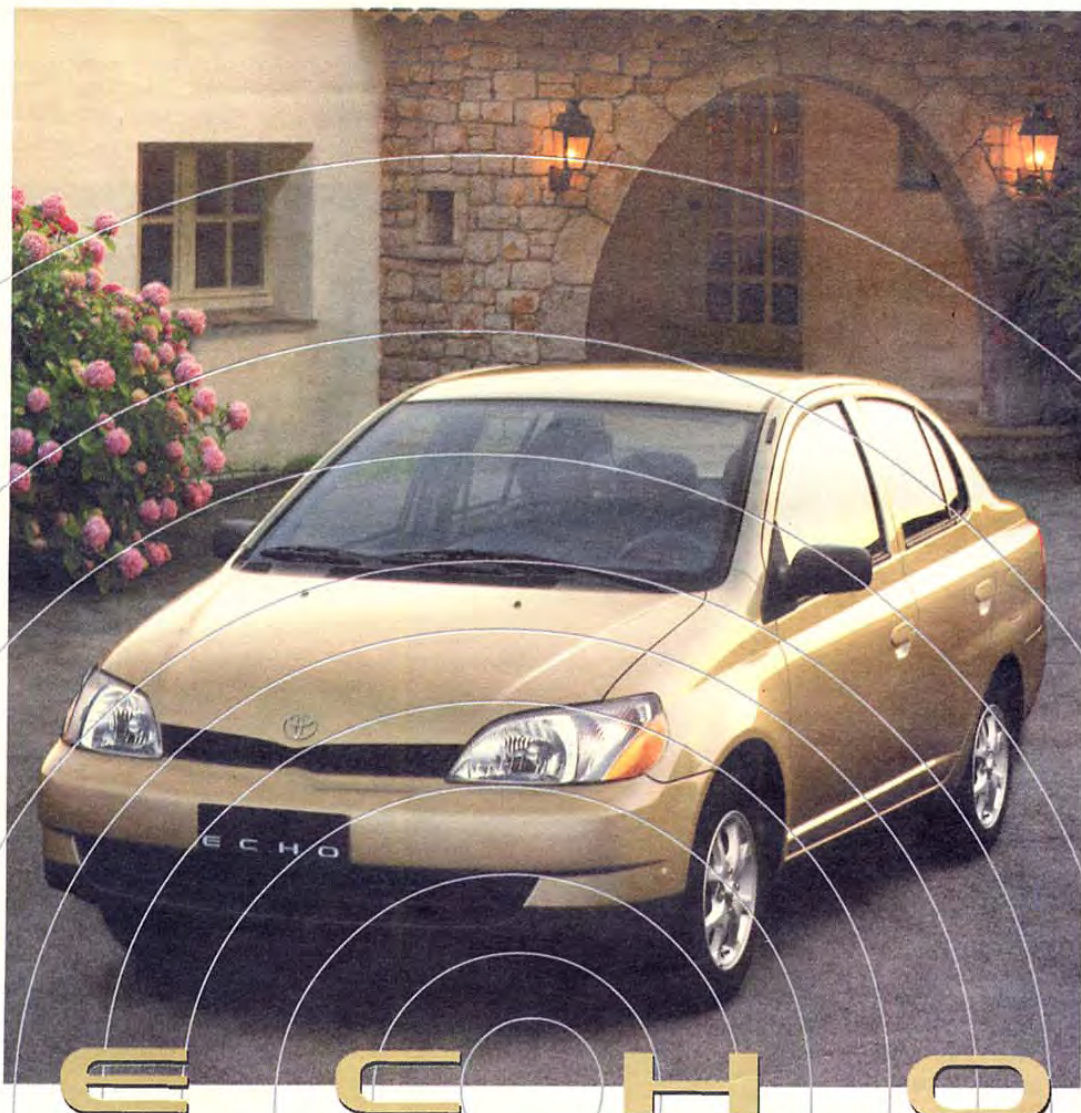
of a provocative nature. Covert flights over unfriendly territory would require waivers, and these were not easily granted, particularly ones to launch a substantial new guerrilla army.

The suspension of overflights had no immediate effect on the plans for the Mustang operations. Gyen Yeshe was on his way to the Nepali valley to prepare for the secret arrival of the initial contingent being recruited. The twenty-six men selected to be commanders of the force were on their way to Dumra for training.

The new ground rules did make the principal American requirement in agreeing to drop supplies to the men from Mustang—that they were to move into the isolated kingdom without public notice—even more critical. This condition turned out to be unrealistic. The first group of recruits proudly told their comrades on the road gangs about where they were going and what they were going to do there. The word spread quickly through these tight communities of dedicated but frustrated men. Soon large numbers of former guerrillas turned up in Darjeeling to volunteer for the Mustang force. Lhamo Tsering asked Gampo Tashi to send men to Sikkim to stem the deluge of recruits. The hereditary ruler of Sikkim, the Choegyal sent an angry protest to Gyalo. The Tibetan workers were repairing his kingdom's roads as a public works project at Indian expense, and he thought they were being wooed away by a massive recruiting drive. These belated efforts were in vain.

On August 1, the *Statesman*, one of India's leading dailies based in Calcutta, began a series of articles with headlines reading Mysterious Exodus from Sikkim: Khamas Leaving in Hundreds; amplified two days later by Tibetan Exodus Continues: Even Persuasion Fails to Change Their Minds; and finally on August 13, 2,700 Tibetans Leave from India. The accounts were accurate. From CIA headquarters urgent and angry messages were sent to Thondup demanding that the flow of men to Mustang be stopped and threatening to cancel the agreement to supply the growing force. But Thondup was powerless to block these determined men as they left their families to make their way by bus, or on foot, through the jungles of southern Nepal. By

Giving voice to your desire



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early autumn Gyen Yeshe was overwhelmed with more than 2,000 recruits ready to fight, but in need of food and arms.

The CIA thus found itself stuck with a sizeable problem and no ready solutions. What was supposed to have been a covert operation was now an open secret throughout the Himalaya. The potential guerrilla army massed in Nepal was not prepared to move unless it received arms—and they could only come by air. But flights had been grounded, and it was too soon to ask for an exception, especially for flights that might call additional attention to this unplanned concentration of no longer secret resistance forces.

The winter of 1960/61 was frustrating for the Tibetans and the CIA officers directing their operations. Gyen Yeshe sent messages pleading for support, including one poignant account of the men being forced to boil their leather shoelaces for soup. Washington found it hard to believe the numbers involved, so Yeshe buttressed his pleas for food and arms with photographs of 2,000 men massed in front of his headquarters. Funds were eventually provided for food, but resentment among the local populace had already erupted against the Tibetan intruders, who bought or took what they needed.

However urgent the food problem, the pressure for a quick solution for political reasons was less critical. The king of Mustang's Tibetan ancestry put him in the Dalai Lama's camp, although his genuine sympathy was mixed with apprehension about the large group of tough Khampa warriors who had become unwitting residents of his kingdom. In any case, even if he wanted to do anything about these new residents, he commanded no troops of his own. He was therefore not an important factor, nor was the Nepali government. Kathmandu was not prepared to assemble the forces required to expel a group of this size from such a remote region. It was easier for the Nepalis to ignore their presence and simply deny access to any enterprising journalist or trekker to Mustang.

The Chinese, after one incursion to Mustang in hot pursuit of fleeing Tibetan guerrillas before Yeshe's forces mushroomed, also seemed disinclined to bother much. The CIA was to learn in 1961 that, in addition to a shortage of military spare parts, the Chinese were concerned about the morale of their own troops, who were suffering from the consequences of Mao's Great Leap Forward. A scrap with Tibetans inside Nepal was not on Beijing's list of priorities.

The stalemate between Washington and Mustang continued throughout the autumn of 1960. The CIA repeatedly asked Gyen Yeshe to send back as many of these unwanted volunteers as possible, but it was not prepared to abandon this potential capability to mount an organised resistance inside Tibet. Like the airdrop operations in eastern Tibet, the Mustang force had taken on a life of its own, and it was a capability that was not to be easily abandoned. It was then a few months before the November presidential elections, and decisions on major operations such as these were put on hold. Desmond Fitzgerald later reported that at a White House meeting he attended on election day, Eisenhower said that if Nixon were elected the CIA operations in Tibet would continue. The ban on overflights would apparently be lifted as long as they took place inside Tibet. He could not, of course, speak for Kennedy.

KENNEDY TAKES UP THE CAUSE

When Allen Dulles met with John F. Kennedy in December 1960 he found the president-elect ready to

continue backing the Tibetan resistance. The election margin had been too narrow. The Republican opposition was ready to look for signs of supposed appeasement, and memories of the 'who-lost-China?' debate were still fresh.

Moreover, support for a resistance movement already in the field appealed to the activist Kennedy administration. As the man in charge of Asia policy at the State Department under Truman, [Dean] Rusk had urged the Dalai Lama to flee Tibet in 1951, and was thoroughly receptive to CIA support for the Tibetan rebels when briefed on it as incoming secretary in 1960. The chief dissenter was the new ambassador to India, John Kenneth Galbraith.

Galbraith was briefed on the CIA's covert operations in India on 29 March 1961, two weeks after Kennedy approved an airdrop to the Mustang contingent inside Tibet. He took an instant dislike to the whole thing, which he characterised as a "particularly insane enterprise" where "planes dropped weapons, ammunition and other supplies for dissident and deeply unhygienic tribesmen who had once roamed over the neighbouring Tibetan countryside and who now relieve their boredom with raids back into the territory from which they had been extruded". He was vociferous in his opposition to the Mustang operations, arguing that an accident might befall one of the airdrops, which would involve India and compromise his embassy's work.

But the administration and Kennedy were still suffering from the previous month's humiliation at the Bay of Pigs and the Tibetan guerrillas represented the unconventional force that Kennedy had long advocated as an alternative to the Dulles-Eisenhower nuclear doctrine of massive retaliation. The Tibetan volunteers had been organised into sixteen companies of one hundred each, with men drawn from various cities, tribes, and areas to



Clockwise from far left: Lo Manthang, the capital of Mustang, with the mountains of Tibet in the far background on the right; members of the Volunteer Freedom Fighters display weapons captured in 1958 from the Chinese; the first group of Khampas flown to the Pacific island of Saipan for training by the CIA in 1957; Gyen Yeshe and Lhamo Tsering flanked by six guerrilla commanders at a pass overlooking Tibet; display of Khampa firepower.

converted his role as chief of the advance party into that of permanent commander of the entire force at Mustang. He had dealt with the unexpected deluge of recruits and imposed discipline among what could have become an unruly mob. He also still enjoyed the confidence of Gampo Tashi. The intended field commander, Lobsang Champa, had been sent for training at Dumra the previous summer but had been stranded there as a consequence of the U-2 incident and the publicity over the unexpected flood of recruits. Although Lobsang Champa had the CIA's full support, Gyen Yeshe refused to yield command. When Lobsang Champa finally returned that summer, making his way to Mustang on foot through the jungle like the recruits, the CIA ordered he be given command of the five hundred men at what was now the Mustang base camp. This Solomonic solution did not resolve the problems among a command already divided by old regional loyalties and rivalries. Gyen Yeshe's action did not help. The CIA's protégé ended up as commander of only one company of a hundred men.

convoys were continuing. The results of one raid gave dramatic support to the CIA request.

In October 1961 a party led by a Dumra alumnus named Ragra attacked a convoy carrying a Chinese assistant regimental commander. This Chinese officer and all of the members of the convoy were killed, and the commander's pouch was captured intact containing more than 1,600 classified documents. These provided first hand intelligence on the serious problems of governance that had grown out of the Great Leap Forward.

This dramatic intelligence haul arrived in Washington at a critical time. [Galbraith] repeated his arguments that the operations, covering "a few square miles on an incredibly vast area" had made no dent in keeping the Chinese from consolidating their hold on Tibet. The world had taken little or no notice of this effort. Finally, the relative value of the intelligence yield was questioned. The irate ambassador concluded that "the operation continues because it got started".

It was easier for Nepal to ignore the Khampas' presence and simply deny access to any journalist or trekker to Mustang.

break up the preference of the Tibetans to cluster in hometown units that tended to encourage ancient feuds and rivalries. Their rigorous daily training schedule would have gladdened the hearts of the Dumra instructors. The men were now looking for missions.

By early spring, authorisation had been obtained from the new White House team to provide arms for seven companies to establish bases across the border. Reinforcements and replacements would be sent from Mustang as needed. On 15 March 1961, the planes flew from their base in Thailand to make the first airdrop of arms and trained radio operators, enough to outfit and staff four companies. The parachute drop was made to a site inside Tibet south of the Brahmaputra River opposite Mustang.

Gyen Yeshe's strategy was to send units of forty to fifty men down from the Mustang plateau onto the Brahmaputra floodplain, where they would attack isolated Chinese military camps and travel along the Lhasa-Xinjiang highway creating disruption along this major supply route. The prime operating season was from August through April when the Brahmaputra was fordable. According to Lhamo Tsering, Gyalo Thondup's operations chief, these attacks were sufficiently effective to force the Chinese to post one division in the area and to divert traffic for western Tibet to the Qinghai-Xinjiang highway three hundred kilometres to the north. The guerrilla units would operate for two to three weeks inside Tibet and then return to their base at Mustang for replacements and resupply.

By then Gyen Yeshe had

While the first drop had been made with the understanding that the men would use the arms to establish themselves inside Tibet, their reluctance to give up their safe haven in Nepal was not surprising. This was to be a running controversy between the CIA and Gyen Yeshe that was never resolved. The Mustang commander continued to request the arms that had been promised for the three additional companies. But in response to Galbraith's continuing protests, Kennedy agreed that all future drops had to be made with Indian approval.

[Former ambassador Bunker believed that] while the Indian government was "not averse to aid being rendered to the Tibetans" they were fearful it would "greatly weaken the Indian position vis-à-vis the Chinese Communists, lend colour to Chinese assertions that the rebellion was instigated by the US, pull the rug from under severe critics of the Chinese in the Indian press and parliament, and turn public opinion against the US, all things the Nehru Government was anxious to avoid".

The CIA countered that it would be impossible for either Nehru or his intelligence chief to explicitly approve such flights. As a precaution, the flight route was planned to ensure that the planes would be over Indian territory for only minutes. The CIA asked for enough flights to complete arming all seven companies in Mustang. The National Security Council's Special Group debated the request throughout the summer of 1961. By this time the remaining company commanders had returned from Dumra, and raids on Chinese installations and

In November 1961 Washington overruled the ambassador's objections. Allen Dulles took the captured documents, along with the bloodstained pouch of their dead owner, for a dramatic appearance before the Special Group. This "evidence of effectiveness" in the intelligence payoff, coupled with the protection afforded by the restricted flight path to Mustang and Washington's reluctance to give up an existing capability against an uncertain enemy were sufficient to win the president's approval for resumption of airdrops.

A second drop for three remaining companies was made inside Tibet on 10 December 1961. But as with equipment dropped earlier, Gyen Yeshe divided the material among six companies, retaining all of the seventeen pistols for his personal armoury. The arms were sufficient to equip only about half the number of potential guerrillas at Mustang. This was all policymakers were willing to approve in Washington. They were sufficient to permit periodic raids to harass the Chinese along the highway, and in their camps south of the Brahmaputra, along a 350-mile front inside Tibet.

But the Mustang force was basically in a holding pattern. Some of the men were now armed for action, but no one was willing to commit them to a full-scale effort against the Chinese. A year later, even after the Chinese were looming on the Indian border, Allen Dulles' successor, John McCone, noted to Secretary Rusk that there was doubt that the government "really wished to pursue the original 1958 objective of freeing Tibet of the



Chinese Communist occupation". He concluded that "we were not operating on a policy line but were acting from day to day."

McCone's initiative produced a decision within a week by the Special Group to put a hold on active operations until a programme of "contingency planning" initiated by the CIA had been worked out. Such planning was overtaken a few days later when the Indians turned to the US after the Chinese poured over their northern frontier to trounce the outgunned and outmaned Indian army on the Tibetan border. After a year of temporising the Tibetans were to become assets again rather than problems.

DIPLOMATIC MOVES

The government-in-exile did not do all its campaigning in the field. On the first anniversary of the revolt, the Dalai Lama announced he was preparing a new constitutional and economic structure. The charter would embody many of the reforms, primarily the redistribution of state and church land and the accompanying traditional governing structure, that his brother had tried to persuade the old guard in Lhasa to accept in 1952. Washington endorsed such "nation building". Predictably it was criticised as premature by Chiang Kai-shek and privately dismissed in the British Foreign Office as "romantic moonshine or deliberate propaganda". The Tibet the British had known was not congenial to reform constitutions.

But some Indian veterans of the independence movement felt otherwise. In April 1960 a group of prominent Indians, including JP Narayan, JJ Singh, and Purshottam Trikamdas were enlisted to host an Afro-Asian Conference on Tibet and against colonialism in Asia and Africa. Delegates from nineteen Asian and African countries met in New Delhi and unanimously adopted a resolution supporting the Tibetan people's right to self-determination. While none of the delegates were official representatives of their governments, several of their governments expressed sympathy for the convention. (India, preparing for a visit by Zhou Enlai, did not.) In the autumn, Singh and Trikamdas accompanied Thondup to New York to line up Afro-Asian support for a UN resolution supporting self-determination for Tibet. They managed to introduce the resolution but it became a casualty of the regular session and the rump session.

Gyalo Thondup did have the satisfaction of being received for the first time by an American secretary of state. Christian Herter saw him and suggested that his brother could keep his cause alive by abandoning his demand to be received abroad as a

head of state and travel abroad as a "great religious leader". Herter's undersecretary for political affairs, Livingston T Merchant, repeated this advice and reaffirmed that the US would do its "utmost" to ensure that the UN was aware of its concern.

While Herter and Merchant were unable to translate their good intentions into action before they left office, their successors were equally committed. The new undersecretary, Chester Bowles, wrote the new UN representative, Adlai Stevenson that he had been studying the US government's relations with the Dalai Lama in terms of Washington's long-term objectives. Stevenson replied that he understood and shared Bowles' "concern over the developments in that strange and far-off land and thoroughly agree[d] that Tibet is not an item we should pass over lightly". The Bay of Pigs intervened, and the Tibet resolution got lost for that session. But even this did not lessen Bowles' enthusiasm. On 30 May, Rusk wrote the Dalai Lama pledging that the US intended "to continue to focus the attention of world opinion on the tragic plight of Tibet and on your struggle for the inalienable rights of your people." When Thondup came to Washington later that year, Kennedy sent similar unspecified, but enthusiastic pledges to the Dalai Lama of US support.

Six months later the Tibetans reached what was to be the high-water mark in their claim for international recognition. On 20 December 1961, the General Assembly with 56 yeas, 11 nays, and 29 abstentions, renewed "its call for the cessation of practices which deprive the Tibetan people of their fundamental human rights and freedoms, including their right to self-determination".

Even the British finally came off the fence and voted for the resolution, presumably on the orders of the new foreign secretary, Lord Home. One Whitehall aide had suggested that a UN resolution supporting Tibet's independence might make the lot of the Tibetans even harder. Home dismissed this with a curt, handwritten marginal note, "It could hardly be worse."

(From *Orphans of the Cold War: America and the Tibetan Struggle for Survival*, Public Affairs, 1999)



The writer with the Dalai Lama's brother, Gyalo Thondup, in New Delhi, 1995.

Building on the same foundation that marked an entrepreneurial and aggressive merchant economy, the UK is set to be the leading 'smart' economy in Europe.

Professor Jim Norton, head of e-business at the Institute of Directors and author of UK e-commerce policy, would argue that the country is already the world leader in businesses trading online. But, he advises that the criteria supporting this claim should be viewed with caution for two reasons. First, the definition of trading online is too broad. Second,

Oliver Roll, director of enterprise

A report by Growth Plus Europe, the entrepreneurs' group, and Arthur Andersen illustrates the lead that the UK has over the rest of Europe in the entrepreneur contest. Behind Britain lies Spain, followed by Italy and the Netherlands. The two largest continental economies, Germany and France, rank near the bottom of the 10-nations survey. In addition, the UK and the US are considered equal in the business environment segment, which includes corporate and individual taxes, new business formation, and capital gains tax rates.

Pinder, who also has a broader

Government is so convinced that websites accelerate the process of change within the public sector, that next week, in London, Lucian Hudson, the Cabinet Office's director of e-communications, will bring together Ministers, senior civil servants and those with frontline responsibility for online sites and

Meanwhile, nations unable or unwilling to respond to the social and political challenges that accompany the information age may discover, to their cost, that equally rapid forces of economic disadvantage can also work at Internet speeds. ♦ (*Guardian*)

The Seattle-based company was subject to a daring hacker assault last October. Although the case is still under investigation, it emerged that the unidentified intruders had been able to study Microsoft's network unobserved for six weeks. Using stolen passwords, they then used Microsoft's Hotmail service to send snippets of the company's source code to an email address in Russia. ♦ *(Guardian)*



● **Reproductive health services**

Master race rhetoric

SAN FRANCISCO - After the apocalyptic predictions for Y2K came to nothing, the radical right and the racist movement have seized upon a new date to rally the troops: 2050, when demographers say non-Latino whites will become a numerical minority in the United States.

White supremacists are yowling mightily about this. They claim that United States Census Bureau projections validate what they've been maintaining all along—that "native" whites are in danger of being bred out of existence. What's at stake, they insist, is nothing less than the survival of America's core national identity, its essential whiteness, which is fading from within as the US becomes ever more "mongrelised".

At present, 72 percent of the US population is classified as white. But this percentage is declining because of lower birth rates among Caucasians and the sustained immigration of non-European foreigners during the past three decades. Today, newcomers to the US are mostly Asians and Latinos. And with little hope for appreciable improvement in opportunity in much of the southern hemisphere, the influx of immigrants is not likely to abate any time soon.

California, a land built by immigrants, is the most populous state in the US and the runaway leader in the ethnic mixing of North America. In 1970, eight



Stanley Forman's famous photograph of an African-American lawyer being beaten and tripped having accidentally stumbled into a demonstration against court-ordered school busing.

White supremacists claim "native" whites are being bred out as the US becomes ever more "mongrelised".

out of 10 Californians were non-Latino whites; as of last August, the heavy flow of migrants from Latin America and Asia had reduced the proportion of Caucasians to 49 percent, making California the third state after New Mexico and Hawaii—where white people are not a majority.

The arrival of large numbers of foreigners has triggered a xenophobic backlash that's likely to get worse as the economy weakens. Non-white immigrants are often the targets of racial abuse. Reported hate crimes in California have increased 11 percent since 1995, mirroring a nation-wide pattern. Some right-wing extremists prophesy the

cataclysmic break-up of the union. Thomas W Chittum, a New Jersey-based Vietnam veteran, proclaims in his book *Civil War Two*, that the US will splinter into ethnically-based national regions: "America was born in blood. America suckled on blood. America gorged on blood and grew into a giant, and America will drown in blood."

White separatists have set up groups such as Americans for Self-Determination, one of whose founders, Jeff Anderson, urged that "the US be partitioned into states for blacks, whites, Latinos, and so on, along with the multiracial states for those who wish to continue with this

experiment". Attacking non-white immigration as "out of control" has long been a tactic of fringe groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, but it wasn't until the Cold War ended that immigration became a hot-button issue, and mainstream US politicians, eager to find scapegoats for their own policy failures, frantically jumped on the anti-immigrant bandwagon.

Ruth Conniff of *The Progressive* observed: "What were once considered right-wing views on immigration that the United States is being 'invaded' by the Third World, that immigrants pose a threat to the American economy and way of life, and that the

borders need military fortification have become part of the accepted wisdom."

For evidence of extreme-right encroachment in US politics, consider the ties that bind Republican Party heavyweights such as Senate majority leader Trent Lott and attorney general-designate John Ashcroft, to hard-core, neo-Confederate organisations (the Council of Conservative Citizens and the Southern Partisan, respectively) that equate race mixing with genocide and routinely defend the legacy of slavery.

"Ethnic pride", not bigotry

Today's more image-conscious white-power advocates eschew heavy-handed master-race rhetoric. Cuching their arguments in coded language that recasts bigotry as ethnic pride, they talk about preserving white identity and protecting the rights of European Americans, which are allegedly under assault. Trumpeting what has since become the standard Republican line on "giveaway programmes" and "special preferences" for minorities, white supremacists maintain that their deteriorating status in society is primarily a consequence of "reverse discrimination" aimed at fair-skinned folk—not the result of global economic forces and social processes that are having a

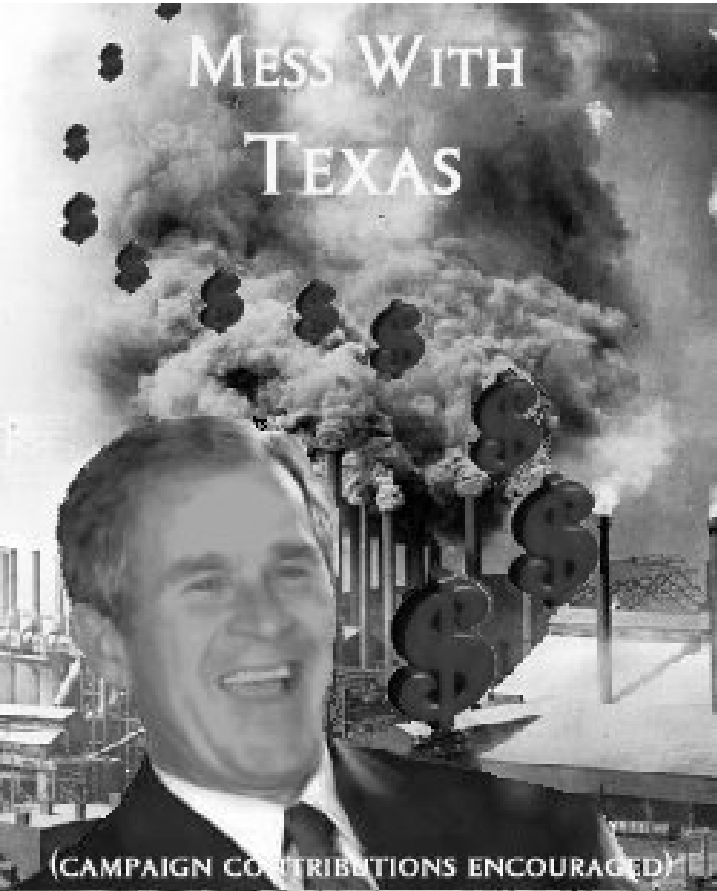
disruptive impact on almost everyone.

Xenophobic campaigns spearheaded by far-right activists culminated in draconian legislation enacted during the Clinton administration, which sharply curtailed federal benefits and legal protection for immigrants and asylum seekers. Passed in 1996, the new laws amounted to "the most sustained attack on immigrants rights in modern times," according to Lucas Guttentag of the American Civil Liberties Union. Two years earlier, the Immigration and Naturalisation Service launched Operation Gatekeeper, a \$300 million effort to create an electronic wall along the entire Mexican border to keep undocumented foreigners out. Stepped-up border patrols forced many immigrants to seek entry under life-threatening conditions, resulting in over 600 deaths since the operation began.

Meanwhile, Amnesty International has condemned abusive practices by the US Border Control, charging that many detainees are beaten, raped, and denied food, water, warmth, and medical attention for long periods. It's a rather sobering testament to how far we've come as a country since the Statue of Liberty was erected to welcome all immigrants. ♦ (IPS)

Martin A. Lee is the author of *The Beast Reawakens*, a book about neo-fascism.

W for Warming



BRIAN KENETTY IN BRUSSELS The top European Union (EU) environment official last week expressed concern that US president George W. Bush would undermine international efforts to cut down on the

greenhouse gas emissions widely believed to cause global warming. Presenting the European Commission's new action programme for the environment, which envisages global cuts in greenhouse gases by 20 to 40

The EU believes that president Bush will undermine international efforts to cut down on greenhouse gas emissions.

percent by 2020, EU Environment Commissioner Margot Wallström told journalists here that Bush should be judged on his actions. However, referring to the Bush presidential campaign's opposition to elements of the Kyoto Protocol, the climate change treaty negotiated at a United Nations summit three years ago, she said: "I am a bit worried, I have to say, after some of the statements I have seen."

The 1997 agreement calls on developed countries to collectively reduce their greenhouse gas emissions—mainly carbon dioxide—from the burning of fossil fuels—by at least five percent below 1990 levels by 2012. Under the treaty, which has not yet been ratified by any industrialised countries, the United States would cut emissions by seven percent below 1990 levels, EU Member States by an average of eight percent, and Japan by six percent.

The Commission's proposal announced last week—"Environ-

ment 2010: Our Future, Our Choice"—focuses on four major areas for action: climate change, health and the environment, nature and bio-diversity and natural resource management. The focus of the proposed new programme is the achievement of the EU's eight percent emission reduction target for 2008-2012 under the Kyoto Protocol. However, the Commission also calls for more far-reaching global emission cuts in the order of 20 to 40 percent by 2020 and cites the scientific estimate that in the longer term a 70 percent global greenhouse gas emission reduction as compared to 1990 will be needed to prevent global warming.

Commissioner Wallström stresses: "The scientists have told us clearly that we must face up to climate change or else accept dramatic consequences. Making the Kyoto Protocol operational is not easy, as everybody knows, but it can really only be a first step."

Environment ministers and diplomats from more than 180 countries suspended intensive negotiations 25 November towards that "first step" after failing to reach an agreement on guidelines for reducing heat-trapping greenhouse gases at The Hague summit. The talks ended in failure because the United States and the EU could not agree on several key protocol provisions—including the amount of credit a country could get by investing in climate-protection projects abroad, and how much credit toward emissions cuts could be gained by using forests to absorb carbon dioxide.

The problems ahead

Key political issues including an international emissions trading system, the rules for counting emissions reductions from carbon "sinks"—such as forests—and a compliance regime have not been resolved. Rules for setting up the so-called Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), which would allow developed countries to meet a portion of their emissions reduction targets by funding clean energy projects in developing countries, are also open questions.

Delegates later agreed to resume the Sixth Session of the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on

Climate Change—the formal name of The Hague conference—in late May in Bonn. However, the Netherlands, whose environment minister, Jan Pronk, chairs the conference, said last week that Bush has asked for a two-month postponement in order to allow his administration to prepare.

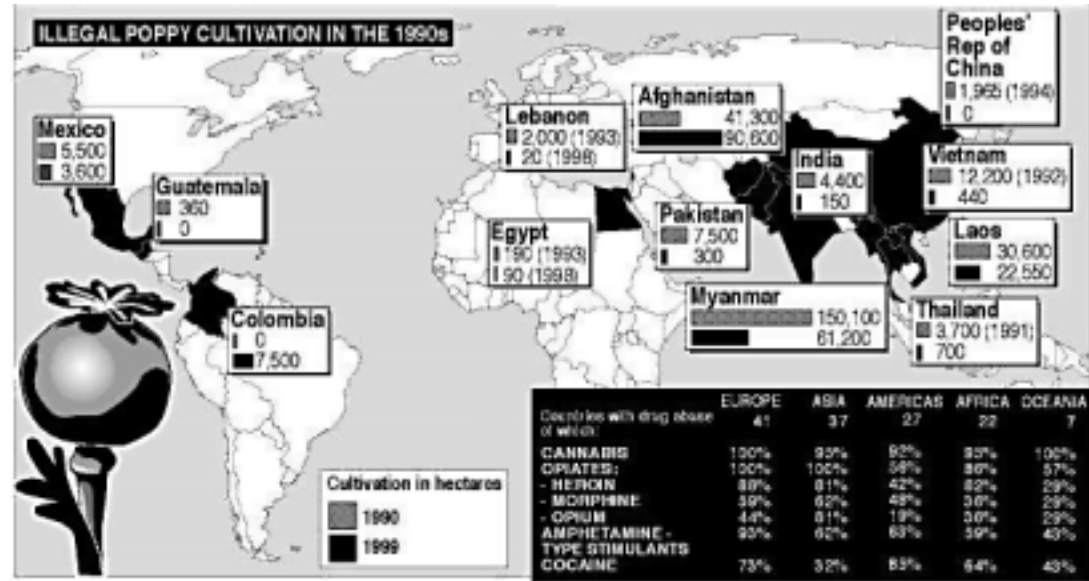
Under the outgoing Clinton administration, US negotiators had pressed for unlimited emissions trading, which would allow companies to buy and sell carbon credits or invest in clean technologies abroad to reach their emissions reduction targets. The EU, however, wants countries to achieve a significant portion of their emissions cuts through domestic programmes that scale down the burning of fossil fuels in power plants, factories and automobiles.

'Environment 2010: Our Future, Our Choice' points to the need for structural changes especially in the EU transport and energy sectors, for stronger efforts in energy efficiency and energy-saving, for the establishment of an EU-wide emissions trading scheme, for further research and technological development and for awareness-raising with citizens so that they can contribute to reducing emissions. At the same time, it acknowledges a certain degree of climate change is expected to happen and says the EU needs to put in place measures to adapt. ♦ (IPS)

Opium War III

NADEEM YAQUB AND DOUG ALEXANDER
IN PESHAWAR/LONDON

A troubled expression hangs on Haji Gildad's face as he speaks of his uncertain future. For 13 years the ageing Afghan has lived with his family in the Pakistani border town of Peshawar, from where he made frequent visits to his homeland for "business". Until recently, Gildad was an opium dealer. He would buy the drug at a bazaar in north-east Afghanistan and sell it to dealers across the country. The contraband would then find its way to heroin labs in remote areas of Afghanistan, or across the mountainous border into neighbouring Iran and Pakistan. But times are changing for a troubled country that provides most of the world's illegal opiates: heroin, morphine and opium to 13.5 million drug abusers around the globe. "It's not easy now to do business in Afghanistan," Gildad admits. Business has suffered immensely due to drought and a decree banning cultivation of opium poppies imposed last July by Mulla Omar, the supreme leader of the hardline Islamic Taliban regime. "If the ban continues for another year, the drug business will become



The UN is working to create a “security belt” around Afghanistan, the source of most of the world’s illegal opiates.

secondary to falconry," Gildad says, referencing the popular Afghan sport. Like Gildad, more and more Afghans are leaving the illegal drug trade. Families that once relied on poppy income are looking for other means of living, forced out by what Gildad calls "unfavourable circumstances". Despite this, Afghanistan has been the world's largest producer of illegal opiates since 1994, with Myanmar a distant second. Together they accounted for 95 percent of the world's illegal opium production in 1999, according to United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) figures published late January. Gildad's frustrations come as the UNDCP steps up its fight to eliminate illegal opium production in Asia. The agency is working with Afghanistan's neighbours—China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan—as well as Kyrgyzstan, the United States and Russia to create a "security belt" around it in order to check smuggling and prevent opium production from spreading to other countries. Opium, and its refined products, heroin and morphine, flow from Afghanistan via Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and the Balkans to Western Europe, where they have become the most problematic of all illegal drugs.

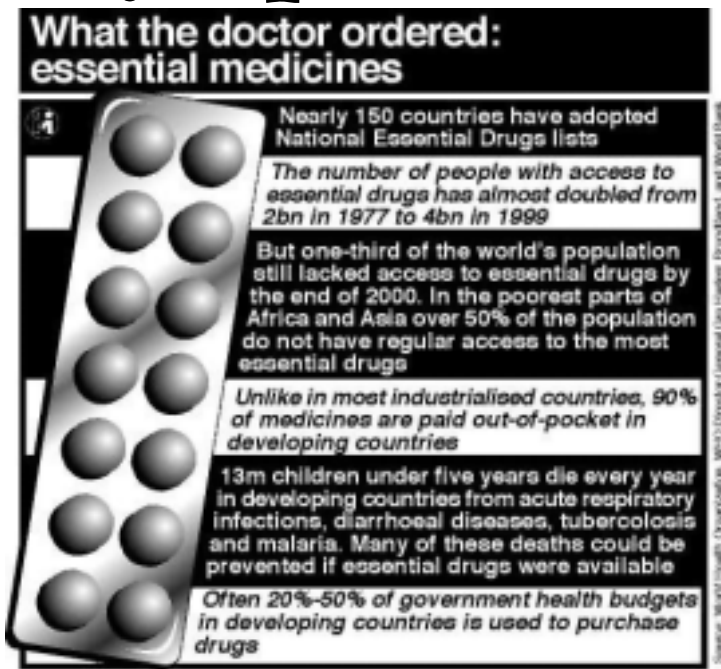
Other UN efforts involve convincing opium farmers to embrace alternative activities, including growing other crops, to phase out poppy cultivation in Afghanistan in five years. "Clearly Afghanistan remains the challenge for the global community in terms of curtailing opium production and hence the availability of heroin," the UNDCP report says. "Rising to this challenge will not be easy." In the past the US has questioned the effectiveness of the UN's anti-drug programme. "Efforts at crop eradication, drug supply reduction, counter-narcotics law enforcement, and demand reduction have completely failed," the US declared in its 1999 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report. Afghanistan's internal turmoil has only added to the problem. The country, devastated by 23 years of civil war, ranks at the bottom of all measures of human development. Illegal activities have become key to people's survival, and cultivators and drug traders see opium as their only means of existence. While the Taliban, which is fighting the Northern Alliance for control of Afghanistan, has made gestures to halt poppy farming, the US maintains that there is "no political will" to seriously curb the opium trade. "These factions, especially the Taliban, who control 97 percent of the territory where poppy is grown, promote poppy cultivation to finance their war machines," the US

report stated. "... They are in active collusion with smugglers and criminal elements to manufacture and export heroin." An Afghan journalist, who did not wish to be named, said that efforts to halt drug trafficking are likely to fail because it is impossible to monitor all the tribes that straddle the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, who move freely between the countries. He noted that even the former Soviet Union, which had a huge military presence in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1988, tried but failed to stop opium flow from Pakistan with all the military force at its disposal. In Pakistan, the head of the military-run Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) questions the UN policy. Brigadier Shahidullah Khan says a security belt around Afghanistan will not work because it is impossible to physically monitor its 2,200-km long border with Pakistan. Hundreds of little routes criss-cross the inhospitable mountains allowing drugs to filter into Pakistan from Afghanistan's north-west, he explains. Khan supports using alternative activities to wean away farmers and dealers from the opium trade—a move that requires political will and international support. As the ageing Gildad faces a crossroad in his life, between the assured income from opium and the unknown, such incentives may be what he needs to face an uncertain future. ♦ (Gemini)

Pay up and die

MOSLEM UDDIN AHMED
IN DHAKA

Sixty-five-year-old Reaz Sarkar died of a stroke while being taken to hospital in a rickshaw, a 30-kilometre journey from his village. He could have been taken to a sub-district health centre, only 10 kilometres away. But, as Reaz Sarkar's son, schoolteacher Abul Rafiq bitterly complains, the centre is in a very poor state of health itself. "Doctors don't stay at the centre, drugs and other medical needs are generally sold out," says Rafiq, alluding to widespread corruption in government-run medical institutions. The government admits that irregularities have existed in state hospitals and health centres for quite some time, that medicines meant for free distribution are sold by unscrupulous employees. Consequently, patients are forced to buy medicines from private pharmacies on prescriptions provided by government doctors. Reaz Sarkar could also have been taken to a Health and Family Welfare Centre (HFWC), which is even closer to his village in Rajshahi district. But it is virtually inactive, with only a single paramedic. There are 3,275 HFWCs in the country's 4,470 unions—the lowest tier of local government—first set up in the late 1980s. But they hardly function. So rural patients make long treks to the nearest hospitals at the district headquarters for even common ailments such as anaemia, gastritis and simple tumours. This is a pity, for Bangladesh once blazed a trail among developing countries when it unfurled an enlightened health and drugs policy after independence. That policy and the working of medical institutions are under sharp scrutiny during an international conference—the People's Health Assembly—held in Dhaka last month, attended by some



Once a model, Bangladesh’s public health policy is today a shambles.

3,000 delegates from 95 countries. Bangladesh, like every other country, had failed to meet the target of 'Health for All' by the year 2000 set out at the 1979 Alma Ata Conference on Primary Health Care. It now plans to establish some 18,500 community health centres across the country, each providing essential health services to 6,000 people. The World Bank is financing the project. Critics of the government, such as Dr Zafarullah Chowdhury, one of the organisers of the Assembly and long-time advocate of alternative healthcare systems, say health policies these days are designed to please multinational drug corporations and are profit driven. "Why do we need community health centres when the union health and family welfare centres are lying inactive? Community healthcare is a fake, a bluff to hoodwink people," says Chowdhury, who helped design Bangladesh's first pharmaceuticals policy. The Bangladeshi doctor, who has been working with an alternative system since the country's independence in 1972, suggests forming a "local health authority" and providing all essential service packages from one centre under the supervision of the authority. This was the cornerstone of Bangladesh's 1990 national health policy, supported by the 1982 drugs policy. "The 1990 health policy was a very pro-people policy," Chowdhury said in a post-Assembly interview. So successful that it was replicated in many developing countries and in Europe. Under the drugs policy, some 1,700 brands of non-essential medicines were banned. The government also prohibited manufacture of the same medicine under different brand names, to stop companies from charging different prices for the same medicine and confusing buyers. The government

also fixed a maximum consultation fee for private doctors, including specialists, and reduced fees for subsequent visits. However, attempts to ban government doctors from private practice came under fire from the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA), the professional body of doctors. Currently, although prices of 117 drugs are officially controlled, there are many particularly imported drugs which are outside the control of the Drugs Administration. Pain-killing injections cost \$3.40 each at a government hospital in Dhaka. The same injection produced by Chowdhury's non-government Ganosthya Kendra (People's Health Centre) sells at the maximum retail price of \$0.37 each. But the government health administration has refused to prescribe his drugs at its hospitals. The government defends the high price on the grounds that there should be control over drugs that could have narcotics uses. "Certainly there should be control over the narcotic drugs," Chowdhury agrees. "But life-saving drugs should also be made easily available for patients in surgical cases to save them from being fleeced in the market." Chowdhury, having served in a makeshift field hospital during Bangladesh's liberation war, set up the Centre after independence to challenge the idea of a health system based on profit. His organisation also mass-produces an antibiotic injection that sells at a third \$3.50 of the cost of a multinational product \$9.40. Articulating fears about globalisation handing over increasing powers to multinational drugs companies, Bangladesh Commerce Minister Abdul Jalil told the Health Assembly: "Our aim should be not only fair trade, but trade with a human face. It should be our overriding endeavour [in trade negotiations] to make benefits of modern research available for the good of the common man." ♦ (Gemini)

Cellphone price wars in India

NEW DELHI – An Indian government telecom company last month launched cheap cellphone services in India, triggering a price war with private operators.

There was a scramble for connections in the capital city as the state-run Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL), opened bookings for the first 100,000 subscribers. MTNL, which monopolises fixed telephone line services in Delhi and Mumbai, will charge six cents for every ten minutes on outgoing calls. Incoming calls will be charged at 0.3 cents for ten minutes—nearly half that charged by private operators. There are two private operators and 430,000 cellular subscribers in Delhi. MTNL will also start cell phone services in Mumbai in February. Mumbai presently has 465,000 cell phone subscribers and two private operators. The Cell Operators Association of India warned that MTNL's entry into the sector would deter foreign investment.

India's *Economic Times* said in an editorial that it was too early for MTNL to be celebrating, given its well-known inefficiency. "We wish it success and hope it will make mobile telecom more competitive. But above all, we fervently wish that MTNL be privatised as soon as possible," the paper noted. "Privatise these (government) behemoths before it is too late."

Till the arrival of cell telephony in India, the government monopolised all telephone services. Telephone connections took years and many bribes to get. However, MTNL's entry into the cell phone market is expected to bring the service within reach of ordinary Indians who can't afford the private operators' high tariffs.

According to R.K. Pachauri, who heads the prestigious, New Delhi-based Tata Energy Research Institute, cell phones can also be used to support development schemes in the countryside in the mainly rural nation. He cites the example of Bangladesh, where mobile phone services are being used as a development tool. One of Bangladesh's best known NGOs—the Grameen Bank—has given cell phones to women leaders who are part of the bank's income-generation schemes.

"Most of the calls were made to find out market information saving people trips to markets in the cities—India has a lot to learn from the Bangladesh experience," says Pachauri. (IPS)

“I am not the Indian Ambassador”

(Excerpts from an interview with Gajendra Narayan Singh, President, Nepal Sadbhavana Party, Jana Aastha, 24 January)



Indian newspapers have repeatedly and forcefully stated that your party always supports India?

The Soviet flag was the flag of all communist parties in the world. The Soviet Union felt that communist parties across the world were its supporters, but this was not true. The NSP flag too is similar to the flag of India. That is probably why they must be saying that.

Not only the flag, your actions and thoughts too seem to point in that direction.

Yes. Even today we see no fault with India. We will never oppose India. Right from 1951, without Indian support we would not have been able to overthrow the Rana regime, and the monarchy could not have been saved. In fact our membership at the UN would not have been easy if India had not supported us.

From what you say, you sound like a stooge of India?

The Valley-based papers have never wanted the advancement of tarai-based people. That is why they always write against us. There may be small faults with India too, but we will be the losers if we oppose India.

Why?

Indo-Nepal friendship is not determined by or based on individuals. It is natural; circumstances have brought us together and forced us to move ahead together.

What has your party to say regarding what happened during the Hrithik Roshan incident?

Our party wrote to the prime minister. We asked the government to make public all facts concerning this incident: how did it happen, who was responsible and why did it happen? If a person is killed the government gives Rs 100,000 to the family. But it is not merely a question of compensation. The government must be able to present facts and identify the guilty. The accused must be brought forward and presented before the victims.

Who do you think are the culprits?

We have heard that the youth wings of the five Left parties, the Nepali Congress and the Rastriya Prajatantra Party have done it.

Is it true that to counter the attack on the people in the Valley that took place from 26-28 December you called for a tarai bandh?

People always oppress the weakest class. The Madhesis are the weakest, and we called the bandh to show our support for them.

The UML student wing was involved in the movement first, and then it organised a rally for peace and unity. No one thought of this rally earlier. Therefore, some believe that it was upon orders from a neighbouring country. Is this true?

First of all this cannot be called a movement. Movements are held for revenge. This was mischief. You mention orders from a neighbouring country. I know nothing about this. The truth is, to save their lives the Madhesis ran for cover. Then to gather their votes, the NC and the UML held a rally for peace and unity. If this rally were not held, Madhav Nepal's party would have broken up. These events took place in the UML and NC areas too. Everyone was scared, and to guard their vote banks they held this rally. Wait till the elections. The NC and UML will pay a great price for this. If they wanted to hold this rally, they should have done so when the riots were taking place.

How come only you know that India was angry over this incident?

See, you are my friend. If I make a mistake, you will be angry with me and I will be hurt. Nepal and India have been friends for a long time, and still we made a big issue over something that wasn't even true.

Is it true that India went all out to defeat Bam Dev?

I am not the Indian ambassador. Bam Dev lost, and I am sad because of it. Now, what is surprising is the fact that not even a single vote in his constituency was invalid.

Without lying, can you tell us with which political leaders of India are you in touch?

There is no party in Nepal that is not in contact with Indian political parties. Every party has contacts, and our party does too. Their leaders remember me, and Chinese and North Korean leaders attended my party convention too.

Financially how does your party function and how do you pay your workers?

At the present moment we are imparting Gandhian training in our party. Gandhiji taught that party workers must not be treated as servants. Therefore our party workers are not paid at all. We run the party on donations.

You are a zamindar. Why do you have to raise donations?

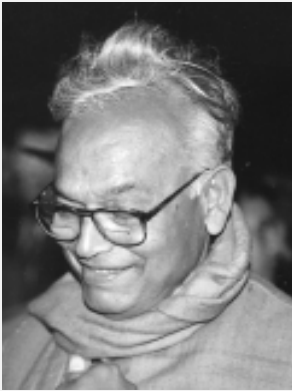
Not me, my father was a zamindar. Once Madhav Nepal and Bam Dev told me, "We hear you have 1,000 bighas of land." I told Madhav Nepal: "I am 4-5 years senior to you in politics. I never had a job like you anywhere. I spent my life in jail or in politics. I never had the time to protect my property."

How much land do you own?

My father had 140 bighas of land. We are four brothers and each got 30 bighas, and my father kept 20 bighas for himself. Today I do not have 30 bighas. I have spent 4-5 bighas on politics.

Do you see any changes taking place in the country at the present moment?

No, no. Democracy and the multiparty system are not going to fade from this country. There may be several problems at present, but democracy will remain. If there is no democracy, where will the party of the Madhesis go? Where will the party of the oppressed go? Democracy cannot be destroyed.



Radio Congress

Jana Bhawana, 22 January



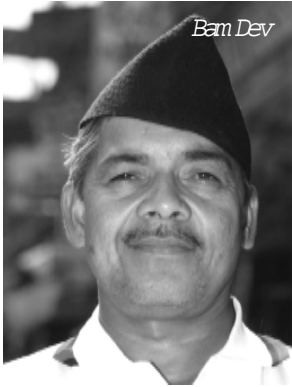
To please its political masters, Radio Nepal broadcast live the 10th National Convention of the Nepali Congress from Pokhara. This is the first time that a convention of any national party has been broadcast live. It all goes to show that people will do anything to please their political bosses. It should be remembered that Radio Nepal is run by the taxpayers' hard earned money.

Show stealer Bam Dev

Saptahik Binasra, 26 January



It appears that the most discussed person at the Nepali Congress convention was Bam Dev Gautam. What he said in his speech to the delegates raised his profile. He said: "Whatever needs to be done can be only done by the Congress. If the Congress cannot do it, then there is no one else who can take the country forward. Therefore the Congress should move ahead and



start the work of nation building." This definitely made Bam Dev the topic of every discussion in Pokhara.

Campaigning wives

Saptahik Binasra, 26 January



Many wives were seen campaigning for their husbands at the



ALL PHOTOS: MIN. BAIRACHARYA

Convention. Dr Arzu Deuba, leading a group of 10 women, was found vocally canvassing for her husband, Sher Bahadur Deuba. Not to be left behind, the wives of Bipin Koirala, Dr Prakash Saran Mahat, and Chandra Bhandari too campaigned for their husbands. Interestingly, all candidates who had their wives out campaigning for them lost the elections.

Warning the Maoists

Jana Bhawana, 25 January



General secretary of the Rastriya Jana Morcha, Nava Raj Subedi, has accused the Maoists of kidnapping, torturing and looting members of the RUM. He said this at a press conference held recently in the capital. He further stated that recently the Maoists had raped the wife of a Pyuthan resident, Man Bahadur Thapa. The Maoists had asked Thapa for Rs 25,000, and

when Thapa failed to cough up the amount the Maoists took away Thapa's 51-year-old wife and raped her. Similarly, Maoists kidnapped Gona Bhandari of Dang and threatened her. In another incident, Durga Rana of Phuthan too was kidnapped and it was only after some time that she was released. The RUM general secretary has asked Maoists to stop this behaviour, and warned that the RUM may have to resort to strong action to counter the Maoists. He stated that the RUM was fully prepared to act against the Maoists if they did not behave themselves.

Maoist visas

Burhabar, 24 January



In Rukum, Maoists have established their 'people's government'. The people's government is now trying to force its will on the followers of the UML and other parties. The UML, with a view to strengthening its party, started a nationwide programme but when UML workers entered Rukum, it appears that the people's government was terrified and passed a new directive. The people's government, led by one Purna Bahadur Charti, has passed a rule stating that if anyone from outside or within the district wants to conduct a programme, prior information must be given to the people's government and permission sought from them. The people's government will then decide on whether to grant them permission or not.

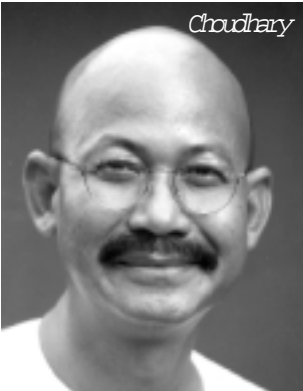
A source in the UML said: "We, the UML, did not tolerate the dictatorship of the Paras, the Panchayat system and the Congress. We will not tolerate the dictatorship of the people's government too. Maybe they think we will get scared and stop our programme. But we will not stop; that directive is of no concern to us."

Maoists claim responsibility

Jana Aahan, 26 January



In a press release issued by the political commissioner Anil and platoon commander Asim of the Maoist forces in the eastern sector, sub-division 3, the Maoists claimed responsibility for the attack on the house of minister Surendra Choudhary. The attack, they said, took place because the minister was corrupt and was harassing people in the surrounding areas. The Maoists destroyed the house worth almost Rs 2.5 million, and looted Rs 270,000 in cash, 40 silver coins, 2kg of silver, 3 tolas of gold, 2 guns, cartridges and other documents. The rebels also took with them the minister's father,



mother, sister and some other people, but released them later.

The Maoists also stated that in

retaliation police have moved into the area and are harassing the people. They warned that if the local people are not left alone then they would be forced to resort to some action again.

Banke CDO was irresponsible

Sarboodhan, 26 January



On 14 January the police resorted to lathi charge and fired at prisoners to stop riots that broke out in Banke prison. Two prisoners were killed and a number of them wounded. The Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and Human Rights formed a committee to hold an inquiry and present their findings to the Committee. A four-member committee was thus formed under the chairmanship of Son Nath Pandey; other members included Nava Raj Subedi, Pasupati Choulagai and Govind Bikram Shah. This committee has now presented their findings. According to them, the CDO of Banke should be immediately dismissed and action taken against him. Others against whom action is suggested are DSP Arun Kumar, and the chief of the jail Mohan Poudel.

The 15-page report contains all details pertaining to the case. It states the manner in which the report was filed, how facts were collected, and also mentions sources. It then gives its conclusion and recommendations.

Koirala must go

Burhabar, 24 January



"If the present Prime Minister Girma Koirala remains in office, this nation is going to face more problems. Therefore the UML demands the resignation of the PM. If he does not resign of his own will, the UML will then be forced to start protests in parliament and on the streets."

On the day Koirala was elected as president of his party, the standing committee of the UML decided to demand his resignation. The party general secretary, Madhav Nepal, chaired the meeting and they discussed the role that UML would have to play in the coming days and in the upcoming winter session of Parliament. This was stated in a signed press release, released by the Party recently.

The meeting decided that the NC had failed to do anything beneficial for the country. Instead of controlling corruption, stopping the reign of terror, dealing with the lack of security and the bad state of affairs, the NC was doing nothing and proving to be very incompetent. It added that although the PAC had proved that the PM was involved in the Lada Air case he is not accepting responsibility. He has also not been able to resolve the Maoist problem. It is also wrong to hand over the management of two major banks in the country to foreign management. The UML has decided to discuss these issues with various political parties and chart a future course of action.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

In the present situation, even when the fascist Girma government is carrying out major killings and resorting to terror, we reiterate our willingness to begin talks if the minimum atmosphere for dialogue is created.

-Maoist leader Prachanda in a statement issued on 28 January, reacting to the approval of the ordinance by King Bherendra to set up an Armed Police Force, Janadesh, 30 January.



"Pondering over a cabinet reshuffle." The lettering on the barrel reads "Lada Air Scandal".



Jana Bhawana Weekly, 29 January 2001

ABOUT TOWN

MOVIES

❖ **Caravan** A charity screening of the Oscar-nominated movie shot in the Dolpo region of Nepal. Funds raised from the show will go to Thinley Lundup Lama. Venue: Russian Culture Centre, Kamalpokhari.. 2 February 5.00 pm. Tickets Rs 200 and Rs 500. Available at the Shangrila Channel office in Sano Gaucharan and at the venue. 421611

❖ **Mon Oncle** (My Uncle) French movie with English sub-titles. Moliere Auditorium, Alliance Francaise, Thapathali. 4 February 2.00 pm. Free entry. 242832

❖ **Free movie** of your choice on big screen at The Conference Room, Gazabko Cocktail Café Marcopolo Hotel. 3 February 2.00 pm. 416432.

❖ **Nepali and Hindi movie** online ticket bookings at www.nepalshop.com

EATING OUT

❖ **Authentic Nepali Sekuwa (Barbecue)** Regular Friday night Sekuwa in the lamp-lit courtyard resumes 2 February at Dwarika's Hotel. Select your own appetisers, momos, salads and choice of meats as well as delicious desserts. Package includes one free drink and lucky draw. Reservations recommended. 479488

❖ **Chinese Food Festival** A month-long festival honouring the Year of the Snake offers a wide variety of authentic Chinese cuisine prepared by Chef Wong Jun from Chendu in Szechuan Until 22 February. Hotel Shangri La. 412999

❖ **Weekend Brunch** Mixed cuisine with a salad bar and desserts at The Fun Café, Radisson Hotel. 3 February 10:30am-2:30pm. Rs550 per person. 411818

❖ **Lavish Brunch** with free swimming at the Shambala Garden, Shangri-La Hotel. 12:00 noon to 3pm Rs750 with 25% discount for members. 435741

❖ **Chulo Batta** Nepali cuisine buffet lunch with live Nepali music at the Sunrise Cafe, Yak & Yeti Hotel. Rs700+tax. From 12 noon. Reservations. 248999.

MUSIC

❖ **Tranquil Tones** Mahayantra, the fusion trio of Navaraj Gurung, Sunil Bardewa and Manose Singh. Also playing Kala Premi, Chirag Bangdel, Rappaz Union. Hotel Shahanshah International, Dhapasi. 10 February 6.00 pm. Ticket Rs500. Available at Simply Shutters, Banu's, Maya's Cocktail Pub, G's Terrace, The Jump Club and the venue. Organised by Stimulus Advertisers.

❖ **Jazz** by Cadenza at Upstairs Restaurant, Lazimpat. Every Saturday 7.30 pm—10.00 pm.

❖ **Rock and Blues** Robin 'n' Looza play rock, blues, soul, and Nepali tunes at The Bamboo Club, Thamel. Every Friday evening.

❖ **Live Shows** Various bands at The Red Onion Bar, Lazimpat. Every evening. 416071

❖ **Chakra** The Piano Lounge at the Yak & Yeti Hotel. Every evening 7pm onwards. 248999

❖ **Unplugged** Syabru Lama plays guitar at the Coffee Shop, Hotel De l' Annapurna. Everyday 7.30pm—10pm. 221711

❖ **Classical Guitar** Kishor Gurung plays classical favourites at the Chimney, Hotel Yak & Yeti. Everyday 8pm onwards. 248999

DANCE

❖ **Classical Nepali Dances** based on Buddhist and Hindu epics and the Tantric pantheon at the Great Pagoda, Hotel Vajra. Every Tuesday, 7pm onwards. Rs300. 271545

❖ **Ballads and Dances of Old Tibet** performed by Tsering Gurmey and Tsering Paljor at the Naga Theatre, Hotel Vajra. Every Thursday, 7pm onwards. Rs400. 271545

❖ **Traditional Dances** every evening at Dwarika's Hotel courtyard. Enjoy drinks from a choice of two bars. No entrance charge, but reservations are recommended for diners. 479488.

EVENTS

❖ **Friends of the Bagmati River Meet** A gathering of concerned citizens to set up an project to develop a realistic and pro-active movement leading to a sustainable water restoration programme, and highlight the sacred waters of the Valley. Become a Friend by attending the monthly meetings. 4 February, 3 pm. Dwarika's Hotel. More information at dwarika@mos.com.np and 479488.

❖ **Weekend Painting Workshop** for children conducted by Cecile Houdret. Alliance Francaise, Thapathali. All day, 3 February. 241163.

❖ **Son Et Lumiere** A temple's tale as told by the temple itself. Classical dance and music in the temple courtyard followed by *Sita ko bhojan*—Sita's feast fit for Rama. Performers include Nassa Culture Academy, Nepal Music Academy and Instant Karma. Dwarika's Hotel. Rs1100 for adults and Rs800 for children. Fund-raiser for restoration of the temple. 24 February, Ramachandra Courtyard, Battisputali. Information and tickets at dwarika@mos.com.np and 479488.

EXHIBITION

❖ **Photo exhibition** marking 50 years of USAID in Nepal. 4-9 Februaty. Noon-5pm. Nepal Tourism Board Ethnic Exhibition Hall in Bhrikuti Mandap

TALKS

❖ **The Most Dangerous Place: India, Pakistan and the Bomb** Talks by Admiral (retd) L Ramdas and Sandip Pandey from India, and AH Nayyar and Zia Mian from Pakistan. Post-talk discussion and tea open to all. Baggikhana, Patan Dhoka. 2 February, 4.30 pm. Organised by Himal Association. 542544

SWASTHANI FESTIVAL

❖ The month-long Swasthani fast comes to an end 8 February evening, full moon night, at Sali river in Sankhu. Campers can pitch their camp along with the devotees. Puja by the river bank. To Sankhu: microbuses available from Boudha.

❖ **Swasthani Internet Festival** A cultural presentation by the Spiny Babbler Museum. Readings (in English, Nepali, Newari and Maithali), lectures, play, art- and photo-exhibition. More information at spinybabbler@info.com.np, www.spinybabbler.org. All day, 10 February. Spiny Babbler, Bakhundole. 542810

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

CLASSIFIED

Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre. Kamaladi. Reiki II 31 Jan—1 Feb. Video screenings, meditation, residential retreats, art workshops, yoga, dance, Reiki treatment. More info at 221875. www.dharmatours.com/hbmc

Sorbin Optics Ban Tole Tel 226194 Remember for sunglasses, frames, contact lenses and solution. Comfort Optics, Chhetrapati, Thamel. 266119.

House for rent Bhaisepati. Three ropanies. Three-storey building with dining, kitchen, three bedrooms, pool, servants quarters, guard room. Ring Prakash 981024199.

The most intricately carved statues in Kathmandu. Handmade Nepal, #211, Sanchaya Kosh Building, Trievi Marg,

Thamel. 253361. www.handamde-nepal.com

Exotic orchids for sale!!! Ring Dinesh or Pinki at 424877. Email dipi@infoclub.com.np

Soft toys, doll and flower-making. Six-month course Rs 4,000. Ring Shama at 521196.

For sale Kinetic Marvel scooter '98. Ring 270924 after 6 pm

Wanted mountain bike. 10-speed, not too fancy, in good condition. Email anaghan@rocketmail.com

Starting this week Nepali Times offers a Classified section. For insertions, ring NT Marketing at 543333-36.

NEPALI WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

No respite from this year's winter drought. That is a fine band of clouds bisecting the subcontinent this week, but it is moistureless. The really serious clouds are stuck out there over the Pamirs and show no signs of moving westwards. The central and eastern midhills of Nepal and the Tarai went through a rare completely-dry January although western Nepal got some snow last week. We can look forward to a clear but hazy weekend with balmy afternoons. After all, with Basanta Panchami, spring is officially here.

KATHMANDU

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
20-04	21-04	22-04	22-05	23-05

QUICKWORD 18

by CROSS EYES

WIN A 100 HOUR INFOCOM MILLENNIUM WORTH RS 3600/-

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MILLENNIUM CD

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Across

- Illegal and attractive (3)
- Friend of the court, partly (6)
- Mimic the simian (3)
- Kids' vehicle (6)
- Face a source of teenage angst (3)
- Black Sea port, filed away (6)
- Make furious (6)
- Sometimes a source of needles (3)
- Mao's great move (4)
- Steel alloy metal (2)
- Hospital worker (2)
- Send away annoyances with this insect in the ear (4)
- Any and sundry (3)
- Nash poem on wasters (6)
- Lounge lizard's shoe (6)
- Some Chinese callisthenics (3)
- Brazilian shaker (6)
- Same old bully (3)
- Patron saint of Scotland (6)
- Porker's writing implement (3)

Down

- Nutty eyes (5)
- Express ponderously (5)
- Four, sometimes fish (5)
- Excited chattering (4)
- Modulate, demodulate (5)
- Kill coldly (3)
- Moolah (4)
- Small part of Big Dipper (4)
- Stop (4)
- Yearly hire-purchase rate (3)
- FIFA for the Yanks (3)
- Not my girl, my sister's (5)
- Never-ending. There's no _ (2,3)
- Delete (5)
- "Orientals", American (5)
- Cleave the Kazakh capital (4)
- Take, only temporarily (4)
- Essential soul-food fat (4)
- Disappointing end to game (4)
- Pavilions sometimes are (3)

QUICKWORD ANSWER 17

G	O	D	S		E	G	I	S
A	P	I	A		I	G	L	O
M	E	S	H		C	O	A	T
E	N	C	A	S		E		
					R	I	B	L
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A	W	E		E	X	A	C	T
R	E	N	E	W		M	E	O
N	E	R	V	Y		A	N	T
S	T	Y	E			S	T	E

Of the three correct entries, the lucky winner is **Armila C. Shakya**

To send in your entries, please fill in the details below and fax to 977-1-521013, or email to crossword@himalmedia.com. Entries can be dropped off at Himalmedia Pvt Ltd, Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur.

Name.....

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A courtyard to the Buddha's memory

Permitting legend, it says, Gautam Buddha visited the valley of the gods to worship and teach soon after he attained enlightenment. That some of his disciples visited Kathmandu is recorded in Buddhist scriptures which mention an exchange of messages between the Buddha and Ananda. The barefooted disciples were so tortured by the rocky paths and the intense cold of the Kathmandu valley, they asked permission to wear shoes. This was granted by the Master after much apparent consideration. No record of his visit to the valley exists other than what hearsay attaches to incidents and hallowed spots. Like a small courtyard in Patan.

History would support Patan's claim to being a well founded city at the time of the Buddha. Legend has him received by the king of Patan with much rejoicing, festivity and display of largesse. The saintly Buddha declined the gifts heaped upon him by the king and his nobles, but he accepted a simple gift of food from an old woman and blessed her for it. Humbled by this incident, the king foresook his royal living, and labouring for many days as a blacksmith gave his earnings to the poor. When the Buddha heard of this royal parance, he baptised and blessed the king who came to him as a poor craftsman and at the same time blessed and honoured the entire caste of blacksmiths. Disputed, but widely upheld, is the belief that he bestowed upon them his own name, Sakya.

There is in Patan today a small courtyard built about a Buddhist *chaitya* which is believed to be the spot where this memorable event took place. Kneeling at the foot of the *chaitya* and facing the door of a small chapel are the stone figures of an an and two women simply attired, their hands folded in homage. Could they be the king and his consorts? The courtyard is known as Thum Baha and once a year the blacksmiths of Patan congregate here to celebrate,



No record of Buddha's visit to the Valley exists other than hearsay attached to hallowed spots. Like a small courtyard in Patan.

just as once a year a festival of feasting and worship centres about the place where the old woman blessed by the Buddha lived. I asked some people living in the courtyard about the history of the place. The two women smiling themselves said it was very important and wonderful but they

couldn't remember what it was. A child thought the kneeling stone figures were his grandfather and aunts. I might have imagined the amused look on the face of the all-seeing Buddha on a stupa overlooking the courtyard.

Swordous a story is surely built on fact, though there were scholars who cast doubt upon the Buddha ever having visited the Kathmandu valley. They would have us believe that the visit of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka centuries later is also unfounded, despite the fact that he is credited with building four stupas about the city of Patan to testify to its blessedness. They are still extant, three of them simple grass-covered mounds as they must have been when they were first built, and one encased in plaster with a painted spire. Interestingly, this embellished stupa stands close by the old bridge over which Tibetan traders came to Patan. One can imagine the offerings they lavished on so holy a shrine. Then there is the unshakable story that Ashoka gave his daughter Charumati in marriage to a local prince. Between them they raised the city of Dagatan, a conch call away from the great temple of Pashupatinath. Charumati was also responsible for building a vihara and stupa at adjoining Chabhill. The existing vihara though ancient has certainly not seen two centuries, but the stupa, if it were to yield up its

secrets, would surely remember the pious princess.

The heaviest concentration of Buddhists and Buddhist monuments is in Patan. The Sakyas are a prominent Buddhist caste. It is from among the Sakyas that the Virgin Goddess Kumari is selected. The Sakyas still shape wondrous images and work in metal. The sound of beaten metal fills many a Patan lane, but sadly the Sakya craftsmen are dying out. "There is not much future in the business," a young Sakya graduate told me. "The demand for fine arts and crafts is rapidly decreasing. Even the handmade household utensils my people produced are being replaced by factory-made products. Our young are turning to the import-export business. Or doing jobs like I'm doing. I'm an agriculturalist, with honours from foreign universities. When I have nothing better to do I take tourists around. I speak two foreign languages."

The young man took me to a ready temple being shuttered against the night. "Not long ago this place was open night and day. Now, even though we lock the gates there is the fear of thieves coming over the rooftops." Did he believe in the Buddha's coming?

"That's a awfully long time ago," he said. ♦

(Excerpted with permission from In the Kingdom of the Gods, HarperCollins, 1999.)

Artists without borders

A group of international artists is using Nepali material for a traveling exhibition called Made in Nepal: 2001.

Using Nepali paper, natural pigments and dyes, a group of European and South Asian artists are currently in Nepal producing abstract paintings of extraordinary range and depth. For each artist in this collective enterprise, a dominant characteristic is at play: for Jac Gijzen it is energy; for Peter Schenk, it is space; for Rob De Graaf, it is dynamic order; for Prakash Chandwadkar, it is the originating thrust of the stroke, and for Laila Mookerjee, it is the priority of colour. Together their work portrays the possibilities of abstract art. Some paintings are already on display at Siddhartha Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited and work in progress can be seen through 7 February across the street at the Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal.



Details of melancholia & mother's Apron-2001 by Rolf Klunter

The artists intend to exhibit throughout the world, expanding the number of participants, using abstraction to explore the guiding theme of the project they have initiated: "Beyond borders and boundaries". Paralleling their borderless journey is an inward exploration of the psyche and the world it encounters through colour and form. Though this is a group enterprise the questions raised and the execution of their painting is decidedly and idiosyncratically individual. We can determine this for ourselves by visiting the artists as they work. The completed exhibit, including an installation by Rolf Klunter, known for his work on Nepali paper, can be seen at 4 pm on 8 February.

The viewer can gain from the openness of this project not only insight into the execution of abstract art, but a genuine appreciation of what is at stake for the artist in his work. The work-in-progress displays a confrontation with an inner state that has as its basis a common underpinning, and yet an individual characterization and resolution. Even as the artists are speaking of the world, of nature and of human emotion, their mode of expression establishes a universal system of signs based on the interplay of colour, shape, space and movement. Jac Guijzen, drawn to Hindu and Buddhist symbolic sources, establishes a dynamic that is shocking and playful. Intensely embodied in his colours, he places himself in a dimension that holds together through the encounter and stasis of his circles, squares and oblong shapes.

Peter Schenk like a Zen contemplative at the river's edge knows well how all things fall in place over time, if one allows space its due. His emotions do not crowd the paper he works on, yet emotion is evoked, and through whatever arises, always human in its reading, a balance is achieved. Rob De Graaf establishes within the framework of his painting a confrontation with chaos that is always orderly. One can hear the music behind this dynamic of circles and organic forms. Jac Guijzen works where the elements are in turmoil, Peter Schenk where they are in harmony, Rod De Graaf where they are performing a suite. The syncopation of his ordered chaos charms the viewer, already charmed by the pastel allure of his paper.



Himalayan woman - 2001 by Peter Schenk

Prakash Chandwadkar feels embodied entering the painting through the movement of the brush against paper, and the encounter of paint with paper replicates his inner world. For Laila Mookerjee, the absence of stroke, the absorbing of stroke into colour, the merging of colour into light, a sheen of many colours, a single evocation of color establishes a world of primal beauty. Here the courage of Jac's and Prakash's work and the harmonies of Peter's and Rob's work are unified and transcended. What Rolf's installation will add to this exhibit we can only assume will be the richness of the Nepali paper he works on and his sure sense of how to use that medium to advantage, with colour, with simple form and the elaborate interplay of both.

This project offers to the viewer an opportunity to enter the rich and unfolding world of the abstract artist.

Siddhartha Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited
Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal



MIN BAURACHARYA

The kneeling figures remain but the beautiful backdrop is now obscured by buildings.

Bookies used cookies

Former Pakistan Test star Qasim Qmar has claimed that a bookmaker enticed players in New Zealand and Australia to throw matches by providing them with prostitutes. Chief International Cricket Council (ICC) corruption investigator Sir Paul Cordon has been given names and phone numbers of 23 women by Qmar, who played 28 tests for Pakistan in the 1980s.

According to *The Observer*,

Cordon, a former head of the London Metropolitan Police, and his investigative team, will take the list with them when they travel to Melbourne for the ICC quarterly meeting next month. The investigation team, mostly former police officers, will brief the meeting before seeking to interview call girls and bookmakers on the list. On the same trip, they will interview former New Zealand captain Martin Crowe, one of several star

batsmen accused by Indian bookmaker Mukesh Gupta of receiving cash for match-fixing information. Crowe has denied the allegation. Qmar, now living in Britain, told investigators about the sex-for-match-fixing set-up, claiming that from the mid-1980s, an Australian bookmaker in Sydney supplied prostitutes to players. "Qmar has also provided information about an identical sex scandal in New Zealand, again



The match fixing controversy takes a new turn, with a former cricketer alleging that players were bought with sex.

organised by a bookmaker, who has been named," *The Observer* said. A spokesman for the investigation confirmed that there was a list, and that it would be among information taken to Australia.

Qmar has alleged that prominent players, including team captains, had sex with the women. In Australia, prostitutes included a doctor, nurse, travel agent and a "glamorous" television presenter, the newspaper said. All were Australian, apart from one Pakistani and a Chinese. The new

revelations come as law enforcement agencies and cricket bodies seek to determine how deep-rooted match fixing is.

Scotland Yard's Serious Crime Squad is already looking into charges made by former England all-rounder Chris Lewis, that he was approached by Indian sports promoter Aashim Khetarpal to help throw a test against New Zealand in Manchester in 1999. Qmar has alleged that batsmen were paid up to £3600 for throwing their wicket away, and received lavish presents as extra perks. One world-class

batsman, who he named to investigators, was offered £9000 to go out cheaply in the first four tests of a five-test series. He also named an Asian bowler who underperformed in several matches in Australia, because he needed money to finish building a house.

The six-strong investigation team, which started its work in September, hopes to present an interim report to the ICC by mid-2001. It has been given three years by the ICC to root out corruption and advise how it could be culled from the game. ♦



THE FULBRIGHT & THE EAST-WEST CENTER SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2000-2001

The Fulbright Program is the premier international exchange between the United States and Nepal. It offers a wide range of opportunities for students, scholars, and professionals to study, conduct research, and gain cultural experience in the United States. The Fulbright Program is administered by the Fulbright Commission in Nepal, which is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting international understanding and cooperation. The program is open to citizens of Nepal who are at least 21 years of age and have a minimum of a bachelor's degree. The program offers a wide range of opportunities, including study, research, and professional development. The program is highly competitive and is open to citizens of Nepal who are at least 21 years of age and have a minimum of a bachelor's degree. The program is administered by the Fulbright Commission in Nepal, which is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting international understanding and cooperation.

General Requirements for Entering the Competition

All applicants must:

1. possess Nepalese citizenship;
2. demonstrate a minimum of 60% aggregate marks in post-secondary fields (Humanities and Social Sciences) or at least 60% aggregate marks in science and technical fields (minimum requirements under separate system are 60% and 75% respectively);
3. be under 40 years of age as of the application filing deadline date (March 30, 2001);
4. be eligible for a U.S. visa;
5. possess the equivalent of a U.S. bachelor's degree (i.e., at least six years of study beyond high school);
6. have at least three years (for most of one year for holders of postsecondary degrees, full-time, professional work experience in an area closely related to their chosen field of study as of the application filing deadline date (March 30, 2001);
7. present a letter (or letters) from employer(s) that confirm applicant's position(s) and years of employment with the employer(s) (letters submitted by government and university employees should also indicate permission to apply for leave time leave for at least two years); and

B. Have academic merit.

Note: Individuals holding master's degrees equivalent to a U.S. master's degree should not apply to the Fulbright program, but may apply to the grant program. Applicants must submit documentary evidence for items No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 above.)

Application Forms

Application forms and detailed information regarding the competition are available from the Fulbright Commission (USE/Nepal) website and at the United States Office in the American Center, Government, Kathmandu, the Ministry of Education, the National Planning Commission, Tribhuvan University, Nepal's Office, Kathmandu University, Kathmandu Office, and with various private and public sector organizations. Applications and information may also be obtained and downloaded from the web site: www.fulbrightnepal.com.np

If you have any questions, write to one of the Question & Answer sessions. There will be two sessions, one on Wednesday, February 1st, at 8:00 p.m. and one on Thursday, February 2nd, at 4:00 p.m. Both Q&A sessions will be held at the US Office in the American Center, Government, Kathmandu, the Ministry of Education, the National Planning Commission, Tribhuvan University, Nepal's Office, Kathmandu University, Kathmandu Office, and with various private and public sector organizations. Read over the application and instructions before coming to a session.

Application forms must be taken out from the US Office by 5:00 p.m. Friday, March 23, 2001. No applications will be given out after this date. Postcards, photocopies, computer applications must reach the Fulbright Commission (USE/Nepal) no later than 5:00 p.m. Friday, March 30, 2001. Late applications or applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

Vacancy Announcement German Agency for Technical Cooperation Health Sector Support Programme



The GTZ supported Health Sector Support Programme (HSSP) invites applications from qualified Nepalese citizens for the following positions in the Physical Assets Management Project (PAMP).

1. Civil Engineer

Major responsibilities of the position

- Carry out technical aspects of physical infrastructure including maintenance practices in various public hospitals and other health institutions as advised by the Team Leader.
- Assist Government institutions in design and cost estimates including bills of quantity for construction and/or renovation of physical facilities within public health sector.
- Prepare contracts for external service providers in accordance with regulations.
- Supervise and monitor the implementation of the terms of the contracts.
- Prepare periodic reports.
- Assist in the development of training curriculum and material for physical infrastructure maintenance training and other required training for health personnel.
- Participate in the training of health personnel in the maintenance and repair of physical infrastructure including application of Maintenance Management Information Systems.
- Support Health Institutions and Management Development Division (HIMDD) in strengthening their institutional capacities.
- Support HHC and HHC in strengthening their institutional capacity to better manage health facilities concerning M&M activities.

Qualification and Experience

- A Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering from a recognized university with minimum of 5 years experience in a related occupation.
- Experience in maintenance of building, civil materials and costing.
- Experience in Hospital building and infrastructure would be an added advantage.

2. Biomedical Engineer

Major Responsibilities of the position

- Carry out technical aspects of medical equipment and their installation including start-up and maintenance practices in various public hospitals and other health institutions as advised by the Team Leader.
- Conduct inventory of medical equipment including their status using prescribed format.
- Initiate comprehensive condition of medical equipment using international nomenclature.
- Carry out on-site repair of medical equipment at the hospitals and at other locations as and when requested.
- Provide advice on installation of equipment to the hospital authorities with particular focus on power supply requirements, proper setting, etc.
- Assist in the development of training curriculum and material for Planned Preventive Maintenance training, user training and other training to be decided from time to time.
- Participate in the training of health personnel in the maintenance and repair of medical equipment as resource person including application of Maintenance Management Information Systems.

Qualification and Experience

- A Bachelor's Degree in Biomedical/Biomedical Engineering from a recognized university with minimum of five years practical experience in hospital technology management.
- Demonstrated ability in maintaining maintenance management systems.
- Demonstrated ability in repair and maintenance of medical equipment.

Minimum requirements for both the posts

- Working knowledge of computer (Microsoft MS Word and MS Excel)
- Good English and Nepali language proficiency
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills
- Willingness and ability to work in a team
- Willingness and ability to travel and stay in remote areas
- Good dependent and personal skills
- Candidates should be ready to take immediate charge

Salary and conditions will correspond to GTZ standard rates for locally employed staff for both positions. Women are encouraged to apply.

Application Procedures: Interested candidates who meet the above qualification criteria may apply with full CV and three recent passport size photographs by February 10, 2001 to Physical Assets Management Project, P.O. Box 1402, Kathmandu, Nepal (marked "GTZ/2001" for the specific post at the top of the CV). Only short listed candidates will be called for the interview. Telephone inquiries will not be considered.

Rana renaissance

SUJATA TULADHAR

Call it an architectural museum, Rana-era pastiche or a masterful reproduction of period pieces, Baber Mahal Revisited is the story of an unimaginable transformation—from cowshed to a palace look-alike shopping mall. The man behind the venture, Gautam Rana-Gitau, puts it better. He calls the complex a phoenix that has risen from its ashes.

Five years ago, the remains of a cowshed and guardhouse stood on the land that Gitau owned in the Baber Mahal area. All that changed when Gitau met an architecture graduate from Harvard, Eric Theophile, who had been involved in restoring historic buildings and temples in the Valley since 1990. Together they decided to bring this little corner of history back to life.

Ignoring lucrative offers to construct a high-rise, Gitau, a great-grandson of Babar Shahar Jung Bahadur Rana, instead turned it into a tribute to his Rana ancestors who introduced to Kathmandu a distinctive mélange of European and Indian architecture and married it with the local. Work began in 1996, and in eighteen months the incredible transformation was complete.

Inside, the five courtyards and the buildings surrounding them, the décor and the aura, all speak of nostalgia for the style of the Ranas, who ruled Nepal between 1846-1951. But this is nostalgia with a very modern face at

BVR everything is a copy of something else. The entrance, for example, is a reduced replica of Singha Durbar porch. All the courtyards resemble some or the other palaces of the Valley. All this reproduction was done with no compunction. Gitau, early on into the conversation, makes a perceptive strike at the regular rant against reproduction architecture. "Authenticity is not the motive behind this building. There is no such thing as an original whether in painting or architecture," explains Gitau. Besides, this sort of catholic borrowing is in keeping with the history of Nepali architecture in the last two centuries. In fact, recreations like these are needed, given the abject conditions of palaces scattered across the Valley.

The Newari Chowk explores the hybrid Nepali-European architecture once abundant in Patan. The touch of "authenticity", if that's what you're after, comes from the windows, all salvaged from houses marked for demolition in the old city. There's another Chowk whose façade is a copy of Thapathali Durbar, the former residence of Jung Bahadur Rana. "If ever the Thapathali Durbar should come down, I want people to remember the Mughal touch so beautifully incorporated through this chowk," says Gitau. The façade is beautiful indeed but it is the small touches—like the *patra* placed in the middle of this chowk—that really make the building. There is another



PICS COURTESY BABER MAHAL REVISITED

The rather masterful reproduction of Rana-era structures in Baber Mahal Revisited is about copying intelligently.

courtyard with a replica of a fountain in Keshar Mahal, and another with the recreation of a wall in Bal Mandir. The best of these, however, is the Mil Chowk where the front on one side is a replica of Baber Mahal Durbar. This is the biggest courtyard and the hub for social gatherings and functions. A tree in the middle with a *chatar* built around it provides a comfortable link with the past. The two busts, one of Babar Shahar, and the other of Aditya Shahar, Gitau's father, add an individual and controversial take on Nepali history to this courtyard. The rooftops have an interesting gingerbread decoration of tin sheets copied from Hotel Shankar.

From the entrance, with its terracotta brick (*telia*) floor, an aura of aristocratic sophistication and crisp architectural perfection strikes the visitor. Gitau credits this to six Newari craftsmen, all in their sixties, whom he calls Gurjus. "Nobody can fault this construction because it has been built by traditional craftsmen who are specialists in this kind of work," says Gitau. The great grandfathers of these craftsmen built the Baber Mahal

Durbar, and the tradition continues.

BMR isn't just about perfecting the craft of reproduction, though. Creativity and innovation are integral parts of the project. No two buildings are of the same height. Some are single-storied others two, but even the ones with the same number of floors are not of equal height. At one corner, a tower has been added. At another, the roof raised. The level variations are applied on the ground too. A tour around the complex makes one step up and down frequently. The idea, as explained, was to break the monotony of the ground and make the complex look like a small city in itself. The Mil Chowk, especially, was built 6 feet below ground level. Consequently, drainage could have posed a problem but the tried and tested architecture of the past came in handy again. With the help of perforated slate tiles, the water flow was diverted internally to a pond outside the complex area. Enlivening the space are the odd stone idol, a pair of metal lions or a lamp placed in the *galli*.

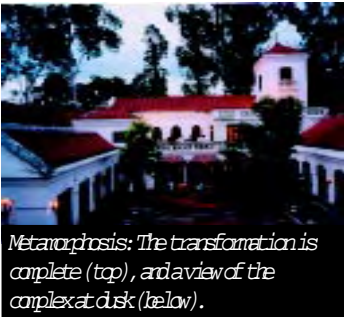
The use of materials like mud mortar and lime plaster for the walls

and metal sheets for the roof brought down construction costs to \$432,000, a major portion borne by Gitau himself while the remaining came as a loan from Himalayan Bank. That cost, the owner believes, is much lower than constructing a modern reinforced concrete frame structure.

An architectural accomplishment no doubt, but what of its commercial prospects? Apart from housing three restaurants and a bar, the complex has several interesting shops, selling a range of products from ware Nepali and other Asian arts and crafts to music-sculptures, paintings, earthenware, copperware, paper products, jewellery, *gate* (traditional glass beads) to CDs. "I wanted it to be a place where a variety of cultures thrived under one roof without being too expensive," says Gitau. But how well is that working?

BMR attracts a minimum of 50 people each day, mostly expatriates and affluent Nepalis, and a negligible number of tourists who stumble upon it through travel magazines. But more often they come to the restaurants than to shop around. So, there are days when shops have no customers at

all. For some strange reason, most Nepalis seem to prefer regular old shops to the ones within the soothing ambience of the complex. Is it because the stores are expensive in BMR? "Not at all," says Caroline of Naya Rasal, "Prices here are the same as in any other of our outlets." Other shop owners feel the same way, but it's obvious that business at other outlets is much better. "Why do people think a clean, beautiful and minimalist place must always be expensive?" argues Gitau. Could it be that BMR has been so successful in re-creating the Rana era so well that the complex exudes too aristocratic a feel? That could be why Baber Mahal Revisited remains an exemplary architectural museum but is yet to achieve commercial success. ♦



Metamorphosis: The transformation is complete (top), and a view of the complex at dusk (below).



PHOTOGRAPH BY DHIRUBA ALE

A STAR IS BORN: Thinley Lhundup Lama of Caravan Fare peeps out from a heap of khadas at a felicitation ceremony organised by residents of Boudha.



PHOTOGRAPH BY DHIRUBA ALE

FANCY FOOTWORK OFF THE MOUNTAIN: Multiple Everest summiteers (l-r) Babu Chhiri, Kaji and Appa Shrestha practise for their charity match against Nepali film artists.



PHOTOGRAPH BY MIN BAJRACHARYA

WOMEN OF THE MAGAR WORLD UNITE: Procession taken out by participants of the first national convention of the Nepal Magar Women Association.

Sharp



Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

DECLASSIFIED ADS

❖ CONGRATULATIONS

Heartfelt felicitation and cordial congratulation to Ghanashyam for his grand success in being awarded a Canadian tourist visa on his fourth try. We wish you all the best in your later life. Hope you never come back! Your loving family, Pappu, Mammu, sister Chandikumari and brother Rame.

❖ VACANCY

A reputed Landlocked Himalayan Kingdom with a land area of 56,000 sq miles is seeking a motivated Chief Sub-contractor to take over the country under a Build Operate Transfer Scheme. Candidate should have at least ten years experience in a senior executive position governing a city-state in southeast Asia that has banned chewing gum. Applicants answering to the name "Lee Kuan Yew" (or words to that effect) will be given special preference. Must have experience in flogging the buttocks of corrupt officials by inflicting at least 35 lashes with a wet rattan cane—on each cheek. Since we received only one application for the post in response to a similar ad in this paper last week from someone named "Baby Doc" (disqualified for not giving his real name) we are asking anyone who feels even remotely interested in taking up this challenging make-or-break post to apply. Please, please, please, please. Should be fluent in English, French, German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, Esperanto and also be a celebrated rocket scientist, a brain surgeon of international repute, and should hold a PhD in Medical Anthropology and/or Particle Physics. Ability to speak Nepali will be an added advantage. Candidate must be over 70 years of age, but exceptions can be made for those older than 80 if uniquely qualified. Although women are encouraged to apply, they will do so at their own peril.

Salary: Negotiable. Perks, benefits and side incomes as per standard operating procedure. Walk-in interview. Come with CV and notarised astrological certification to Singha Durbar West Gate by Friday afternoon.

❖ CAR FOR SALE

A 1996 Mitsubishi Pajero in top condition belonging to an ex-MP is for sale in as-what-is condition to raise money for political horse-trading. Duty not paid, and has failed three successive emission tests. Vehicle can be inspected in the parliament car park and towed away by the highest bidder.

❖ JET WANTED

Royal Nepal Airlines is floating another global tender for the moist lease of a jet in the colours of an obscure European airline to augment its rapidly-expanding collection of second-hand aircraft from international suppliers. Tender for each aircraft should be received by the undersigned by Saturday afternoon with separate earnest money in a sealed envelope. The envelopes shall be opened next week in secret at an undisclosed location. The bidder whose earnest money is found to be highest shall be awarded the contract immaterial of the actual tender amount pledged. No questions should be asked, and none will be entertained. Jet in question will get indefinite free parking at Kathmandu airport, and will not actually have to fly anywhere since there are no passengers to fly.

❖ HATS WANTED

Nepal Hat House is looking for exotic new hats for supply to an eccentric new client with hat fetish who is fast running out of supplies. Interested parties should apply in person with sample headgears in triplicate. ♦

NEPALI SOCIETY

Lochan



Lochan Bhattarai was scintillating last week on *Shree Panchami*—the festival dedicated to the goddess of learning, Saraswati. Her latest album, *Lochan Bhattarai at Patan Durbar*, was being formally released by Nepal's senior musical figure Natji Kaji. The album contains 16 songs which she sang to welcome the Nepali New Year 2057 at the ancient Keshav Narayan courtyard of the Patan Museum last April. The concert opened up new doors to Nepali musicians to organise live concerts in such exotic settings. The new album was released at the same place as the New Year concert.

At the ceremony, poet Durga Lal Shrestha said it all: "A good lyricist should not let any unnecessary word seep in. And a good singer should always understand the poetry within. Lochan's compositions are good music through and through." Lochan started her professional singing career 14 years ago. Later it was the song *Tada tada nabhai jau timi* which brought her fame. She now has many singles, duets, soundtracks and folk songs, apart from the CD album *Swor*.

Lochan also reflects Nepal's incredible ethnic

diversity in her own life: she was born to a Bahun father and Magar mother. Husband Chakra Khadka is a lecturer at Patan College. "He is my mentor. My inspiration and above all a great soul friend who has always given me the warmth and support at all times," she says. Close friends call Charkraji a "house-husband" of the family.

With modern music and satellite television, Lochan is worried about Nepali folk music turning feeble. "Nepali *Adhunik* uses lot of Hindustani *raag* base," she says. "But there are many folk tunes and melodies we can add to our own style of *raag*. In fact it has become necessary to compile all the folk tunes and write them in music script." Lochan has already taken up the preservation of Nepali folk as a personal crusade. She feels that once

folk tunes are written in scripts they can be categorised and musicians can keep on adding improvisations till the whole thing turns into a *raga* of a new genre.

Apart from being known as a versatile singer—singing folk and *Adhunik* in various ethnic languages, Lochan has a green thumb as well. Her small house in Min Bhavan has a verdant terrace that can be called the "Hanging Garden of Patan". Lochan likes to say she shares her house not only with her husband and a son, but also with the 500 or so flowering plants and creepers of 50 species. "Before I leave for any of my shows I touch these plants and energise myself. It is almost that we communicate spiritually," says Lochan. It certainly seems to help her music. ♦

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