

# NEPALI Times

NEPAL'S TOP NEWSPAPER

#48

22 - 28 June 2001

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Rs 20

## GO, MANGO ! 10,11,12



### Under My Hat Mental Clinic



EXCLUSIVE

## Sharpening knives

Parliament begins its budget session from Monday and King Gyanendra will address a joint sitting of both Houses soon after. There is a lot of business to catch up with: elect a third of the Upper House, approve the budget, pass critical bills including one to set up an anti-Maoist paramilitary force. The king's choice of four new Upper House MPs will be analysed for any hints of dramatic change in palace policy. Political parties are already sharpening their knives to resume their harassment of Prime Minister Girija Koirala. This time, they are expected to focus on his perceived mishandling of the post-royal massacre scenario. But the main opposition UML's position on the massacre has now diverged from three of its six member left alliance.

Koirala is also regrouping, resuming his strategy to rope in party dissidents. He may even consider quitting if the opposition parties let the budget pass. "He's not the type to go under pressure," one Koirala aide told us. "But if they leave him alone, he may be tempted to go." The centre-right RPP is also caught between the two big players: Surya Bahadur Thapa, president, wants the RPP to vote with the UML in the National Assembly. But Rabinendra Nath Sharma wants the party to ally with the Congress. Thapa has already expelled two Sharma supporters. Another RPP leader Pasupati Rana—Devyani's father—has more important family matters to take care of.

The other issue that could rally the opposition: the 4 June formulation of the "Public Security Regulations" giving local administrators powers to detain, arrest and restrict the movement of potential "troublemakers". Lawyers are challenging the rules in court.

1 June  
15:00

Prince Gyanendra leaves Chitwan for Pokhara by helicopter. He had arrived a week earlier for a field inspection of King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC) activities. From Pokhara he was to fly to the foothills Mt Manaslu to inaugurate micro-hydro plants and inspect projects.

16:00

After having a late lunch with his parents Crown Prince Dipendra drives to the National Sports Council's complex in Satdobato to check out preparations for the forthcoming national games. He stops at the swimming pool complex, the shooting range and the newly built squash courts.

17:30

Dipendra returns to the palace to accompany his parents to a tea gathering at the house of the Bada Gurju in Dilli Bazar.

18:30

The royal family returns to the palace after which King Birendra goes to his office and Queen Aishwarya to her bungalow. Dipendra heads to the Tribhuvan Sadan, where the family is to meet for dinner later in the evening. He tries some shots at the billiards table by himself, downs one or two pegs of Famous Grouse whiskey.

19:25

The crown prince sends his ADC away and royal invitees begin arriving soon after. Dipendra serves drinks to some of the early comers, and at 20:00 goes to fetch Queen Ratna. King Birendra arrives at 20:30 and spends some time with his mother. By then Dipendra is "intoxicated, stammering" and

# 4 DAYS, 3 KINGS

Nepali Times has pieced together this chronology of four days in June based on exclusive interviews with high-level sources, eyewitnesses and testimonies included in the probe panel report.

can't stand straight. His brother and cousins take him to his room. Dipendra talks about having discussed wedding plans with his mother and grandmother, and says both did not agree. He also says he will talk to his father on Sunday.

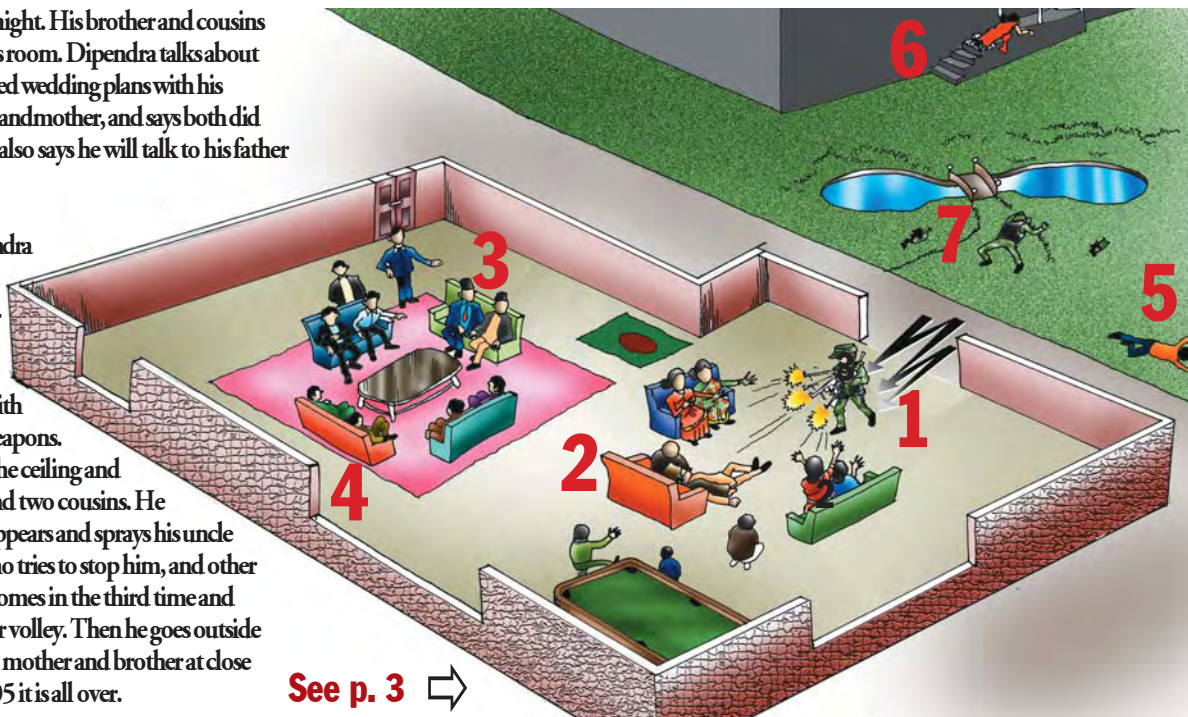
21:00

King Birendra enters the Billiard Room. Dipendra appears soon after, armed with at least four weapons. He shoots at the ceiling and at his father and two cousins. He backs out, reappears and sprays his uncle Dhirendra who tries to stop him, and other relatives. He comes in the third time and shoots another volley. Then he goes outside and shoots his mother and brother at close range. By 21:05 it is all over.

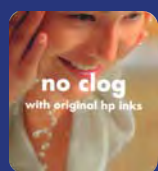
See p. 3 ➡

1 Crown Prince enters room several times 2 Sprays King Birendra repeatedly 3 Royal relatives rush to king's aid, some are killed 4 Others hide behind sofas 5 Nirajan is killed while shielding Queen Aishwarya 6 Queen's body found on landing 7 Dipendra is found near pond

GRAPHIC: BLASH RAI



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TESTIMONY

by DR UPENDRA DEVKOTA



## At Chhauni, 1-4 June 2001

The army jeep with red lights flashing banged into two cars on the street as it careened past the Bagmati Bridge intersection and pulled into Norvic hospital at about 2200 hrs on the night of 1 June. A uniformed royal ADC rushed out and whisked neurosurgeon Dr Upendra Devkota from his clinic. "The Crown Prince has bullet injuries, we are going to Chhauni," he told a dazed Dr Devkota. Cars, motorcycles and people struggled to get out of the way as the jeep, speeding sometimes at 80 km/h, made the journey from Thapathali to Chhauni in less than four minutes.

Following are excerpts from an exclusive Nepali Times interview with Dr Devkota about the unimaginable sight that greeted him at the trauma hall of the army hospital that Friday night, and his recollection of the events of the next three days:

The way the army chap was driving, I knew something was very wrong with the Crown Prince. At the hospital, there were military personnel swarming at the gate, people were running around. It is obvious in retrospect that those who brought me wanted me to go upstairs to the Crown Prince first, but others already there dragged me to the main hall for trauma victims. So some were saying this way doctor, others were saying upstairs doctor. All I knew till then was that the Crown Prince had bullet injuries. I

was shown into the hall and taken to the first patient on the left. He was extremely pale, blood-splattered beige kamij and suruwal, grey hair, a Sai Baba locket around his neck, he was being ambulated. I didn't know who this patient was, but I knew from a distance that he was lifeless. I looked at his eyes, felt his pulse, and said he's gone.

Dr Khagendra Shrestha then arrived and took me diagonally to the other side of the hall, murmuring: "Disaster, everybody has been massacred." There was a body covered with a

sheet. He lifted the sheet and said, "This is Her Majesty the Queen." The whole upper part of her head had been blown off. Before I could react, he took me to the next stretcher on the floor, and lifted the sheet, and said: "This is His Royal Highness Prince Nirajan, gone already. This is Princess Sarada."

By this time, I'd seen enough. He took me to the next stretcher where a patient was still being resuscitated and he said, "Princess Sruti". At last I saw someone still alive. But she was in poor shape, her heart was barely beating, pulse was not palpable, after a quick look there were no obvious external injuries, so at first glance it could have been internal bleeding or a nemothorax. But there were doctors looking after her and there was no head injury, so Dr Shrestha rushed me off back to the same first very pale patient with the Sai Baba locket I had seen while coming in, and he said: "This is His Majesty."

See p. 6 ➡

Hotline: 523050



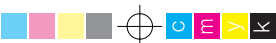
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## ELVIS IS ALIVE

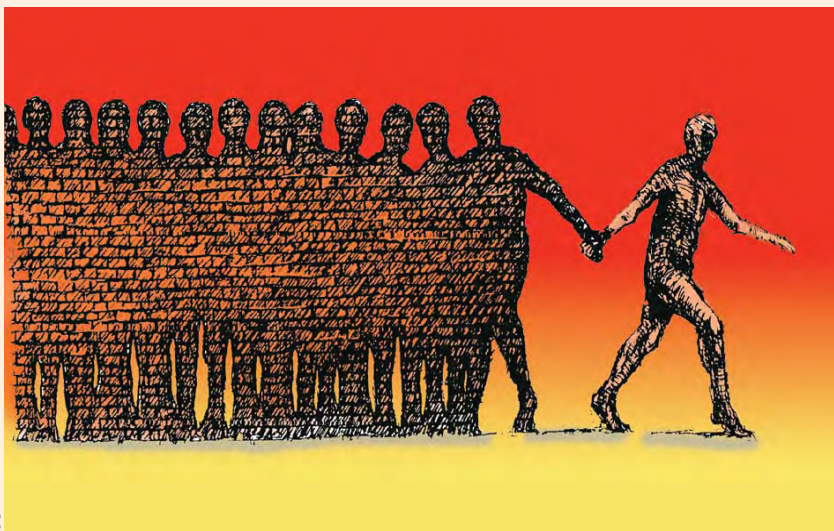
You can easily wake up people who are asleep. But it is more difficult to wake up someone pretending to sleep. We are still in denial: because we think the plausible is not possible. Numbed by shock, starved of facts, we just don't want to believe the awful truth. Our hunger for credible information is incredible. But there we have it: this was not a crime of ambition, it was a crime of passion. Helped along by mind-altering chemicals, a fatal fetish for firearms, an unbending and unreasonable family, an attachment so consuming that everything—even the kingdom—was secondary. (A circular etymological reality brings us back to square one: the word "assassin" is derived via Medieval Latin and French from the Arabic "hashsashin", someone who smokes hashish).

The Keshab Prasad Upadhaya probe committee report put a lot of doubts to rest about the question of responsibility. By Nepali standards, and given the limited time frame, this was a remarkably thorough job. But because it was raw, there was often contradictory information, there were bound to be holes. The rambling, unedited testimonies are rich in imprecise trivia (red sari, black substance) and poor in vital details. Why were post mortems not carried out, was Dipendra's blood tested for narcotics and alcohol? If not, why not? Besides, motive was not in the probe panel's terms of reference.

To put these questions to rest and to bolster the facts we know to be true, the government, the palace and parliament must get the ball rolling on a long-term, all-encompassing and independent commission of inquiry with wider terms of reference. These must include a test of the existing frozen plasma sample to determine the nature of the narcotics, if any, in it. It must examine the then Crown Prince's medical and psychological past, whether or not he was on anti-depressants and what type of narcotics he had taken, there must be a thorough forensic and ballistic re-examination of the evidence, a probe into possible motive(s).

One investigation is not enough. There will be a tendency to brush awkward royal secrets under the carpet, to keep princely peccadilloes under wraps. But the need to find the absolute truth about what happened at Narayanhiti on the night of 1 June is not just a royal matter anymore—this kingdom's future is tied up with it. No doubt, an investigation on this scale cannot be done in three days or a week. It may even take a year. And despite that the case will not completely close. But another, more comprehensive, investigation of this type will satisfy a lot more people. Theories of imperialist plots and masked gunmen will endure. Like those who think Elvis is still alive and those who think that Lee Harvey Oswald was innocent, conspiracists will always be among us.

As for the rest of us: let us now at least pretend to be awake.



## PSYCHOANALYSING A NATION

(From: *Critical Theory Today* by Lois Tyson. Garland, 1999)

"Our unconscious desire not to recognise or change our destructive behaviour—because we have formed our identity around it and because we are afraid of what we will find if we examine it too closely—is served by our defences. Defences are the processes by which we keep the repressed repressed in order to avoid knowing what we feel we can't handle knowing.

Defences include *selective perception* (hearing and seeing only what we feel we can handle), *selective memory* (modifying our memories so that we don't feel overwhelmed by them or forgetting painful events entirely), *denial* (believing that the problem does not exist or the unpleasant incident never happened), *avoidance* (staying away from people or situations that are liable to make us anxious by stirring up some unconscious—i.e., repressed—experience or emotion), *displacement* ("taking it out" on someone or something less threatening than the person who caused our fear, hurt, frustration, or anger), and *projection* (ascribing our fear, problem, or guilty desire to someone else, and condemning them for it, in order to deny that we have it ourselves)."



### STATE OF THE STATE

by CK LAL

# From regal to royal

Was the head of government not allowed to accompany the head of state in the royal carriage because his head wasn't shaved?

**I** imagine an ace conservationist next to a stuffed tiger frozen in an upright attack position. Or sitting with his shoes resting on a snow leopard pelt in the royal audience chamber. And then put his personal friends in the Worldwide Fund for Nature in the picture. Shocking? It would have been, but nothing about Narayanhiti shocks us anymore.

In the days when the competition between a carnivorous animal and a hunter (with nothing more than a spear in his hands) was more or less even, game trophies symbolised human triumph over beasts. Tribal chieftains decorated their camps with the heads of dead animals to intimidate possible competitors. However, after the Chinese invented gunpowder and Indians trained elephants in *kheda*, hunting was reduced to little more than a blood sport with little connection to providing nutrition to the hunter.

Ownership of stuffed animals—along with mink coats and shahtoosh shawls—is not considered politically correct anymore. In fact, displaying the fur of endangered species is in downright bad taste. The interior decorators of Narayanhiti have always been known for their bias towards kitsch. A constitutional king who is a hunter-turned-conservationist does not need these props, they are more suited to absolute monarchs or Bollywood baddies. Even in the mumbo jumbo of superstition, vibrations emanating from stuffed animals constitute bad Feng Shui, and it's inauspicious Vastu to let game trophies cast dark shadows over the occupants of a palace.

Décor reminiscent of a bygone era is bad enough, but worse is the tyranny of dead traditions, archaic language and antiquated customs. The institution of monarchy is not only a link with the past, it gives sustenance to a society in the turbulence of the present and promises to inspire its journey towards an uncertain future. Such an important institution should not be allowed to remain prisoner to the palace bureaucracy. Courtiers, by their very nature, are more interested in preserving the status quo (their own interests are tied with it) than ensuring that the king becomes a personification of the zeitgeist.

What is given continuity in the name of hoary traditions are nothing more than antiquated customs borne out of dead habits of ancestors. All that an arcane ritual

like making a priest eat the forbidden meal (*katto*) and then chasing him out of the Valley does is get us coverage in the international press. Souls of departed kings could do without the tears of priests made outcast by their greed.

There is nothing wrong per se with the practice of Hindus going around town with tonsured heads to show their grief. It is a relatively innocent practice, and barbers did their bit by agreeing to provide free service to those willing to have their heads shaved in the first week of June. But the government made a mockery of this custom when it issued a formal order that forced all male civil servants to become skinheads.

When we didn't see the Prime Minister in the carriage of the newly crowned king, one of the explanations doing the rounds of Kathmandu's notorious rumour-mill was that the head of government was not allowed to accompany the head of state in the royal carriage because his head wasn't shaved. Such is the stranglehold of fossilised tradition over our psyche that many of us believed this seemingly ludicrous interpretation of a very conspicuous lapse on the part of the palace officials.

The Prime Minister and leader of the opposition in the *Pratinidhi Sabha* offering coins to the newly crowned king appeared cabalistic to the whole world watching this sombre event on their television screens. This custom must have been important when feuding nobles and squabbling courtiers paid their tributes and took an oath of continuing allegiance, but it looked less than respectful towards the elected representatives of the sovereign people. Perhaps more comfortable at raising his fist,

comrade Madhav Nepal looked distinctly ill at ease carrying out this ritual *darshan* of a constitutional head of state of a kingdom where he himself is an elected and popular leader.

There are scores of other practices that have clearly outlived their utility and need to be reformed to suit the needs of the Internet age. To take a glaring example, when grief is a matter of the heart, why close the mind for thirteen days in a row? Over the decades,

the official mourning period has been decreasing from one year to forty-five days and then to one month and finally to thirteen days where it rests now. Maybe if we reduced it to a day, or three days at the most, it will make the lives of daily wage earners less miserable and they will bless the departed souls in right earnest? The well-off had their ATM cards to extract cash, but the rest of us had to borrow around.

There are some less obvious vestiges of past dogma. Unless someone in the palace now tells the bosses of state-controlled media that the head of state of Tuvalu (area: 10 sq m, population 9,100) congratulating our king on his enthronement is not headline news, the poor bureaucrats are unlikely to dare discontinue the tradition which says that any news that has the name of His Majesty in it is headline news. And if the new king doesn't change this, no one else will do so anytime soon.

In anything that concerns the king or the palace, there is nothing that anybody other than the king himself can do. It is for the king to drag the palace establishment from the shackles of the past and set it on a course that will make the Nepali monarchy a modern, relevant institution that plays a catalytic role in social transformation, economic development and political stability of this country. Our monarchy doesn't need to rely on that poor stuffed tiger in the corner standing on its hind legs with a permanent, silent roar on its face to prove itself. Nepal's monarchy has its place in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990; and even more importantly, in the hearts of common Nepalis. ♦





From p. 3 ➡

21:20  
The first injured start arriving at the army hospital in Chhauni. In the confusion no one thinks about informing the prime minister. Raj Sabha chairman Keshar Jung Rayamajhi is alerted (by whom he does not say) at 21:45 and the police chief Pradeep Sumshere Rana at 21:15 by the ADC office. The Army Chief reaches the hospital at 22:10, and the home secretary finds out at only 23:00 or so.

21:30  
In Pokhara a surviving royal family member rings Prince Gyanendra at Himgriha and, so as to not to worry him too much, just says there has been a shooting. As he prepares to leave by road, the prince gets another call at 22:00. It is Brig Tika Dhamala, who says there had been an accident, and he is needed at the hospital and a helicopter is on its way to fetch him. The prince is asked not to leave until the helicopter arrives. He waits until two in the morning by which time he has been told what happened.

22:50  
Keshar Jung Rayamajhi calls Prime Minister Girija Koirala and tells him the king had a “serious heart attack”. Is that what he was told? If he knows what really happened, why doesn’t he give the correct information? Koirala dresses to go to the hospital when Pashupati Maharjan, chief palace secretary, comes to get him. One the way to the palace Maharjan tells Koirala that the king was shot. The two stop briefly at the palace for a briefing by the military secretary, and cut him off as soon as Koirala is told the king and queen were shot and heads to the hospital. Rayamajhi is there and the Chief Justice and House Speaker also arrive. No one can tell the government officials the exact details, and they just stand around.

23:00  
By this time, King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya, Prince Nirajan, Princess Sruti, Princess Shanti, Sarada and Kumar Khadga are dead inside the trauma hall of the army hospital. Word starts spreading in Kathmandu’s elite circles by mobiles and landlines. Doctors work in the operation theatre to save the crown prince, Dharendra and other injured.

2 June 00:45  
A royal Super Puma helicopter 9N-RAJ takes off from Kathmandu and tries to penetrate dense clouds towards Pokhara, but after trying for half-an-hour returns to Kathmandu. Prince Gyanendra is informed in Pokhara, and starts off by road soon after, escorted by a security detail of 16 army vehicles.

05:15  
At first light, the helicopter takes off from Kathmandu again to rendezvous with Prince Gyanendra at Gajuri on the Prithvi Highway. It returns with the prince and lands at Chhauni by 06:30.

06:30  
Prince Gyanendra makes the rounds of the ICU at Chhauni to inspect the dead and injured and is briefed by medical personnel. He meets the prime minister and other officials. Discussions focus on the condition of the crown prince and the succession. The option of regent is brought up.

07:00  
Despite a news blackout, word of the massacre spreads like wildfire through the streets of Kathmandu. Two daily newspapers have the story splashed on their front pages and sell out immediately.

09:00  
Raj Sabha meets at Bahadur Bhawan in Kanti Path to discuss succession.

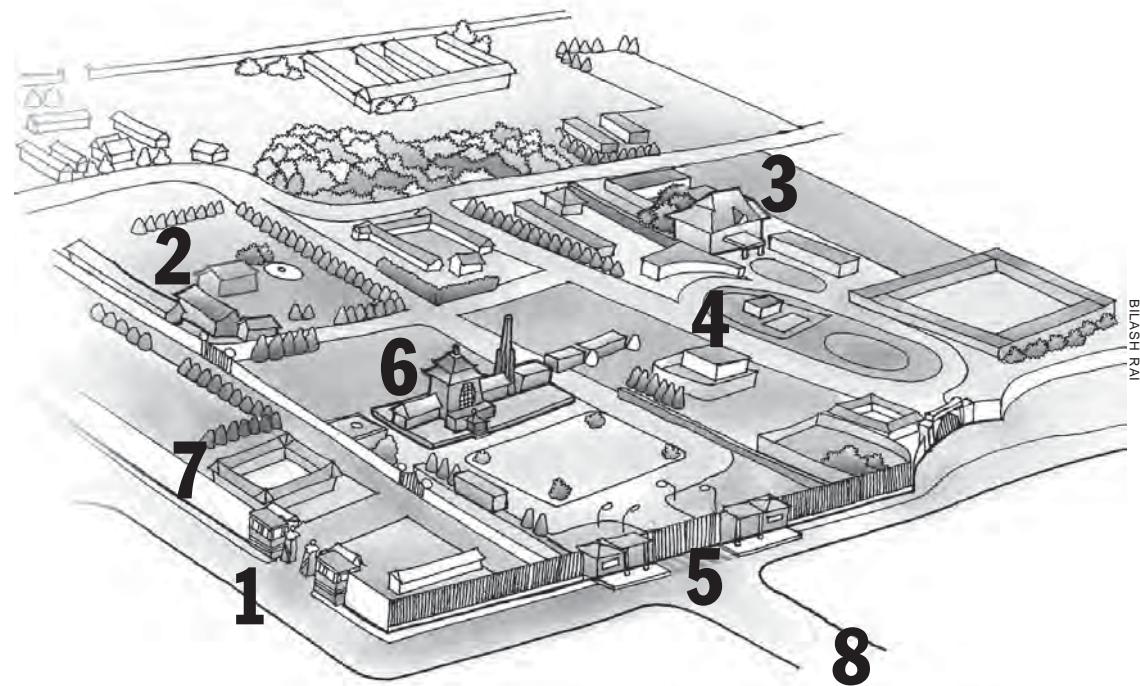
13:00  
An official announcement finally says King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya are dead. It proclaims Dipendra king, and Gyanendra regent.

16:00  
Dignitaries gather at Chhauni for the start of the funeral procession for the king, queen, prince and princess. It takes three hours for the procession to get to Pashupati and the cremation, another two hours. Funeral procession is stoned at Swayambhu and the prime minister’s car is damaged.

3 June 7:00  
A fuzzy statement by the regent broadcast over radio and television finally tells the Nepali public that four members of the royal family died from “a sudden discharge of an automatic weapon”. Hordes of foreign media persons already in Kathmandu pooh-pooh the statement in their dispatches, the Nepali public smells conspiracy.

09:00  
From early morning people visit the pyres at Aryaghat, as if to confirm what they saw on TV the previous night. Many take their children along. Others begin flocking to Narayanhiti to sign the condolence book. The first signs of trouble in Darbar Marg, Baneshwor and Jamal as thousands of angry and shocked citizens gather. Many are mourners, but troublemakers in the crowd begin throwing stones at police and chanting anti-Gyanendra and anti-India slogans. In the absence of official information, wild rumours sweep Kathmandu.

4 June 03:45  
King Dipendra dies at Chhauni. 08:00-8:30  
Palace officials, the cabinet and opposition figures meet at the hospital library to again discuss succession. Rayamajhi tells King Gyanendra he



1 West Gate 2 Tribhuvan Sadan (Crown Prince residence) 3 Shri Sadan (King and Queen residence)  
4 Mahendra Manjil (Queen Mother’s residence) 5 New South Gate 6 Royal Palace 7 Palace Secretariat  
8 Durbar Marg

should now be declared king. Other members of the Privy Council approve with their silence. Gyanendra says that is something for the Raj Parishad to decide. Then the prime minister says the Parishad would formalise it, and that he would have to sit on the throne. Others present agree. Madhav Kumar Nepal then suggests that an investigation on the 1 June incident should be announced after the enthronement.

The meeting becomes tense again. Rayamajhi interjects: “Won’t it be enough if the king addresses the nation?” Nepal is adamant, saying the people will not be satisfied by a royal address after the entire family of the king who gave them the constitution had been massacred. The prime minister steps in and supports Nepal, as do the speaker and the royal palace chief secretary. Then they discuss the committee’s nature: Nepal wants the Chief Justice to head it. The Chief Justice suggests that would not be

enough, and says that as leader of the opposition Nepal should also be a member. They leave it at that, and the people hear the king name the committee on national media the same evening.

09:00  
The Privy Council meets again to declare Gyanendra king. Police try to stop protesters from entering Kantipath where Bahadur Bhawan is located. Immediately after being named king, Gyanendra tells the people that there will be a “thorough investigation” of the palace massacre because there are no more legal and constitutional obstacles.

10:00  
But by then, organised street protests begin. Thousands are brought in trucks from the outskirts of the city, taxis are commandeered by protesters and converge at the city centre. By mid-morning there are about 10,000 people in Kamaladi, Jamal and Ghanta Ghar.

Tear gas fills the air.

11:00  
Gyanendra is proclaimed third king in four days. As street protests get more serious, curfew is announced from 15:30. King Gyanendra is enthroned at Naasal Chowk, he rides in a carriage procession to Narayanhiti past streets guarded by the army.

15:30  
Dipendra’s funeral procession heads towards Pashupati in a truck along the curfew-bound Ring Road. At least six people are killed in police firing, and hundreds of suspected Maoists, said to have infiltrated the demonstrators, are rounded up.

21:00  
King Gyanendra addresses the nation on radio and television and names a three-man probe team, including Madhav Nepal. Nepal is forced by his party the next day to resign from the committee.

LETTERS

**ROYAL TRAGEDY**  
The point you make in your editorial (“I may die, let my nation live on”, #46) needs to be emphasised over and over again. In Nepal, kings have prospered only in communion with democracy. Of nearly a dozen Shah rulers, only three stand out, King Prithvi Narayan Shah, for his thrust on nationalism and direct rapport with the people (recall and re-read his *Divyopadesh*), King Tribhuvan for his joining hands with the people’s struggle against the Ranas and for ushering in multi-party democracy, and King Birendra, for conceding political space to Constitutional Monarchy no matter howsoever, reluctantly. Any king who tries to ignore this link between the palace and the people-or parliament—would put the monarchy in the crisis of survival. It is equally true in today’s Nepal that it is not ready for a republican polity, particularly because those who swear by democracy have not been able to rise above their ego conflicts, family nepotism and political opportunism. The parties that are asking for the abolition of monarchy, directly or in a covert manner would not be able to win over the larger mass of Nepali people.

**SD Muni**  
Singapore

In the spirit of being a well wisher for this wonderful country of ours we should do everything to move forward. It is a critical period. A unique opportunity to find in adversity hope for the future. A

joint session of both houses issuing a joint statement together? Inviting the Maoist moderates to take part? New rules for royal succession that—dare we hope—might consider female descendants?

**Chandra Surya**  
via email

My first encounter with late King Birendra was in 1967. I was stuck at Lukla airport with an overshoot, and there was no way to get word out. The then crown prince Birendra had just started flying lessons and he came on a search and rescue flight to locate me the next morning. Even as a trainee, Birendra was already thinking like any mature pilot. Another episode in Pokhara proved to me King Birendra’s priority was Nepal’s development. I was ferrying text books by plane to Baglung and had to make 54 roundtrips to get all the books out in time for the new school year. But the king was residing in Pokhara with his whole entourage around the lakeside palace, and I would be buzzing them all day with my plane. A few years later, the king was in Surkhet, and I was doing food shuttles to Jumla. Although I was flying noisily all day from before dawn to finish the shuttles by dusk, there was no complaint from the royal camp. I am sure the king had a hand in allowing the flights in Pokhara and Surkhet to go on. As a person who considers Nepal my second home, I am shocked and saddened like all Nepalis by the royal tragedy.

**Capt Hardy Fuerer**  
Kathmandu

Thanks to the internet, I could read CK Lal’s “Tribute to history” (#46) and it moved me like nothing else in recent times. I have read innumerable articles, comments, responses and views during the aftermath of the massacre, but none have stirred me like this one. Mr Lal speaks of the need to take a positive attitude and to move forward, he offers a message of hope, and of learning lessons from the tragedy. Why can’t more Nepali writers be like him?

**Bibek Pandey**  
by email

This time, CK Lal is right (“A tribute to history”, #46). Birendra was a good king. Maybe Dipendra could have been good king. But now Gyanendra is the king, so let’s all help him become a good king.

Maybe our silly Nepali politicians will give Gyanendra a chance. Baburam Bhattarai is wrong: Nepalis love their kings whosoever they may be. Long live the king of Nepal

**Rakam Rai**  
by email

As if the shock of 1 June was not enough, we had to endure the press conference addressed by House Speaker Taranath Ranabhat. What was this, a sitcom on tv or the presentation of the probe report to the people? Why was everyone laughing? What was Mr Ranabhat trying to do? Be cool? He made a fool of himself and the whole nation in front of international media.

**Manit Upadhyaya**  
by email

How can we trust our rulers? We were told from the first day it was an accident, and then the government put journalists in jail. Our leaders think Nepalis are still in a 150 year old time warp. They aren’t today, Nepalis will not take lies from officials any more. This is fair and clear warning to our new king and our elected officials: don’t take the people for granted, don’t insult them. We have the right for right information, we have the right to use our right, and we have right

to be treated fairly and equally.

**A Lamichhane**  
by email

The political situation in Nepal is very volatile, as unexpected events have occurred one after another in last few days. A mass killing called Kot Parba took place in 1846 when King Rajendra, the ancestor of present king, was ruler. Jung Bahadur orchestrated the murder of most political heavyweights in the Kot courtyard. He was not punished, but made prime minister. King Rajendra was weak, so Jung Bahadur had to prevail in the larger interest of the country. Had he not, Nepal would have become a part of British India. A section of people believe that whoever the culprit in the massacre of 1 June may be, questions should not be raised if they affect the continuity of kingship in Nepal. Nepal is a small country and is vulnerable to vandalism, separatists, incapable leaders, incapable people (who choose the leaders) and other threats. In such a situation, the king gives us a sense of hope and assurance, even if he is as good as a stone god.

**Neputra Birganj**

Over the last two weeks, we have seen just how much King Birendra meant to the people. The saying “You don’t know what you’ve got until it’s gone” is so applicable to this moment in Nepali history. We always seemed to have taken monarchy for granted; that the king and queen would always be there to invisibly guide us through good and

bad times. Then 1 June happened. But the time has now come to let the past be, and have a vision for the future of our Nepal. Monarchy is the symbol of our national unity. Let us hope that there is no day in the future when we will hear people say, “King Gyanendra was so good to us; it’s too bad we never let His Majesty know how we truly felt.” There’s no time like the present...

**Sujala Pant,**  
**Shanghai, People’s Republic of China**

The conclusion of the probe panel blaming the crown prince for the royal massacre was an eye wash. This explanation was indigestible and hard to believe for Nepalis. But I feel we have no choice but to accept it. Speaker Taranath Ranabhatt’s antics at the press conference was irreverent and showed a lack of sensitivity for such a solemn occasion. The journalists attending were no less guilty in making light of this event. It is shameful that such a high-ranking Nepali official showed poor judgement and poor taste in front of the entire world. Nepal now needs all parties to cooperate, reflect on the future and change the present.

**Sudan Shrestha**  
Dharan

**CORRECTION**  
Soaltee Enterprises, and not Surya Enterprises (“All the king’s businesses”, #47) handles royal investments in the Soaltee Group.—Ed





# "I was hit. Sruti took cradled me. Then Dipendra came and shot her."

- *Kumar Gorakh*

The details are so horrific and gory that reading it is not for the faint-hearted. The 300+ page report is made up mostly of raw unedited testimonies from eyewitnesses, medical personnel and security staff. Some of the accounts are rambling and confused, others are contradictory. The royal relatives who were in the Tribhuvan Room were interviewed less than a week after the massacre. Many said they could not recall exact details because things happened so fast, and also because of the shock and grief.

There are unconfirmed details: did the fatally wounded King Birendra try to reach for a gun that Dipendra threw? Was the person in the red sari seen by a waiter running into the garden Queen Aishwarya? How many times did Dipendra go out of the room, and why? Where exactly were the ADC's during the whole episode? How long did the shooting last? Any eyewitnesses to Dipendra's suicide? Why wasn't the queen mother interviewed?

There is inconsistency in the exact timing of various events. There are differences in the recollections of

eyewitnesses, but none of them have any doubts about who did it.

The Nepali public has an image of Dipendra which is a composite of what the palace wanted us to know. But family members are now coming out with hush-hush stories about Dipendra's past behaviour: an easy-going and pampered crown prince used to getting what he wanted, his gun fetish, his previous shooting sprees, his violent outbursts in which Princess Sruti and other relatives and friends had been victims, his frequent drink and drug-induced rage. One bout of viciousness was on his birthday almost exactly a year ago. Dipendra carried his MP-5 submachine guns wherever he went. Palace officials were used to him frequently blazing away at crows, cats and bats in the palace grounds. In fact, when the first shots were fired, sources told us the Queen Mother remarked: "There he goes shooting cats again."

The following is an unofficial translation by Nepali Times of excerpts from the commission's transcripts of eyewitness testimonies:



Queen Komal: "I was present at the family gathering at Tribhuvan Sadan that day. I learnt that the crown prince had gone to rest early. Sometime later there was a burst of gunfire and the bullets hit the ceiling. After that I saw that King Birendra had been hit on the right side of his neck. Kumar Khadga and Kumar Gorakh were also shot. Then I was hit in the back and I fell down... (Princess) Shanti had fallen over me, and I could not see anything after that."



Princess Helen Shah (King Birendra's aunt): (She was sitting with the Queen Mother in the anteroom, heard gunshots and some people running in the garden. She thought the youngsters were playing. In the end she heard one or two shots. Then there was silence.) "About 7-8 minutes after that Paras came running (and told us). After hearing that 'Amumuma dai-le ta Thulobuba dekhi liyara sabai jana lai goli han'yo' (Dipendra shot King Birendra and all

the others), I opened the door and stepped out. The Queen Mother was behind me... I then entered the Billiard Room... and looked all around. Everyone was on the ground. Dhirendra was crying in pain. I rushed back to the Queen Mother and told her everyone except Dhirendra were dead. She asked where is the king. Paras said I have sent him to hospital already. Then she asked where were the queen and Nirajan. At that time the two stepped out. The Queen was in front and Nirajan was following... I don't know where. Then we went to hospital."

Princess Shoba Shahi (King Birendra's youngest sister, now recuperating in hospital). "It was our normal Third Friday gathering. No argument, no discussion it was just a gathering. He (Dipendra) had served drinks and then gone to fetch Mummy (Queen Mother)... After chatting with our mothers we all



drifted towards the Billiard Room. The crown prince was not there. Dhirendra told me that four people had taken him (Dipendra) to his room. Then we entered the Billiard Room. A while later, he (Dipendra) appeared in combat clothes (sobs), he had a big gun. He did not talk, all of us were there, and there was the sound of gunshots... We did not think that he intended to kill, we thought the gun had gone off by mistake. Birendra dai fell. I went and held him.

Rajeev also came and helped. I couldn't tell where he was hit... Birendra dai tried to get up. And he was holding a... I said leave this and snatched it. The magazine came out and I threw it away. Sometime later there was a bang, Sani diju (Princess Shanti) came running in. There was a shot from outside and my maili bhauju (middle sister-in-law, Queen Komal) fell, then I saw that Gorakh had been hit. He (Dipendra) was still coming in and Dhirendra said 'Babu, that's enough'. He had just finished saying that when he was shot. Immediately after Dai (King Birendra)

her)... again he served drinks, then at about 8:30 His Majesty arrived. At that time Dai (Dipendra) was with us inside, in the room where the incident took place. He seemed drunk and fell, as if he had passed out and was down on the floor. Gorkah, Nirajan, Rajeev and myself picked him up and told him we were taking him to his room because Thulobuba had already come. We took him up but did not put him in bed, we put him down on a floor mattress. At around 8:31-32 we turned off the lights and came down. His Majesty spent about half-an-hour with the Queen Mother. Then he

"Baba, you have done enough damage."

- *Prince Dhirendra*

fell, Sruti came saying "Bua, Buba", but seeing her husband she said "Eh batimilai pani lagyo?" (You have also been hit?) and rushed towards him... Then she fell. After shooting bhai (Dhirendra) he shot his sister. After that he shot His Majesty again and he fell... actually he killed him that third time."



Prince Paras: "We reached there a little after 7:30, about 7:40. Everyone else had come. Mummy, myself, sister and Himani (wife) were a little late. The Crown Prince appeared like he had already had some cocktails. (He asked) what would you like? I decided to have just a Coke. I have been drinking whiskey," he said. He was ok until that time, but seemed intoxicated. (When I asked) what happened he said: 'We've been discussing marriage. I spoke with mua (his mother) and with Afumuma (Queen Mother), both have said no.' This was about eight o'clock.

At around eight the Queen Mother came, (Dipendra had fetched

came to the room where the incident took place. The king had just taken a drink. We had not even said cheers, we were in a corner and did not see the crown prince coming... that's the corner where we usually stayed, we youngs (sic) used to stay there so (the elders) didn't see us smoking. I did not see him coming. I only came to know he had come when the first shot was fired. He fired three rounds as he came in, His Majesty had just asked 'What are you doing?' Bang, bang, he was hit here and here (pointing). His Majesty fell. Dr Rajeev and I were together. Both of us rushed to him. Dr Rajeev reached His Majesty, but I was stopped by Princess Shoba. I went back and told the sisters to take cover and lie low. At about this time the Crown Prince came in again. I saw him shoot at His Majesty. I saw him shoot Dhirendra. When he was returning the second time Dhirendra said 'Baba, you have done enough damage'. No sooner had he said that, than bang-bang one hit him here (pointing). Then he fell, and after that it was one after another, I cannot recall. I had already turned back and was helping the sisters to take cover. I saw His Majesty, Kumar Gorakh and Kumar Khadga fall, more or less at the same time. It was the MP-5 that had hit the three, this was the same MP-5 which His Majesty picked up. Princess Sobha took it away and removed the magazine, and put it down on the floor. Maybe she

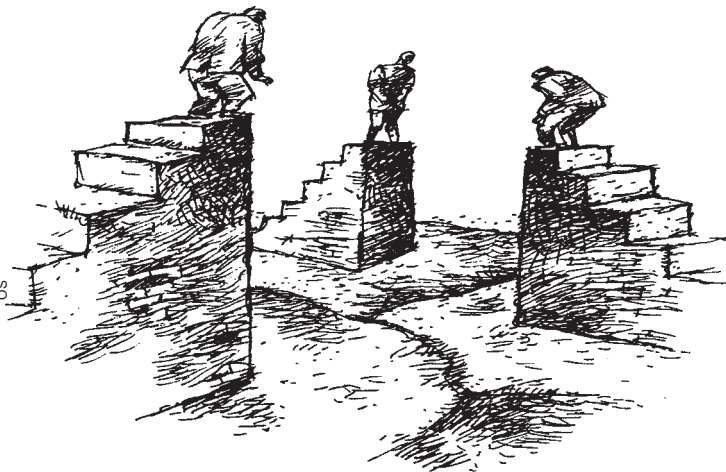
## HERE AND THERE

by DANIEL LAK

# Smile, you're on camera

LONDON: A short visit to this self-regarding centre of the universe was an opportunity not to be missed, given the intensive turmoil and pained introspection going on in Kathmandu. The occasion was an awards banquet, an evening of glitter and cocktails to honour the best of "development journalism". I came away without an award but chockfull of thoughts, opinions and ideas — the columnists stock-in-trade.

First impressions count so as I hurried into the five star hotel ballroom, the receptors were turned up to maximum absorption rate. Odd thing, I thought, to pay homage to coverage of poverty and humanitarian issues at a \$100 dollar a plate dinner. The master of ceremonies, a respected television anchorman in Britain, made the obligatory observation that we should be having a bowl of rice and African mealy meal, just to set the tone right. I nodded sagely and sipped some expensive wine.



Here we were, congratulating ourselves with mutual backpats about our splendid work on behalf of the poor, and where were those with first hand experience?

The nominees for the various categories were very, very good, almost all of them well-meaning, compassionate and hard-hitting. From a BBC colleague in Africa, a withering look at how safari tourism in the exquisite Serengeti National Park was displacing local people; how callow visitors believed it was all for the better, that it was okay to banish entire communities or families because their maize patches were an eyesore for the hard-currency-and-cameras crowd. Another highlight was a twisted yet wonderful look at racism in Britain. A bearded comedian, the British born son of Iranian parents, took a group of Iraqi Kurdish refugees out for a night in the most socially conservative part of northern England. Through laughter, we learnt just how bad it still is out there.

A radio documentary into the use of rape as a weapon in Bosnia brought tears of anger, then a feeling of deep admiration for the survivors of unspeakable Balkan atrocities. It was a useful reminder of just how horrible that conflict continues to be. Amnesty International's advertising campaign against British and German arms exports, especially implements of torture, pricked the conscience but probably did very little to influence the arms merchants. Blurry images from Dubai of the annual convention of dealers in death interspersed with pictures of a smiling English salesman testing an electric shock device that eventually ended up in Indonesia, part of the torture cupboards in ex-President Suharto's intelligence agencies.

As the evening went on, and disappointment at finishing second eased with each glass of wine, my reflexive cynicism kicked in and started me

wondering about a few things. For one, where were the producers and journalists from the developing world itself? Here we were, congratulating ourselves with mutual backpats about our splendid work on behalf of the poor, and where were those with first hand experience? In fact, it took a special category award funded by the World Bank to recognize work done in distant lands, and even then the winners were Americans. Never mind that their film about the searing South African Truth and Reconciliation commission was powerful beyond belief. The runner-up in the category was my personal favourite of the evening: a film from Cambodia about a group of tribesmen digging a trench across their country to lay fibre optic cables. It was delicious irony, of the saddest possible variety.

The night belonged to a soap opera though. *Soul City* is produced by an NGO in South Africa and its the country's most popular television programme. We watched an episode about domestic violence but almost every other social issue imaginable has been covered. *Soul City* entertain, enlightens and educates and it reaches about 80 per cent of the urban black population — a shining example of the good work that media can do, freed of the shackles of government interference and Murdoch-style profit seeking.

This all took place as traumatized Nepalis were hearing about the horrendous rampage at the royal palace three weeks ago, and if nothing else, the evening taught me that many, many people have immense challenges in their lives. All that remains is to get on with it, and give it your best shot. Smile for the camera. ♦





**“I saw him (Dipendra Shah) coming in from the main door in combat uniform carrying two machine guns.”**  
- Ketaki Chester

thought this was the only weapon, but Dai (Dipendra) also had other weapons, I had seen them. One handgun was on his left side the MP-5 was in his right pocket. ...I did not see what happened outside. He had the shotgun and the M-16 on his shoulders.

He may have gone in and come out within a minute, or perhaps 30 seconds. He came back with the big gun, an M-16, and hit Thulo Buba (King Birendra) in the head, then Kumar Khadga fell. I did not see Sruti come but saw her telling Gorakh, 'Baba you have been hit.' Princess Sarada went to where Kumar Khadga had fallen, she lay over his body sobbing "What has happened to you, what has happened to you?" The crown prince came back and shot her at point blank range. ...when he came for the third time he shot at Jayanti diju, Ketaki. ...and Sruti. Then he came towards the tall chair, we were directly in front of him. I said 'What are you doing. ... what are you doing. ... please go.' If he had shot: I was there, Mahesh was there, Rabi was there. I had hidden them there. My sister was behind Mahesh. My wife was there. I had hidden three of the (cousin) sisters there and another one behind what looks like a sofa. To Dai (Dipendra) I said: "Please, what are you doing, we are the only ones here". One-by-one he looked at us and left. I got up and went to Kanchho Buba (Dhirendra). He told me: "Paras I can't move my legs, please try to move them." Then he told me to protect the children, I did not even see my mother (Queen Komal) fall. She was trying to get up from under Princess Shanti. I went and helped muma get up. ...then I went to the Queen Mother's room. I had heard firing outside and thought it came from there, but it was quiet in the room. I told them what had happened. By then the firing had stopped.

Dai's ADC came saying 'He shot himself, he shot himself'. I asked him where was Bhai (Nirajan), he said he had been shot. I asked where was Thulo Muma (the Queen) he told me Thulo Muma was down, everyone was down and Thulo Muma had no chance. I did not see what happened. ...outside Bhai (Dipendra) was lying down groaning in pain. (Reasons for shooting) I think it was the marriage issue. This discussion had begun on his last birthday. We discussed who were "against" and who were "with". Bhai (Nirajan) and I were "with". We did whatever he said. Rajeev was "with", Sruti, Gorakh and other sisters were "against". I think that was the main reason."



Princess Prerana (Paras' sister): "...After sometime Dipendra (came) in army dress. ...first he fired up on the

ceiling, then he shot Thulo Buba (King Birendra). ...I don't know who else he shot, I saw all of them on the ground. ...Daju (Paras) hid us all behind the sofa, we were behind him. I saw Thulo Buba and my uncle (Dhirendra) being hit. I saw the others only after they had fallen.



Princess Sitashma (Dhirendra's daughter): "We were near the bar. I came in about an hour later Thul Dai (Dipendra) came in an army dress, we stood by just watching, then there was the sound of firing, Paras-da said get down get down and we hid. Then I saw my father going down slowly. Hearing the machine gun we stayed hidden. He (Dipendra) came, looked at us and left. Then I heard what happened outside, we did not see it."



Princess Dilasha (Dhirendra's daughter): "We hadn't even said cheers. We were just talking. ... then there was automatic gunfire. We were shocked. His Majesty had been shot, he was hit in the neck. I saw that, I also saw him fall down."



Kumar Gorakh (Princess Sruti's husband, still in hospital): "I heard gunshots, I thought it was crackers. I didn't know what was happening, then I saw His Majesty fall. Then everyone started saying 'What happened, what have you done?' I ran from the corner to the side where His Majesty was. I looked at him and said he's been shot, then when I was returning, well. ... what to say. ... Dipendra Shah (sobs) came and shot everyone who was there. I was behind a table or something when I was hit and fell to the floor. He was going in and out. The only person with a gun was Dipendra Shah, no one else was there. He returned and picked out those who had been hurt, took aim and shot, took aim and shot. ... what else is there to say (weeps). He had at least two machine

guns. Also perhaps a pistol. I think I saw that much. I don't know the make of the machine gun. But when he held up the gun there was a flash. I thought this is the end, that was when I was hit. I fell. I could not move. Then my wife (Sruti) came to see what had happened to father. I said: 'Baba, malai pani dago' (I have also been hit). She took me in her lap, then he came and shot her. Both of us fell there and others came and took us to hospital."

Rabi Sumshere Rana (Married to King Birendra's aunt): "...His Majesty had taken a Coca-Cola and moved towards the billiard table, I

**“I heard gunshots and... a woman's voice saying 'call the doctor.'”**  
- Colonel Sunder Pratap Rana

was two or three steps behind and he called me. I moved forward and he asked how I was. I said everything was fine and then Mahesh Kumar entered and said his wife could not come because of arthritis. His Majesty moved forward and said that gout, uric acid, cholesterol were in the family. Before he had finished talking about cholesterol, Mahesh Kumar left and another man came (towards us). Not army uniform, that dress is known as a fatigue, I looked closely and I noticed it was the Crown Prince. I thought he looked at me and I think he smiled. Then there was a burst of three shots. What to do. His Majesty just stood and watched, I just stood there watching. I knew he was a happy-go-lucky person, but this was no way to fool around. Then I saw blood gushing out of king's side. I yelled: "Doctor!" ... the King said 'What have you done?' He (Dipendra) had bolted out of the room. Then, in utter panic, I screamed for an ambulance..."

Maheswor Kumar Singh (married to King Birendra's aunt): "...When I arrived the Crown Prince was already there. He was playing billiards on his own. He asked me to take a drink. He was manning the bar himself... I took a drink and parked it on a table. It was about 7:30-7:45, and he (Dipendra) went out. His Majesty the King was not there yet. So we went to greet the Queen Mother, and Her Majesty the Queen was also there. We were chatting when His Majesty arrived at about 8:30, and then I stepped out. After about 10-15 minutes His Majesty... went to the Billiard Room.

He (the king) had a drink in his hand. ...I went up and told him my wife could not come and were talking about health, ... (at about) 8:50-8:55. I heard a sound from behind and turned back. I saw the Crown Prince in complete battle dress, cap, an automatic weapon could be clearly seen in his hands. About one or two seconds later there were two sounds. I thought it was from the TV. It was very near my ears and thought my eardrums had burst, I blinked. I turned to see what was happening. ...Rajeev Shahi was already



running towards us and stood behind King Birendra trying to support him. ...I think I saw the queen rushing out. ..."

Ketaki Chester (Prince Basundhara's daughter): "I saw him (Dipendra) coming in from the main door in combat uniform carrying two machine guns. ...I did not think they were real. My sister (Jayanti) was near me and I said, 'Isn't he too old to come in a uniform in front of other people?' My sister is now dead. She said, I don't know. Then I thought he was bringing the weapons to show them to His Majesty. He walked straight into the room and stood about

10 feet away from His Majesty then I heard a bang. I did not think it was a gunshot. The gun in his right hand was aimed upwards. Then I smelt something and told my sister this could be ammunition. He turned and headed out, we stepped forward and saw that His Majesty had been hit and he was falling down slowly. ...later I saw Her Majesty marching out of the door, I called out to her twice. I heard the machine gun fire twice and told Dhirendra whom I was holding: 'He may have shot Her Majesty'. ...when Her Majesty ran out, ..., I saw Nirajan running after her. ..."



Capt Rajeev Shahi (husband of Dhirendra's daughter): "I heard that His Majesty had been shot. By the time he had already fallen. I opened the coat and pressed the right side of his neck (to stop the bleeding). The king said 'Rajeev, I've also been hit in my stomach'. ...I had not seen the Crown Prince until then because he had run out. Then he came back in. Dhirendra Shah had tried to stop him saying 'Baba what are you doing?' and he was shot."

See p. 6 ➡

**Soon, the Children's War?**  
There's a relatively new but alarmingly fast-growing phenomenon that needs the attention of Nepali child and human rights activists. The recent Global Report on Child Soldiers 2001 released last week by Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers says that about 30 percent of the guerillas involved in the underground CPN-Maoist led People's War are children. The report claims that Maoists are using school students and younger children in the five-year-old insurgency. Six guerrillas under 18 were killed in a single encounter in 1999 in Kavrepalanchok district. "The Maoist leadership is fully aware that children under 18 are recruited to their cause," says National Human Rights Commission member Professor Kapil Shrestha. The Report says that while the recruitment of children is not yet a widespread occurrence, there are "symptoms" that it could turn into a serious problem soon. Most of the children in the Maoist insurgency are believed to be between the ages of 14 and 18, but the presence and use of even younger children cannot be ruled out. The Report points out to the possibilities that they are being forced to pick up arms against their will. The Human Rights and Peace Society, a Nepali rights NGO, reported that at least 30 children were abducted by the Maoists last year, but it cannot confirm if they were abducted to be trained for the life of insurgents.

The 1962 Royal Nepal Army New Recruitment Rules requires that a person be at least 18 year old to be recruited. Similarly, the Asia-Pacific Conference on the Use of Children as Soldiers held here in 2000 endorsed the same age provision for recruitment in the army.

**How are Nepali women doing?**  
Not too well, according to the World Bank. A new Bank study concludes that women's subordinate position in society is the main impediment to their accessing health care facilities.

Other reasons rural Nepali women often do not receive adequate care are lack of knowledge, an unwillingness to disclose illness and ignoring ailments. Such attitudes to sickness are usually the result of other phenomena like few trained women at health care posts, and the unavailability of cash, an excessive workload, and caste-based discrimination, all of which are found to impact women's health more than that of men. The study says that flawed policies compound the problem. Rural women would have better access to health care if women were better represented at the policy level, policymakers understood gender issues better, there were a women's health database, more staff and supplies and political commitment.

What can be done to improve the situation? The report says starting awareness programmes to increase knowledge about women's health, "developing women's capacity to visit health care facilities", working with traditional healers, encouraging women to participate in health management and incorporating gender issues at every level of planning would all help. Since we know why Nepali women aren't healthy, and what to do about it, it should be an easy ride from here on.



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Colonel Sunder Pratap Rana (ADC to His Majesty the King who was 40 or 50 m away from the scene of the crime): "The time was...after nine, after nine. There was a sound of the cupboard moving. I said what was happening and Major Gajendra (Bohra, Dipendra's ADC) stepped out. As soon as he stepped out, I heard gunshots and Her Majesty's, a woman's voice saying 'call the doctor.' I tried to call the doctor on my mobile, and could not. Then I ordered for the fighting force and moved forward. There was another round of firing. I kept moving forward. Inside the hall I saw people on the ground, but could not make out where who was. I was running from outside and looking inside... I found the His Majesty in a group and felt if I carried His Majesty and went back the same way the same man who had shot him could attack us, so I ordered that the door be broken. We checked his airways, bleeding and circulation, His Majesty had survive(d) the attack. We then put him in a car and left for the hospital."

Major Ananta Keshar Shima (ADC to Her Majesty, who was also in the nearby office): "A woman's voice had ordered us to call a doctor, it could have been Sruti's or Her Majesty's voice. Then I tried to call a doctor from the office telephone. After failing

to get through to the army hospital and doctor I went towards where the firing had come from. By the time the door had been broken. I helped the colonel carry His Majesty out and after the car left, I went back to call the doctor again and ordered more vehicles...I looked around for Her Majesty and not finding her in the room I came back to the ADC room and called the nanny in her quarters. The nanny told me Her Majesty had not returned so I went out towards the garden, where I met Major Gajendra. As we went forward we saw a body near a bend. It was groaning, coming up close I recognised the Crown Prince and ordered the people with me to take him away. Then while I was turning around, I saw Prince Nirajan flat (sic)... and sent him to hospital." Because I had not yet found Her Majesty I went in... I saw something red on the side of the door, I ran up the stairs and there was Her Majesty. Because I could not carry her on my own I called the military police, put her in a car and took her to hospital."

Major Gajendra Bohara (ADC to Dipendra, also in the ADC office at the time): "I was working on the computer when Sunder Pratap said what happened? I stepped out and then heard the sound of firing, and said

"sir I can hear shots." I went straight ahead and reached the broken door. From there my eyes went to the entrance door. I saw the crown prince step out and pulled at the door (broken one). I knew the door would be locked from the inside, then I ran around and peeped but I could not see anything, then I turned back. At that time I saw another ADC coming and moved forward—slowly—because I had seen firearms. My aim was to protect the crown prince...by the time the colonel had entered the room, and I also saw that inside all had fallen...All had fallen but at the time I did not even think that the crown prince had shot himself, I was only thinking of how to get him under control, if nothing had happened to him it would take much time to control him, so we were looking around slowly. Then we heard a sound from the stairs leading to the garden. It was a loud groaning noise, the groaning was there till we had reached the hospital. Following the noise we found the crown prince and brought him out..."

Captain Chakra Shah (ADC to the Queen Mother): "...After hearing 'call the doctor, call the doctor' we ran towards (the room). I was on duty in the area for the first time so I did not know where the entrance was...I tried to open the door, others

broke the door and stepped in, later I followed. They had covered His Majesty and because my responsibility was the Queen Mother, I began to look for her...I searched for the Queen Mother among the female corpses but did not find her...then I came out from another window...then I didn't know where she was coming from, she called me 'Chakra...'"

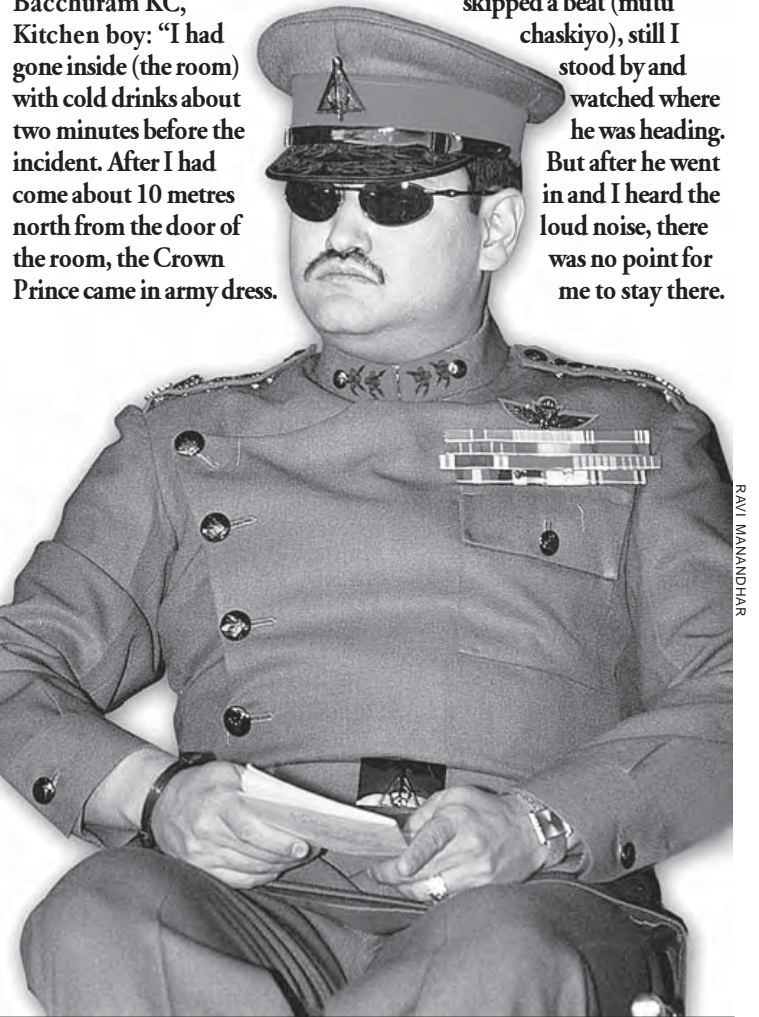
Captain Pawan Khatri: (ADC His Majesty the king, in the duty room after the king went to Tribhuvan room from his office): "We were chatting when there was a bang, bang sound from outside. We had just stepped out when we heard loud firing. Then we heard 'call the doctor' from inside. The Colonel was on the phone, on the set I called for the military police and ran forward...when I reached near (the room), I saw a man in combat fatigue leave from the back door, in the garden-side door with a gun whose light was on, the gun was facing this side (sic) and the person was about to turn. The light on the gun was still on. I stood outside and had my pistol in my hands, after that I went to support Colonel Sunder Pratap."

Santa Bahadur Khadka, Kitchen Boy: "...The Crown Prince was moving backwards

with guns in two hands, he was moving backwards and the (woman in red) was in front of him, we could not recognise her... The two were not talking, they were running, shouting, screaming. I cannot say who was speaking. The women in the room were screaming."

Bacchuram KC, Kitchen boy: "I had gone inside (the room) with cold drinks about two minutes before the incident. After I had come about 10 metres north from the door of the room, the Crown Prince came in army dress.

He had a gun in front. I thought he may be going out somewhere. The firing started the moment (he entered) the room, then I became scared, my heart began pounding, I ran away. ...I had seen (guns) in two of his hands, one was big, another small...He was in a scary position.... Seeing him with weapons, I was scared, my heart skipped a beat (mutu chaskiyo), still I stood by and watched where he was heading. But after he went in and I heard the loud noise, there was no point for me to stay there.



RAVI MANANDHAR

## CONVERSATION

by R KHADKA

# Incarceration of innocents



RAVI MANANDHAR

**T**ranscript of a telephone conversation last week between the author and two boys from Kalanki who were picked up by police on Friday morning at 11:30 while they were buying vegetables. The family employing the boys went to the top echelons of police to have them released. The actual names of the boys have been altered.

"Hello, can you tell me your name?"

"My name is Ram."

"Your friend's name?"

"Hari."

"I understand the police took you and your friend to the police station yesterday..."

"Yes, they did."

"When did they arrest you and then let you go?"

"They took us to the police station around 11:30 a.m. yesterday and let us go around three-thirty p.m. today."

"Can you tell me how they arrested you? What were you doing?"

"Hari and I were going to buy vegetables for the house. A police van pulled up and one of the policemen said to us, 'A friend has called you' and bundled us in and took us to the police station."

"Did you say anything?"

"No one said anything."

"How many of you were there at the station?"

"Oh, twenty or twenty one of us..."

"Young and old? Any girls?"

"Most of us were young, between 18 and 22 years of age; there were one or two older men, around 40 years old. There were no girls."

"And none of you said anything or asked why you had been brought there?"

"No. None of us could say anything to the police. The police said they'd beat us if we talked. So no one dared say anything."

"Did you find out how the other young men had been brought to the police station?"

"Some of them had been told what we were told: that a friend was waiting for them at the police station; but some others had been asked if they wanted to join the police force..."

"What kind of boys were there? Tough ones? Local hoodlums, you think?"

"Oh, no. Just regular boys. Nobody tough...just normal fellows."

"Were you all in one single room or in separate rooms? Was there anything to sit on, or did you remain standing all night?"

"We were all in one room. There was nothing to sit on. No chairs or benches. It was a cemented floor. There was one straw mat in the room."

"What if you wanted to go to the bathroom?"

"There was a bucket in the room to pee..."

"And what if you had to more than just pee?"

"A police escorted us to a bathroom outside."

"Did they feed you?"

"Oh, no. They said we had to buy our food. Nobody ate, so no one went to the bathroom."

"How did you sleep? Standing up or on the floor?"

"We all slept on the floor, all piled on top of each other. Feet resting on other people's heads..."

"Were there more of you at night than when you were first brought in?"

"A few more were brought in, but no more than 23 or 25 of us total..."

"So what did they say when they let you go in the morning?"

"Nothing really. I was told not to keep my hair long, to cut it and keep it short."

"Did the others have long hair?"

"No..."

"Were there any with shaved heads?"

"Yes, quite a few, and Hari had an earring."

"So when they let you go, all they said was to cut your hair?"

"Yes. And we were let go because the family we work for know important people. That's why we were let go early. There were still people in the police station when we left."

"Did the police take down your name?"

"Yes, they did."

*Later, I called the police station where Ram and Hari had been held. A police officer answered and very politely answered my queries.*

"Officer, is it true that the police has been taking into custody young men in our neighbourhood?"

"Yes, sir, that is true."

"And why is that?"

"Well, sir, in the past few days, the situation in our city has been quite delicate, so we've been bringing in young men who appear to be troublemakers..."

"Is it still going on?"

"Well, sir, it's going to depend upon the situation. Today has been quiet. Nobody has been arrested."

"There were a few arrests yesterday, is that right?"

"Yes, sir. But they've all been released with warnings. To not to think about causing trouble. Given the situation in the city these days, sir, we're bringing in those kinds of young men who have earring, long hair, those who look suspicious. But today, there is no one here."

"Tell me, officer, is this happening only in our neighbourhood or all over the city?"

"All over the city, sir."

"So you have the right to arrest anyone you feel looks suspicious and just might cause trouble?"

"That is right, sir."

"And who gave you this order, officer?"

"From above, sir."

"The police headquarters? the ministry?"

"Yes, sir, from above...and who are you, sir?"

"I live in the neighbourhood."

"I see, sir."

"Well, officer, thank you very much. You've been most helpful."

"Thank you, sir."



“There is a conspiracy in this country to turn our youth into drug addicts. Even the royal family is not safe.”

That was when it became very emotional for me. The shock finally hit me: all the royal family was gone. Till then, no one had told me what had happened, but I knew these were bullet injuries and it began to sink in that whoever did this was trying to wipe out the whole royal family. Possibilities began racing through my mind: could it be the military, the Maoists? But I didn't ask anyone. I paid my last respects to the king and walked out. I had flashes of memory of having met him during a big international neurosurgical conference in Kathmandu three years ago: he was a perfect gentleman, and he felt deeply for the country. It was difficult to accept that he

army neurosurgeon, Dr Sharma, we called the Bir Hospital plastic surgeon Dr Joshi and fortunately we had theatre assistants who had worked with me before at Everest Nursing Home. That was very convenient, because they were familiar with my technique which is important. But before the surgery, I looked at the other injured to see if there were any other neurosurgical casualties. Dhirendra was very breathless, but conscious, Princess Komal was in the corner with a chest wound, the bullet having just spared her heart, Kumar Gorakh was there, Ketaki Chester had a shoulder wound but she was able to talk.

for the country. I had lost track of time, it was now getting light outside. We did the MRI, the bullet had gone through both thalami causing intraventricular bleeding. These were all bad signs. The treatment plan was standard: take him to the ICU, continue antibiotics, continue ventilation to reduce intracranial pressure, elevate the head to 30 degrees. Dr Shrestha said okay, we can disperse and meet at ten in the morning, but Prince Gyanendra was supposed to arrive any moment so we waited. The feeling in the army hospital was: well, at least somebody from the royal family is alive and there is someone to take charge of the situation.

The prince arrived, he took a quick look at all the casualties, he went up to the library and called Dr Shrestha and me. The prince looked at me and asked: "Tell me, how is the crown prince." I described the situation without any ambiguity: any through-and-through injury of the brain behind the hairline is usually fatal. I said that although he is still alive, the long-term prognosis is very, very poor. The prince looked very grave, but kept his composure. He looked like he was under control, he was decisive and did not waste time. In retrospect, I realised that they had a very serious problem communicating to the public, letting the media know. But I have to say that they never interfered with the medical side of things.

We planned to meet at 1000 and dispersed. I had just gone home and taken a shower when the hospital called again and said I had to come down to reassess the situation by nine o'clock. I called and stopped all sedation and the drugs for paralysis, and by the time I got there at nine the patient was marginally better, he was trying to move his legs, breathe and cough. He was

alive, the same as yesterday if not better, and we had to continue aggressively treating him. This was conveyed up the line, and I think the procedures got underway to declare him king, declare King Birendra dead and Gyanendra Regent.

Sunday was a very stressful day, we had to attend to Prince Dhirendra and we hadn't eaten anything all day. By Sunday evening King Dipendra was moving rapidly into brain dead criteria, we had a medical board meeting, we met Prince Gyanendra, told him that the chances of surviving were zero and explained the options: with the family's full consent you could turn off the ventilator, or you could follow cultural norms and let nature take its course and consider the patient dead only after the heart stops beating. Prince Gyanendra listened to this, and said: "Let me discuss this with the Queen Mother." He came back soon after and told me: "Ok, doctor, let nature take its course. Keep on treating him." He also told us to do everything possible for Bhai (Dhirendra). Early Monday morning, King Dipendra's heart stopped, there was an effort to resuscitate him, but he did not make it. He came into our care as crown prince, and died as king.

Now, if you ask me if there was a conspiracy. I should say, not directly. But there is a conspiracy in this country to turn our youth into drug addicts. Even the royal family is not safe. This is a conspiracy by the mafia and the traffickers. ♦

(Dr Upendra Devkota is Chief of Neurosurgery at Bir Hospital and was trained at the Institute for Neurological Sciences in Glasgow and the Atkinson Morley's Hospital in London.)



Late King Birendra with Dr Devkota at an international neurosurgical conference in Kathmandu in 1999.

was gone, it was as big a loss for me as when I lost my father and mother. Then I was rushed upstairs, and I couldn't think about that anymore. The army medical personnel had prioritised the patients according to their condition. I changed into surgical greens, and entered the operation theatre, passing four more injured patients whom I didn't recognise then. The crown prince was there with two wounds on either side of his head, some blood and brain tissue oozing out. There were no other wounds in his body, and they had taken everything out except his underwear. They had already put a tube down his throat, an IV line, it had all been done very professionally. The blood pressure and heart rate were on the monitor, reasonably okay at 110/70 or 80. He had dilated and fixed pupils, but he was twisting his arms and legs, which meant he was not brain dead. He was trying to breathe, they were assisting his breathing with bagging. So in my assessment at that time he had a Glasgow Coma Score of 4, not 3 which is the lowest. The outlook was extremely poor. We had to attempt the best possible care, and give a chance for a miracle to happen.

There were extremely competent colleagues attending to the crown prince, and we proceeded to paralyse him, put him on a mechanical ventilator and arrange four units of blood for the surgery. We had the

The entry wound on the crown prince was just behind the ear on the left side about 1 cm wide, a bigger exit wound on the right side above the ear. There was a decision to be made: should I take him to the neurosurgery ICU at Bir which has better equipment and trained staff. I realised that the transfer itself would jeopardise what little chance of survival he had. We did a brain x-ray to rule out metal fragments so that we could do an MRI later—to do an MRI with metal inside would have been inexcusable. There was no metal. We enlarged the wound on the left side, removed dead brain tissue, stitched it, turned the patient around and carried out the standard procedure, cauterising, removing bone fragments, leaving an opening in the covering of the brain in case of future infection. Then Dr Joshi provided the skin cover.

Finally, I had time to go to the surgeons' room. I had a chat with some colleagues and at last I heard: the person I had just performed surgery on, the crown prince, had killed everyone. Personally, for me there was a sense of relief. Of course, it was a terrible tragedy for the royal family, but the other alternatives (that it was an outside job) were more sinister

REMEMBRANCES

by RANJIT RAUNIYAR

The Prince and I

It's been barely two weeks since we returned from Kathmandu. We woke up overcast Saturday morning to the heavy circumstances in Nepal. My American friends look at this as a development in a far away historical subtext, perhaps akin somewhat to the way I'd react if say Prince Tippytoes in Tonga had perpetrated a similar situation – more intriguing than tragic, more fantastical than sad. But for the small Nepali community here far away in Greater Boston, the immediacy and enormity of what has happened continue to bring it indescribable pain.

I had met Prince Nirajan for the first time while I was a student at the London School of Economics. He was in his penultimate year at Eton at the time and had come to London along with his two cousin sisters (daughters of now King Gyanendra and Prince Dhirendra, the slain King's youngest brother) to divert briefly from life at Eton. Chiran, a close friend of the prince and my classmate at the LSE, had asked me to come along with him. He seemed to implicitly have been "commissioned" with showing the honorable guests a "fine time."



"Ever considered LSE after school?" I had asked the young Prince. "My 'father' wants me to go to Oxford," he said seeming long resigned to the paternal dictat. "Depends on my grades," he added. "I haven't been doing too well in school." As if!

We talked the night away in an Irish bar in the heart of Covent Garden – in matters relating to life, friends, comedy and school. "Where in Nepal do you live?" the Prince asked me. "Kathmandu," I said. "You should come over some time," he said with such nonchalance that I didn't know whether to chuckle at it or be grateful for it. "Yeah right, come over! Should I knock on the palace gates when I come over?"

The bouncer at *The Hippodrome*, a nightclub in the middle of Leicester square drawing large, unsuspecting tourists to its 80s style music and its tacky ambience, stopped the prince who was then barely 18 and asked him for his ID. I felt like interrupting the big bouncer and saying "Don't you know silly man, he is the prince of Nepal." But the Prince seemed to be savoring his anonymity, moving along in through with the crowds, eager to be one in the many.

We didn't speak about politics, governance or the role of monarchy. Instead, we walked along eating hot dogs from a street vendor, reciprocating the salutations of strangers, and promising at the end of it all to stay in touch. As it is with these things, we of course never got around to staying in touch. I never had an occasion over the years to think much about the Prince and the Princesses. Until few days ago.

It is hard to personalise a loss when the whole nation has a claim to the events and circumstances of the last few days that providence has decreed for Nepal. My entire sadness is not that a "friend," is no more but only that if his death had to be, that it would have come in a similarly unassuming, ordinary and non-abrasive way as I had for that one week in London, personally known his life to be. ♦

Ranjit Rauniyar is a graduate of the London School of Economics and is currently working in Boston.

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Bankrupt banks

Two of Nepal's largest banks have been on the verge of collapse ("What if" NT#26). And the worrying thing is that there has been no progress whatsoever towards possibly bailing them out. The central bank decided on the consultants who would take over the management of the Rastriya Baniya Bank (RBB) about two months ago, but the actual handing over was held up because the same process has not been completed for the Nepal Bank Limited (NBL). Now its no longer hush-hush: 10 central bank evaluators, including a representative from the NBL, have decided that all four companies that had been short-listed for the assignment have been disqualified. So, expect more delays.

Last month, Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) faxed the evaluation committee scorecard to the World Bank that is to give \$25 million (CHK) to the project. All four companies—Price Waterhouse Cooper, Ernst and Young, ICC Bank-UK and Development Partnership-Ireland —scored lower than the threshold 70 points in the evaluation. Or they were not good enough. The World Bank is said to have done its own evaluation of the four companies and concluded that all four that failed are capable of fulfilling the tasks laid out in the Request for Proposal. "The committee's decision to disqualify all four companies that were short-listed earlier is suspect," a source told us.

The World Bank is seeking a re-evaluation of the short-listed companies—which would entail forming a new evaluation committee because the one that rejected them is likely to do the same again. With NBL's consultants not finalised it's now almost certain that the bank reform project cannot be initiated in September—the fourth of such extended deadlines, which could even be the final extension, as our World Bank source says.

A central bank official was defensive: "We're ready to go ahead with the RBB's reforms, we're committed to address the NBL's problems too, but there are some technicalities we've not been able to get over yet." These technicalities are said to include handling the unions, getting the support of political parties and the bank's shareholders. Private investors control a majority of NBL shares. "We've been slow, but sometimes donors tend to want everything to happen their way," the source added.

The two banks—the RBB and the NBL—have a total negative networth anywhere in the range of Rs 20-25 billion, depending on who is counting. The RBB has been crippled by political loans, and the reasons for the NBL's ills are insider lending, over-concentration on certain sectors and business houses. Sources told us that part of the problem with the NBL is its ownership—the government is a minority shareholder. Some even suspect that its private owners are uninterested to have reforms because many of them are also borrowers and would not like external consultants breathing down their necks.

One reason none were selected was because most of the 41 compnies shortlisted after responding to NRB's Special Procurement Notice were auditors. "We are looking for managers and bankers, the companies we were to choose from the list were did not have much experience in those areas," said a source in the NRB evaluation team. "We don't know what's wrong with going with the one with the highest score and start looking at the financial proposals." That is easier said than done, because as we have learnt, of four companies screened for managing RBB two have scores above the 70 percent threshold, and had been evaluated by almost the same evaluation committee.

There is still another roadblock. In an earlier communication the NRB has told the NBL that it would have the "final word" in the selection of the consultants, even though it would not have to pay consultant fees. This means any selection for the management of Nepal Bank Limited by the NRB's evaluation committee would have to be approved by NBL.

Very few now doubt that the two banks are sinking, when they do they will take the economy down with them. Worse still all donors are watching how the bank reforms are moving, and could begin to tighten the purse. We already know that reforming RBB and NBL is a condition for Nepal to be able to borrow from IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Fund.

Given the opposition political parties still against banking reform-- not to talk about dissenters even within the ruling party--unions are against it and so are defaulting businesses and other interests that have pushed the banks to bankruptcy. NRB sources say the best way to begin would be to start with the RBB and gradually rope in the NBL. The World Bank does not like this idea and with the September deadline approaching, someone has to decide, and fast.

Empty hotels

It was looking like a good summer. Indian tourists had just begun responding to Nepal's "Festival of Life" campaign. The May statistics from the Nepal Tourism Board were beginning to show the graph edging cautiously upwards. Total arrivals had increased by 8.5 percent until May 2001. This means 12,312 more tourists came by air in the first five months of 2001 compared to the same period last year—when Indian Airlines flights remained suspended after the IC 814 hijacking. The increase in Indian tourists was about nine percent over the post-hijacking lows. Indian arrivals in May were almost 13 percent more than that in April.

And then the royal massacre happened, and hotels have been empty since. Indian tourist numbers plummeted from over 500 arrivals on 1 June to barely 50 by 10 June. Hotel occupancy is in the single digits. However, there seems to be a light at the end of the tunnel, most July bookings are intact, and the outbound Tibet traffic is expected to fill hotels as scheduled. By this week, even the casinos were seeing an increase in the trickle of Indian visitors.

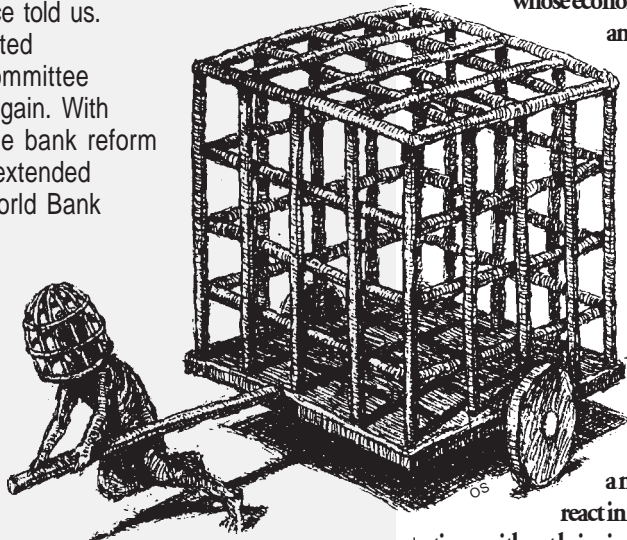
NBE gets ISO certification

Nepal Bayern Electric (NBE), which exports engineering and electronics components to Europe, has been awarded the ISO 9002 and ISO 14001 certification related to quality and environment systems. The audit was conducted by experts from TÜV Sddeutscheland of Germany. NBE is among few Nepali companies to get the certification under ISO 14001 norms of International Standard Organisation, Geneva.

The entire certification process of NBE was assisted by DEG of Germany. "DEG's interest in having Nepali companies certified in quality and environment is that trade more than aid is the way to development," says Lochan Gyawali of NBE. DEG is an arm of the German government that gives financial support to viable projects and industries.

Since it was launched in 1993, NBE has been exporting electronic components for use in satellite, automotive, broadband, and other technologies. The company is run by an all-Nepali team, and has a dedicated work force of about 500 women workers besides technical staff including engineers and supervisors. Ruediger Lemp, the German Ambassador to Nepal, in a message calls the certification "a good demonstration of the usefulness of such bilateral joint ventures".

NBE is a German-Nepali joint venture between Wust Gmbh, of Munich and the Narayani Group from Nepal. NBE exports its products to Ireland, Finland and Germany.



At times like these...



We need to adjust to globalisation without changing our culture.

Nepal is limping back to normal, grief-stricken and shocked. Slowly people are trying to look ahead. And that is what everyone ought to do, because the task in front of us now is making for ourselves a workable, bright future. As a country whose economy is saddled by an inefficient

government and a bandh-loving opposition, we have all got to put in some more time trying to make the future work. The Beed has been in a dilemma, wondering how a nation should react in such trying

times without bringing the economy to a standstill. The last two weeks saw only a couple of workdays. In order to gain some kind of closure, we have been following certain rituals of mourning from time immemorial. The challenge we face now is fitting these into a modern paradigm of commerce, business and economy.

The world economy functions around the clock. True, Nepal does not have the volumes of the big bourses, or commodity exchanges that transact high volumes of trade or foreign exchange markets that work

on rates quoted minute to minute, but there are areas that have been affected in the last few weeks. One could argue that when a nation is shocked, as we have been, perhaps discussing trivial issues like business is moot, but the reality is that life goes on. People who had to retire their Letters of Credit had to fork out penal interest, demurrage charges had to be paid to transporters, rental had to be paid for goods that stayed in the other side of the border. Students going abroad missed out, because the banks were not functioning and did not issue Travellers Cheques. People who had to go out of the country for medical emergencies could not travel, because the offices handling the issuance of passports were closed. People trading on the low volume stock exchange had to wait two weeks to square off their deals and most have lost in interest the gains they anticipated.

The list of the unquantifiable is longer. The number of days the schools have been closed this year has become even longer. The change in examination dates especially impacted those taking international competitive examinations. The transportation system came to a virtual standstill, affecting the movement of agricultural produce. In Nepal, where a large portion of the populace lives hand-to-mouth on daily wage, is it fair to deprive them of their income while also forcing them to pay more for

everyday goods and foodstuff due to disruption in supplies. And in a country that depends on tourism as much as we do, shutting down the economy for extended periods is not a luxury we can afford.

It is time we examined our laws for shutting down the country and assessed what they should affect and what not. The government may not do much about this since the bureaucracy is notorious for enjoying extra days off—the same reason there is little real opposition to the bandhs. Government servants who avoid work even on the best of days cannot be expected to support changes that would require them to work more. The business community that largely comprises traders also has a vested interest in such situations—they control the supply chain and gain by charging an extra five rupees for a litre of kerosene or a kilogram of sugar. And the people who really suffer? They do not even have a forum to voice their concerns.

Simply put, we need to make adjustments to accommodate the economy in the context of rapid globalisation without affecting too adversely the ethos of our religion, our culture and our social values. This difficult task must begin now. ♦

Readers can post their views at arthabeed@yahoo.com

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**ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY**

While multinational energy companies are trying to cash in on Nepal's hydroelectric potential, one small private organisation has been quietly saving Nepal millions of dollars by building indigenous capacity to model projects designed on Himalayan rivers.

Hydro Lab is an independent research laboratory that now helps big power and irrigation projects to do in Nepal what would have to be done in Germany, Canada or Norway at much higher cost. Hydro Lab's shed located within the Tribhuvan University Institute of Engineering campus in Pulchowk is a private company set up originally with support from the Norwegian government. The Lab got help from the Norwegian Institute of Science and Technology and the International Center for Hydropower, and it is the only research organisation providing specialised hydraulic model studies in water engineering in Nepal.

"When development experts say 'capacity building' it has become a cliché, but this is what capacity building means—the ability to do professional and world-class research work in Nepal," says Hydro Lab's Pratik Pradhan. For decades, research on proposed water engineering projects such as bridge and dam building and hydroelectric plants in Nepal had to be done in Europe and India. There was simply nobody who could do it here. Consultants would ask foreign companies to look into the research side and design their projects according to the suggestions given.

# A role model for modelling

ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY

**Nepal is saving millions of dollars because expensive hydraulic modelling can now be done indigenously.**

This not only took up a great deal of time but also siphoned off valuable hard currency outside the nation.

First started as a laboratory for students of the Institute of Engineering and later combined with a branch of the Butwal Power Company, Hydro Lab gained momentum when NORAD agreed to sponsor the lab on a private basis for five years in 1999. By then it had already produced two successful models of the 60 MW Khimti hydropower project as well as the 12 MW Jhimruk River model.

So why is it important to model river projects? Pradhan explains "We help engineers to design and modify their projects based on life size experiments carried out in this lab so they don't make expensive mistakes in real life." The lab is currently working on its third model, the much debated Melamchi project. Hydraulic model studies, planning and design of hydraulic structures, testing performances of riverside structures for the Melamchi intake are being carried out. The Lab does applied research focused on handling

techniques in steep sediment carrying rivers and conducts field studies.

The Melamchi River is replicated exactly in a 1:30 scale model, where every boulder on or near the river bed that is more than 1 meter wide is carved meticulously to see how the water flows around them. The model is so perfect that even vegetation is copied, as are tributaries and gorges along the Melamchi river. Bigger rocks and granite found in the actual riverbed and banks, were surveyed, photographed and numbered and their exact shapes duplicated in Pulchowk—the only thing is that they are 30 times smaller.

What look like pebbles are actually designer rocks carved exactly out of cement and made to resemble the real boulders on the real river. The Lab can simulate various categories of floods. From a murmuring brook in the dry season with less than 10 cubic metres per second, the Melamchi can be simulated into a monsoon torrent with 70 cumecs. Simulations can even be made for once-in-300-year flash floods of up to 1,000 cumecs. Rushing down the gorge are pebbles, which if this was a real flash flood would be boulders weighing up to 20 tons.

Since Himalayan rivers don't just carry water, the Lab can also simulate sediment, and measured amounts of

sediment are automatically poured into the flow. All of these are so accurate and minute to the last detail that it almost feels like you're some giant staring at a tiny river below. As Pradhan, gives the orders to let the waters flow, one can actually see why the Himalayan rivers are so hard to tame. "This can also be done with computers but with Himalayan rivers the theory just doesn't work," says Pradhan.

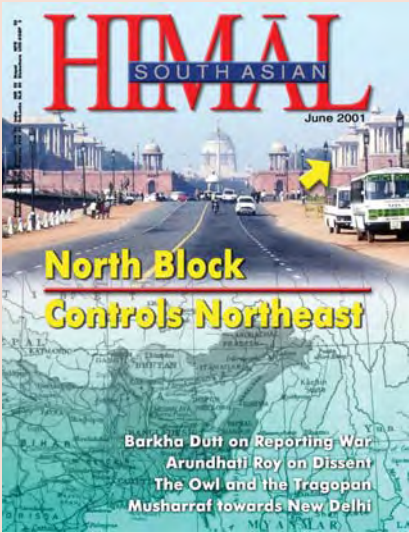
The model enables Pradhan's team to study the impact that such floods would have on the river, the river bed, and gives them vital information on where the engineering projects should take place. Pradhan points out a hidden point just after a sharp bend and says, "Ideally the dam should be placed here because in rivers like these construction should never be done in the direct path of a flood."

The work however does not end here. "It's a never ending research," says Pradhan. The Lab has already

conducted two major model research projects and three smaller ones including Melamchi Sediment Sampling, Nyadi Sediment Sampling in connection with the feasibility study for the Nyadi Hydropower Project and the Khimti Settling Base Performance Test.

The construction of Melamchi model started in January of 1999 and was completed within three months. However it is not as easy as it sounds. Because the model has to be an exact replica of the real terrain the designers have to actually visit the field and note each and every nook and corner of the stream. All materials used here are locally manufactured. Compared to computer research this type of model study is cheaper and only costs up to Rs 3,000,000. But seeing its effectiveness there is no reason why a project should invest millions in computer research at least for the moment. Until then, Hydro Lab has and its 15 member staff have no competition. ♦

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SALIL SUBEDI

Look at the mango. Hold it in your hands. Feel its weight. Move your fingers over its firm, slightly sticky body. Bathe yourself in its lush colour. Inhale the aroma that wafts across its skin. Imagine what lies beneath. Imagine eating it nibble by delicate, heavenly nibble. Imagine eating it with your beloved. You are slowly becoming one with the mango. Drool. Slobber. Squish. Slurp. Gobble. Couldn't wait, could you?

Mango is an undeniably amorous fruit. In our observation, there is no other food that humans so completely give themselves over to, not even litchees. Eating a mango is like falling in love. If you want mere aphrodisiacs, go eat chocolate or truffles. Mango is the fruit of more elevated oneness of being—the real passion fruit.

Fallacy: Eve ate an apple. She hardly seems the sort to bound up in a tracksuit, ponytail swinging, do a set of Swedish exercises and then crunch with Pepsodent teeth into an apple. She seems somehow sensual and more tropical. The other options seem equally unlikely—artichoke (naughty in intention, but a bit too labour-intensive), pomegranate (also naughty, but demanding), banana (surely she wasn't this crass), olive (other, more spiritual uses), figs (plants otherwise occupied), oranges (snore). What *could* she have eaten? Durian? Ornamental pepper? Mangoes are 4,000 years old and thrive in tropical climes, the cradle of early humanity. In the case of Eve, mangoes are the prime suspect.

Contrast this with an account of the patron celestial lovers of Nepal, Shiva and Parvati. When they came down to the Himalaya, the poor lady missed her mangoes so much, she began to pine quite away. Shiva, always the devoted consort, took time off from his hectic administrative activities and using his divine powers created heaven on earth—by bringing the mango to us. Right from the beginning, in myth and in literature, South Asians got it right. True, we had a head-start—it was love at first bite and our first eulogy was written before we released mango pollen across water and land—but still, to produce a body of stories like we have, where there is a mango story attached to every major (and even minor) character, and where there is not one set of lovers that does not rendezvous in a mango grove, is to demonstrate a closer, more visceral relation to the fruit. Consider a recent gem: “*Ma mahuri hu radha, timi aap ke manjari hau*” (“I am a bee, Radha, you are a flowering mango tree”—perhaps, these things lose something in translation.)

But before you start putting them out of sight of your children, remember that times have changed, things have moved on, and we are



Mangoes are, of course, delicious, as all South Asian mythology and literature that evokes them will tell you. They are also versatile, have umpteen therapeutic effects, and... are the perfect bathtub food.

now more liberal. Mango-eating is a wonderful family activity. It's like Lego, only better. Mangoes come in many shades of green, even when ripe, the yellows go all the way from golden yellow to canary yellow to yellow—and green—with a red or pink blush. There are over 1,000 kinds of mangoes in the world, 500 of which are somewhat more common than others. In Nepal there are about a dozen common varieties, and who-knows-how-many others in little groves here and there. And that's not counting the Indian varieties available in the market. You can squelch your way through tarai varieties like *Dashahri*, *Kishanbhog*, *Maldaba*, the hybrid *Bizu* and the punchy little *Suryapuri*, the *Supare*, *Totaphuli*, *Gulabkha*, *Gabate*, *Sindure* and *Kakri* from the mid-hills, the generic large Nepali *Pharse* and the *Banganapalli*, *Bambaiya*, *Senoriya*, *Alphonso* (watch for fakes) and *Calcuttia* from India. Even slurping can be educational, and you can make a map with the different mangoes marking their natal homes: Jhapa, Kanchanpur, Rupnagar in the tarai and Kavre, Trishuli–Bidur, Dhadhing, Naubise, Palpa and Syangja in the mid-hills. If you cross the border, as

you will 70 percent of the time you buy the fruit of divinity here, you could traverse the plains of Uttar Pradesh, to the east coast of India, through Maharashtra and Madras, and up to Andhra Pradesh. Speaking admiringly of the Adventures of Mango, Lal Babu Shah at the wholesale fruit and veg market in Kalimati proclaims the *aanp*: “hero no. 1 fruit.”

Cynics will suggest that nothing can be as perfect as some of us believe mangoes are. But they are perfect, really—however you choose to eat them, whether sliced along the seed with the flesh scored so it comes away from the skin easily, or simply peeled and chopped, whether you delicately pick at the seed or go for the jugular, using your lips, teeth, tongue and fingers to get the last shred of flesh. If you're really particular, you can even get a “mango fork”. Yes, it exists—it has one long, strong tine that can pierce the hardest mango seed. So all you do is peel, poke, and eat it like a popsicle. Even in this case, though, we defy you to not splatter yourself with juice. Whatever you do to get them into your system, know that they are *not* “fattening” and that they contain a goodly amount of vitamins C and E,

an extraordinary amount of vitamin A and beta carotene, and minerals including zinc, magnesium and potassium (so much for the lowly banana). Ripe mangoes, unripe mangoes, mango flowers, and the resin of the tree's bark are said to have many, many therapeutic properties—they're said to be variously anti-viral, antiseptic, antihelminthic, antitussive, antibiotic, expectorant, stress-relieving, laxative, anti-asthmatic and, yes, both aphrodisiac and contraceptive. How do you get better than this.

Now wonder they're such booming business: At the wholesale fruit market in Kuleswor, anywhere between six and ten trucks of mangoes are unloaded everyday. Each truck carries about nine tons. That means that in a good month, around 2,500 tons of mangoes are consumed in Kathmandu and surrounding areas. “People here are amazing. They really eat mangoes voraciously,” laughs Bidya Bahadur Khadki, a founder of the market and a fruit trader himself. “It wasn't like this earlier, but the last couple of years have really been good.” Over the season, Valley residents eat, drink and cook over 6,000 tons of the fruit. But they

aren't the only ones getting fat off it, and high prices we pay have as much to do with the mathematics of taxes and bribes at the border, and meagre subsidies as with our insatiable greed. Narayan Dhital, chairman of Kuleswor market says these factors together raise the price of mangoes by almost Rs 3 per kg. Mango accounts for nine percent of all fruit grown in Nepal, and almost 31 percent in the mid-hills. The Department of Agriculture claims that of all tropical fruits, it gives priority to the mango, while fruit growers laugh bitterly at the suggestion. Either way, something ought to be done to sort this out and feed our hunger more economically.

And it would be nice to get more Nepali mangoes. India accounts for over 50 percent of the world's mango production, and Nepal, a mere four percent. Someone made smart on a steady mango diet should figure out what percentage of the word's mangoes are consumed in Nepal, just so we get an idea of why we are overwhelmed with mangoes from across the border. They're also delicious, but it would be wonderful to be able to differentiate between tarai sweetness and mid-hill flavour, between the varieties that are firm, slightly tart and almost creamy and those that are squishier, sweeter and more fibrous, and all those in between.

It's amazing how different varieties of a single fruit can taste, and how much subtle, yet identifiable variation there can be between different batches of the same variety. We should have mango-tasting sessions, like wine and whiskey tastings. We should have neighbourhood and street potlucks where everyone brings a different mango delectation. We should ban bandhs during mango season so the precious fruit doesn't get overripe or rot away while waiting to go places. We should declare one month of every summer Mango Month and be happy, simply because we have mangoes. And, yes, we should spend some of that time soaking ourselves in bathtubs, skinny-dipping in lakes, communing with our mangoes, relishing the fruit that is said to be the abode of the daughter of the sun, the mess be damned. ♦







# Go, MANGO!

### Mango-basil sauce

Goes well with grilled chicken or fish, or pork chops.

- 1 small ripe mango, peeled, pitted
- 1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 spicy chilli, seeded, minced
- 1/3 cup thinly sliced fresh basil leaves
- 3/4 cup canned low-salt chicken broth
- 1 1/2 tablespoons golden brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce

Puree mango, set aside 1/2 cup. Heat one tablespoon oil in skillet over medium heat. Add garlic and chilli, then basil; sauté just until basil wilts, about one minute. Add broth, brown sugar and soy sauce. Bring to boil, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat and simmer three minutes. Gradually whisk in mango puree. Simmer until sauce thickens and coats spoon, about five minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Makes four servings

### Cuban mango mojo

Works with any grilled meat. Try rubbing chicken or pork chops with a mixture of finely ground fennel seed, pepeprcorns and salt before grilling.

- 1 green mango, peeled and coarsely chopped
- 1/4 cup fresh lime juice
- 1 large garlic clove
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh hit green chilli (including seeds)
- 1 teaspoon salt, or to taste
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh coriander

Purée mango, lime juice, garlic, chilli, and salt, then stir in coriander. Makes 4 servings

### Curried chicken and mango sandwiches

- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1 1/2 teaspoons chopped fresh corainder
- 1 teaspoon curry powder
- 1/2 firm ripe mango
- 2 skinless boneless chicken breast halves (about 3/4 lb total)
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 2 loaves of soft bread
- 4 small lettuce leaves

In a bowl stir mayonnaise, coriander, curry powder, and salt and pepper to taste until combined well. Peel mango and thinly slice lengthwise.

Pat chicken dry and season with salt and pepper. In a 9" non-stick skillet heat oil over moderately high heat until hot but not smoking and sauté chicken four minutes on each side, or until cooked through. Transfer chicken to a cutting board and let stand 5 minutes. Diagonally slice chicken and season with salt and pepper.

Make sandwiches with mayonnaise mixture, lettuce, chicken, and mango and top. Makes 4 servings

### Mangoes in spicy yoghurt

- 2 large ripe mangoes, unpeeled, cubed
- 2 cups plus 3 tablespoons water
- 1/2 litre thick unsweetened whipped buttermilk.
- 1/2 medium coconut, shredded or minced
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric.
- 3 plus 2 large dried red chillies
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1/2 tablespoon mustard seeds
- 1/8 tablespoon fenugreek seeds
- Curry leaves to taste
- Salt to taste

Place mango pieces at the bottom of a large heavy wok. Cover with two cups water. Add salt and turmeric, bring to boil and reduce heat.



SALT, SUBED

Mix three tablespoons water, coconut and red chillies and blend into fine paste. When the mangoes are cooked so skin is soft, add buttermilk, coconut-chilli paste and boil for three minutes. Add curry leaves, remove from heat. In a small wok heat oil till it starts to smoke lightly. Reduce heat, add mustard seeds and pop. Then add fenugreek seeds and 2 dried red chillies. Fry for two minutes until chillies are brown. Add spiced oil to mangoes in yoghurt. Makes 4 servings

### Mango and red onion chutney

- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 2 medium red onions, cut into 1/2" cubes
- 1 capsicum, diced into 1/4" pieces
- 1/4 cup minced peeled fresh ginger
- 4 ripe mangoes (3 lb), peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 cup canned pineapple juice
- 1/2 cup fine vinegar
- 1/2 cup packed light brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon curry powder
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried hot red pepper flakes
- Coarsely ground black pepper

Heat oil in a heavy skillet over moderately high heat until hot but not smoking, then sauté onions, stirring frequently, until softened. Add capsicum and ginger and sauté, stirring, one minute. Stir in mangoes, pineapple juice, vinegar, brown sugar, curry powder, and red pepper flakes. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until thickened, about 15 minutes. Season with salt and coarse pepper, then cool. Serve at room temperature. Will keep refrigerated for two weeks. Makes about 7 cups

For sweets and drinks, see p. 12 ➡

  
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- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh tarragon or 2 teaspoons dried
- 1 1/2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon peel
- 2/3 cup diced, peeled ripe mango
- 1/3 cup diced capsicum
- 1/3 cup diced sweet white onion

Just mix all ingredients.

This goes with everything from fried chicken to vanilla ice-cream.

2 3/4 cups finely chopped peeled pitted mangoes (about 2 mangoes)  
2 tablespoons sugar  
1/4 cup chopped crystallized ginger  
2 teaspoons fresh lime juice

Place 1 cup chopped mangoes in medium bowl. Combine remaining 1 3/4 cups chopped mangoes and sugar in processor. Puree until smooth. Add to bowl with chopped mangoes. Stir in crystallized ginger and lime juice. Let stand at least 30 minutes. Cover and refrigerate.  
Makes 2 cups

- 2 cups white flour
- 1 level tablespoon ground cinnamon
- 1 level tablespoon baking soda
- ¼ tablespoon salt
- 1 ¼ cups white sugar
- 2 eggs
- ¾ cup vegetable oil
- 2 ½ cups ripe mangoes, peeled, chopped
- ½ tablespoon lemon juice
- ¼ cups raisins

Combine all dry ingredients. Beat eggs with oil and add to flour mixture. Add mangoes, lemon and raisins. Pour into 2 greased 8x4 loaf pans. Bake at 350 degrees F for about 60 minutes or until toothpick comes out clean. Makes two 8x4 loaves

1 1/2 cups sugar  
1 cup sifted cake flour  
1/2 teaspoon salt

1 1/2 cups egg whites (about 11 large)  
2 teaspoons warm water  
1 teaspoon cream of tartar  
2 teaspoons vanilla extract  
Powdered sugar  
Thinly sliced crystallized ginger (optional)  
*Mango ginger sauce:* See above

Preheat oven to 350°F. Sift 1/2 cup sugar, flour and salt into medium bowl five times. Beat egg whites in large bowl until foamy. Add two teaspoons warm water and cream of tartar and beat until soft peaks form. Gradually add remaining one cup sugar and vanilla and beat until stiff but not dry. Sift sugar-flour mixture over whites 1/4 cup at a time and gently fold in. Transfer batter to ungreased cake pan. (Do not use non-stick pan) Bake until cake is light golden, top springs back when touched lightly and cake begins to pull away from sides of pan, about 45 minutes. Remove cake from oven. Cool completely. Using knife, cut around sides of pan to loosen cake. Transfer to platter. Dust cake with powdered sugar. Serve with mango-ginger sauce. Makes 8-10 servings

1 15 oz ripe mango, peeled, pitted, cut into ½" pieces  
1/2 cup sugar  
3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice  
Pinch salt  
4 large egg yolks  
1/4 cup chilled unsalted butter, cut into small pieces

Puree first four ingredients, scraping down sides of work bowl occasionally. Add yolks; puree 15 seconds longer. Strain through sieve set over large metal bowl. Discard solids in sieve. Set metal bowl over saucepan of simmering water (do not allow bottom of bowl to touch water); whisk puree until thickened, about 10 minutes. Remove from over water. Whisk in butter one piece at a time. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

- 1/4 cup water
- 3 tablespoons tequila
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 large ripe mangoes, peeled, pitted
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice

Combine first three ingredients in heavy small saucepan. Stir over medium heat until sugar dissolves and mixture boils. Cool syrup slightly. Puree mangoes, syrup and lime juice in processor until smooth. Transfer mixture to cake dish. Freeze,

stirring occasionally until slushy, about two hours. Continue freezing until firm. Let stand 10 minutes at room temperature. Break up into chunks. Return mixture to processor and process until smooth. Serve.

Serves 4

3 cups chopped peeled mangoes (2 mangoes)  
6 tablespoons light rum  
1/2 cup granulated sugar  
2 tablespoons water  
1 1/2 tablespoons fresh lime juice  
8 (1/3-cup) ice cream moulds and 8 wooden sticks

Blend all ingredients in a blender until smooth, then force through a fine sieve into a large glass measuring cup. Pour into moulds and add sticks. Freeze at least 24 hours. Makes 8 (1/3 cup) ice pops

## Make it up

## Make it up



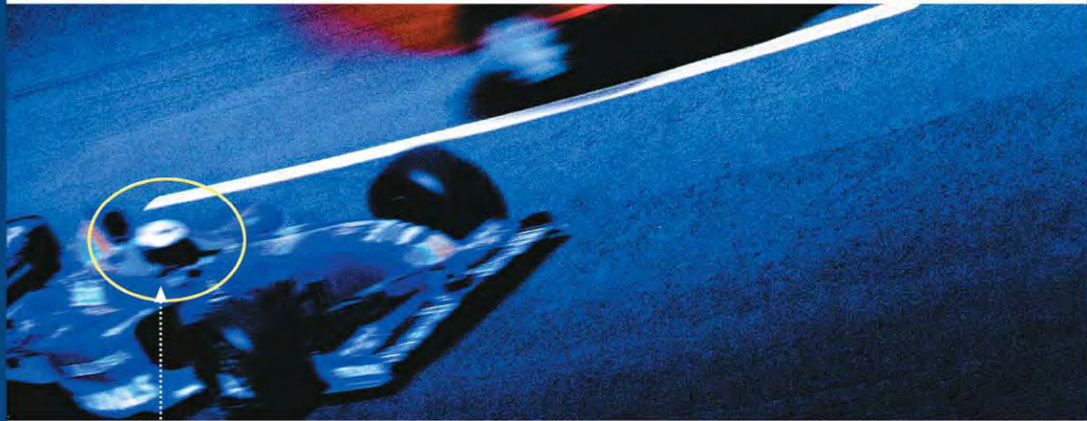
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WASHINGTON - While President George W Bush spent much of his first trip to Europe assuring its inhabitants that more unites the continent and the US than divides them, his ideological followers at home stoked anti-European feeling. Led by the editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal*, prominent right-wing media figures cited the alleged rise of anti-Americanism in Europe to bash the Old World for a host of faults the US has traditionally associated with the continent: cynicism, hypocrisy, opportunism, and cowardice. The specific target has been European “elites”, as if the centre-left governments in most of Europe do not represent the people who elected them. “For decades, this elite class has generally cherished a sneering and jingoistic contempt for America and American values,” argued Michael Kelly, an influential *Washington Post* columnist. The message: don’t take them seriously, they’re just jealous of our superiority.

# Same old story

## Hoary anti-European sentiment rises again in the USA.

A herd of columnists saw European hypocrisy in the fact that no EU nation has ratified the Kyoto Protocol, despite their oft-stated intentions to do so. Also dismissed were European objections to capital punishment. “Ex-Trotskyites in France consider us barbarians for imposing the death penalty on a mass murderer,” complained *New York Times* columnist William Safire, “though more prisoners in French jails committed suicide in the past year than were executed in the US.” And National Missile Defence? Linda Chavez wrote in the *Washington Times*: “Once the US has developed a missile defence system, the Europeans will be only too glad to share it.” As to European complaints about American unilateralism, Kelly wrote: “There are worse ‘isms’, and three are imperialism, fascism and communism. A century of American resolve, often in the face of European disdain, created a continent where not one of these lives as a serious force. Not bad.”

Such self-righteousness is nothing new in trans-Atlantic relations. But the latest burst comes when there is no single power to offset US global dominance and as Bush leads Washington in a clearly unilateralist direction. The US has been ambivalent about Europe since its first

president, George Washington, warned against “permanent alliances” with European powers. US “isolationism” has nothing to do with isolation from the world as a whole. The most venerable isolationists have always thought Washington had a God-given right to intervene in the Caribbean, Latin America and Asia. Most early settlers came here for very good reasons for religious and political freedom which was denied them by authoritarian or monarchical political systems back home, or social and economic opportunities which were not available in the class-bound and aristocratic societies of the Old World. The idea was, as the revolutionary Tom Paine put it, “to begin the world all over again.” This New World would embody all the virtues Europe lacked.

“The Calvinist cast of mind saw America as the redeemer nation,” wrote historian Arthur Schlesinger in 1983 explaining the roots of Ronald Reagan’s foreign policy which, like Bush’s, was also criticised in Europe as unilateralist, albeit less surly. Most of the country’s “redemptive” efforts were aimed first at the indigenous population that threatened the country’s continental expansion, then the inhabitants of the Caribbean Basin and Asia. Woodrow Wilson, a true

Calvinist, tried to make World War I “the war to make the world safe for democracy.” When his efforts to fashion a new world order were frustrated by Europeans, the US moved back into isolationist mode. It took a Japanese attack on the US Pacific fleet in Hawaii and Nazi Germany’s declaration of war to bring Washington into World War II. In the popular mind and mainstream media, the US rescued Europe during the war and then remained there to rescue it, relatively peacefully, from the Soviet threat in the Cold War and from its own impotence in the Balkans.

Not everyone accepts this version of history but it is gospel to most Americans, particularly right-wing forces that cheer Bush’s unilateralism. Charles Krauthammer has already celebrated this as “the Bush Doctrine.” Krauthammer wrote in a recent *Weekly Standard* article, “American power is good not just for the United States but for the world. The Bush administration is the first administration of the post-Cold War era to share that premise and act accordingly.” Proclaimed Krauthammer: “We are not just any hegemon. We run a uniquely benign imperium.” ♦ (IPS)

# Scenes from the drug war

The war on drugs takes many forms. Colombia presents the militarised version, with specially trained battalions skimming over jungles and mountainsides spraying defoliants from helicopter gun-ships. This “poisoned earth” policy kills coca plants, not peasant farmers. So, many cross into Ecuador to cultivate coca there. Or you can take a poppy field and dig a large pond, fill it with fish, plant trees around it, buy ducks and entrust them to your children. This supposedly eradicates a field of poppies, provides local people with protein from fish and fowl, helps reforestation and brings employment to children.

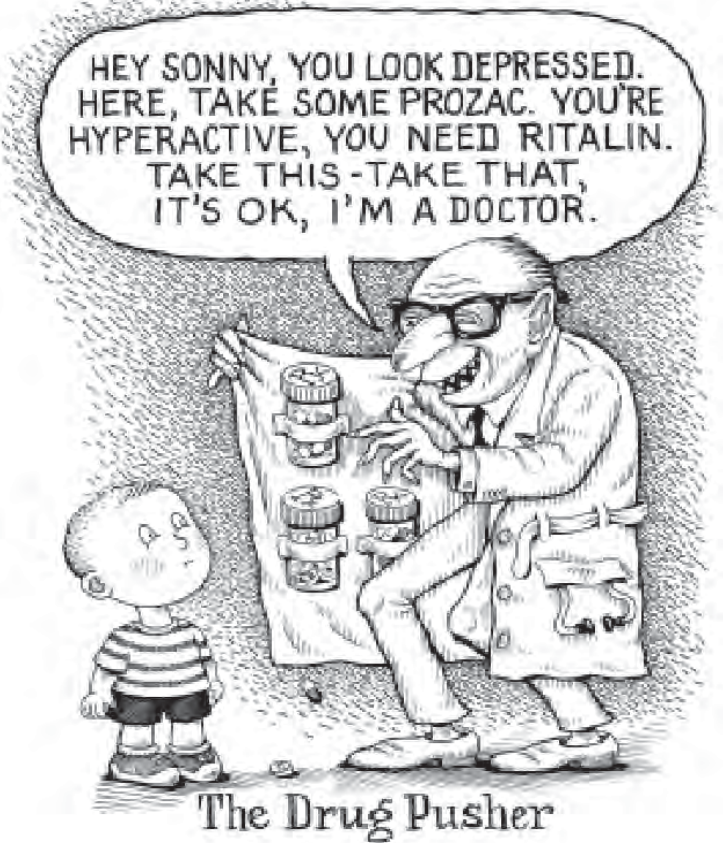
That was the idea behind a USAID-funded poppy eradication program in Afghanistan. As in Colombia, the results were fleeting. Poppy, like coca, is an ideal cash crop for farmers with small areas of land and few resources. It needs little care and brings a secure income. But fighting poppy/coca production is an ideal stance for politicians. It is easier to spend millions to eradicate poppy/coca production in poor countries than confront addiction at home. One needs only to look at the example of Afghanistan to see the folly of such endeavours.

The promise of funds to fight poppy production galvanised the American Embassy in Islamabad into action. The American Ambassador’s wife flew to Quetta to discuss with Mullah Nasim Aukhundzada a poppy substitution program. Mullah Aukhundzada was Amir of a big area in southwest Afghanistan, a major poppy producing area. He promised to slash poppy production in return for tractors, seed, and other goodies. Soon USAID funded its own eradication program. Although it attracted experienced advisers, political pressure for fast results left little time for groundwork. Instead of researching the area’s agricultural base, social structures, and local cultures, the plan’s officers launched a program based on hearsay and feeble contacts. Afghans took advantage of the programme officers’ ignorance, goodwill and craving for instant results. NGOs that had flourished during the fight against the Soviet occupation now had little funding, and saw money to fight poppy as a way to cover administrative expenses and keep jobs alive. Although they lacked experience in narcotics eradication, many NGOs in Peshawar and Pakistan’s North West Frontier jumped at the opportunity to secure USAID money, proposing ill-considered programs. One such was Afghanaid, a British organisation that provided an area in Nangahar with several teams of bullocks. After ploughing the land for winter wheat, the farmers slaughtered the cattle because they could not feed them through the winter—no fodder was provided. This program was quickly dubbed “Kebabs for Poppy”.

There are other amusing anecdotes. But the end result is not: the program often failed to deliver what it promised and achieved the opposite of what it had intended. Mullah Aukhundzada was so angry when the promised goodies failed to materialise that he ordered all former poppy producing and surrounding areas, to double production the following year. In another instance a young Afghan convinced the program’s administrators that his uncle (in reality a nonentity) represented many growers whom he could persuade to stop cultivating poppy and walked away with \$100,000. In areas that received assistance, neighbouring farmers cultivating food crops switched to poppy to qualify for aid.

So long as political masters yearn for quick fixes and high profile results, such

America has renamed its militarised effort to reduce drug production Plan Colombia an “Andean Development Initiative.” It will probably fail.



programs will yield only short-term successes. Helicopter gun-ships and expensive crop replacement programs provide TV-friendly images, but do nothing to lessen the demand for drugs. Peasant farmers may, for a time, be bribed or intimidated (the Taliban executes Afghan poppy growers) into cultivating crops other than poppy or coca. They may even be persuaded to dig a fishpond and try and eke out a living. But when the pond dries up or the substitute crop or job fails, so long as there are rich drug users in the West, they will return to cultivating poppy or coca. ♦ (Project Syndicate)

Juliet Peck was a consultant on aid for the UN and USAID in Afghanistan and is currently a television producer.

## Now, incentive to be progressive

BRUSSELS – EU member states and the European Parliament are considering a proposal to simplify rules for imports from developing countries and increase incentives for trading partners who respect international environmental and social standards. The European Commission has proposed the regulation as a revision of the 1971 Generalised Scheme of Tariff Preferences (GSP), set up to give developing countries easier access to EU markets. The new rules which would cover the GSP’s final two years, 2002 to 2004. The proposal seeks to simplify the GSP rules, harmonise current procedures and better target them to countries most in need,” the Commission said in a statement. EU Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy adds: “It is also intended to improve the effectiveness of special incentives to promote core labour and environmental standards. The scheme constitutes a further tangible example of the promotion of sustainable development, a central plank of EU trade policy.” The proposal would double existing preferences for countries that respect international environmental and social standards—for example, preserving forests and biodiversity. In the social sphere, beneficiaries would be required to apply all ILO conventions related to core labour standards, including the right to unionise. Beneficiary countries committing “serious and systematic” violations of those standards could lose their GSP status. Previously, the eligibility of countries and particular sectors was decided only when a new regulation came into force. Under the proposal, this would be done once a year. (IPS)

## Straightening up

PISA, Italy - The Leaning Tower of Pisa, the gravity-defying icon of imperfection, was reopened last weekend, 11 years after it was closed to the public because of fears it might collapse. The \$30 million project to stabilise the 12th century tower and return it to the sustainable tilt of 163 years ago is being hailed as one of the great engineering feats of all time. But some who worked on the project say the technical challenges paled in comparison to negotiating the political minefields in a country that changes prime ministers often and has elevated second-guessing to an art form. The commission was briefly disbanded in 1996 when the project was stagnating in the face of government apathy, widespread criticism, and disagreements among the specialists on how to proceed. But two years ago they decided on British professor John Burland’s suggestion—remove soil from the high side of the tower’s foundation so it sank deeper and righted itself. Shortly after construction of the tower began in 1173, the sandy soil of the estuary started shifting, causing the tower to lean. The builders decided to press on, and the tower, eight stories and 187 ft high, was completed in 1370. Over the centuries its tilt grew incrementally, but it was never in danger of falling over until 1838, when someone dug a walkway around it, weakening the foundation. In 1934, an Italian engineer Girometti tried to stabilise the tower by drilling 361 holes into the base and filling them with mortar, but this increased the tilt. The local tourist board estimates that five to six million visitors arrive every year to see it and says numbers have remained constant, despite the tower’s being closed to the public since 1990. (The Boston Globe)



## World’s largest kebab

Limassol, Cyprus - At least 6,500 people feasted on an oozing one-and-a-half ton mass of roasting chicken meat on Limassol’s waterfront last Sunday, in an attempt to break the existing record for largest doner kebab and raise money for charity. “It went wonderfully,” said fast-food restaurateur Sami Eid, who organised the event in conjunction with the Limassol Rotary Club. “We didn’t sleep last night.” Eid’s crowning triumph came in breaking the world record, set in 1998 with a 1,030 kg kebab in Zurich. Limassol mayor Demetris Kontides weighed the raw ingredients of the kebab, which, at 1,503.66 kg, came in just ahead of the predicted 1,500. After the 1,500 cleaned and de-boned chickens were stuck on to the two-metre high skewer, Kontides measured the dimensions—1.51m in height, 1.41m in diameter at the base and 1.16m at the top—observed by a district officer, in compliance with rules set out by the *Guinness Book of World Records*. The kebab sat roasting and rotating until just after 1pm, when the first portions were served on a Lebanese-style pita with lemon and garlic. Patrons bought kebab tickets for \$1.50. Although the feast was scheduled to end at dusk, Eid and company continued to dish out hunks of the massive pile of meat until late into the night. Kontides estimated that 10,000 people attended the event during the day, milling about to gape at the behemoth skewer, if not to partake in it. (The Cyprus Mail)



# Another new configuration



**Russia and China are heavyweights in a new Central Asian organisation that aims for security and better trade and obliquely opposes US policy in the region.**

MOSCOW - With last week's metamorphosis of a border deal into a new organisation covering Central Asia, the volatile region is now dominated by Russia and China. This new grouping took form at the fifth annual summit in Shanghai of the Shanghai Five—Russia, China and the former Soviet states of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Uzbekistan is also a member of the new group, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The SCO's roots lie in the 1997 creation of a body to deal with border disputes amid common concerns about Islamic extremism. That year, Shanghai Five countries, which share the former Soviet-Chinese border, signed a treaty significantly

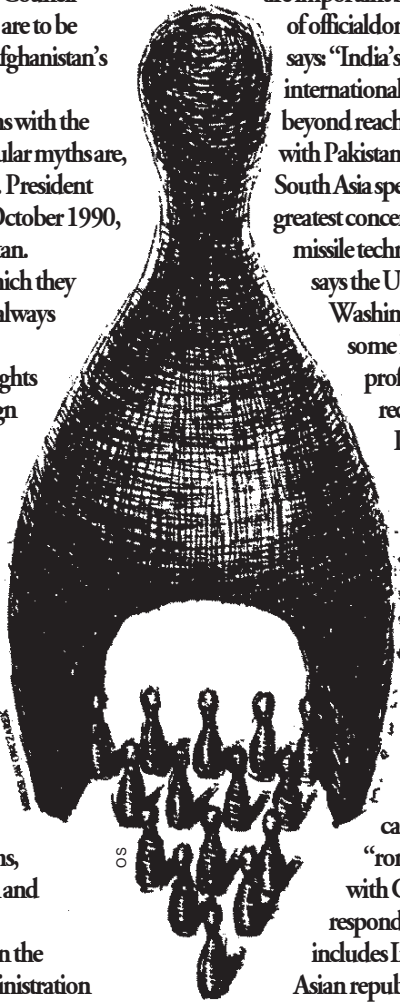
reducing border troops. For Russia, this new formal regional structure is the fruition of its long-advocated collective security action to deal with terrorism in Central Asia. But the new club has other implications for Central Asia's power equation. Russia and China have long shared concern over perceived American dominance in international affairs, so Moscow and Beijing will push the SCO to counterbalance Washington's perceived unilateralism. Russia and China will be "driving forces", the Russian Interfax news agency quoted a Kremlin source as saying. Russia and China prioritise efforts to ensure a democratic world order and a "multi-polar world," Putin was

quoted as saying. "There is nothing more dreadful for US Central Asian policy than a rapprochement between Russia and China," argued deputy Alexey Arbatov of the Russian State Duma (the lower chamber of parliament). SCO defence ministers voiced support for the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty between Russia and the US, signalling opposition to the planned US missile defense system. Russia is an exclusive supplier of advanced weapons and military technology to China. Analysts say the inclusion of Uzbekistan, Central Asia's most populous nation, in the SCO is also a key development. The move comes as a blow to another post-Soviet group, GUUAM, including Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova. This was created with Western support in 1997 to challenge Russia's perceived domination and Uzbekistan joined in 1999 at the 50th anniversary summit of NATO. However, Uzbekistan concluded a security treaty with Russia last May. The SCO is also set to challenge another project backed by the West—the TRACECA programme to develop a transport corridor on a west-east axis from Europe, across the Black Sea, through the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea to Central Asia. SCO prime ministers will meet next fall in Kazakhstan to discuss trade between member states, including an SCO-based "Silk Road" project. Since the TRACECA was designed to circumvent Russia, the SCO-sponsored Silk Road may be another blow to Western policies in Central

Asia. But SCO leaders refrained from overt anti-Western pronouncements and said the new group is open to all potential applicants. There have been none so far, though Mongolia, Iran and the US might consider such a move, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said. The six SCO leaders also signed the Shanghai Convention to Combat Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism, supposed to be a basis for a joint anti-terrorism centre in Bishkek, the Kyrgyz capital. A recent northward advance by the Taliban has sparked concern about instability in Central Asia. Last fall, dozens of well-armed Islamic rebels crossed into Kyrgyzstan from neighbouring Tajikistan. Taliban-controlled Afghanistan is seen as a major training centre for radical Muslim and separatist groups. Concerns about Muslim separatism also worry Beijing, due to outbreaks of unrest among the Muslim Uighur minority—a Turkic-speaking group in its westernmost Xinjiang region that borders Central Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan. In the wake of the Soviet collapse and Russia's withdrawal from Central Asia, "a sort of power vacuum" has emerged in the region, Putin said recently. Now this vacuum is being filled by "religious extremists and terrorist organisations," so joint efforts are needed to control the situation there, he added. But a possible anti-terrorist body of the SCO has some inept antecedents. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a grouping of former Soviet nations, already has an Anti-Terrorist Centre that hasn't produce any meaningful results. ♦ (IPS)

# Wanted: Hard realism

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar's visit to Washington last week was the first high-level contact of the military regime with the Bush administration. Two regional trends impinged on the talks, a visible relaxation of tensions in South Asia, evident in the upcoming summit between India and Pakistan. Second, after the Third Round of the US-Russia Working Group on Afghanistan ended 24 May, the two countries jointly declared that "Taliban support for terrorism continues to be a threat to the interest of both countries, as well as to regional and international stability." UN Security Council sanctions, imposed against the Taliban in December 2000, are to be made more stringent with stationing of observers all along Afghanistan's border to ensure compliance with the arms embargo. Pakistanis need to discard myths and approach relations with the US with more hard-headed realism. Some of the more popular myths are, first, the belief that Republicans are pro-Pakistan. Not true. President George W Bush's father initiated the current sanctions in October 1990, soon after the withdrawal of the Soviet army from Afghanistan. Republicans are keen to build a cosy rapport with India, which they view as a potential counter to China. US national interests always come first. Second is the view that the US will help restore democracy in Pakistan. Not true. Democracy and human rights are important values within American society, but US foreign policy is not always based on these ideals. US interest is linked to promoting its objectives, regardless of whether there is a democratic government or a military regime in Pakistan. A third myth is that Pakistan is no longer "strategically important." But Pakistanis forget that their country is located in the most strategic part of a region crucial to America's Asia strategy. Pakistan's foreign policy links with China and Iran, and its role in combating terrorism, curbing nuclear and missile proliferation and containing "religious extremism", ensure that it remains a key player in regional and global politics. A fourth myth says the US installs or removes regimes. This is no longer the case. Accomplished conspiracy theorists, many Pakistanis blame outsiders for their problems, forgetting that their problems are largely their own creation and that the solution lies in their own hands. Pakistan's resumption of dialogue with the US comes in the context of South Asia policy prescriptions for the Bush administration



**With a new administration in Washington, Pakistanis need to discard myths and approach relations with the US with more hard-headed realism.** issued by two important Washington-based think tanks. American think tanks are important because they either influence official policy or reflect the views of officialdom. The Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) says: "India's hopes for a security vision grounded on an expanding international role and stronger ties to the United States will remain beyond reach unless it can sustain a serious effort to resolve its problems with Pakistan." The Brookings Institution's report last month, authored by South Asia specialist Dr Stephen Cohen, underlines Washington's "area of greatest concern" as the "spread of nuclear expertise, fissile missile and missile technology" to and from South Asia. The Brookings report also says the US "should renew contacts with those Pakistanis who share Washington's concern over the spread of radical Islam. These include some Pakistan Army's officer corps, Pakistani intellectuals, professionals and most of the business community." It recommends that "American military training programmes for Pakistanis terminated nearly nine years ago should be immediately revived." Pakistan should seek a stable, business-like relationship with the US based on a "no capitulation, no confrontation" approach. The Bush administration, like most Western countries, has a certain comfort level with the military regime. Its sympathy was demonstrated by providing economic relief through the IMF and the World Bank, enthusiasm about Pakistan's policy of reaching out to India, and support for the vision of "moderate, modern Muslims and a progressive Pakistan" that the military regime has espoused. However, while the partial lifting of sanctions is on the cards in the future, the key question is how much the American "romance" with India will be at the cost of Washington's ties with China, and to a lesser extent, Pakistan. How Pakistan will respond to the emerging anti-Taliban alignment in the region that includes Iran, Turkey, China, Russia, the United States and the Central Asian republics—and India—bears watching as well. ♦ (IPS)

**Finally, a miracle pill?** BANGKOK - For two weeks people have been lining up to get the V-1 Immunitor pills—which some call the "Thai vaccine against AIDS", others a "food supplement" and still others, alternative HIV/AIDS treatment. There is little clarity about the pills' exact nature—a related product, V-1, has been approved by the country's Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as a food product for export. Whatever the medical truth, the queues to get the pills highlight the desperation of 740,000 Thais with HIV/AIDS, not least due to the cost of treatment. Thailand's FDA says people with HIV/AIDS have often had "false hopes based on rumours." In a country where 46,364 of nearly 170,000 people with AIDS have died, the promise of a cure offers much-needed hope. The pills were first given out two years ago at Ban Bang Pakong clinic in eastern Chachoengsao province, where they were distributed until late May. The Salang Bunnag Foundation, chaired by a retired police general of the same name, which financially backs the pill's production claimed two people with HIV were cured after they regularly took the pills. Patients are advised to stop other medication while on the Immunitor. There is now a clamour for the pills and distribution moved this month to a police station. There is also confusion. Thai media reports have raised many contradictions and questions about the product. Confusion also reigns as the authorities seem to not yet have decided on the official stand—they have made announcements, backtracked and contradicted each other. (IPS)

**Dodgy ceasefire** NEW DELHI - Last week's agreement between Naga leaders seeking a separate homeland and the Indian government to continue a four-year-old ceasefire and extend it to areas outside Nagaland in India's turbulent northeast, might be in trouble. The Indian government is under mounting pressure to revoke territorial extension of the ceasefire. Opposition took a violent turn in Imphal, capital of Manipur state which adjoins Nagaland, forcing police to open fire and clamp an indefinite curfew on the city. At least seven people were reported dead and scores injured in the firing. Opposition to the ceasefire has also come from the United Liberation Front of Assam, a militant group fighting for Assamese independence. Last week's talks nearly failed over the issue of including areas outside Nagaland in the ceasefire. Naga leader Thuingaleng Muivah's powerful National Socialist Council of Nagaland, Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM) has been demanding that the ceasefire also apply in adjoining Manipur, Arunachal and Assam states, where it maintains bases. The home ministry initially said that this would mean legitimising Nagalim or "Greater Nagaland", the creation of which is the stated goal of the NSCN-IM, but the government eventually agreed. The conflict between the Nagas and the Indian government is one of the longest standing struggles of indigenous people. After Indian independence in 1947 and Burmese independence in 1948, the traditional territory of the Naga tribes, which extends 37,000 square miles just south of the Chinese border, was divided between the two, ignoring a declaration of independence by the Nagas. Peace was restored in Nagaland after 50 years of separatist insurgency in 1997 when the Indian government and the rebels signed a ceasefire and agreed to work on a long-term solution. Until now, it has held remarkably well. (IPS)

**Sex sells. Or does it?** SHANGHAI - The Communists didn't shut it down. The free market did. China's first-ever sex museum closed shop here after 20 months of showcasing the most splendid moments in the country's bedroom history and losing around \$200,000. But the man behind it has found a new location and is risking his life savings to give it another shot. "If I don't do it now, my whole life's life work will be wasted," said Liu Dalin, 69, a sociologist and owner of the collection of over 1,700 artefacts dating back as far as the Bronze Age. Attendance was dismal because few people knew where the museum was, tucked away on a side street in Shanghai's shopping district. The kiss of death came when the building's management refused to let the museum hang a marquee—the word "sex" isn't allowed in commercial advertising. Yet Shanghai has thousands of sex-toy shops, Viagra knockoffs sell like hot cakes, some karaoke bars double as brothels, and much more graphic displays of nudity and sexual situations are available in pirated movies, live dance performances and nude photography exhibits. If anything, the displays at the Museum of Chinese Ancient Sex Culture may not have been titillating enough. The most graphic depictions of erotic positions, images historically placed at the bottom of a bride's dowry trunk so newlyweds would know what to do, were drawn with almost childlike smiley faces. Liu believes people will find the new museum easily—it's large, street-level windows are great for displays, which should be within the law. Liu believes it's a wonder his museum was allowed at all. "This would have been impossible 10 years ago," Liu said. "This is progress." (LA Times)





# “How could the Maoists stoop so low?” -- Mohan Bikram Singh

Budhbar Saptahik, 13 June

At the present moment we will not go about analysing King Birendra. No Marxist-Leninist party would express their thoughts about him the way the Maoists did. If what they said is the conclusion they have arrived at, they should explain how they reached it. Was what they said what they thought even before he was killed or is this an opinion they formulated after his death? They have not clarified this, but have only skimmed the surface. They haven’t realised the gravity of the situation and have made an ad hoc statement.

Their statement exposes their thinking processes and bears traces of anti- nationalism. One main feature of anti- national thought is that it does not follow any logical sequence, and lacks seriousness. Such thinking changes by the minute. The Maoists’ statements about Birendra are not logical or well-reasoned and should be ignored. Their bad reasoning is not as important as the anti- national stand they have taken. Until yesterday they spoke of a Naya Janabadh, or a new peoples’ democracy. After this they have displayed their devotion to the monarchy and the monarch. They have called the royal massacre a new Kot Parba and say this should not be accepted. If we analyse their shallow and unreliable nature, we should not be surprised if tomorrow they decide to back the new monarch.

Dr Babu Ram Bhattarai says that if we analyse the Shah dynasty, we will find that they first fought the British colonialists and later the Indian imperialist forces and have always protected the independence of this country. He further writes that all the work that has been done by the Shah dynasty for the benefit of the nation will always be remembered. I will not try and find reason in this conclusion. This is a vulgar display of opportunism. Other than the present king, they have placed all former Shah rulers on a pedestal. They claim this is not a sudden conclusion but that all further generations will analyse history in the same manner. The Maoists are shameless. They feel that by making such statements, they would gain prestige, respect and acceptance. How could they stoop so low?

# “Note of dissent.” Kamal Koirala

Jana Aastha National Weekly, 13 June

I cannot mourn a murderer. I will fall in my own estimation, if I mourn a person who killed his father, mother, brother and sister. I thank that one incident for atleast one thing, that all could die together. Otherwise it becomes very difficult for me to comprehend how would you (Chandani Shah) live when the very person who you have lived for, has been murdered right before your eyes. The cruel and mad murderer had mercy on you in this sense.

The nation is in deep mourning and facing a great deal of hardship now. Medical people and psychologists say that grief goes through many phases. At first you cry a lot, you shout and refuse to believe anything. Then you do not feel like eating, there is anger building up in you, you can’t sleep, you carry the burden of guilt and can’t feel happy about anything. This all is followed by the third stage, where you try and remember and talk about the person who has just passed away. You then try and reason with yourself and calm down.

I do not know which phase in which this country is at the present moment. But it still is in great sorrow. People do not believe anyone but themselves. They have lost the power of believing. If the Japanese could survive Hiroshima and Nagasaki, then the Nepalis, too, will survive this tragedy. Let us start believing that we will survive, that our nation will survive.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

We as ADCs used to suggest (to Dipendra) that he should not take it (the black substance rolled into cigarettes). But he used to tell us that it was better than cigarettes.

Major Raju Kumar Karki, ADC of Dipendra, to the high-level investigation committee.

पर र र ... नाउ .. इन ईंगलिश ...  
रयाता .. हा हा हा हा हा ... !



Parrr ... now ... enn english ... Rat ... tya. tya tya tya tya ... !

Drishti weekly, 19 June

# King Birendra, Ganesh Man and democracy

Punajagan Saptahik, 12 June

On the morning of the 30 Chaitra, 2046 (mid-April, 1990), Revati Raman Khanal, chief principle secretary of the king, called Ganesh Man Singh on the telephone. He said the king wanted to meet Ganesh Man and asked him when he would like to have the meeting. Ganesh Man said he would be in the bathroom till 1pm, then have his lunch and rest a little until 4pm. So he would only be able to meet the king between 4 and 6pm and asked if that would be alright .

Khanal said he would convey that to the king and then get back to Ganesh Man. Ganesh Man did not hear from the palace that day. Khanal rang the next morning and explained that the king had been busy with a religious function the previous day, and asked Ganesh Man to present himself at the palace today at 4pm. The king and Ganesh Man met on the fifth day after the restoration of democracy and this meeting lasted for about two-and-a-half hours.

This meeting determined the course of Nepal’s political future. Ganesh Man thanked the king on behalf of all people for respecting their ambitions and longings. He further said that since the king had helped democracy take root in the country again, the king must now also become a little more democratic in his actions and thoughts.

His Majesty said he did not understand what he meant. Ganesh Man replied that all Nepalis believe in democracy and all Neplais are equal. Therefore, if the king while addressing the people addressed them as “tapai” instead of the less respectful “timi,” then it would only increase his stature among the people. And well, whether to follow this advice or not was a choice that only the king could make.

His Majesty blushed for a moment, but he was not angry, just rather expressionless. After some time he smiled and said that what Ganesh Man had just suggested was correct. He told Ganesh Man that from now he would follow his advice. After this incident, the king did as he had been requested by Ganesh Man.

# “Orphaned twice”

Gorkhapatra Daily, 16 June

“I still cannot believe that my loving and caring mother has passed away. What shall I do?” This is what Hom Bahadur says. Her late Majesty, the queen had taken a special interest in Hom and cared for him since he was two years old.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Hom is now 16. Hom, says people are usually orphaned only once in their lives, but he has been orphaned twice. He cannot bear the grief and says the queen loved him, took special care of him and did all that she could ensure he had a bright future. He is finding it very difficult to cope. All those beautiful moments he shared with Her Majesty and other relatives are now just memories. All he has now are photographs, but the biggest tragedy is that all those pictures are locked up in the palace. Hom says that when he was a baby, his father was sick and helpless and his mother could not feed him, so his parents left him at the Bal Mandir. The next day, the queen visited the orphanage and Hom caught Her Majesty’s sari and started wailing. The queen then picked him up and said that she would from now on take care of Hom herself and took him to the palace.

Hom only found out all this later. He only knew that Queen Aishwarya treated him like her own child. Hom stayed in the palace for between three and four years, and he not only had a mother there, but also a brother in Prince Nirajan and a sister in Princess Sruti. The prince and princess treated him like a brother. Hom remembers how the queen herself had fed him. He was later admitted to the Kanti Ishwori School. Hom’s eyesight is very weak and the Queen ordered that Hom be treated at Tilganga Hospital to rectify this. He was admitted at the Tilganga hospital only a day before the royal massacre. Hom says the queen said to him that his eyes had to be operated upon otherwise he would not be able to carry on with his education. He could not tell Her Majesty about the successful operation. He got news of the massacre while recovering at the Bal Mandir.

# King, queen, rickshaw

Saptahik Bimarsa, 15 June

14 years ago, the king and queen went on an unannounced visit to Birganj and went around town on a rickshaw. Birganj’s senior citizens fondly remember that incident. Their Majesties were visiting Hetauda and decided to come to Birganj. The king was in military uniform. They got on a rickshaw registration number MPR 55-77 /

78 and went around the town. Their Majesties also started a conversation with the rickshaw driver, Sakar Miya Ansari and inquired about the local administration and the situation in the town. Miya did not recognize Their Majesties. While he was showing them around , a local Marwari businessman recognised them, started running behind the rickshaw, chanting praises to them. It was only then that the citizens of the town realised the king and queen were in Birganj. They started lining the streets and started chanting praises. Miya saw a police vehicle speeding towards the rickshaw, and told the couple in his rickshaw that Their Majesties were arriving and they should get down, otherwise the police would give him trouble. Miya forced the couple to get down. Their Majesties got into the police vehicle, and it was only after the queen had given Miya Rs 2,000 as fare that he realised who he had been ferrying. Their Majesties visited Birganj many times, but this particular incident is most memorable, say residents of the town.

# Snubbed

Jana Aastha National Weekly, 13 June

It is rumoured that the Queen Mother ignored Dipendra when she went to visit the injured members of the royal family at the Army Hospital. Sources say that after the cremation of King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya, the Queen Mother went to the hospital to visit the injured. She visited Queen Komal, Princess Shoba, Gorakh Sumshere, Ketaki Chester and Dhirendra Shah. When she was finished, she walked towards the lobby to leave in her car. On her way to out her ADC Sashi Singh pointed to the room Dipendra was in. The Queen Motehr walked straight ahead to her car.

# Defunct DDC

Jana Abhwan National Weekly, 15 June

The chief of the “peoples’ government” in Rolpa, Santosh Budamagar, has put out a notice saying the people and the peoples’ government of Rolpa have declared the District Development Committee (DDC) defunct and so the committee cannot do anything in the district without the permission of the representatives of the peoples’ government. According to the notice, the peoples’ government was elected through fair, democratic means on the 10 April and the results were announced on 16 May at a gathering of 50,000 people. The government, he adds, is supported by 95 percent of the local population. And since most supported the “peoples’ election”, all organs of the previous system are declared defunct, and the district will be run by institutions of the people’s government. All funds coming into the district will have to be approved by the newly-elected representatives and government. If any individual or organisation wants to work on development projects here, they will have to get permission from the peoples’ government and its representatives before they can start any work.

All HMG institutions will also have to take the abide by the rules

of the elected representatives. If they do not follow the directives, the peoples’ government will take action against them.

# No census

Saptahik Janadesh, 12 June

The Maoists have said they will not allow the enumerators of 10th national census into areas they control. The census was scheduled to start 10 June but was delayed by national mourning. Sources say the Maoists have not allowed people from the census team into their areas. The Maoists, who run peoples’ governments in Rukum, Rolpa, Salyan, Jajarkot, Jumla, Kalikot, Accham and Bajura, say the Koirala government is only limited to Singha Darbar. Instead, the head of the Maoist government in Jajarkot, Bhakta Bahadur Shah told us, the Maoists will carry out their own census programmes.

He said the government has been conducting national censuses for a long time and has always said this would be linked to development projects, but it seems that they were fooling the people. A census is supposed to assess the level of development that has taken place or need to take place in backward areas, but the government has not acted on the information. Instead, it discriminates against the people of Karnali. The Maoist chief in Kalikot, Prajuwal, said the people of Kalikot would also have nothing to do with the census. According to him, the government has not clarified the purpose of the census and so people will not participate. He added that if the government insisted or used force, then the Maoists would reply in kind.

The Maoists have begun to say that the sole purpose of the census is to try and get rid of them. They say all the questions in the census are designed to weed out Maoists and Maoist sympathisers and then deploy the army to kill them. People who seem to be against the Maoists will become tools for the government, which will then say that there are no Maoists in Nepal.

Maoist sources say decisions concerning the census will be taken on a district to district basis. According to the Dailekh secretary of the Maoists, Parasmani, in districts where the Maoists have formed peoples’ government, no census will take place at all. Where there is no peoples’ government but Maoists area forces are in control, the census will take place, but under strict supervision of the peoples’ army. He has asked people to only answer questions they feel are necessary. Parasmani also said the Maoists will take a copy of all the data collected.

# More peoples’ governments

Saptahik Janadesh, 12 June

The People’s War is in its sixth year. The Maoists have already formed “peoples governments” in many districts, and now they have four more under the belt. On 7 June the Maoist election officer, Bharat Kumar Bam announced in front of a 24,000-strong gathering that they had now formed district-level peoples’ governments in Jumla and Kalikot. Peoples’ governments are in place in Rukum, Jajarkot, Salyan and Rolpa.





# Three Nepalis and a kayak

Kayaking has come a long way here—the all-Nepali Team Nepal is participating in an important competition in Spain this week.

## ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY

Ever met a kayaker crazy enough to bungee jump off a 160m bridge above the Bhote Kosi attached to the cord *on his kayak?* Such is the obsession of Santosh Gurung, one of the three members of Team Nepal that will represent the nation in the World Freestyle Championship in Sort, Spain starting 25 June. Santosh, a river guide by profession, won first place at the seventh Himalayan White Water Rodeo organised last November by Dave Allardice of Ultimate Descents and Peter Knowles, who wrote *White Water Nepal*, the Nepali river rafters bible. Battling the rapids with Santosh will be a river guide and kayaker with a great deal of experience, Tarka Kamal, who came second in the Himalayan White Water Rodeo, and Anup Gurung, another young kayaker who came third. Although Nepalis have participated in international white water events in the past, this may perhaps be the first time an all-Nepali kayaking team competes against teams from 45 countries.

With so much of water flowing fast and furious down Nepali hills, one would expect many Nepalis to be involved in such drenching adventures as kayaking. Surprisingly, the reality is the opposite. Only a handful of our own citizens ever think of taking a wild ride down the river for entertainment. There are economic reasons kayaking won't ever have the mass appeal of football or basketball, but there are signs that adventure

sports on the water are getting more popular among those who know the rivers well. Kayaking is a relatively new sport, simple in concept but a bit more complicated in practice. It involves a one-man boat shaped like a canoe and the kayaker simply tries to maintain his balance in the water using a two-sided oar to beat the waves. The thrill lies in facing gigantic waves, holes, and rapids being squeezed through an ever-narrowing gully. Sounds like the kayaker would be pretty helpless, right? But there are skills that talented people can hone to ensure they stay in the boat rather than out of it. For the rest of us, though, it will remain a wet roller-coaster ride over which we have little control. Our ilk will always be in the numerous beginner's training camps adventure sports companies organise.

With the eternal snows from the Himalayas feeding our gullies and ravines, Nepal offers kayakers some of the most exciting waters in the world. Rivers like the Bhote Kosi, the Karnali, and the Kali Gandaki, have a cult international following among white water rafters due to their size, scenic beauty and the accompanying experience Nepali wilderness offers. "More and more of white water enthusiasts are starting to come to kayak," says Tarka Kamal who has been in the business for more than ten years now. This is great for Nepal's image, and it has the added advantage of inspiring younger Nepali river guides to try kayaking. "The glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) in the

Dudh Kosi river in September 1998 showed the world that Nepalis could also kayak," says Kamal, who earned the admiration of kayakers around the world for his part in saving the lives of many. It wasn't easy, though—he was spent in four short hours over a distance of 45km, a distance that normally takes three days to kayak over. Santosh and Anup laugh that when age catches up with them and companies tire of seeing them, they will open a kayaking club.

Team Nepal, which left for Spain last week faced a lot of problems, but none of this put a damper on their spirits. The All Nepal River Guide Association contributed Rs 28,000 towards the expenses of the trip, but the Rafting and Kayaking Association under the Nepal Sports Council has done nothing at all. The team's gear is sponsored by six companies: a Method kayak from Perception UK, an Innerzone from Wild Rock Boat Werks, Canada, Paddlelok paddles from Lendel, Scotland, buoyancy aids and jackets from Nookie, England, Shread Ready helmets from the USA and and Smiths Sunglasses, also from

the USA. In addition Mahendra Thapa of Equator Expeditions also funded two air tickets while the ticket for the third member came from Dave Allardice. "We are not well-off, but since this experience is one that will open other opportunities up to us, us we will make do with the little

resources we have," says Anup. And opportunity there is—kayaking is now an Olympic sport.

Team Nepal is great, but they will be challenged by their more experienced international counterparts in Spain. Tarka who has also kayaked in Argentina, Chile

and Japan always welcomes a dip in foreign rivers. "The most important thing is that we will get more experience and the opportunity to widen our knowledge. And this will also be a sort of a promotion for Nepal," says Anup. Good luck Team Nepal. ♦

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## VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

ActionAid Nepal (AAN) is an international non-governmental organisation working in Nepal since 1982. It believes that poverty is a condition of social injustice and discrimination and that it can be eradicated through a process based on empowerment and fulfilment of basic rights of poor and marginalised people.

We are seeking an able Nepali woman for the position of **Human Resources and Organisation Development Manager** (HR/OD Manager) to head its Human Resources Department in the Country Office. This is a highly responsible position within the senior management team reporting directly to the Country Director (CD) and will call for the following specifications:

- ♦ A post graduate qualification in either Human Resources Management, Organisation Development or Organisation Behaviour (this can be compensated with extra hands on working experience in a similar position)
- ♦ A working experience of at least 3-5 years in a management capacity in a similar position preferably in a social development organisation
- ♦ Excellent language skills both in English and Nepali both spoken and in writing
- ♦ Excellent interpersonal skills
- ♦ Computer literate
- ♦ Knowledge of the labour laws of Nepal, Gender equity issues and management of change in organisations would be an asset

We are looking for a mature, balanced person exhibiting demonstrated leadership competencies to strategically guide the human resources function towards enabling AAN achieve its mission related goals. She should possess functional tact, diplomacy, effective skills in dealing with people, industrious and be results oriented.

The person will be maintaining close relations with other HR/OD functionaries who work in the various country programmes and the regional office of ActionAid Asia.

**AAN accords prime importance to the attitude and behaviour of the people it aims to recruit and believes that they should be compatible with its core values.**

The position will be based in Kathmandu and may involve some field visits as and when necessary to different AAN projects in Nepal.

Employment with AAN offers opportunity for career enrichment for competent persons. It also offers scope for travel not only in Nepal but also internationally as it maintains strong affiliations with ActionAid offices located in approximately 35 countries of the world.

Please forward your application by the **25<sup>th</sup> of June** with your recent CV to the:

**HR/OD Manager  
ActionAid Nepal**

Post Box 6257, Kathmandu  
Fax 419718. Email: [sabitab@actionaidnepal.org](mailto:sabitab@actionaidnepal.org)

## Ten Flying Dutchmen on Highway 318

Finally, a mountain biking team with a difference. Ten Dutchmen, all corporate employees in Beijing and Shanghai, biked down from Lhasa to Kathmandu last week.

This 1,000km 16-day journey through the roof of the world was a ride with a purpose. The team, Ten Flying Dutchmen, raised \$100,000 for the Dorfuton Primary School, which has some 200 children, in Qinghai province in southeastern Tibet. Thanks to the good burghers, the school can now take on 200 more students, expand its educational offerings to grade 9 and build a solar heating system so the school can remain open even during the winter. According to one member of the team, the trip served several purposes: it collected funding for the school, gave the team an opportunity to explore a side of Tibet they had never seen before, and showed Nepali tourism entrepreneurs that there is an expatriate market they can target in China. Dutch.



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SAVING FAITH

# A monument to an Indian princess

History is uncertain: it is a long time ago. Deupatan was either a flourishing city spread about the most holy shrine of Pashupatinath, or the sacred land waiting for a city. Certainly there must have been a settlement, a centre of pilgrimage already. The king, according to early travellers, lived near the temple where he worshipped daily.

There was a palace on a mound above Pashupatinath. And a road led to distant Swayambhunath on its sacred hill. Tradition, legend, natural surmise, has a sprawl of habitation about the sickle of the Bagmati that flowed through the Kathmandu Valley. It was called Manjupatan after Manjushri, who drained a lake to form the Valley.

Perhaps in the darkness of the night, sorcerers still meet to change metal into stone and water into burning oil.

In the morass of time, dates have small meaning but a halo is forever cast about the time when Gautama Buddha was born. Scholars will forever debate whether he visited the valley of the gods or not: tradition says he did. He visited the city or town of Patan, where he bestowed the favour of his name upon the blacksmith caste by elevating them to Sakyas. After visiting Swayambhu he sat upon the lion throne made by Viswakarma, and read from the *Puranas* to the large company of people who had gathered to do him honour. What

concerns us more is the coming of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka in the footsteps of his master. He raised or added to existing stupas wherever the Buddha had tarried or preached: four about the city of Patan, one on Swayambhunath hill, one at Baudhanath and one at Kirtipur.

There exist other stupas that may be Ashokan, overlooked by historians and scholars both. One is on the hill of the thirty-two butterflies, not far from Pashupatinath, another beside the new ring road below Swayambhunath and a third to the north of Bhaktapur. But even these are outside the limits of my concern with Ashoka's daughter Charumati.

They merely substantiate the visit to the Kathmandu Valley of her forever famous father.

She must have travelled with him, and either it was love, a political arrangement or a strange fascination that had her married to a prince, Devapala, who is historically connected with Deupatan, near Pashupatinath. Hearsay history has him either living in the palace above the temple and administering the township of Deupatan, or founding it together with Charumati.

One fairly authenticated version of shadowy history has the impetuous Charumati—her beauty, her graces are left to imagination—deeply impressed by a display of sorcery and black magic. Water was turned to oil, water burned, an iron arrowhead was changed to stone and a wooden staff into a writhing snake. The Indian princess begged her father to marry her to the young prince Devapala—handsome, courageous, himself possessed of mystic powers?

It was done, and Charumati

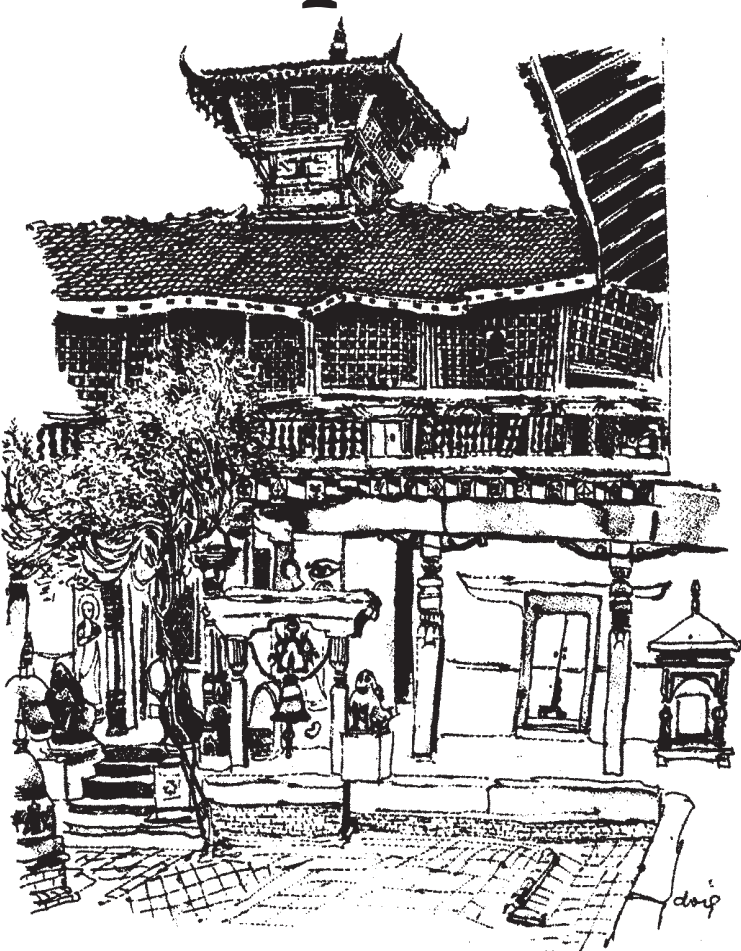
remained in her new homeland, helping to found not just one new town, but two, because beside Deupatan she herself lavished patronage on a Buddhist settlement called Chabahil. There, inspired by her father, she raised and about it a *vihara*. Apparently she herself took more and more to a religious way of life and finally renouncing regal living, became a nun.

My sketch is of the Charumati vihar or *bahalas* it is today: old, very old, but obviously not original. Perhaps it stands on ancient foundations, for the people of Chabahil are firm in their belief that it was Charumati who built it. The *pujari* doesn't even know who Charumati was a goddess, he told me.

Three shrines occupy the square building. Beside the entrance, in the spirit of Buddhist-Hindu coexistence, is a small shrine to Bhairab, the terrifying protector. The main shrine is occupied by a standing Avalokeshwar, and immediately above, in a shrine forbidden to most visitors, is an Ajima, or grandmother goddess worshipped by Buddhists and Hindus alike.

Before the main shrine is a *chaitya* carved with four Buddhas that date to earliest Licchavi times (AD 300-800). Although still remarkably preserved, this historic monument is in urgent need of restoration. The *pujari* told me that some foreigners—he thought Americans—had come some years ago with promises to repair the building, but they never returned.

Nearby is the stupa Charumati built, painted with large, all-seeing eyes and surrounded by small votive *chaityas*, stupas and images. A beautiful Licchavi Buddha that had



stood out the centuries, was briefly stolen but returned. All trace of the monastery that stood about the shrine has disappeared. Modern building begins to encroach upon the old Chabahil and its ancient neighbour Deupatan, are but names; only a few old buildings indicate where they once stood: in Chabahil, the stupa and the courtyard named after Charumati; in Deupatan, a tantric temple and a stone bath fed by carved water spouts. Where the prince and princess might once have bathed, and some ancient paving stones.

There is still the strong sense of tantric mysticism that attracted Charumati to the place. Legend has it that a tantric was locked for days in religious debate with a visiting Shankaracharya from south India in

the small courtyard of an existing temple courtyard. The debate ended only when the Shankaracharya discovered that the temple goddess herself was aiding the tantric sage. And residents of the area are given to saying that they hear strange and often terrifying noises in the night, coming from the direction of a tantric shrine that now stands beside the new highway that rings the Kathmandu Valley. Perhaps in the solemn and darkest darkness of the night, sorcerers still meet to change metal into stone and water into burning oil. ♦

(Excerpted with permission from In the Kingdom of the Gods, Harper Collins, 1994.)



MIN BAJRACHARYA

NEPALITERATURE

by MANJUSHREE THAPA



## Bhupi Sherchan On rumour and hearsay

Bhupi Sherchan's renowned poem *Yo Hallai Hallako Desh Ho* has been much quoted since the 1 June massacre at Narayanhiiti Palace. In fact it has been quoted so widely that it risks becoming an easy weapon to silence even legitimate, critical and valuable scepticism of official bungling, government mediocrity, shoddy inquiries, contradictory narratives, and a lack of credible material evidence surrounding the massacre. Surely the Nepali public should not be belittled for demanding intelligent answers and credible proof—and surely Bhupi Sherchan should not be used to such ends.

A sharp response to the misuse of Bhupi Sherchan's poem comes from Pratyoush Onta in the 15 June Kathmandu Post: "Those who quote the last seven lines of Bhupi Sherchan's immortal 70-line poem on ours being a country of rumours on their way to a patronising analysis of so-called rumour-spreaders, might want to reread its first 48 lines to think about how the best of our poets characterised the process that give rise to hallas [rumors]." The entire poem is translated below in deference to Onta's critique.

**This is a Country of Hearsay and Rumour**

A country where music competition judges are deaf people sporting earphones,

and where poetry arbiters have souls in the process of petrification, where wooden legs win races and where security rifle blades are held up by broken plastered hands, a place where *doko* after *doko* *kharpan* after *kharpan* truck after truck of souls are decked before roadways and verandahs, where those who become political leaders sell and buy souls like stock agency shares, where the champions of the youth bear corrugated wrinkles on their foreheads, where the 'wash and wear crease' of respectability of even the worst reprobate never crinkles, where even the most debased whore's face of synthetic skin never wrinkles, where agriculture fairs display seeds that promise double yields while spreading news of drought and famine, where in the place of Bagmati and Bishnumati rivers beer and whisky now trickle, and where Pashupati and Swayambhu are used not to get a taste of sacred offerings but for a taste of Adam and Eve's forbidden fruit in the surrounding jungles and forests,

where sugar factories produce not sugar but alcohol, where free mothers birth not sons but *lahureys*, where great poets die before their time still unable to pay off debts, where a poet insane with his country's anxiety must seek refuge in another country's hospital, and where the sole daughter of the goddess Saraswati withers in her youth for lack of medical attention, where guides remind tourists of Nepal's contribution to foreign lands and on holidays ask for the contribution of their foreign cameras, where young people undergo army training singing songs of Nalapani and Kangada fortresses

Donning a *khukuri* along with coat and tie, renting my heart wide open I feel I must speak to this country, O fellow countrymen O national poets O honorable leaders If you want you can label me

someone who hates or betrays his country but this country is mine as much as yours, even if we were to divide it equally my small hut would stand on one of its ten million pieces, my funeral pyre would stand on one of its countless river banks

This is the feel that compels me to say that gives me courage to say: this is a country of hearsay and rumour If one were to unearth the foundation of each house here only hearsay and rumour would be found heaped there That's why this is a country of hearsay and rumour This is a country standing on hearsay and rumour This is a country founded on hearsay and rumour This is a country of hearsay and rumour

This poem is found in Sherchan's collection *Ghumne Mechmathi Andho Manchhe*. Another Sherchan poem, "The History of My Country Seems Wrong to Me," can be read in NT #27.



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- ❖ **Dwarika's Saturday Escape** Afternoon tea, cocktail, dinner, room, massage and breakfast. Saturday evening to Sunday noon. Until end-September. \$130 per couple. Dwarika's Hotel 479488
- ❖ **Spiny Babler Museum** Readings and presentations of contemporary Nepali literature and art Sundays 5-6pm Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel; Tuesdays 4-5pm Kathmandu Environment Education Project, Thamel; Thursdays 7-8pm Bamboo Club Restaurant, Thamel, Saturdays 5-6pm New Orleans Café, Thamel. spinybabler@mos.com.np. 542810, 546725

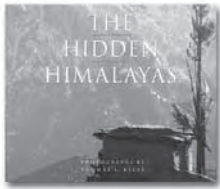


MARTIN CHAUTARI

- ❖ **Classic Literature** Discussion Series 6: Ramesh Vikal's "Naya Sadak ko Geet" Pandits: Govinda Vartaman and Manjushree Thapa Unless otherwise noted all discussions are in Nepali. 26 June Tuesday. 5.30pm Thapathali .

For inclusion in the listing send information to [editors@nepalitimes.com](mailto:editors@nepalitimes.com)

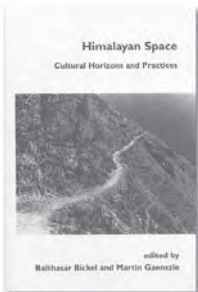
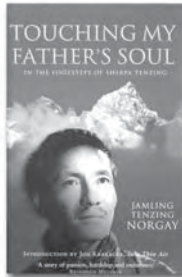
BOOKWORM



**The Hidden Himalaya Photographs** by Thomas L Kelly, text by V Carroll, Dunham Abbeville Press Publishers, New York, 1987 [2001] Rs 3,960  
In breathtaking photographs and evocative prose, Thomas L. Kelly and V. Carroll Dunham reveal Humla's limitless vistas and disclose intimate details of the lives of its yak herders, caravan drivers, shamans, and polyandrous brides. Kelly and Dunham, the first Westerners to live in Humla, take us through a year there.

**Touching my Father's Soul: In the Footsteps of Sherpa Tenzing Jamling Tenzing Norgay**, with Broughton Coburn Random House, Great Britain 2001 Rs 1,400

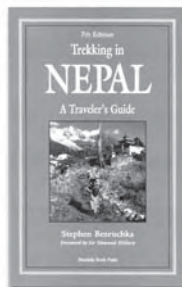
In the fateful 1996 climbing season Jamling Norgay followed his father Tenzing's footsteps up Everest driven by a need to understand his father and the spirit of his Sherpa heritage, as well as his instinctive desire to climb the lethal, yet sacred mountain which had so dominated his life.



**Himalayan Space: Cultural Horizons and Practices** Balthasar Bickel and Martin Gaenszle, eds Völkermuseum, Zürich, 1999 Rs 1,975  
This volume explores how notions of space and landscape find expression in Himalayan cultural traditions, languages and practices. Includes essays on Newari, Belhare, and Mewahang Rai people, Tamu (Gurung) shamans, Rai language, Tamang oral traditions and Magar mythology.

**Trekking in Nepal: A Traveler's Guide** Stephen Bezruchka Mandala Book Point and The Mountaineers, Kathmandu and Seattle, 1972, 1997 [2001] Rs 675

Dr Bezruchka write comprehensively on Nepal's most rewarding routes, what to bring, trekking with children, what to expect, and the people and history behind it all. He covers 21 major areas over all types of terrain and includes alternatives and side trips. Includes new routs in the Makalu Barun area, 76 photos, 16 maps and 20 elevation profiles.



Courtesy: Mandala Book Point, Kantipath

CLASSIFIED

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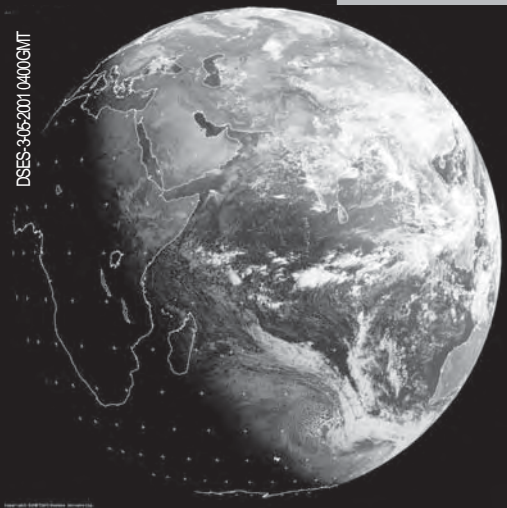
For insertions ring NT Marketing at 543333-36.

YAK YETI YAK



NEPALI WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL



This satellite picture shows a fine series of southwesterly trade winds building up from the southern Arabian sea right up to the east coast of Thailand—indicating that the monsoon is off to a healthy start. These winds will in the next weeks head towards Bangladesh and take a sharp left turn to be over eastern Nepal by 10 June. Till then, we will see a series of weather cells moving from west to east bringing thunderstorms and occasional heavy bursts of rain characteristic of pre-monsoon showers. Finally, monsoon winds will chase the westerlies away and that is when the rainy season will officially start. (See "Monsoon moods" p. 10-11). So far, the onset of the monsoon is right on schedule. Long-term forecasts also show a healthy advance of the monsoon over June and July.

KATHMANDU

Fri  
30-19

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29-18

Sun  
29-19

Mon  
30-18

Tue  
30-19

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Sun	0615-0645	BBC	Agenda
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ECO HIMAL

SALIL SUBEDI

Errant public school alumni will remember being caned with the *sinnupani* (nettles) for not getting their homework done. Now, you can wear nettles. Well, it's not exactly the *sinnu* that made contact with your backside, but something that looks rather like it and belongs to the same species. In Mangtewa village in the eastern Sankhuwasabha district, Kulung Rai

people, indigenous to the eastern hills of Nepal, have found an ingenious use for the *allo* plant (*Girardinia diversifolia*). They have culturally and religiously determined uses for the plant, but they've also been earning their livelihood by making fabric and clothing from this plant. They extract the *allo* fibres, turn them into fabric and then all manner of clothing.

# Say *Allo*

**A painstakingly produced fabric made from Himalayan bush becomes easier to make, and more exciting to wear.**

It sounds simple, but it is a painstaking task—literally. In October and November, the men climb the hills and harvest the *allo* shrubs. After the shrubs are brought down, the men strip them of their bark and lay them to dry in the sun for three days. And there ends their share of the work. Now it is the turn of women, boiling the bark in water containing ash. After this, the bark is stonewashed at a nearby river, bringing out the fibre that makes *allo* special.

The fibre is then mixed with crushed limestone to make it a little greasy and easier to handle. All this ethnobotany can be hard work: the fibre is rolled around the waist and the free end is clamped between the teeth. One hand quickly rolls the fibre down—through the teeth, which act as a filter—on to the spinner. At the end of a life devoted to this painstaking task, women have wounded and scarred hands and have lost teeth prematurely, and jaws that never seem to stop hurting.

But this might soon change, so we can wear *allo* clothing without feeling too guilty. Hari Gopal Shrestha, a Bhaktapur-based expert on Nepali textiles, has been working with the Austrian group, Eco Himal, to help the kulung Rai find better income-generating alternatives. The latest development is heartening: “Recently we introduced a foot-operated device which dispenses with the need to use the mouth and works six times as fast as the traditional method,” he says. Last December, 20 women were trained on how to use the new looms (*khutte kal*) and also new techniques in pattern design. Shrestha assures us that the women will not suffer as much anymore. This will surely help the small, but growing market *allo* clothing. “Eco Himal’s initiative to help the Kulung Rai is overseen by the income-generation programme of our community development project. So we’re definitely scouting for a better market for their products,” says Ram, Gauli, the administration and finance officer of Eco Himal. *Allo* are becoming the rage in eclectic circles in Austria and other European countries where it is marketed by Eco Himal.

There are obstacles to such efforts. *Allo* has the same rough, husky texture as jute and hemp, and although it is often lighter and more delicate-looking, it is often mistaken for them. And not everyone is crazy about coarse fabric. There are ways around this, though, and the community has been taught how to blend other fabrics with *allo*. The community is experimenting with a variety of different blends. They produce *allo*-silk (Rs 700 per metre), *allo*-cotton (Rs 500 per metre) and pure *allo* (Rs 200 per metre) using only

natural vegetable dyes in plain colours. “The price they are getting is too low for the effort involved. And many Kulung women still use the mouth technique. It’s tough,” says Gauli. You can now buy *allo* place mats (Rs 1,500 for a set) and shawls and mufflers (Rs 700 upwards). They’re available at a few outlets in the Kathmandu area, mainly in Kupondole.

More will soon be available. “The Kulung and consumers have been enthusiastic about the blends,” says Krishna Karki, the field coordinator of the project.

Kulungs still give first priority to making the sacks and raincoats they’ve traditionally made for themselves and for sale to neighbouring villages. But the blended *allo*-based fabrics are paving the way for the community to take on the world. They’ll start small. “We don’t really need to gun for foreign markets initially. There’s a lot of potential to market it in Nepal. The problem is, people don’t really know what *allo* is,” says Gauli who was wearing an *allo* coat when he spoke with us. “*Allo* is cool in the summer and warm in

winter, and it’s waterproof and durable. I’ve been wearing this coat throughout the year,” he says. And then there’s the gauzy lightweight feel of *allo* shawls and scarves that makes you feel like you’re in a fairy tale world, evoking at every glance the beautiful mountains of eastern Nepal where ingenuity, folk science, and very hard work come together. Can you say *allo*? ♦

Eco Himal Site: [www.ecohimal.or.at](http://www.ecohimal.or.at)  
More *allo* info, search with ‘*allo*’ keyword on: [www.icimod.org](http://www.icimod.org)  
[www.panasia.org.st](http://www.panasia.org.st)  
[www.mtnforum.org](http://www.mtnforum.org)

Top Left: Kulung lady extracting *allo* fibre on improvised spinning machine. Down: An *allo* coat sample.



SALIL SUBEDI

HAPPENINGS



MINI BAIRACHARYA

PALACE GATES: Flowers and condolence messages have been removed from the main gate of Naryanbahi, which this week wore a forlorn and empty look.



MINI BAIRACHARYA

PACK JOURNALISM: International and domestic media at the parliament secretariat for the release of the report by the probe panel on the royal massacre on 14 June.



ZOOM PHOTO CENTER

JATRA TIMES ARE HERE AGAIN: The annual Jayabageswori Jatra gets underway on 14 June.

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# Shangrila





# Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

It is when you have hair coming out of your ears that you know you have reached ripe old age and you are finally going to get the respect from society at large that you deserve. Exactly as was predicted, my hair has lately stopped growing where it is supposed, and sprouts lushly where it is not supposed to—like inside my ears and on the tip of my nose. It is also true what they say that your nose grows bigger as you grow older. I now know from personal first-hand experience that my proboscis has grown in stature and prestige in the last five years. Already, people on the street are mistaking me for House Speaker Taranath Ranabhat and expressing heartfelt greetings by loudly imitating Arnold Schwarzenegger. So much so, that if my nose grows any further than what I have at present, it is soon going to enter a room at least a minute and a half before the rest of me.

don't have pimples any more. Yes, the elderly gentleman at the back. I can't hear you, can you speak up? You have two nipples? I SAID PIMPLES, NOT NIPPLES. You will also find that you don't have to follow old boring rules of etiquette anymore. For instance, at a sit-down dinner it will henceforth be ok just before dessert arrives to excavate a juicy morsel of marinated mutton from your man-made molars, examine it in detail and plop it back into your mouth. And as a compliment to the chef, it is also ok for those of us approaching the autumn of our lives, to burp loudly from either end of our alimentary tracts after a hearty meal with near and dear ones, and if any youngsters look shocked, you pat them on the head and say: "Did I startle you, my dear?" After the meal, you don't have to feel bad about falling asleep in the sofa, you snores muffled by nasal vegetation, while the rest of the clan

# Has anybody seen my teeth?



And now that my armpits are going bald I can tell that very soon, as a senior citizen, I will have every right to be a mad old coot and if anyone has any objections they can just go and get stuffed. Look at Kishunji, I can't wait to get away with what he gets away with. The other great advantage of being a septuagenarian in Nepal today is that it is the only qualification you really need to be prime minister. There are many other benefits to growing old, and I will try very hard during the course of the coming few months to remember what they are. Remind me. Oh yes, one great benefit of turning hundred-something is that you

talks about the Man in the Mask. With such liberties, it is surprising why anyone would want to stay young and worry endlessly about who done it. At home, you will find old taboos lifted—you now have the freedom to walk around the house in broad daylight clad in nothing but your Y-fronts. Take it from me: going bald is also the best way to solve your dandruff problem. What makes me especially glad is that our society still carries on the glorious Nepali tradition of treating our elders with respect. Why would anyone want to grow old gracefully, it takes away half the fun. Has anyone seen my teeth? ♦

## NEPALI SOCIETY

# Ram goes to Brussels



It was natural for Ram Prasad Bajgain, a Nepali farmer, to get a culture shock when 24 hours after leaving his paddy terraces in Kavre District, he was cruising into town from Brussels airport. But there was an even bigger shock that awaited him at the centre of the city. There were enormous two-story high billboards of himself staring down at him. "I thought I was dreaming," recalls Ram, who was invited to a big United Nations conference to convince delegates that given the will, a community spirit and a little bit of help from outside, Nepali farmers can take care of themselves and build their own future. Ram is the member of a farmers' self-help group called the Phulchoki Community Organisation in the village of Kushadevi, a three hour drive east of Kathmandu. In Brussels, Ram addressed press conferences and spoke to delegates at the UN conference on Least Developed Countries about his experience in the improving the lives of villagers. "We have 39 members in our group, each contributes Rs 10 a week, and we decide collectively from the money put together who is the neediest and would benefit from a small loan," explains Ram. Although there is a 15 percent interest on the loans, almost all are paid back in time. There is a provision for no-interest loan for health emergencies. Ram's wife Sangita is with a parallel women's group that has a similar credit scheme. "We don't

step on each other's toes," he laughs. The only people who are worried about Ram and Sangita are local loan sharks, who used to charge up to 100 percent interest on loans, and have seen a drastic reduction in their profits. There is very little politics within the group because no matter what party members belong to, their needs are the same: insurance for their water buffalos, better health facilities, better education for their children. This is perhaps something Kathmandu's squabbling and short-sighted politicians could learn from, quips Ram: "They should come to Kushadevi and see how we do it." In Brussels, Normand Lanzon, the head of the UN's Capital Development Fund found a message in all this for his organisation's work worldwide: "We have to go to Ram's level, and learn from the example his community has set. Unless we work with people like them we will not have genuine development." We ask Ram why it has worked in his village, but it doesn't in others. "We tried hard first to motivate the community and get them fired up, we had to convince everyone that they would benefit, and that the poorest would benefit most," he says with confidence. Encouraged by his brief trip to Europe, Ram is now working with renewed enthusiasm to set up a new water supply project, a campaign to get better sanitation and hygiene and also to improve facilities at the local school. If only Nepal had more Ram Prasad Bajgains. ♦

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