SUDHIR SHARMA

When the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) held its second convention in Dang in February, the party announced a new Prachanda Path doctrine calling for a “mass uprising” in urban areas to take the revolution forward. At the vanguard would be Maoist front organizations of students, women and workers.

The royal massacre of 1 June prompted the party to accelerate its preparations for such a mass uprising which would prepare the ground for an intercommunal government at the centre. Maoist leaders saw the street protests that followed the massacre and widespread public skepticism about the new king as an opportunity to cash in on the situation.

They had banked on the street protests escalating, the anti-Gyanendra wave intensifying, and a showdown occurring between the monarchy and pro-monarchy political parties to bring a new king into the picture. “They knew they got it wrong,” one source told us. There just wasn’t enough critical mass in the protests for the Maoists to instigate an urban uprising by plying back on the pro-monarchy political parties and the spontaneous outpouring of public grief to bring down Gyanendra who, despite all talk, had already declared the institution of monarchy. “They knew they got it wrong,” one source told us.

But the Maoists are said to be turning the situation to their advantage. “We will not be caught off guard by the government,” one source told us.

The Maoists have therefore gone back on Plan B, which is to foment confusion in urban areas by using “banner bombs” — hoisted by Maoist supporters from big banners denouncing the new king and the prime minister. The explosions in the capital this week are designed more to maintain a state of uncertainty and panic by media magnification than to create casualties, and they build up to the planned nationwide strike on 12 July.

Sources close to the Maoist hierarchy interviewed for this article say the party is planning to declare a “regional people’s government” in the areas in midwest Nepal under their control this month. The next step soon after would be to leapfrog into the national stage by announcing a parallel national interim government like they have done in the districts under their control. This was already clear from an interview in the Revolutionary Worker (www.zwara.org) by Maoist Leader, Prachanda, two years ago in which he said: “When Rajapaksa, Biharan and Jaishot and Saban are liberated natives, then we will declare the People’s Republic of Nepal. That government will be at the centre.”

The Maoists will also keep taunting the government. “They will keep linking the revolution to the royal massacre,” said the Maoist leader. “We will keep going back to the royal massacre and never forget about it.”

The Maoists are also realistic. “Within six months, the new government will fall and we will solve the Maoist issue,” said one Maoist leader, a former royal army officer. “We are optimistic that this will happen and we will solve the Maoist issue.”

And the Maoists are also realistic in that they know the party can never win a direct confrontation with the new government. “We don’t believe in confrontation,” said the Maoist leader. “We believe in negotiation.”

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The Maoist revolution has suddenly moved to fast-forward. Helping the Maoists is the confusion and disunity among elected parties in parliament, which have not come together even after the royal tragedy. “The Nepali Congress and the UML are close to a pact under which the Nepali Congress will get the prime minister’s post but the new prime minister will not be able to form a National Integration government,” said the Maoist source. “The Nepali Congress and the UML are close to a pact under which the Nepali Congress will get the prime minister’s post but the new prime minister will not be able to form a National Integration government.”

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This Karl Marx aphorism translated into poetic Mandarin was Mao Zedong’s favourite: “Seek truth from facts.” Facts are the most boring thing. The good guys don’t seem so good after a while, and the bad guys in retrospect look like they were acting in enlightened self-interest. Just like there are no permanent bad guys or permanent enemies in politics, maybe there are no permanent good guys and no permanent bad guys either.

Nothing extraordinary, therefore, about Coman Prachanda’s 180-degree turn after the royal massacre to state that the Shah dynasty was the epitome of Nepali nationalism, and that King Birendra had Maoist sympathies. This week, the government announced that his group will henceforth only bump off supporters of the “fascist Gyanendra-Girija clique.” Everyone else is free to live. Was this a message targeted at local Maoist cadre who were getting a bit carried away lately setting fire to school principals in Surkhet, killing VDC chairmen in Jhapa and sabotaging an ambitious distinct education project in Dalitkhel? Or does this represent a phased strategy that could ultimately bring the insurgents out into the mainstream without losing face? We don’t know.

There is no one in Nepal who has any quarrel with the Maoists’ demands for streamlining education, for gender equity, for land reform, or for their other 40 original agenda points, barring one or two. The only difference is over the method used. After all, despite all its shortcomings, this is still a democracy that is striving to install the checks and balances needed for majority rule, minority rights and elected governments to get on with the job of reducing poverty, providing basic services and tackling inequities. We have a parliament that has passed the local self-governance act to devolve powers to communities, it is in fact cracking down on graft in high places, etc. It will soon pass a bill to grant property inheritance rights to women and citizenship to the disenfranchised.

There is a vibrant free press which allows at least eight newspapers sympathetic to the Maoist cause to be printed in the capital alone. Does political power only come from the barrel of a gun? Is armed struggle just a brilliant military strategy borrowed from the capital alone.

It is a clash of two political orders and two ways to get to their goal. But even if their means are violent, a just and fair society fosters greater public debate and forges a truly representative democracy. Gagging the press and reviving the kind of government on the other hand cannot use the same tactics as throughout history used desperate means. A free and democratic liberal society cannot treat them like terrorists. Violence is the only way to get to their goal. However bullfrosted Ranabhat’s antics were, at least they were spontaneous. To those who know Ranabhat personally, he is correct to a fault when it comes to observing the niceties of Kathmandu’s nobility—notice his noblest of all his manner of students who have just finished a farce: “getting carried away by his false bravado. Take a second look at the press panel yesterday when he appeared to be so.”

When King Gyanendra entered the Pratap Narayan Shah on 29 June to administer the joint session of parliament, Speaker Tarat Ram Babu had seen to it that there would be no danger to the person of the king. On his express orders parliamentary security guards subjected even the prime minister of the country to a thorough body check. This non-confrontational face of Speaker Ramabhat was quite different from the showdown one seen over Nepal Television screens last month when he was presenting the probe panel report to the press.

Now that two weeks have elapsed, it may be time to take a fresh look at Ranabhat’s performance that Thursday evening of 14 June. Many found the Speaker’s antics unspeakable. Ranabhat entertained media no end by his theatrical misrepresentation of Rambo and was quickly dubbed a national embarrassment in the virtual community of the Nepal diaspora (see sample Internet illustration, right). After reading his submission in enthusiastic arguable at Narayanhiti, it is difficult to resist the charm of taking Shakespeare is one of the essential mono-syllable: “getting carried away with one’s words”.

Anyway, Ranabhat prefers Hollywood blockbusters to homemade Kollywood tear-jerkers. Had his taste been different, he would have known when to hold his smile, and when to shed a tragic tear. Nepali society places a premium on solemnity, and Ranabhat forgot this cardinal principle if you want to be taken seriously, you must appear grave as a gravestone. He is still paying for being himself at that press conference. Nothing causes as much revulsion in the bourgeoisie as a breach of decorum, and for them his frivolity was unforgivable.

Ranabhat’s first faux pas was that he didn’t run away from responsibility like Comrade Madhav Nepal. To be a true-blue Nepali elite, you don’t do anything other than pontificate. By putting his shoulder to the grind, Ranabhat lost all rights to self-righteousness. He antagonised half the bourgeoisie by just being in the probe committee. The other half then had enough reason to denounce his demurrer when he chose to be serious without seriously appearing to be so.

Somehow, the possibility of a conspiracy offered a salve to the middle-class that has found it too difficult to cope with the tragedy of Rambo. The stark fact of the massacre being the result of insanity that sets into any stagnant value-system would have blown the cover of conspiracy. The bourgeoisie therefore hailed Ranabhat for not being party to its social cover-up exercise. One look at the way the Maoist insurgency is being taken by the social elite of Kathmandu is enough to show the hypocrisy and duplicity that is rampant here.

Upper and middle-class Nepal is so rotten to the core that it does not have the moral courage to face uncomfortable facts. All it wants is a convenient fiction to hide its agony. It would have blown the cover of conspiracy. The bourgeoisie therefore hailed Ranabhat for not being party to its social cover-up exercise.

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King Gyanendra's burden of living

The throne was thrust upon him, and the only silver lining may be that exemplary leadership is often forged during testing times.

The right of rule over Nepal has been thrust upon King Gyanendra, and the only silver lining may be that exemplary leadership is often forged during testing times.

There are other issues that need prompt attention. Nobody could have fully anticipated an irrational act of such ordained self destruction, but it must also be noted that the palace security apparatus failed miserably. What kind of security system allows an assault weapon to be displayed and bullets to be fired without activating prompt intervention? The palace will also have to improve its arcane bureaucracy that drafts and defiles ridiculous criteria to absurdity in the global audience, insulted the intelligence of the global audience, but also not convert the monarch into virtual idol. What was needed from the palace at such a critical moment was information, not provocation. The Crown now must establish a timely and credible line of communication with the people.

At times the new king must feel as though he is losing the respect of the Kathmandu nobility who today accept the name of following elder brother Ram's departure from power. It is not as if Princess Dhuni Bhanariya sought the throne, the throne was thrust on him for the second time in his lifetime, a burden of reckless disfigurement of the republic. Politically Nepal has been an unexpectedly forgiving country. From his biographers and thousands of biographers who deliberately blew up the parliament now grace the highest position in government and legislation because of their government'sGGLE point of view now and then. No doubt, this lenient tradition will continue in the future. In this accommodating society, a similar gesture of public pardon for Prince Paras! The prince may however have to bear in mind that sealing and reconciliation is always a two-sided affair.

The new king is going to be compared to his illustrious brother constantly, which is only natural. He is already being painted as an Indophile, Sinophile, anti Indian and so on by different groups to suit their vested interests. In the wake of the late king, it might also turn somewhat dishonorable when it comes from those who have no hand for the monarchy. Then the rumour mills resurface Dipendra as a masyed angel just to make it difficult for the living. This helps the challenger of a different nature for the new monarch.

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Scenes from the Great Global Cliche

The heady combination of vile food, unlikely travelling companions and worsening jet lag rears for many insights, some of them clichés that come back with surprising freshness.

On the madcap run around halfway around the world the skies throws up countless opportunities to reflect on this crazy global village of ours. Asepsis, ditches and rich experiences abound, even aboard transcontinental aircrafts and in departures lounges. Not to mention on endless highways through the hinterland of America.

It begins with a young woman on RA217 to Delhi, the first leg, the tiny step that begins the journey. I heard her unmistakably Canadian tones as she joked with the cabin crew. The first surprise, they laughed back. Here, I thought to myself, a woman of substance! On board the aircraft (a Boeing 777, the only non-stop flight for your comfort) we chatted over my first of several drowned airways meals, and by no means the worst. Young Ms Mishra was from the fair burg of Toronto; her parents having left Calcutta many decades ago. She was a student politician, incredibly bright and more to the point: she had been a rollerblading Kathmandu on 1 June 2001. No, not as some callow experience sponge of the continent, she was a volunteer health worker in a village near Baglung. I lapped up her insights and experience, marvelled at her comments and thoughts, braved her full of humanity, understanding and intelligence. And, now, it wasn’t just the forty-something student trying to impress a twenty-something wunderkind. Her parting comment, “I’ve learned more about caste in five weeks in that village than any book ever taught me,” was both fascinating and somewhat worrisome.

From Delhi to London, my travelling companions were almost exclusively of a type—elderly Punjabi, mostly Sikh ladies who’d clearly never been near a modern jet aircraft before. They chugged the aisles and banged on the doors of the washrooms, oblivious to the little red circles that told us to wait our turn. They shrugged their shoulders helplessly when addressed in English, or even the Hindi I had some of the flight attendants, I was mystified, but soon got to the bottom of things. For they were, of course, on their way to the births of grandchildren, first grandchild usually. And that meant uprooting oneself from the village and development challenges, they’ve come to rest here, in one of the most advanced projects that can help change lives. The organisation the help to fund asked an NGO to stop spending millions on rituals—char and daans—and instead give to communities that use the money to help women throughout nepal. Unlike many nepali development organisations, Tewa tries to focus on raising money from institutions and individuals locally, which isn’t been easy. “Our ability to retain Nepali donors has been rather low. We need to educate people more about philanthropy,” adh Thapa. Some charities are more concerned with giving and working, and the idea of sustainability for them is not as important—arguing that their work is to be sustained by donations. Other organisations have their own revenue sources like handcrafts and other business through which they support their projects. However, both kinds of organisations are important “to teach the people to fish than just to give them fish”.

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This is in sharp contrast to how most Nepali development organisations do business. They are largely over-funded by donors, and compelled to make disbursements through NGOs, which in Nepal take on the air of philanthropic undertakings. Critics say such groups are completely dependent on donor funding and dry up once the source of money dries up. The extent of foreign involvement in national development is so high that in some schemes it is difficult to discern whether the real beneficiaries are even intended to be the Nepali poor: the priorities, area of work, methodology are all decided elsewhere.

Tew's concept of secular philanthropy to advance development is new, not just in Nepal but also in other parts of South Asia. Kovala Kothari, founder of the Unniti Foundation in India, is another proponent of giving just for giving, and promoting a philanthropy that raises to improve the reproductive health of women and to enhance opportunities for educating girls in South Asia. Writes Githa in *Twice Blessed: The Art of Giving*: “Philanthropy is seen in as a broader concept, more than just giving for charity. It embodies the ethic of sharing one's good fortune with others to help them lead more fulfilling lives...” In other words, it is about transmitting compassion by sharing one's good fortune with others to help them lead more fulfilling lives...

This desire to give comes from within as was the case with the late Nepali mountaineer Babu Chiri Sherpa. He never saw a classroom as a child, and so was motivated to contribute much of what he earned by guiding—when not actually carrying foreign mountaineers to the highest peaks—to build a school in Takshindo, his native village in Sola Khumbu.

There are many other Babu Chhiri in Nepal about whom we know little. One is Man Singh Maharjan, a wage labourer from Man Majau in Kathmandu. He saved his wages to found a primary school in his village in 1985. And in 1992 when the school was recognised by the government as a lower secondary school, Maharjan says, he felt fulfilled.

A random survey on charity conducted in 2000 by Martin Chaudhuri confirms that middle-class Nepalis do give to charity, but for religious purposes. A majority don't mind spending to fund worship but would think twice about giving the same to organisations like Poonapakar and Tewa. The survey showed that Nepalis gave almost Rs 190 million in religious donations in four years, mainly to restore temples or rituals. They gave Rs 30 million to set up health clinics and run health camps and another Rs 90 million for education projects like school buildings, the establishment of trusts and scholarships. The survey shows that Rs 270 million was given for social work, including infrastructure development, drinking water supply and bridge-building projects. The survey indicates that funds were collected on an individual, community and organisational basis.

The survey also confirms that Nepali's corporate sector, unlike that of India or the United States, is stingy when it comes to real charity. Says a former employee of a community radio station that just tried to raise money to help one of Nepal's most beloved musicians, Amber Gurung: "We went to keywreys, asking them to share the surplus, however small, with others or with the cause(s) one values the most. This giving is different from the motivation behind the giving of businesses, who expect the goodwill of targeted buyers to take the form of tangible returns. One sure test of the genuineness of a charity act is whether or not the giver seeks publicity for giving.

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The survey also confirms that Nepali's corporate sector, unlike that of India or the United States, is stingy when it comes to real charity. Says a former employee of a community radio station that just tried to raise money to help one of Nepal's most beloved musicians, Amber Gurung: "We went to keywreys, asking them to share the surplus, however small, with others or with the cause(s) one values the most. This giving is different from the motivation behind the giving of businesses, who expect the goodwill of targeted buyers to take the form of tangible returns. One sure test of the genuineness of a charity act is whether or not the giver seeks publicity for giving.

This desire to give comes from within as was the case with the late Nepali mountaineer Babu Chiri Sherpa. He never saw a classroom as a child, and so was motivated to contribute much of what he earned by guiding—when not actually carrying foreign mountaineers to the highest peaks—to build a school in Takshindo, his native village in Sola Khumbu.

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Awadhi textbooks are not doing too badly, with 4,800 and 3,500 takers respectively, but textbooks of other national languages are just gathering dust. The CDC officials are supporting the constitutional right of children to choose textbooks in their mother tongue. Active have been campaigning for the last decade that national languages other than Nepali are also given official language status. The Centre has prepared textbooks for free in Bhojpuri, Tharu, Tamang, Awadhi, Madhali, Limbu and also books for class one in Rai (Bantawa) and Magar. This year, the Centre prepared the curriculum for the Gurung Tama language and they plan to produce textbooks for grade one in fiscal 2001/2002. The government has already spent Rs 10 million, close to Rs 10 million in the last year alone, to produce textbooks in national languages under the Basic and Primary Education Programme. Those in place and those developments have children studying their mother tongue as an optional subject, with Nepali compulsory. A 1995 report of the Rastriya Bhasa Niti Sujhav Ayog (the national committee on language policy) says 69 percent of the population today are literate in their mother tongue. Activists have been campaigning for the last two years for academic advancement in comparison to their peers who first learn to read and write in Nepali and English. He is not alone. His reluctance to promote national languages reflects government policy. The government has taken steps to make the Constitution carefully it does not say government should produce books for these communities, but only give them recognition if they take their own initiation,” he says. He also thinks that children who first become literate in their mother tongue lose two years of academic advancement in comparison to their peers who first learn to read and write in Nepali and English.

The government’s effort is to support the national languages other than Nepali. The committee recommended that 17 percent of total government expenditure be allocated to the education sector. Primary education should be free of extra fees like the exam fee, admission fee, or school deposits. At least ten percent of all students in community schools and five percent in private schools at the lower primary and primary levels should have free education. Schools should be categorized into community and institutional kinds. Community schools should be further divided on the basis of government or self-funding. The report recommends that government aid to schools be continued for the time being, but they should gradually be made sustainable without government grants. Private schools should be allowed to collect fees that amount should not exceed the rate required to recover running and infrastructure costs. Private and public school should follow the same syllabus as prescribed by the government, and Sanskrit should be optional.

One never heard All Australian or All Armenian of anything. Even within households, people are communicating via handle numbers. Life is becoming increasingly, abstract like faceless faces in a room of mirrors. Known by handle numbers. We live in the most ‘ubiquous’ of times. But the Internet is different in that its ubiquity threatens America’s ‘ubiquitousness’. People have started casually saying “your URL is?” where is the money?

As of now, the books are a novelty, which may be more talked about than used. For instance, Newari is spoken widely in the Kathmandu Valley, but only a handful of students in less than ten public schools here use the text. Awadhi textbooks are not doing too well, and government officials have to find takers who wish to use them. People laugh hehehe and hug {{{}}} and kiss *** and kiss. Social networking and online communities to the test. It is not the government’s responsibility to create an encouraging environment where the children can study their own languages,” says educationist Dr Hridaya Rama Rajbhandary, a staunch supporter of education in the mother tongue. The government’s effort in the mother tongue is not enough. The government’s effort in the mother tongue is not enough to satisfy the least—officials seem to have, simply put, bad attitude. goal. The government in the mother tongue is not enough to satisfy the least—officials seem to have, simply put, bad attitude. Goal. The government in the mother tongue is not enough to satisfy the least—officials seem to have, simply put, bad attitude. Goal.

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How much longer?

from p. 1

The other characteristic of the Prachanda Path doctrine, according to party literature published after the second convention in February is the decision of the "mass uprising" to urban areas with the "people's war" in the hinterland. The Maoists have declared eight districts in Bheri, Karnali and Rapti Zones as having "people's governments" and they appear to be consolidating their hold on districts on the periphery like Dang, Bajura and Dákhhali. Analysts are expecting a major Maoist attack on vulnerable police stations in these areas. Instead of killing large numbers of policemen, Maoists are now also abducting scores of new recruits which brings them valuable manpower and weapons.

On the international front, the Maoists have joined forces with South Asian organisations to set up a Coordinating Committee of Maoist Parties and Organisation of South Asia (CCOMPOSA) with member groups from India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, including the MCC and People's War Group in India. The MCC, which is active in Bihar, is reported to have moved in to Darbhanga near the Nepal border. A CCOMPOSA press release in Patna said the group was "desirous of mutually and coordinate the activities of the Maoist parties and organisations in South Asia". A senior police official in Patna is quoted by an Indian internet journal as saying: "This is a matter of grave concern for the entire nation. The security and integrity of the nation is threatened by this trans-border Maoist coalition." The Maoists have been closely monitoring the post massacre developments and have adjusted their strategy accordingly. Prachanda issued his first statement on 2 June, denouncing the murder as "political conspiracy" against "liberal" and "nationalist" King who did not want to use the army to fight Maoists. His next statement on 5 June named Indian intelligence agencies and Girija Koirala as conspirators. Then in 6 June write-up, Maoist ideologue Babu Ram Bhattarai, said the other conspirator was King Gyanendra and made his first call on the army to overthrow the "nationalist" forces.

"The early statements were being made by the leaders individually, based on reports they were getting on the street protests," a Maoist source told us. "The idea was to keep the protests going." Then the party politicians sat down to assess the situation. In 10 June statement endorsed the arguments forwarded by Prachanda and Babu Ram Bhattarai and announced the birth of a new republic. It also broadened the analyst's analysis by changing the existing theory on the monarchy a conspiracy by US and Indian intelligence agencies to undermine and isolate China.

"Earlier our reading was that the king was on our side, now we have reason to believe he could side with government," the Maoist source told us. "We're watching the emerging political alliances, and naming CPN Unity Centre as an ally was to show others who want to join us in the interim government where they can come." This move appears to be the result of the Maoists' reasoning that before 1 June, the people either supported the Maoists or the monarchy. Now, they feel, the king is dead the new king is not popular so they can convert the monarchist

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**Notice**
- Page dimensions: 907.0x1303.0
- Report card: Government spending reached Rs 50.5 billion in mid-May, up 23 percent compared to last year, and much of that was spent in meeting recurrent expenses. Regular spending was up by about 25 percent and development expenditures grew by just 22 percent. The revenue collected during these ten months of the fiscal year was Rs 37.3 billion, resulting in an overall deficit of Rs 10 billion. The hole was plugged by issuing savings and development bonds (Rs 3.1 billion) and treasury bills worth Rs 1.1 billion, and by taking out foreign cash loans worth about Rs 3.4 billion. The government also obtained an overdraft of Rs 2.7 billion, which by law should come down to within Rs 1 billion by mid-July when the fiscal year ends.

Prices rose faster, by three percent year-on-year compared to 1.9 percent growth last year. Food and beverage prices remained low and the increase in the non-food category. The prices of imported goods grew by 77 percent, reflecting the increased costs of petroleum products (since October last year) and the depreciation of the Nepali currency vis-à-vis the greenback. Prices went up most in the hills (seven percent), then in the tarai, by 2.8 percent. Kathmandu Valley saw the smallest rise, 1.7 percent.

There has been a slowdown in the growth of exports, which grew by about 17 percent compared to the roughly 38 percent achieved in the same period last year. The Nepal Rastra Bank reported decline in the export of some major products—carpets, garments and jewellery. The slowdown in exports was balanced by a slump in imports, which grew by just 6.9 percent to about Rs 95 billion. Imports grew by about 26 percent in the same time frame last year. The trade deficit narrowed by about three percent to Rs 47 billion. The Balance of Payments, based on eight month figures, was favourable by about Rs 9 billion. The overall foreign exchange holdings in the banking system increased by about 11 percent to about Rs 103 billion, of which over 25 percent is held as Indian currency.

### Wholesale price index

The central bank has begun computing the Wholesale Price Index (WPI). The index, published for the first time last week, will complement the Consumer Price Index, the base year for which is 1999/2000. By this measure, agricultural product prices have slumped by about 7.7 percent, mainly because of a fall in prices of rice, wheat, corn, vegetables and spices. The index monitors wholesale prices of 18 agri-commodities. The WPI is based on statistics collected from 20 market centres across Nepal for a total of 71 products. The bank reported increases in 45 of the 71 products in the last 10 months of the fiscal year.

### Marketing Nepal

A Nepali company doing good to be different. Only At Nepal P Ltd, a dot.com company, has taken Nepal’s first initiative to assemble a digital directory of industrial and commercial organisations, small and large. The aim of the directory is to introduce all that Nepal produces to the global market. The CD, aimed at an early-2002 release, will be distributed free at trade fairs at home and abroad. Only At Nepal (http://www.onlyatnepal.com) is asking the government to declare 2002 “Export Nepal Year,” and will simultaneously petition other governments to declare the coming year “Import Nepal Year.” Jari Shrenan, director of Only At Nepal, says of the project: “It could probably help kick start our economy.”

### New mobiles by November

The Khetan Group has taken one more step towards launching its mobile telephone services. Spice Cell (P) Ltd., Khetan’s joint venture with India’s Modi Corporation is already registered at the Department of Industries last week. The company says it will begin work to set up the operations as soon as it obtains a formal license. The company plans to begin services by mid-November, but that start date depends on the final verdict of the Supreme Court, on a lawsuit challenging the licensing process. The newly registered Rs 750 million Spice Cell has issued capital of Rs 450 million. The Khetan Group controls 40 percent of the company and Spice Cell Modit 60 percent. The company plans to sell 15,000 mobile connections in its first year and 75,000 by 2006.

### More juice

The American juice company Sunkist is now in Nepal, via the Philippines. The fruit drinks and instant drink mixes come in Apple, Orange, Grape and Mango and many sizes. The funky bright red drink terrapacks hold 200ml, 250 ml and one litre. A release of Namaste Nepal, which imports the product, says it is worth spending a little more to buy healthy drinks.

### Fait accompli

Bhajuratna has been selling the Fiat Uno and the Siena in Namaste Nepal, which imports the product, says it is worth spending a little more to buy healthy drinks.

### Million rupees TV

Sayakar Co Ltd has begun marketing the Philips Plasma, a 42” TV screen with a 160 degree viewing range. The TV is just 11 cm thick, can be hung on walls like a painting and even used as a computer screen with appropriate visual graphic adapter. The price—just over a million rupees.

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made in Nepal

Toothpaste is now Nepal’s fourth-largest export. The war is on between personal care products.

A battle for soap customers in Nepal is being shaped by multinationals, including Unilever Group and Colgate-Palmolive, heralding a rise in consumerism in Nepal. Both companies have factories in Nepal. In fact, toothpaste is now Nepal’s fourth-largest export.

The soap wars reflect Nepal’s battle for soap customers. Indian soaps, “complains a label. “We no longer get the real brands in Nepal, they also encountered a strong consumer bias against the made-in-Nepal label. “We no longer get the real Indian soaps,” complains a shopkeeper in Kathmandu, holding up as evidence a bar of Lux that was manufactured in Nepal by Nepali Lever, a unit of Hindustan Lever of India.

The soap wars reflect Nepal’s larger experimentation with consumerism. Democracy arrived in the early 1990s, and was followed by a media boom, exposing people to international television shows and ads. Until the mid-1990s, Nepal had only one TV station and no cable TV. Commerce in general has flowered. Nepal now has almost 10 domestic airlines, up from just a couple in the mid-1990s. There is a boom, too, in finance companies.

“People are coming out of the closet,” says Sunam Shahya, marketing manager of Space Time Network, which is starting a Nepali-language satellite-TV service. “Earlier they may have wanted to buy, to shop in a department store, to use a good brand of soap. Now they are expressing their thoughts more freely.” Nepal’s per capita gross domestic product of $150 to $200 means it is one of the poorest countries in the world, and market analysis is in its infancy. One analyst views the country as two roughly equal markets—Kathmandu, and the rest. For example, if you can sell 1,500 motorcycles a month in Kathmandu, he says, you will sell the same number in the rest of the country. Kathmandu has about 10 percent of the nation’s 24 million people, and its per capita GDP is about three times the national average.

Soap, however, isn’t the same as motorcycles, and soap marketers view the rural market as a key growth area. Aarti Soap & Chemical Industries, whose brands include D-Max and Premi, go into villages with videos demonstrating how to use its products. Lever sponsors oral-health campaigns in partnership with non-governmental organisations and is trying to build a distribution network that reaches into the countryside—as are rival companies.

Competition is fierce for shelf space. At the Laxman Cold Store in Kathmandu, an open-front shop looking out on a curbside temple, proprietor Laxman Das Shrestha says his distributor is offering him Rs 600 a month for two months if he will build a small display case at the front of his store. Nearby, at a tiny spice shop, the shopkeeper says he gets Rs. 300 a month for carrying only Colgate dental-care products—an amount that doubles his monthly profit from toothpaste and toothbrush sales.

TV ads are getting more sophisticated. Aarti is moving away from religious imagery, opting instead to explain a product’s attributes. Aarti executive Varun Lohia pops a video compact disc into his laptop and plays a coming ad. Aarti previously ran ads for five to 10 years without changing them, says Lohia. “Now we change them every six months.” Aarti’s ads for five years were for children. For six months, Lever was surprised to discover that Liril, which is Nepal’s biggest-selling soap brand, was commonly used for hair-washing and at a face bar for special occasions, due to its lemon scent. Lever adjusted its Liril marketing to capitalise on the soap’s perceived freshness.

Unilever also launched a campaign around Fair & Lovely skin cream to try to change people’s impression of Nepali-made goods as inferior. As recently as two years ago, consumers were willing to pay 10-20 percent more for Indian-made goods than their同类. Consumers were willing to pay 10-20 percent more for Indian-made Fair & Lovely, and the Indian version would outsell the local version 5-1, “We had a very sad situation,” Ghose says. The ratio was reversed after a campaign featuring stylish young women being asked a series of questions: Is everything you’re wearing imported—shoes, watch? Yes, she replies. But what about the radiant on your face? No, she says, that’s made in Nepal.

STC (Asian Wall Street Journal)
The ancestors of Krishna Awale and his wife Bhimaya have cultivated bountiful harvests over the centuries on this rich land. They believe in the Manjushree legend. Krishna is now 65 and Bhimaya 55, and their treasure trove of knowledge about the seasons, the soil, cropping, transplanting, harvesting was passed down from one generation of Awales to the next. Nothing is written down, there are no charts and tables. But Krishna and Bhimaya don't need notes, the wisdom of the ages is all stored in their heads. But the trouble is that since none of their children want to be fulltime farmers, it looks like the knowledge will fade away when Krishna and Bhimaya stop farming.

This week, Krishna and Bhimaya don't need notes, the wisdom of the ages is all stored in their heads. But the trouble is that since none of their children want to be fulltime farmers, it looks like the knowledge will fade away when Krishna and Bhimaya stop farming.

When Manjushree let the waters out, the creatures who suffered the most were the holy naagas that lived in the lake. These were powerful serpents, and their wrath worried Manjushree and the other gods in heaven. Manjushree, always accommodating, made smaller lakes downstream for naagas to stay. But that put the naagas at the mercy of garudas. The winged garudas are always trying to eat the aquatic naagas, and the naagas are always trying not to be eaten. This is a perennial struggle, and it is most intense during the monsoon. When they fight, it determines how much rain falls. If the garudas manage to snatch a naaga in their talons, the heavens will open up with rain. “Today, the naagas have the upper hand,” explains Krishna.

A little hard of hearing, Krishna is well known among his friends and neighbours in Patan’s inner city for his weather forecasting ability. He doesn’t need a degree in meteorology to tell instinctively from the smell of moisture in the air, the movement of the clouds, the “feel” in the morning air, the movement of the clouds, the cool breeze from the east it will rain, and how much. Krishna uses sign language to communicate with his wife who translates for us: “You can tell from the smell of moisture in the air, the movement of the clouds, the ‘feel’ in the morning air, whether it will rain, and how much. Krishna has an extraordinary ability. He doesn’t need a degree in meteorology to tell instinctively whether it will rain, and how much. Krishna uses sign language to communicate with his wife who translates for us: “You can tell from the smell of moisture in the air, the movement of the clouds, the ‘feel’ in the morning air, whether it will rain, and how much.

Askirti


Between June and August, 95 percent of the population in Nepal will be getting their hands and feet dirty. They’ll be digging lustily into oozy, almost soupy mud and sowing rice saplings over 1.51 million ha. The fun ends September through November when the rice is harvested. This will be some over 3.5 metric tonnes, 54 percent of total grain production in Nepal, contributing more than 20 percent to the country’s GDP. Rice is cultivated in 52 out of 75 districts, and Morang, Jhapa, Kapilbastu, Saptari, Nawalparasi, Siraha, and Rupandehi are especially prolific. The high, mountainous regions of Mugu, Rasuwa and Solu-Khumbu produce the least, preferring potatoes. The most popular varieties of Nepali rice are Mansuli, Taichun, Pokhreli, Basmati and Khumal. Recent FAO statistics show that the average Nepali consumes 117 kg of rice annually. Gulp.

**NEPAL’S NICE RICE**

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The difference between therapeutic cloning and reproductive cloning should not confuse us.

Sometimes in the next two years a human being will likely be cloned. This may or may not bring shudders of horror, but will certainly not occur outside the law or in some shadowy offshore location. The medical, scientific, legal and political establishment will fully support the effort. This done, however, will never leave the British laboratory in which it was created.

Last January, a form of human cloning called “therapeutic cloning”—more properly “cell nuclear replacement”—was legalised in Britain. As with in vitro fertilisation, the British appear to have been the first to devise a regulatory scheme for morally contentious technology. The world is watching to see what will happen next. It is rather like a Woody Allen script, but run backwards. In Allen’s ‘Sleeper’, a form of human cloning called “therapeutic cloning”—more properly “cell nuclear replacement”—was legalised in British. As with in vitro fertilisation, the British appear to have been the first to devise a...

Even though I do not believe in a slippery slope from therapeutic to reproductive cloning, societies’ laws should give voice to its values. In countries which allow for the former, it is probably a good idea to ban the latter. (Professor Syndyke)

The Cloning Sourcebook was published last summer by Oxford University Press.

On newsstands this weekend

Dolly, the cloned sheep.

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...
Multinationals are talking a worrisome new talk.

"the language of human rights is increasingly being adopted by companies when it suits the point they wish to make with their investors.

Talisman and BP say respect for human rights is a fundamental part of the way they do business. And indeed, under the law of many European countries, trafficking is a criminal activity. Protection, and the possibility of paying off their debts at the end of a given period, means that they are transferred from one agent to another without any means of ending the illegal contracts they are forced to enter into. The immigrants are promised high wages, but this is based on the generation of immediate profits. A fundamental characteristic of human trafficking and organs is even worse than slavery. The slave was valued for his ability to produce wealth, but a human being is valued for his ability to generate earnings for others or for the removal of their organs for sale.

These new forms of exploitation reflect the extraordinary cruelty produced by human greed and the need to control the organized criminal networks to maintain the massive transfer of bodies is based on the generation of immediate profits. A fundamental characteristic of human trafficking and organs is even worse than slavery. The slave was valued for his ability to produce wealth, but a human being is valued for his ability to generate earnings for others or for the removal of their organs for sale.

How do we understand the new forms of human trafficking?

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Talisman and BP say respect for human rights is a fundamental part of the way they do business. And indeed, under the law of many European countries, trafficking is a criminal activity. Protection, and the possibility of paying off their debts at the end of a given period, means that they are transferred from one agent to another without any means of ending the illegal contracts they are forced to enter into. The immigrants are promised high wages, but this is based on the generation of immediate profits. A fundamental characteristic of human trafficking and organs is even worse than slavery. The slave was valued for his ability to produce wealth, but a human being is valued for his ability to generate earnings for others or for the removal of their organs for sale.

These new forms of exploitation reflect the extraordinary cruelty produced by human greed and the need to control the organized criminal networks to maintain the massive transfer of bodies is based on the generation of immediate profits. A fundamental characteristic of human trafficking and organs is even worse than slavery. The slave was valued for his ability to produce wealth, but a human being is valued for his ability to generate earnings for others or for the removal of their organs for sale.

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KUMUDINI HETTIPARRACHI  
PRAMALAKUMAR, SRI LANKA

A northern Sri Lankan town is the uneasy transit point between rebel- and government-controlled areas.

Trucks carry food and other essentials into rebel-held areas about once a week, as the region is still short of supplies, especially medicines and goods that are embargoed. "The situation is very bad. Prices are high, there are no medical facilities," says a 7-year-old Mylapuran. He has seen all the close bonds between the Tamil and the Sinhalese in the 1990-1997, then the formation of Tamil government that used to share their jobs, discrimination and the demand for a separation and an amounting conflict. "I don't like this division. We cannot go to Sinhala homes in the south and Tamil homes in our town. Now we are afraid to speak to each other. Politicians are at fault." 

There is no direct transport in the War. Travellers have to break their journey at three points and pay Rs. 1,200 (US $13) for transport alone. The journey costs a fraction of this during peace time. Residents going north have to travel through Puttalam-Kalpitiya and fly to Jaffna, the northern capital, in a costly military-run transport plane with limited space. "It is easier to go to a foreign country than travel north, whispers a weary traveller checked by security personnel.

Getting permission to travel to either side is hard. From Sum, some 800 people gather outside the gates of the government office in Vavuniya with their belongings, Koneswane, coconut oil, fuel, cycle tubes, water bottles, a child's rocking home, a stringy, plastic chairs are strewn along the road. Some have spent a week awaiting permission outside. The procedure seems simple. To visit rebel territory, which the government calls "asylum area", hand in a form with a photocopy of your identity card or an officer follows. The process is slower. A passenger list is put up in the office and people get a small, numbered card — their 'passport' to the other side. Crossings are on Tuesdays and Saturdays. Travellers queue up, one line for government servants and the idk, and the rest for rebel drivers. It is a hectic day but with restrictions on certain items.

On the rebel-controlled side, the procedure to enter government areas is similar. Residents need clearance from the rebels. Assisted by the Red Cross, they make their way to the army checkpoint. Their bags are not as heavy as those heading in the reverse direction. They cross to the main land to the rebel side and undergo body checks.

At the army gates of Idarkhol and Bahadur village is closed, but at dusk families fleeing to the cleared side and rebels who want to surrender approach the army checkpoint. They are helped in. Many come to surrender or find refuge under cover of darkness. We check to see if the army is in control. We give them food if they're not already eattin', says a army official.
The monarchy...A modern day Kot Parba took place in Nepal in 2001. On this day, June 5th, the people of Nepal expressed their opposition to the monarchy. This incident was followed by the 2001 movement which resulted in the fall of the monarchy. Today, the people of Nepal celebrate the end of the monarchy every year on this day. The memory of the Kot Parba is still alive in the minds of the people.

FROM THE NEPALI PRESS

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Summer madness at Wimbledon

Summer madness at Wimbledon

LONDON: most involving watching wall-to-wall British Open at the end of the month, surfing in Spain or — come the school holidays start in favour of their feet.

Their heads, stiff new tennis trainers, tennis racket, sunglasses perched on everyone seems to be carrying a sporting back to front baseball caps. Middle-aged men fill the municipal tennis courts. Some 46 per cent of spectators were women and 64 per cent men. The All England Club swathed in union flags reflects its clientele. Honorary genteel and well-heeled.

Henman and Greg Rusedski. These are not adolescent girls but women of Henman and Greg Rusedski. These are not adolescent girls but women of

Wimbledon remains part of the estate to remind visitors that beyond the park lies an industrial

Wimbledon and other sporting events are not adolescent girls but women of Henman and Greg Rusedski. These are not adolescent girls but women of

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Real close in on Zidane

Real Madrid are close to completing the world record signing of Zinedine Zidane from Juventus. According to a report on Spanish radio station Cope, Real president Florentino Perez met with Juventus general manager Luciano Moggi in Switzerland on Tuesday, and a transfer fee of $12.8 million (E46.4 million) was agreed for the French international midfielder. That would smash the £37.5 million (E45 million) paid by Barcelona to buy Portuguese international Rui Costa from Juventus last year. The report said a verbal agreement had been reached between the two clubs and a deal could be closed later on Wednesday. Real Madrid said they could make no official comment on the matter. Moggi told reporters last month, when speculation was rife about a possible Real bid for Zidane, that there was no question of the Serie A club selling their star player. Zidane, World Player of the Year in 1998 and 2000, has been a target for Perez since he announced his candidacy for the Real club presidency last summer. Perez promised to fight for Barcelona and do whatever possible to add Zidane to the Real roster.

Milan snap up £30m Rui Costa

Portuguese international Rui Costa has become AC Milan’s second major signing in two days. The Fiorentina playmaker ended a week of transfer speculation by agreeing a £30 million move to the Rossoneri. On Monday, Milan signed Italian international striker Filippo Inzaghi in a £27.1m deal from Juventus. By joining Milan, Costa, who was also wanted by Lazio and Parma, links up again with former Fiorentina coach Fatih Terim. Costa had been on the verge of a move to Parma after Fiorentina, attempting to clear debts of £40m, agreed to sell him and gokeeper Francesco Toldo to their Serie A rivals for £43m.

King temps Lewis camp

Boxing promoter Don King has offered a $12.5m to the Lennox Lewis camp to stage a world heavyweight title rematch with champion Jose Luis Castillo. After a recent court case, Rahman has been ordered to fight Lewis within the next 18 months before he can defend his titles against anyone else. And with both camps eager to stage the rematch sooner rather than later, King, Rahman’s promoter, has fired the first salvo in what is bound to be a protracted negotiation. King named 6 October as an agreeable date without specifying a venue. Rahman upset Lewis in April in South Africa by knocking out the British fighter in five rounds. King said he had made the £12.5 m offer to the Lewis camp was meeting to consider it on Tuesday. King is currently promoting his 4 August card in Beijing, China, which features a third fight between World Boxing Association heavyweight champion John Ruiz and former champion Evander Holyfield. Rahman was scheduled to make his first title defence on the card against David Leon but will still be going to China anyway as part of the broadcast team.

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The forgotten shrine of the sikhs

Here Guru Nanak sat in meditation and here are also buried the ashes of a Nepali king.

A later king, Rana Bahadur Shah, also of unsound mind, is said to have found solace at the Guru Nanak Math. He gifted considerable land to the temple so that his health would be restored. When I went back to sketch the garden and the temple, I was met by another old priest. I asked him if I might see the gurudwara's footprint. “Ah yes,” he said, “they are the Guru Nanak’s feet, but they are also Vishnu’s. They are both the same.”

And who, I asked, wrote the golden book enshrined in the temple, “Set Chand, the guru’s son,” he said. Was it not Guru Nanak? By then the guru had gone to Tibet, he said, “But that is all the same. Our gods are our gods.”

Possibly the lovely, lovely Guru Nanak Math is in need of a Sikh scholar to unravel its truths and legends. Until then it will remain a half-forgotten temple on a wooded hill threatened by the brick and concrete advances of Kathmandu.

(Extracted with permission from The Kingdom of the Gods, Harper Collins, 1984.)

CULTURE
6-12 JULY 2001 NEPAL TIMES 17

by DESMOND DOIG

SAVING FAITH

The forgotten shrine of the sikhs

A small dark room. At the centre, a small shrine behind you, are two feet, laid with roses. “The guru’s,” he said. “It is at this spot where his health would be restored.”

The two limewashed houses are plastered with ochre earth. The black painted door is hidden in the way of old Nepal, so one stoops to enter. An old man, adeep on the clean, earnthen floor sits up and smiles a welcome. His dog, curled up beside him, takes no notice. I beg his pardon. Perhaps I’ve made a mistake. I’m looking for the Guru Nanak Math. He leads me barefooted across a finely plastered courtyard and to the centre of which is a small shrine with a tulip plant growing out of the top. It is difficult to make out the deities in the small niches but he agrees, as I think aloud, that they are Vishnu, Shiva and Parvati, Hanuman and Pashupatinath. In a verandah are steep stairs which we climb to enter into a small dark room. At the centre, under a canopy, is an altar draped in red. Here, says my companion, reproses the Granth Sahib, written by Guru Nanak himself in letters of gold. I ask him to repeat what he said because if he is correct, then this almost forgotten shrine in a land not normally associated with the saint possesses a rare and unique relic.

Strangely, the priest who is Nepali, wears none of the symbols of Sikhs who are often unmistakable from Vaisnavite Hindus. At Pashupatinath, I would have taken him for a sadhu. He whispered me out of the court yard into a small whitewashed courtyard and under a large pipal tree he pointed out a stone slab on which were carved two feet, laid with roses. “The guru’s,” he said. “It is at this spot that Guru Nanak sat in meditation. In that little shrine behind you, are the ashes of a Nepali king.”

We sat together on mossy steps leading up to the shrine, a strong scent of jasmine in the air and two small dark rooms. One had footprints. “Ah yes,” he said, “there are the Guru Nanaks’s feet, but they are also Vishnu’s. They are both the same.”

The speechlessness of the Bamiyan deities in the small niches but he was a bellow, a roar. My feet were bound, each limb stood like a dance of destruction. My mouth was forced shut, those hues arose as a conflagration. Colours were daubed over my sky, the gale became a ripple of my speech — I will speak.

No one has been able to stop me speaking. I am a ripple of power moving swiftly with the light.

The one who tries to stop this expression disappears in the deluge of time. Only the one who speaks remains. I will speak — a ripple of power moving swiftly with the light.

We will awaken. We have awakened at the call of the empty expression.

Neither is expression halted by attempts to halt it. Nor do hues stop colouring the picture that has been sketched. Nor can anyone block expressions of love and joy. Nor does gentle sunlight ever stop shining on childhood lips.

Nor can anyone suppress free and open expression. No one has been able to stop me speaking. I am a ripple of power moving swiftly with the light.

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We will awaken. We have awaken
Mango festival at all food and beverage outlets. Everest Hotel. 488100
9am-6pm, except Saturdays. Alliance Française.

**MUSIC**

- Mango Tango Exotic mangoes desserts Hotel de l’Annappurna. All day, all food and beverage outlets. Until 10 July.
- Mango festival at all food and beverage outlets. Everest Hotel. 488100
- Saturday splash Swimming and brunch. The Cafe & Poolside, 11am onwards. Rs 555, Rs 298 for children under three ft. Everest Hotel. 488100

**EVENTS**

- Contemporary Jazz Dance Classes at the Alliance Française by Meghantha Thapa. Thrice weekly, starting 26 June. Alliance Française. 241153, 242 832.
- Weekly cocktail, monthly beer Buy one get one free. The Radisson Corner Bar. 411818
- Dartwalk’s Saturday Escape Afternoon tea, cocktail, dinner, room, massage and breakfast. Every Saturday until end-September. Rs 130 per couple. Dartwalk’s Hotel 479488
- Disco party Buffet dinner, dance with DJ Raja. Hotel Shahenshah, Dhapasi. 13 July, 7pm on. Rs 600. Tickets at Irish Pub, Pub Maya, Hotel Red Planet, Thamel; International English Language Centre, Kiosk Bars and Travels (Nag Pokhari) and at the door. Yoga and Breakfast Six-week course in Hatha Yoga for beginners. Rs 400 per lesson, includes breakfast. Dartwalk’s Hotel 479488
- Stress Free Weekends Overnight stay at the Hyatt, dinner for two at the Rox Restaurant, use of pool, health club, spa and outdoor jacuzzi, ayurvedic massage for two, weekend brunch, late check out Sunday. Rs 9000 plus tax. Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 491234

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| Sun | 2045-2115 | BBC | Agenda |
| Daily | 2045-2115 | BBC | नेपाली सेवा |
| Daily | 2245-2300 | BBC | नेपाली सेवा |

**YAK YETI YAK by MIKU**

The monsoon is taking a breather, as you may have noticed. And the satellite picture taken on Wednesday evening tells us why: a cyclonic circulation over the Bay of Bengal that is bringing dry air into Nepal from the northwest. Expect sunny hot days ahead with afternoon thunderstorm buildup. Until the moist winds from the southeast pick up again early next week. Higher than normal rainfall in western Nepal last week prove that the first monsoon cycle is now over. Both the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea branches of monsoon are now active and heading toward central and northern India. The usual track format of movement is along Nepal’s southern border and will bring erosive rainfall, some of it in concentrated thunderstorms triggering landslides and floods in central and eastern Nepal. The monsoon front from Arabian Sea may also bring stormy rains in western Nepal.

**NEPAL WEATHER**

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IT’S A BULL’S LIFE: Farmers use oxen to plough a narrow paddy terrace at the foot of the world’s highest peak by an Indian Army expedition. Kathmandu Valley in deference to Lord Pashupatinath.

The new British Council has more than just books.

SALIL SUBEDI

“But don’t you know it’s called the Learning Zone now,” is what you will hear if you ring what was the British Council Library of your youth. But bookworms, don’t worry. The new Learning Zone of the British Council (BC) in the lush surroundings of Lainchour has over 10,000 books on science, humanities, the arts, computers, management and other popular subjects. The difference is that it isn’t just a library anymore. When it moved to new premises after 40 years last November, the British Council diversified and now has the Information Centre, the Learning Zone and the Lending Zone.

The new 1,406 sq m two-storey building was designed by WH Adkins, a British architect and is supposed to be the first of 10 new BC centres around the world. It is earthquake-proof and the glass-front is bomb-proof. There’s also a fire escape for the staff on the western side, opening out to the British embassy. “But our members are safe and well taken care of inside the premises,” smiles Brigitte O’Connor, the new BC director. “The centre now meets BC corporate standards of health and safety.”

Although the old complex on Kantipath, a neo-classical Rana-era creation, had a certain flair, the new centre will have improved customer service facilities and is wheelchair accessible.

The best public feature of the building is probably the large layer you enter into. “This central area or the courtyard as we call it can also be used for public events and is available on rent for events that comply with BC requirements,” says Kiran Bhattarai, coordinator of the Learning Zone. The library is on the left and leading off the right hand side are classrooms for the morning evening classes on general English, report and proposal writing, methodology, international examinations and professional English writing. This area also has a small section with videos and other reference materials on education in the UK.

The library itself is bright and cool. It is air-conditioned, well laid-out and there are computers with CD-ROM, and an online catalogue. The library is for members only, 3,086 so far and with facilities for 3,500. “The junior section has been drawing in a lot of children and their parents,” says Bhattarai. The library also has resources for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and the Cambridge University exams. The self-access centre in the library has multimedia resources like audio/video materials and computers with internet facilities to improve English language skills. The library receives 30 periodicals and five UK newspapers. “The range of books we offer has helped people of all age and interests,” he adds. Everyday some 300 members use the library, the majority students either pursuing studies in the UK or eager to access information about it. The online catalogue, which replaces the clunky old card index, is a welcome addition and works well with the BC automated services. But it isn’t all studies and earnest self-improvement. The fun in the last few months has included a celebration of world Book Day, where celebrities “got caught reading”, exhibitions, a poetry contest for children and a film festival in collaboration with the British Chamber of Trade and Commerce. “There are a number of other events in the pipeline,” says Bhattarai. One such event might be an exhibition of books on governance in September. Unfortunately, there is no major book sale in the offing, other than the usual small ones that come up of books withdrawn from circulation. The BC Lending Zone replaces around 1,000 books every year.

The British Council has also been conducting research and training programmes for governmental and other organisations, lawyers, police and human rights activists. “One of our major undertakings was the Enabling State Program (ESP) for good governance conducted for the parliamentary secretariat of Nepal. The BC has also been managing the District Health Strengthening for DHB,” says Raju Shukya, manager of Information Services. For the last decade, the BC has supported regional offices and the annual meeting of the Nepal English Language Teacher’s Association (NELTA). The Council recently launched the first directory of the Association of British Alumni in Nepal (ABAN). “We hope to bring together the alumni under a same platform. This is helpful in identifying the expertise they have achieved,” says O’Connor.

The BC, a charity headquartered in the UK, was established in 1930 to fight fascism and promote peace. “We are non-political and non-religious in our mission. Our aim has always been to enable the flow information about the English language and literature,” explains O’Connor. “In Nepal, our focus is to assist Nepali students for education in the UK and providing them with access to information.” The BC here also provides one scholarship a year for higher-education in the UK.

The new, improved facilities will surely attract more people to the Learning Zone. But the Council retains important parts of its old flavour. Familiar faces like 51-year-old Govinda Man Shrestha, the longest-serving staff member, are still here, as are the librarians from Kantipath.
Monsoon survival tips

Many readers from all worldwide nooks and crannies have been writing wanting some tips to ask if it is safe and sound to return to Nepal for the summer holidays during the ongoing annual monsoon event, and if so, whether they can eat the salads. Because most of the queries have come from highly litigious countries in the western hemisphere, we have counterdirected queries and now can be briefly frank no, keep off, leave us alone this monsoon season. And, yes, you can eat the salads.

But if you are determined to return in defiance of our dire warnings then there are a few threats to your personal life and limb that you should know about beforehand:

1. Diaria (no, let me see if I can spell this right) Diaria... De Fia... Diay-ah... Di... Do or not... Do or not... This amusingly-slightly-irksome is the most frequent cause of morbidity among visitors to Nepal and is the result of an anti-government bacteria that believes in a violent uprising. Just kidding. The medical profession has been trying to come to grips with the runs ever since unsuspecting care-seeking human beings were named a species called Neanderthal. Nothing then, or since, has worked. Our only hope now is the legal profession.

That is why, before you embark on your journey to Nepal this month, you adventurers owe it first carefully check the fine print to see if you are covered by the Warsaw Convention and the appendix contained therein if your itinerary allows you multiple stops in a country other than the country of departure.

Further, His Majesty’s Government of the Landlocked Kingdom of Nepal which is situated in a Yam-like fashion between A Rock and a Hard Place (hereinafter referred to as “HMG/N”) shall have only limited liability for personal injury or death due to negligence.

This limit on liability is applicable on the part of the nation state in question and any other nation state en route if they are signatories to the Warsaw Convention and it can be proven beyond reasonable doubt that the infection took place outside the sovereign territory and airspace of the kingdom of Nepal. In such a case, this liability up to this amount shall depend on the negligence of the nation state in question, especially if it is the Republic of Singapore (hereinafter referred to as “Gumless”).

2. The second threat to your personal security comes from dust.

Avoid it. In fact, keeping dry is going to be your foremost preoccupation while here. Luckily for you, large parts of Nepal including the whole of Chitwan District, has been declared dry. But if a sudden shower should catch you and your wife there will be no shortage of people willing to share their umbrellas.

- “Why you Outstanding? Please come understand with me.”

- “Oh, thank you from the bottom of my heart, and from my wife’s bottom, too.”

3. Creepy crawly. There are blood-sucking insects bearing from the family anacridae which includes lice, rural vampires and airport customs officers. For all these types of blood suckers, there is only one antidote: pepper spray. Bring lots.

Nepali Society

Roop’s inner light

Roop Jyoti is a serenely composed man, quick to smile, always relaxed. The icon of the Jyoti Group, Roop is not your stereotypically stressed businessman constantly worrying about the stockmarket and perpetually glued to a mobile. The reason; regular meditation at the Vipasana Centre that he helped set up in the verdant foothills of Shivapuri north of Kathmandu. But there was one bit of news that made Roop lose his composure last week—his nomination by King Gyanendra to the Upper House. “I am numb with excitement,” he confessed to us. “But a bit nervous too.”

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