



Under My Hat
Monsoon survival tips 20



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 organisations of students, women and workers.

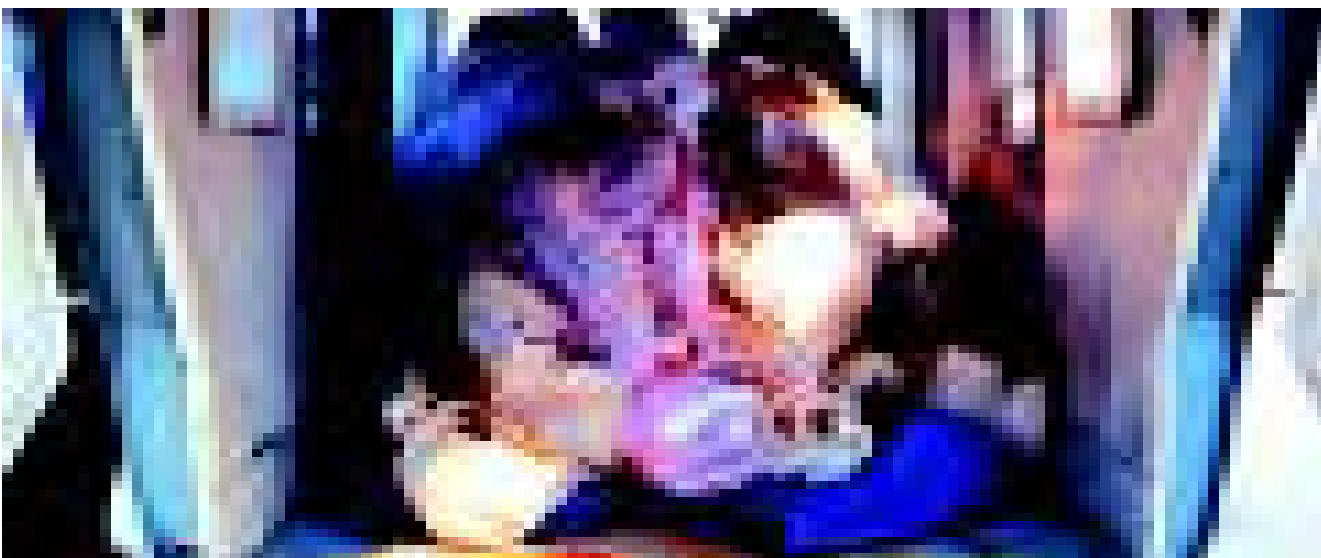
The royal massacre of 1 June prompted the party to accelerate its preparations for such a mass uprising which would prepare the ground for an interim peoples' government at the centre. Maoist leaders saw the street protests that followed the massacre and widespread public scepticism about the new king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

They had banked on the street protests escalating, the anti-Gyanendra wave intensifying, and also on ingratiating themselves to Beijing. There are indications now that the party brass miscalculated. "They know 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 piggy-backing on the public anger and shock, and the spontaneous outpouring of public grief indicated that deep down Nepalis believed, even respected, the institution of monarchy. Then the five sympathetic moderate left parties did not entirely support the Maoists in their strategy.

The Maoists have therefore gone back on Plan B, which is to foment confusion in urban areas by using "banner bombs"—booby trapped explosives hanging from big banners denouncing the new king and the prime

How many more bodies?

The Maoist revolution has suddenly moved to fast-forward.



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 peoples' 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.rwor.org) by Maoist leader, Prachanda, two years ago in which he said: "When Rolpa, Rukum, Jajarkot and Salyan become liberated zones, then we will declare the Peoples' Republic of Nepal. That government will be at the centre."

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 budget session of the house will be allowed to carry on in return for Prime Minister Girija Koirala stepping down. The UML will brandish this as a victory, and a vindication of its anti-corruption crusade, but it is doubtful if Koirala's replacement will suddenly bring a

unity of purpose in government or the opposition—especially in terms of a joint strategy on resolving the Maoist issue.

So, expect the Maoists to continue to flaunt their presence in Kathmandu, through booby traps, infiltration of protests against the public security regulations, torch processions—especially in the runup to next Thursday. In the countryside, expect widespread attacks on police posts.

The Maoists will also keep taunting the Army, try to infiltrate its ranks to bring down morale and stoke disunity. In the post-massacre scenario, the Maoists find themselves propelled to a period they were expecting five years from now. In a sense it has accelerated their revolution, but it also means that they are not yet prepared to take on the Army. "The Maoists have no illusions about it: they know that sooner or later they will have to take on the Army," admits one senior military source.

The sea-change in the balance of power within Nepal after the Naryanahiti mass murder has also begun a process of polarisation so that the Maoists can now pinpoint the "fascist Gyanendra-Girija clique" as their main target. "The party is extremely suspicious of a possible alliance between the king and prime minister to crush the movement, and it is trying its best to corner the two forces," said the Maoist source. Leader Baburam Bhattarai said in an article last week (translated on p. 15) that the Republic of Nepal has already been born, and he called for a broad alliance of political forces to form an interim government at the centre.

See p. 7

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EXCLUSIVE

High and dry

BINOD BHATTARAI

BIRGUNJ - Six months after completion, Nepal's brand new Inland Container Depot outside this border town wears a forlorn look as monsoon rains batter the empty \$29 million facility. The "dry port" will slash transport costs for Nepal's overseas exports and imports by nearly half since Indian railway wagons will unload containers directly inside Nepal. This would also obviate the hassles of trucking goods through India's notorious Bihar and West Bengal states.

But the dry port is in limbo because Nepal and India cannot agree on operating Indian railway wagons in the 5.4 km stretch from Raxaul to the terminal. "We would like to have the trains coming in from tomorrow, and expecting this delay we had sent our proposal for rail operation in February 2000," a commerce ministry official told us.

It took India until April 2001 to respond with a counter-proposal. Nepali officials were still "reviewing" the document this week, and it will be brought up when a bilateral trade committee meets in Kathmandu early next month. Indian officials say a Nepali response would be the place to begin discussions on the rail deadlock.

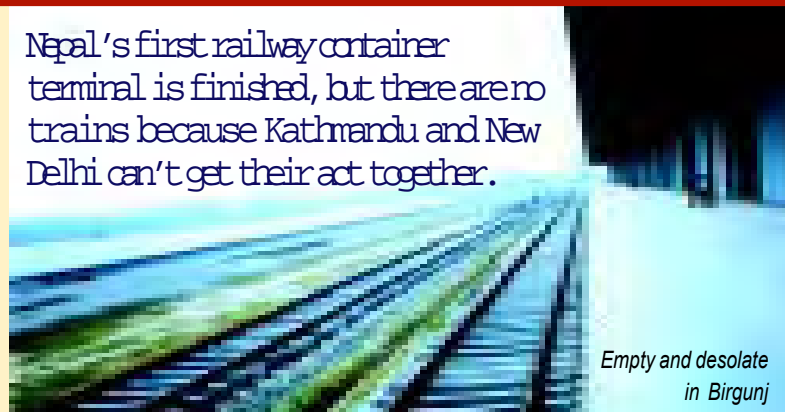
This looks like a case of a three-way clash of babudom

in Kathmandu, New Delhi and the Indian state of Bihar—as well as India's bureaucracy. Besides the railway agreement, there are other matters on the terminal still pending:

- Nepal wants simplified customs procedures to avoid holding up wagons at the border for "one time lock" inspection. India is said to want to check the locks in Raxaul, Nepali officials don't see why that is necessary.
- An agreement on exchange of information for freight monitoring between the seaport and the dry port.
- Nepal's parliament needs to approve three new laws on "Multi-Modal Transport" and the government has to select terminal operators through competitive bidding.
- Nepal would like the railway services agreement to cover a revenue sharing arrangement between the terminal operator and the Indian Railways which would get captive business.

The delay in agreement is costing Nepal dearly. There is the lost saving on cargo transport to and from the sea, and the private terminal operator selection has also been

Nepal's first railway container terminal is finished, but there are no trains because Kathmandu and New Delhi can't get their act together.



Empty and desolate
in Birgunj

delayed because the railway services agreement is not through. Delays are also hurting contracts of consultants for installing the freight information and automated customs data systems.

The Birgunj container terminal is spread over 35 hectares and is largest of three new border transport facilities built with a World Bank loan. The terminal is initially expecting ten trains a month and up to 16 when it runs at full capacity. Officially the ICD project ends on December 31.

Businessmen are pessimistic. Said one: "At today's pace, it could take until year-end for the first train to come." He blames both sides: New Delhi for using delays as a bargaining chip on larger trade issues, and Kathmandu for dragging its feet on responding to the Indian proposal. ♦

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SHI SHI QIU SHI

This Karl Marx aphorism translated into poetic Mandarin was Mao Zedong's favourite: "Seek truth from facts." Politics is a fleeting 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 friends and no permanent enemies in politics, maybe there are no permanent good guys and no permanent bad guys either.

Nothing extraordinary, therefore, about Chairman 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 Chairman 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 district education project in Dailekh? 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, and 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 Yanan, 1939 and slightly modified by our comrades to serve as a shortcut to power in Nepal, 2001? This week in the Sri Lankan parliament, the JVP party is about to bring down the government of Chandrika Kumaratunga by threatening to withdraw from the coalition—proving that if they so wish there is a powerful parliamentary role for Maoist parties.

True, in the past 12 years we have elected leaders who have destroyed themselves and nearly destroyed the country by ignoring aspirations, squandering mandates and abandoning accountability. The way to correct that is to ensure democracy is more effective and efficient, and to make it unbearable for elected crooks to cling on to power.

All open and free societies face a dilemma when dealing with political violence by extra-constitutional forces. It is a clash of two moralities, a psychological struggle over ideas. Those who have taken up arms fervently believe in a new Nepal that is equitable, just and fair. They are impatient, and they believe violence is the only way to get to their goal. But even if their means are violent, a liberal society cannot treat them like terrorists. Violence is unacceptable, but we have to accept that desperate people have throughout history used desperate means. A free and democratic government on the other hand cannot use the same tactics as those who want to end freedom and democracy.

Ultimately, the battle is over ideas. The only way to counter support born of fear and intimidation is through an even freer and fairer society that fosters greater public debate and forges a truly representative democracy. Gagging the press and reviving draconian laws are sure to backfire. Democracies must ensure their people a free press: censorship just plays into the hands of those who remain outside the constitution, and will undermine the

very democratic value system that we need to nurture.

When faced with seemingly irreconcilable differences, then, can democracy come up with a solution?

Unlike the dialectics of totalitarianism, democracy does not have ready, cut-and-dry answers. All democracy does is give competing ideas a legitimate forum so that the people can decide which way to go.

At some point the Maoists, too, will have to contend in the arena of free ideas. In love, in war and in politics it is all about winning hearts and minds.

MARTIAL LEITER



STATE OF THE STATE

by CK LAL

All the world's a stage



Taranath Ranabhat may actually find that for a politician, even bad publicity is good publicity.

When King Gyanendra entered the *Pratinidhi Sabha* on 29 June to address the joint session of the parliament, Speaker Taranath Ranabhat 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 no-nonsense face of Speaker Ranabhat was quite different from the downish 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 impersonation of Rambo and was quickly dubbed a national embarrassment in the virtual community of the Nepali diaspora (see sample Internet illustration, right). After reading his submission in enthusiastic regale at Narayanhiti, Ranabhat recited the entire report of the two-member probe panel constituted by the King to investigate the Narayanhiti Massacre of 1 June. In the manner of students who have just finished a particularly difficult exam Ranabhat completed reading the report all by himself, and then lifted Dipendra's M-16 gun with his now-famous pose. The next day's national dailies proclaimed this was the worst affront to Nepal's image abroad after Girija Prasad's interview to CNN. And his "bhatatata" is now immortalised in the Nepali lexicon, and is sure to find place in the next edition of the Nepali *Sabdakosh* with the new meaning for this onomatopoeia: "getting carried away with one's words".

Apparently, 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 strategic tear. Nepali society places a premium on solemnity, and Ranabhat forgot this cardinal principal: if you want to be taken seriously, you must appear as 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 demeanour when he chose to be serious without seriously appearing to be so.

Somehow, the possibility of a conspiracy offered a solace to the middle-class that has found it too difficult to cope with the tragedy of regicide. The stark fact

However buffoonish 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 noblesse oblige at Narayanhiti while presenting the report to the King. Ranabhat's desire to be accepted by the high society of Kathmandu is so strong that he would never dare transgress the borders of propriety set by it.

One explanation for his behaviour is that the Rambo act was an act. By refusing to become a sobbing bearer of bad news, he may have courted censure and diverted the attention away from the shortcomings of the probe panel report which, everyone agrees, was full of holes. It was a

compilation of eyewitness accounts and physical evidence of what happened, it did not analyse, and it offered no conclusions. Questions about motive—the why of the tragedy—were not fully answered, and tangential references to it fudge rather than clear the issue.

Ranabhat's antics distracted attention from that central point. No one cared to notice



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 hated Ranabhat for not being a 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 expose 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 behind, and Dr Baburam Bhattarai had already produced one with alacrity. After *Kanipur* published the good doctor's paranoid purple prose on its opinion page, it became the revealed wisdom for the chattering classes of Kathmandu. What the probe panel found contradicted that fiction with an array of facts too powerful to refute. So the pundits unsheathed their pens and ridiculed Speaker Ranabhat in a display of the "hang the messenger" mind-set. Accepting facts would demand too much self-analysis.

the nervousness Ranabhat was trying to conceal by his false bravado. Take a second look at the video-clip: with the advantage of distance from that day of fearful anticipation, you can see the raucous scene with a more discerning eye. The sadness in Ranabhat's eyes above the smiling face is all too visible. The laboured English is as much due to exhaustion as a display of his lack of command over the language. If you look dispassionately, the agony behind is apparent. To be able to misquote Shakespeare is one of the essential attributes of belonging to bourgeoisie, and it is difficult to resist the charm of taking liberty with the bard to sum up the fracas over the fiasco in one sentence: all the world is a stage, Tara Ranabhat played his part, and lampooning him is much ado about nothing.

However he may have come across on television on 14 June, mark my words: Ranabhat is a son of the soil and street smart. Watch this man, he was BP Koirala's blue-eyed boy and is destined to go places. Even the negative publicity he got will help him in the long run. ♦

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 terrible night of June 1 was nothing short of a Shakespearean tragedy enacted on a Himalayan scale. A demonic rage seems to have swept Narayaniti to decimate the reigning dynasty and completely unhinge the Nepali psyche in one stroke. As the nation mounds and confusion reigns, one tragic figure is left standing to pick up the pieces of family annihilation and national crisis.

Enormous responsibilities have been thrust upon the shoulders of King Gyanendra in the worst of circumstances. As the last man standing he must be aware both of his responsibility to the 500-year-old dynasty and the urgency of providing a unifying motive and hope for a nation beset by a host of problems. Despite the enormity of his own family grief King Gyanendra may not however expect much sympathy for his personal situation or the task he has at hand. He carries the burden of the living where death may be the only proof of innocence. How come you are alive? You were supposed to be dead along with the rest

of your lineage, the monarchy's detractors insinuate in innuendoes.

The snub UML dealt by ejecting from the commission called by the still grieving King to investigate the killing of late King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya and rest of the royal family is a portend of things to come in the future. Coming from a party that has shut down Parliament for months on end, the constitutionality plea was rather hypocritical. Or it could also be that having burnt their fingers in the investigation into the death of late Madan Bhandari, the UML is merely trying to steer clear of what it sees as a potential minefield. Considering the task at hand the commission did a commendable job despite UML's exit.

The committee appears to have decided not to speculate on the motive for the killings as all of those most involved in Dipendra's bridal disagreement were dead. While the report helped lift the heavy fog of uncertainty,

suspicion and chaos generated by the royal carnage, it disappointed some who had expected its findings to confirm the more colorful version of events and motives. Apparently it can be difficult to accept a truth which is far simpler than all it is hyped up to be.

For the republican stream in Nepali politics, there will probably be no better opportunity to strike than the present when royalty is reduced to the last man following the royal massacre. Therefore no quarters will be given in the grim struggle, even by some of those who opportunistically recast themselves as 'constitutional monarchists' out of political expediency. If outright insurrection is not feasible at the moment then attempts will be made to sap the credibility of the new king by feeding the frenzied rumor mills. Rumour and slander remain potent weapons in Nepali politics, their efficacy resting not on veracity but rather on the intensity and audacity of the

whisper campaigns. An ancient political art, rumors now command the services of the latest means of communication such as the internet, fax and the media to create virtual smear communities transcending national and local boundaries. Efforts will be made through various means to further destabilize the nation during the throes of succession by both internal and external interests. Instability at this critical juncture would serve some sections very well.

Wayward prince

In the emerging cacophony over the present crisis, some seek to disqualify King Gyanendra for being involved in industrial entrepreneurship in the past. If anything that should be an asset, an industrious king is always better than an idle one. Obviously for reasons of conflict of interests he should not be owning or running them once he has ascended the throne, but his past experience will definitely assist him in better understanding the issues of state in his role as the head of state.

Others question King Gyanendra's ascension to the throne simply because he happens to be the father of a wayward prince. It is not as if Prince Gyanendra sought the throne, the throne was thrust on him for the second time in history. Should a son's recklessness disqualify a father? Politically Nepal has been a uniquely forgiving country. Former hijackers, head hunters and those who deliberately blew up parliament now grace the highest positions in government and legislature because of the general amnesty granted every now and then. No doubt, this lenient tradition will continue in the future. In this accommodative milieu, is it possible to conceive of a similar gesture of public pardon for Prince Paras? The prince may however have to bear in mind that healing and reconciliation is always a two-sided effort.

The new king is going to be compared to his illustrious brother constantly, which is only natural. He is already being painted as an Indophilic, Sinophobic, anti-Indian and so on by different groups to suit their vested interests. These comparisons with the late king might also turn somewhat disingenuous when it comes from those who have no love lost for the monarchy. Then the rumour mills resurrect Dipendra as a martyred angel just to make it difficult for the living. These will be challenges of a different nature for the new monarch.

There are other issues that need prompt attention. Nobody could have fully anticipated an irrational act of such deranged self-destruction, but still it must be said that the palace security apparatus failed miserably. What kind of security system allows assault weapons to be lugged to the king's chamber and dozens of bullets to be fired without activating prompt interception? The palace will also have to improve its arcane bureaucracy that drafts and defends ridiculous statements like submachine guns suddenly discharging. Such inept utterance not only insulted the intelligence of the global audience, but also cost the new monarch vital credibility. 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 reliving the destiny of the Ramayana's Bharat who reluctantly accepted the realm following elder brother Ram's departure from Ayodhya. Bharat faced the silent resentment of his subjects even though he had nothing to do with Ram's exile, having been away at his maternal home at the time. Despite personal agony, duty bound Bharat to the thankless job. At least Bharat's brother returned after fourteen years, Gyanendra's brother won't. He is on his own now.

The only silver lining for a person on whom greatness is thrust upon is that exemplary leadership is often forged during testing times. King Gyanendra only has to be true to his country and history and render his best effort. Out of the present baptism by fire may rise a monarch who nurtures our unity, sovereignty and democracy. As the spontaneous outburst of public sorrow and grief made it clear, the silent majority has a deep faith in the institution of monarchy and that may be the new king's biggest asset in these turbulent times. The new monarch must learn to respect this historic trust and draw from it to heal a divided polity and chart his new destiny as the symbol of national unity and identity. ♦

(Saubhagya Shah is currently completing his PhD research on state, development and social movements at Harvard University)

LETTERS

CHATTERATI

CK Lal's article on insecurity in the hills was poignant and empathetic ("An unquiet peace", #49). In stark contrast, Kathmandu's educated classes show no empathy for the larger community. In opposing the security regulations, do they not realise that the safety and security of Nepalis is what the government should be most concerned about? Do they not realise that there is a Maoist insurgency that is preaching war out there, bithering VDC chairmen and anyone who does not agree with them? What can we expect from political party workers who went underground after the royal carnage: so little faith did they have in the democratic process. How dare they now come out of their *dulo* to pontificate about press freedom and the security act? The Kathmandu elite are upset that they will not be able to say what they want and be searched as they travel about at night by 'lowly' policemen. But is it such a big price to pay for the safety and security of all Nepalis, particularly in the districts? The last month has shown that Nepalis who are in

a position to make a public opinion are shallow and selfish. They have inherited very little of the bravery of their Gorkhalis forbears. On the other hand, they are for peace, yes, but the peace of the *masaan-ghat*. Do these chattering classes really represent the people, and do we need to give them so much importance?

SB Thapaliya
by email

KEEP CULTURE

I read with dismay (and irritation) CK Lal's "From regal to royal" (#48). He suggests we throw all our values and traditions out the window. In exchange for what, I wonder? Maybe, he should also tell the Smithsonian in Washington DC to get rid of all the fossils, dinosaur bones. What is applicable in America and Britain may not be appropriate in a country like ours. Is Mr Lal writing solely for the benefit of western readers? Not many Nepalis would relate to his way of thinking.

Subodh S Pal
by email

WHO CARES?

Whether you like it or not, general

people in Nepal are now in favour of Maoists. Of course, it will be very painful to the elite in Kathmandu. You are the losers, so we understand your irritation. You may write countless anti-Maoist slogans, but who cares? We general people have nothing to lose. We want the Maoists to capture power and throw all thugs into garbage as soon as possible. What can we expect from the present government or opposition? Do the leaders of ruling party and the opposition have any morality? Instead of writing in favour of these thugs why don't you join hands with people and support Maoists? But we know, you hypocrites will never do it, you worship power. No power of world can resist people's power. It is up to you, whether you publish this letter or not, but I

hope you will take courage to publish it.

Ganga Ram Tamang
Baudha, Mahankal

FIRST STONE

I have read and admired the Nepali Times for its considered views and rationality. But on the question of the resignation of the Prime Minister, you seem to have made up your mind that he should go ("Time to take off our masks", #49). Why should he resign? He has not been charged in any court, he still commands a majority within his party and in parliament. The opposition UML does not want to take him to court because that would expose the skeletons in its own closet. Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.

Badri Uprety
by email

VALLEY OF HALLA

In his article, "The Valley of Halla" (#46) Kanak Dixit correctly writes about the structure of Nepali society and how it affects access to the palace. That in a democratic country like ours, the elected prime

minister was informed about the incident at the palace after three hours confirms Dixit's observation. It is time now to make certain things transparent about the palace's internal matters.

Dhruva Lal Karna
Dhangadi, Kailali

ALLO, ALLO

Salil Subedi's report on *allo* ("Say Allo", #49) produced by the indigenous Kulunge Rai people was fantastic. We should encourage and appreciate any constructive endeavour made by the Nepali people, especially indigenous and marginalised people. Thank you for bringing this remarkable project to light.

Kripa Bantawa Rai
UK

TEARS AND ROSES

I just read the article by Rupa Joshi ("Tears and roses, #49) on your Internet edition. And I must congratulate her on one of the best piece of writing on Nepal I have seen in a while. She provides a compelling critique of the fly-by-night variety of journalism that is insufferably shallow and conceited, yet incredibly powerful. Joshi's

analysis could be just as true of the mainstream media coverage on Africa, Middle-East or any other third world country. Hopefully writings like this will provoke the public to subject the media to the same scrutiny that it has on government, parties and institutions.

S Thapa
New York

GOOD SIGN

After reading "Sharpening knives" (#49) I eagerly waited for the announcement of the king's nominees to the upper house to look, like you said, for signs of change. And, yes, I think it clearly indicates a dramatic change in the thought process of the palace polity. The three non-political nominees signal a fresh democratic outlook that is in keeping with the spirit of the constitution. The king presents himself as being above partisan politics. This is Nepal, and obviously there will be endless hair-splitting on the choice. But on the whole, a good sign.

Al Grimjee
Kathmandu

It is better

RAMYATA LIMBU

Labindra Mishra used to like going out for a few beers after a hard day's work at the BBC Nepali Service in London. He doesn't mind doing with less these days—for a cause. For every pint he doesn't drink, he puts away a quid.

The kitty goes to the Help Nepal Network (HeNN), an organisation Mishra founded. This small London-based network

encourages Nepalis living abroad to donate the price of a beer they forego to help fund development projects in Nepal. Since its establishment in September 1999, HeNN has raised about £9,000 to support small projects: a school library in Dunai, Dolpa, a de-worming campaign among Chepang children in Chitwan and the restoration of a school building in Pyuthan. "It's a small effort. But we're growing," Mishra told us.

The idea for Help Nepal came out of the frustration Mishra felt when chatting about lack of development in Nepal over bottles of beer in Soho pubs. He says he and his friends got plain tired of talking and complaining and not seeing anything happen, so they decided to begin the "A pound a month fund for Nepal." So far, about 200 members from the Nepali diaspora have chipped in with about £9,000 and have begun making a difference.

Help Nepal members comprise a new breed of Nepalis, those who give and are trying in their own ways to restore Nepali traditions of philanthropy. Such givers are still a minority, but they mean much to people being helped by their contribution. "Many people from the villages have begun approaching us for help. They're willing to volunteer time and labour to ensure that the community benefits from the

Philanthropy is finally gaining ground among Nepalis who are moved by a sense of equity, rather than the possibility of religious or spiritual payback.

projects," says Arun Singh Basnet, who coordinates HeNN's work in Nepal.

Giving to others has long been a tradition in Eastern societies. But we have been used to giving to the less fortunate not because we want to, but because we hope it will earn us divine merit in the afterlife. That isn't really philanthropy as we understand it today—as an offshoot of a particular humanist practice, giving without expecting physical or spiritual returns, giving to try and build a just society. Caught between modernisation and tradition Nepali ways of giving are changing, albeit slowly. People give, but with strings attached—where not appeasing gods or the spirits of departed souls, they are occasionally trying to sell something. "Even if this altruistic impulse comes out of a guilt-ridden and security-driven reflex of the better-off sections, the outcome is a contribution toward narrowing the gap," says an NGO worker in Nepal. "Likewise every rupee a privileged Nepali can spare, if used properly, can make a huge difference in the lives of

those who don't have anything."

Paropakar, founded by Daya Bir Singh Kansakar in 1952, is the best-known and oldest organised charity in Nepal. ("Bahadur Nepali", #30) Many still remember how Kansakar once brought home a cholera-stricken child and nursed him back to health against his own family's wishes. He built the charity brick-by-brick, freely using his own funds and resisting the temptation of being co-opted by modern "projects" funded by donor money. Paropakar runs an orphanage, a free ambulance service, a school, a children's village and a maternity hospital. Its branches in 30 districts also run primary health care centres in 175 villages across the country. Kansakar passed away earlier this year, but his charity continues to carry his initiative forward. They are thinking of new ways to promote domestic philanthropy in Nepal so that the work is more sustainable and fulfilling. It may be easier to just hand the projects over to donor-funded NGOs, but Paropakar wants this to be a Nepali initiative.

Feminist activist Rita Thapa,

founder of the women's support group, Tewa, is trying out a similar concept on a larger scale. She wants to develop philanthropy as a non-religious, secular campaign to advance projects that can help change lives. The organisation she helped to found asks Nepalis to stop spending millions on rituals—*daans* and *sharadas*—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 individuals and institutions locally, which hasn't been easy. "Our ability to retain Nepali donors has been rather low. We need to educate people more about philanthropy," adds 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 has to be supported by donations. Other organisations have their own revenue sources like handicrafts and other businesses through which they support their projects. However, both kinds of organisations feel it is more important "to teach the people to fish than to just give them fish".

Says Hitkar Bir Singh Kansakar of Paropakar: "In a philanthropic organisation like Paropakar there's always more expenditure than income. Our orphanage,



Hitkar Bir Singh Kansakar



Rita Thapa

HERE AND THERE

by DANIEL LAK

Scenes from the Great Global Cliché

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



a headlong run around halfway around the world throws up countless opportunities to reflect on this crazy global village of ours. Surprises, clichés and rich experiences abound, even aboard transcontinental aircrafts and in departure 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 RNAC departure clerks. The first surprise, they laughed back. Here, I thought to myself, is a woman of substance! On board the aircraft (a Boeing 757, corruption-free for your comfort) we chatted over my first of several dozen dreadful airline meals, and by no means the worst. Young Ms Mishra was from the fair burg of Toronto, her parents having left Gorakhpur many decades ago. She was a student politician, incredibly bright and more to the point: she had been outside Kathmandu on 1 June, 2001. No, not as some callow experience sponge with a backpack and a copy of the Lonely Planet—she was a volunteer health worker in a village near Baglung.

I lapped up her insights and experience, marvelled at her comments and thoughts, found her full of humanity, understanding and intelligence. And, now, it wasn't just the forty-something male trying to impress the 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 clogged 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 chaste Hindi of 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 grandchildren usually. And that meant uprooting oneself from the village or hard-earned haveli in Delhi, braving remarkable barriers of technology and language, and making the dash to be at the side of the children. Remarkable and somewhat touching, the good side of globalisation, or so I told myself as I stood waiting to use the toilet.

In Canada, home, amid the ersatz cowboy paraphernalia of Calgary International Airport, I marvelled at just how Asian everything was. The immigration officer was a Tamil. He gave me a suspicious glare when I told him that I chose to live in South Asia. It was a penal sentence. But he stamped me in, muttering comments about "dirt, filth and disease." The taxi driver was a Hmong tribesman from Laos. It turns out that this unlikely oil town near the Rocky Mountains is the biggest Hmong community in the world. Abandoned by the Americans despite the support during the Vietnam debacle, the Hmong have a new home, devoid of bamboo, tropical fruit and their beloved hills. "My son is a professional skier," said the driver with resignation.

Finally, to the great American state of Montana where I sit atop the foothills of the Beartooth mountains, the Great Divide to the West, the sprawling, arid Midwestern Prairie in the other direction. I'm here to visit good friends, from South Asia naturally, and their adopted Nepali daughters. After years of taking on the world's aid and development challenges, they've come to rest here, in one of the more stunningly beautiful places I've ever seen. And the talk, naturally, is of the palace massacre and the Mask theory, and Dipendra and Devayani, and all the rest. All along my endless journey here, I've been asked about the killings in tones usually reserved for discussion of soap operas and the latest celebrity gossip. Nepal, it seems, has arrived in the global village. And what a way to do it. ♦



to give

dispensary, ambulance services are all free. We do keep a little donation box. Those who can afford it leave something, which is welcome.”

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 pre-decided elsewhere.

Tewa’s concept of secular philanthropy to advance development is new, not just in Nepal but also in other parts of South Asia. Kaval Gulhati, founder of the Unniti Foundation in India, is another proponent of giving just for giving, and uses money her foundation raises to improve the reproductive health of women and to enhance opportunities for educating girls in South Asia. Writes Gulhati 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 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 Chhiri 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 world’s highest peaks—to build a school in Takshindo, his native village in Solu Khumbu.

There are many other Babu Chhiris in Nepal about whom we know little. One is Man Singh Maharjan, a wage labourer from Man Maiju 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



A school library built with the support of Help Nepal Network in Dunai, Dolpo.

conducted in 2000 by Martin Chautari confirms that middle-class Nepalis do give to charity, but mainly for religious purposes. A majority don’t mind spending to fund *satsangs* but would think twice about giving the same to organisations like Paropakar 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 same study also confirms that Nepal’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 had tried to raise money to help one of Nepal’s most beloved musicians, Amber Gurung: “We went to breweries, asking them to support the cause. They flatly

told us ‘our consumers profile does not identify with the singer’.” In other words, the corporations are not interested in giving if they don’t see ways to get recover the money, or even make more as a result of their donation—charity as a PR exercise. “It’s not that they don’t give. You only have to look at the number of shawls they give away at felicitation functions,” says Ratna Sansar Shrestha, a corporate lawyer. “But for every rupee they donate, they get ten times more in terms of publicity.”

Even institutional mechanisms are not geared towards encouraging giving. The law (Section 43, Income Tax Act 2031/1974) allows a meagre five percent tax deduction on net income or Rs 100,000, whichever is less, on money given to charity. Nepal does not have a law to govern charitable trusts, which does not help either. Instead we have individual trusts created by separate legislation—mainly commemorating politicians—which end up as political fronts to extort businesses for funds to run political parties and groups. Says Shrestha, “Only a separate Trust Act enabling charitable institutions to function independently and transparently will encourage people to donate to deserving causes. We’ve had talk of such a law for the past two years, but it is nowhere near becoming finalised.”

Until then, organisations like Paropakar and Tewa, and individuals like Mishra, and giving to their causes will be a novelty, not a habit for most Nepalis. ♦

Bin worries

They want to tidy up the city, but will the trash cans prove too tempting? Kathmandu’s municipality is worried that Rs 1,500 garbage bins they plan to install at various points in the city might be either stolen or vandalised during demonstrations. And if they do stay in place, fret the city’s housekeepers, residents might deposit their rubbish around the bins, but not necessarily in them. The City’s Solid Waste Management Section plans to install more than 500 bins around the metropolis, including on New Road, the Soaltee Bishnumati Bridge, the Bishnumati Bridge, in the Tripureswor- Sundhara, Tundikhel area, the Ratna Park-Jamal- Tridevi Marg loop, and the areas around the royal palace, the Indian Embassy and Kamaladi. Such experiments in the past have not been too successful, but a city official says, attempting optimism, “The bins will be placed on trial for a three-month period. If 20 percent of the bins are stolen during the time, then we’ll probably have to terminate the programme.” The city spends Rs 80 million on urban sanitation every year.

Choppers, finally

What goes up must come down, and the Nepal Police Force will soon have its own choppers—but at less than the money they asked for. The Ministry of Finance has agreed to sanction Rs 250 million to purchase two helicopters for the Nepal Police Force. The police had hoped for Rs 570 million rupees to buy a 21-seater MI 17 and a smaller craft, and an additional Rs 20 million for maintenance. Finance Secretary Bimal Koirala says it’s all the government can spare given its budgetary constraints. When summoned by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) after the Home Ministry complained about non-cooperation on the matter of fund for choppers, Koirala said his ministry was trying to put a check on what seemed excessive and asked the Home Ministry for a formal application.

Since they began operations in Maoist-affected districts in 1996, Nepal Police has spent Rs 620 million chartering helicopters from private operators to airlift personnel and supplies to and from these remote districts.

Aide de fired

Four royal ADCs have been sacked from service after a high-level military committee commissioned to review security arrangements at the palace reported a severe lapse of security on 1 June. Colonel Sunder Pratap Rana, ADC to King Birendra, Major Ananta Keshar Singh, ADC to Queen Aishwarya, Major Gajendra Bohara and Major Raju Karki, both ADCs to Crown Prince Dipendra have been dismissed. Two royal orderlies and two officials with the Royal Palace Service have also been dismissed. But the ADCs say privately there is nothing they could have done to prevent the massacre by a family member.

NIV’s global domination

Big plans are afoot for Nepal Television. Or so it says. After announcing its intention to beam its Nepali programmes abroad via satellite starting this week, the state owned station says it has more in the offing. Preparations are underway to start a commercial metro channel for Kathmandu’s viewers in the next two years. A 72 m tower is being constructed inside Singha Darbar (NTV Headquarters), and the corporation is adding more relay stations so that viewers outside the Valley can access programmes without relying on dish antennas. Director Durga Nath Sharma says the network will upgrade production, and tap advertisers in India and Nepal to meet satellite transmission cost—estimated at Rs 25 million annually. Nepali viewers are doubtful. Long disillusioned with the state network’s sub-standard fare, they say seeing is believing. Meanwhile, Space Time Network’s Channel Nepal beat NTV to going satellite by beginning 4-hour daily test transmissions uplinked from Bangkok.

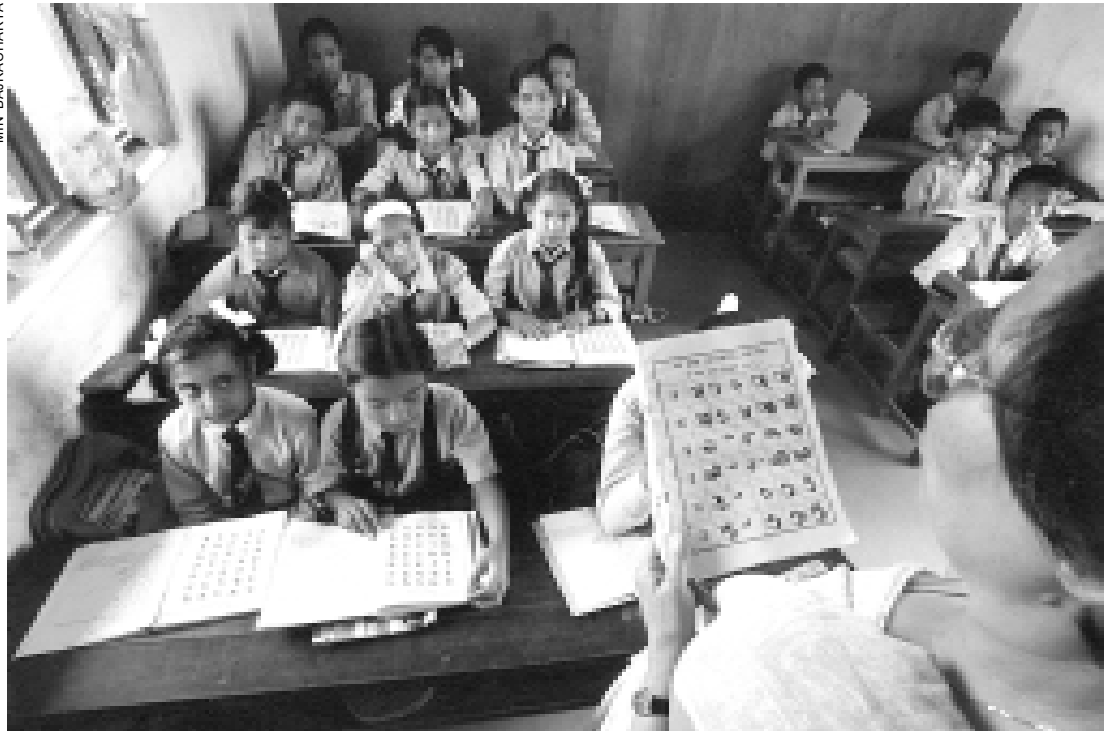
Cash-in time

It’s already happening. Nepal’s royal massacre is grist for the publishing mill. Jonathan Gregson, author of 2002 *Kingdom Beyond the Clouds* (“Kingdoms in cloud-cuckoo-land”, #15) has reportedly received a \$100,000 advance from Talk Miramax for a book on the tragedy tentatively titled *Blood Amidst the Snows: The Doomed Royal Dynasty of Nepal*. Gregson, who lives in Nepal, will use the killings to discuss Nepal’s history in doubtless sepulchral tones. Gregson’s proposal says he will explore “the staggering military expansion in the 18th century to this year’s ‘Massacre in the Palace’—a sequence of events so bizarre that Greek tragedians could not have dreamt it up. The book is slated for a June 2002 release. Next stop: Hollywood.



HYATT

MOTHER TONGUE



Nepali children have the right to education in their native languages, but where is the money?

HEMLATA RAI

Primary school textbooks in nine national languages are ready, and all the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) has to do is find takers for them.

As of now, the books are a novelty, which may be more talked about 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 CDC textbooks. Limbu and 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's effort is to support the constitutional right of children to choose to be educated in their mother tongue. Activists have been campaigning for the last decade that national languages other than Nepali also be given official language status. The Centre has prepared textbooks for up to class five in Bhojpuri, Tharu, Tamang, Awadhi, Maithili, Limbu and Newari, and books for class one in Rai (Bantawa) and Magar. This year, the Centre prepared the curriculum for the Gurung/Tamu language and they plan to produce textbooks for grade one in fiscal 2001/2002. The government has already spent about Rs 10 million, close to Rs 6 million in the last year alone, to produce the textbooks in national languages under



curriculum and textbook development component of the Basic and Primary Education Programme. The system in place until these developments had children studying their mother tongue as an optional subject, with Nepali compulsory.

A 1995 report of the Rastriya Bhasa Niti Sujhav Ayog (the national commission to make recommendations on language policy) says 69 languages are in use in Nepal, 21 with

their own script. The CDC says it will produce textbooks in other national languages when those communities also demand it. In an opinion poll conducted last year by the non-governmental Media Services International, 28 percent of janjatis said they wanted their children educated in mother languages, another 29 percent preferred English to be the medium of education, and the rest plumped for Nepali.

Why people make these decisions is a different story, but some believe that the first step to make people feel comfortable and positive with learning in their own language is simply making it easier to implement mother tongue education. "It is the government's responsibility to create an encouraging environment where the children can study their own languages," says educationist Dr Hridaya Ratna Bajracharya, a staunch supporter of education in the mother tongue.

The government's take on the matter is discouraging, to say the least—officials seem to have, simply put, bad attitude. Gorakh Bahadur Singh, Deputy Director of the Curriculum Development Centre, says that it is only the goodwill of his office that ensures non-Nepali speaking communities the textbooks to study. "It is not the government's responsibility to produce books in these languages—if you read the Constitution carefully it does not say the 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.

He is not alone. His reluctance to promote national languages reflects government policy. The 1995 report on language policy was drafted by a high-level government committee under pressure from language rights campaigners. The policymakers recommended a working plan for the protection and promotion of national



languages more than eight years ago, but the government has not taken any steps so far to implement it. The textbooks are a case in point. They are ready, but the Ministry of Education and Sports is doing nothing to reach out to the communities—no teachers have been trained to use the books, and distribution is laggardly. There are no mechanisms to monitor language teaching either,

and the government expects the communities themselves to generate the resources to retain teachers if they choose for their children to be educated in mother languages. Tanka Gaire, a curriculum development officer, believes this is for the best. "We cannot expect the children to bear the burden of protecting a language that has no scope for higher education and future employment," he says.

Language rights campaigners say the language policy is the main obstacle their initiative faces. "the government's policy of imposing Nepali on non-Nepali speakers is killing other national languages," said discontented language rights activist Padma Ratna Tuladhar. Many feel that the only way to ensure other national languages are a viable medium of education is raising their profile nationally—by having more people proficient in them. ♦

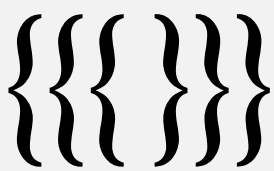
School reforms

The report of the high level committee formed to study problems in the education sector, mainly to counter Maoist demands on private educational institutions was released on 27 June. Educationists, student unions and private school management organisations had mixed feelings about it. Some education professionals have cautiously hailed the recommended reforms, but doubt they will be implemented effectively. The recommendations include:

- 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 level should have free education.
- Schools should be categorised 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 for 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 but the 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.
- A teacher licensing system should be introduced under which all instructors will have to have a teaching licence. The National Teachers' Service Commission will be responsible for issuing the licenses.
- Parents should be given a role to ensure quality of education. Schools should establish parent-teacher associations to ensure their participation in school management and maintaining transparency in school accounts.
- The recommendation should be implemented in three phases—the short term, the medium term and the long term.

4 JULY

by RANJIT RAUNIYAR



*** ** : -)



BOSTON - Americans have generally avoided things not worth doing. Americans have also generally overdone those things that are worth doing. And they tend to revel in overarching themes, which perhaps explains their fixation with all things large and ubiquitous.

Even their dreams are as overdrawn as All American. One never hears All Australian or All Armenian of anything. "Oversize it please," extends beyond culinary earnestness. Lawsuits for example. And this time against God, the "ubiquitous" of them all. I am referring, of course, to the gentleman Donald Drusky who brought this said lawsuit (not only against God but against all states and every American citizen) demanding "God return his youth and grant him the guitar-playing skills of famous guitarists, along with resurrecting his mother and his pet pigeon." As if!

With the Internet all around us, we now live in the most "ubiquitous" of times. But the Internet is different in that its ubiquity threatens America's "ubiquitousness." People have started casually saying "Your URL is?" There is now a dotcom to reassure me that my egg is proportionately rich in Omega-3, the fatty acid good for my brain and my blood pressure. Additionally, I can even confirm if the chicken laid the egg that I am about to eat in a "liberated" environment, able to "roam free, feather to feather, in 300 foot-long well-lit barns." Visit www.countryhen.com or email countryhen@net1plus.com to confirm.

Americans are sufferingly sensitive. Which of course, is what makes this country great. Ask the chickens. But Americans are also becoming more and more abbreviated. Ubiquitously. First it was with their diet. Fat Free. Cholesterol free. This free. That free. Freedom. And then. Abbreviated workforce. Abbreviated garden space. The Internet has instigated a plethora of abs. LOL (Laugh Out Loud), BRB (Be Right Back), TTYL (Talk To You Later). People laugh hehehe and hug {{{}}} and kiss *** and kiss

more lovingly *** **. The most unsettling is the abbreviated smile :). When people start smiling sideways you know something is wrong with them.

Even within households, people are communicating via email. "Chester, I have left your food in the freezer. Microwave when you're ready. Luv. Mom. P.S. Don't forget to do your homework. M."

"You have new messages" is the elixir even for existentialist dilemmas. People are having sex in text which is leading to elaborate polemics on infidelity. Friends are known by handle numbers. Life is becoming increasingly, abstract like faceless faces in a room of mirrors.

Even Barbie, propped up with the new appellation of "Hacker Barbie" can stare at a computer screen (without blinking and without food and drink) for 16 hours at a time. She can even say "Bummer! Your kernel must have been trashed." The idea, if it must be explained, is to redress the categorisation of women as "numerophobic" and "computer-illiterate". The sensitiveness of this country is intense. The notion of the open, gregarious and ubiquitous American will be clicked away. The Internet will claim to make up for it.

Growing up in Kathmandu, we never had the luxury of an All Nepali dream. As a nation, we were still sorting things out. And still are. And even in America dreams are not in text. Because there continues to be something deep about real picket fences. Because home-made pancakes remain different from Starbucks Frappuccino. Because the sense of competition is not to win the next sweepstake. Because Dear Dad and Mom do not mean DD&M. Because to miss home is different from missing <http://www.home.com>. Because a rose is still a rose. Because we never smile sideways. ♦

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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 fusion of the “mass uprising” in urban areas with the “peoples war” in the hinterland. The Maoists have declared eight districts in Bheri, Karnali and Rapti Zones as having “peoples’ governments” and they appear to be consolidating their hold on districts on the periphery like Dang, Bajura and Dailekh. Analysts are expecting a major Maoist attack on vulnerable police stations in those 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 Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organisation of South Asia (CCOMPOSA) with member groups from India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, including the MCC and Peoples’ War Group in India. The MCC, which is active in Bihar, is reported to have moved its bases to Darbhanga near the Nepal border. A CCOMPOSA press release in Patna said this week the “groups will unify 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 Naxalite confederation.”

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 a “political conspiracy” against a “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 a 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 revolt to join 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 politburo sat down to assess the situation. Its 10 June statement endorsed the arguments forwarded by Prachanda and Babu Ram and announced the birth of a new republic. It also broadened its analysis explaining the existing theory on the murders: a conspiracy by US and Indian intelligence agencies to encircle 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 monarchists

as well.

Seen in this light, targeting King Gyanendra appears to be a strategic move rather than a conviction that he was a conspirator. Yubaraj Gyawali, a senior UML member of the Upper House sees this as proof that the Maoists were all along being supported by some palace elements. He told us: “Now we know that a faction of the palace was providing them some protection and that is why their morale was high. The threats against the king may either be posturing to try and get the same support, or it could be they are running scared.”

The fact that the Maoists’ tactics have changed so frequently is seen by some as confusion and differences in the ranks. Prachanda’s statement on Sunday that only supporters of the “fascist Gyanendra-Girija dique will be attacked” is taken by some as an

indication of such confusion. Earlier the Maoists’ collection of taxes and donations were aimed at medium and large businesses and their targeting corrupt local officials were populist. Lately, however, the extortion is getting indiscriminate and hurting the not-so-well-off, and many popular local figures and elected officials have been brutally killed just for daring to oppose local Maoists.

But Maoist sources deny there is confusion, saying the party’s response shows flexibility to changing circumstances. He told us the party could ultimately regard Gyanendra as a Sihanouk-type figure, or even the founding president of a new republic led by an interim government.

Essentially the palace killings have eclipsed the need for talks—for the time being at least. Independent analyst Pitamber Sharma says that by



declaring Gyanendra and Girija as fair game, they’ve eliminated the need for a government to pursue talks. He adds: “I think the Maoists are now trying to prepare for a big confrontation, the recent incidents may be aimed at gauging government response.” ♦

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EVEREST

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 offset the increase in the non-food category. The prices of imported goods grew by 7.7 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 2.6 percent. Kathmandu Valley saw the smallest rise, 1.7 percent.

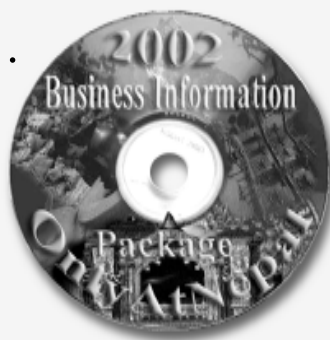
There has been a slowdown in the growth of exports, which grew by about 17 percent compared to the roughly 38 percent achieved in the same period last year. The Nepal Rastra Bank reported decline in the export of some major products—carpets, garments and jewellery. The slowdown in exports was balanced 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 20 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 bank's Consumer Price Index. The base year for the WPI 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 small Nepali company is doing IT to make a difference. 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". Juni Sherchan, 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/ Modi, 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 terapacks 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 Agency P Ltd says it is prepared to bring more Fiat cars into Nepal, now that its service centre is fully operational. The Dhapasi-based service centre became operational early this year. Bhajuratna has been selling the Fiat Uno and the Siena in Nepal. The company says the service centre was set up to enhance customer support in order to buttress its plans to market more models in Nepal.



Million rupee 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 an appropriate visual graphic adapter. The price—just over a million rupees.

FNBP

Something to think about: the Federation of Nepali Businessmen in Politics



A notice posted in newspapers by the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) a week ago caught the eye of this Beed. The preferred modes of address in these times are accusations and entreaties. The FNCCI tends to overuse the latter. In this advert, the organisation was pleading for harmony in the business fraternity very much along the lines of their earlier pleas on bandhs and other occasions when national economic interests were being affected.

This time, it requested readers to keep their cool about the forthcoming elections to the FNCCI's apex body. Right now, businesspeople are as busy as politicians, and doing much the same thing—they are all aiming for power, spreading the word about themselves, begging for votes, making alliances, doling out favours—in short, politicking every opportunity they get. It strikes those of us watching bemused from the sidelines that this is some sort of contest we were never told about, this urgent effort to show us that if politicians can do their particular brand of business, businesspeople, no lesser mortals, can equally engage in politics. Your columnist believes this is one of the more egregious ironies of Nepal. (See also "Running for president", #44)

The FNCCI offers amusement not just in the form of individuals lobbying hard for themselves, but also in the debate that flares up every two years with the FNCCI elections about

whether the Federation is the right mode of representation of the business community. Particularly fraught is the issue of diversity—whether all forms of business are represented fairly and adequately. The conception of a new organisation, the Confederation of Nepali Industries (CNI) this FNCCI election year, is perceived as the result of real frustration—the industries and people involved say they are tired of their grievances being ignored. During elections in the last there have been meetings for consensus candidates and unanimous nominations, but all these noble intentions are forgotten after the election is over—until the next poll.

Perhaps the thing to do now is re-evaluate the FNCCI, not to get rid of it, but ask whether some radical re-engineering might not make it more effective. The rules relating to representation should be looked at, as should the fact that the district chambers dominate electioneering in not perhaps the best manner. Who should run the organisation—a busy executive committee or a strong secretariat? Do the people on the various FNCCI committees really have the time to meet and solve problems? Some believe they spend more time keeping track of the various groups they are members of. Is getting into committees a free ticket to

hobnobbing with the politicians, people in the government and the rather limited cocktail circuit in the capital? The organisation needs a stronger secretariat with more powers that can provide continuity without elected bodies affecting their functioning. It needs more people who understand business and strong management practitioners and professionals who can help the business community work out long-term strategy.

Times have changed. We talk about globalisation and ask the government to think about privatisation and liberalisation. But perhaps first the business community should set its own house in order, in keeping with changing the situation, concerns and needs of business.

The Beed is not pointing fingers at individuals or groups of individuals, but urging the captains of business and industry to look at the FNCCI beyond the election. The organisation has the foundation and stature of an apex body, but in theory only. We need vision. ♦

Readers can post their views at arthabeed@yahoo.com

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

JESSE PESTA

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-biggest export, behind carpets, garments, and vegetable fat called vanaspati. Local and foreign companies are bringing out new soaps with features such as antibacterial properties and citrus scents, which are particularly popular.

Street prices have gone down by as much as 20 percent in some categories in the past few years, largely because of competition. Selling personal-care products can be tricky in a place where

consumers commonly use inexpensive laundry soap to wash everything from kitchen utensils to their hair. As companies ramped up production of foreign 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 Nepal 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.

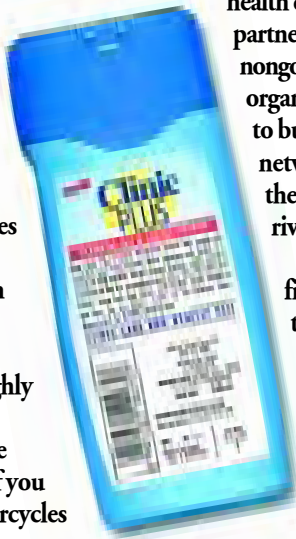
"People are coming out of the closet," says Suman Shaky, marketing manager of Space Time Network, which is starting a Nepali-language satellite-TV service. "Earlier they may have wanted to fly, to shop in a department store, to use a good brand of soap. Now they are expressing their thoughts more freely." 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 Preeti, goes into villages with videos demonstrating how to use its products. Lever sponsors oral-

health campaigns in partnership with nongovernmental 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 laundry soap Diyo used to play up the fact that diyo, which means bright, is also the name of a votive lamp used in temples. A new campaign stresses the addition of modern ingredients to the product and the fact that it doesn't scratch the skin like some cheap, coarse Nepali soaps do.

Lever is widely considered the



leader in redefining the Nepali soap market. The company says it found the market starkly divided between low-cost laundry soaps at one end, and high-cost imported soaps and shampoos on the other. Lever has tried to introduce midrange products, marketing Lux for women, Liril for young people and playing up Lifebuoy's hygiene benefits. In fact, managing director Sandip Ghose says Lever was surprised to discover that Liril, which is Nepal's biggest-selling soap brand, was commonly used for hair-washing and as 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 Fair & Lovely, and the Indian version would outsell the local version 3-to-1. "We had a very odd 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 radiance on your face? No, she says, that's made in Nepal. ♦

(Asian Wall Street Journal)

SIC



ALL PHOTOS SALIL SUBEDI

SALIL SUBEDI

ons ago when Lord Manjushree glided down from the Tibetan Plateau to the emerald lake of Kathmandu he saw a lotus with a thousand petals near the shore. With one mighty swipe of his sword, he cut the hill at Chobar in half, draining away the water. What emerged initially must have been a muddy and smelly swamp, but in time it became the rich and fertile valley.

The ancestors of Krishna Awale and his wife Bhinmaya have cultivated bountiful harvests over the centuries on this rich land. They believe in the Manjushree legend. Krishna is now 65 and Bhinmaya 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 Bhinmaya 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 Bhinmaya stop farming. This week, Krishna and Bhinmaya are on the outskirts of Patan transplanting *taichin* rice on a small strip of land surrounded by concrete buildings. It is not just the knowledge that is threatened, Manjushree's legacy—the land—is also in danger of

being lost. Krishna is at the far end of the field, his back bent as he hacks away at the soggy soil with a *kodalo*, Bhinmaya sorts out the rice seedlings in bundles so they can be planted. The sun and humidity are fierce, and Krishna takes a break, sweat streaming down his creased face. He doesn't like the look of the sky, the sun has a halo around it and the sky is deep blue. It isn't supposed to be like this on 15 Asar, the official rice planting day. "Today the *naagas* are not happy. They're not letting out any rain," says Krishna pouring water into his mouth from a bronze *kariwa*.

When Manjushree let the waters out, the creatures who suffered the most were the holy naaga 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 whether it will rain, and how much. Krishna uses sign language and expressive grunts to communicate with his wife who translates for us: "You can tell from the cool breeze from the east it will bring sudden rain. When there is a bright sun and the ground gets very warm like now, then there will be afternoon rain, and the gods suck

water from the ground with their rainbows to replenish the clouds in the eastern sky."

Krishna never went to school, and no school could ever teach him what he knows. Born to a family of farmers and brick layers, Krishna was the youngest of three brothers who were all orphaned when they were young. Being the youngest, Krishna felt the loss of his parents the most, he became a street kid sleeping in *patis* and getting by running errands for the *sabus*. At 13, Krishna was sent off to far western Nepal to work in the farm of a Rana zamindar in Kailali. He returned to learn to drive a lorry when there were only four lorries in the whole of Kathmandu Valley. "These days there are so many buses and trucks and hondas," he laughs. Being a lorry driver in those days must have been like being an airline pilot today—people looked at the handsome young man Krishna with awe.

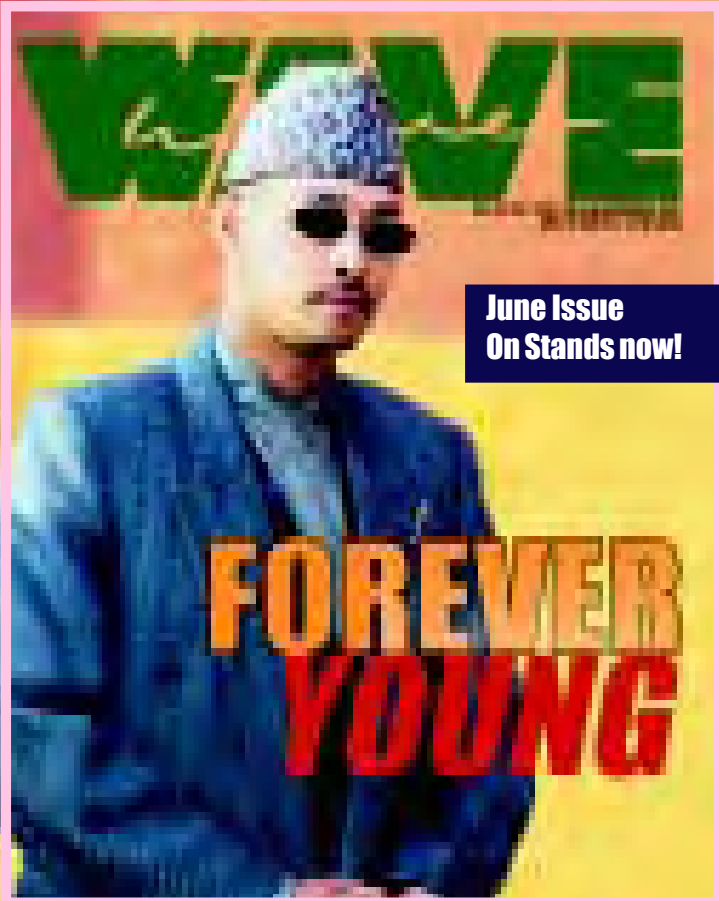
Krishna's rugged good looks haven't left him, and my Patan

Planting rice with

"When there is a bright sun and the ground gets very warm like now, then there will be afternoon rain, and the gods suck water from the ground with their rainbows to replenish the clouds in the eastern sky."



Aakirti



th Krishna and Bhinmaya

y warm, then there will be afternoon rain. The gods suck water from
ds in the eastern sky."



Newari women interpreters attested to it. Krishna's muscles glisten in the sun as he toils in the paddy field, he is lean and agile. Krishna is Bhinmaya's second husband, and the two have lived and farmed together for 35 years. Bhinmaya is proud of her husband, but acknowledges that he

has a weakness for *aila* after which he can be a bit of a bully. Krishna is unrepentant, and signals with his fingers: "The body needs to rest after a day's work. A little *aila* is good for health." It was Bhinmaya who worked with her husband to turn him away from drink, so he

would be healthy enough to work to feed and bring up their four children.

Krishna's oldest son now crafts bronze images of the gods through the lost-wax process, and saves enough to help his parents, repairing their house and even helping get his sister married.

"He cycles down here sometimes to bring us food and helps carry back the harvested rice and grains. And he's never shouted at me even once," says Bhinmaya.

Krishna's liking for the *taichin* rice is very strong, he says this is unquestionably the best suited for Kathmandu valley soil and climate. "A *taichin* meal is filling, and you can make a good *chiura* and *jaad* from it," he says. It doesn't need much to get Krishna into talking about drinking. All you have to ask is about the soil, rain and the taste of different traditional food and drinks. And gods.

Krishna and Bhinmaya are both devotees of Karunamaya (Red Machindranath), the Sun and the

Moon. "Karunamaya is the feeder of all," he says, pointing at a ring rainbow around the sun. "The gods are having a meeting up there. They want to know why Karunamaya always arrives late." According to the myth, the god of compassion first feeds all the sentient beings, and is therefore always late for those heavenly meetings. "Without sun, the world cannot survive. I like to watch the sun god riding away in his chariot." Bhinmaya prefers the moon god's healing qualities and believes her soothing light helps the rice seedlings to grow tight and tall.

Krishna's extraordinary skills and understanding of nature, the sky, the soil and crops are in danger of vanishing with his generation. Wisdom amassed almost from the time of Manjushree will soon be gone. This loss, multiplied with tens of thousands of other Krishnas and Bhinmayas all over Nepal, will be incalculable. This is their intellectual property, and our heritage. And we have to save it. ♦

NEPAL'S NICE RICE

Between June and August, 95 percent of the population in Nepal will be getting their hands and feet dirty. They'll be digging lushly into oozing, 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, Pokhrelhi, Basmati and Khumal. Recent FAO statistics show that the average Nepali consumes 117 kg of rice annually. Gulp.



Cloning's slippery slope



Dolly, the cloned sheep.

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

Sometime 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 clone, 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

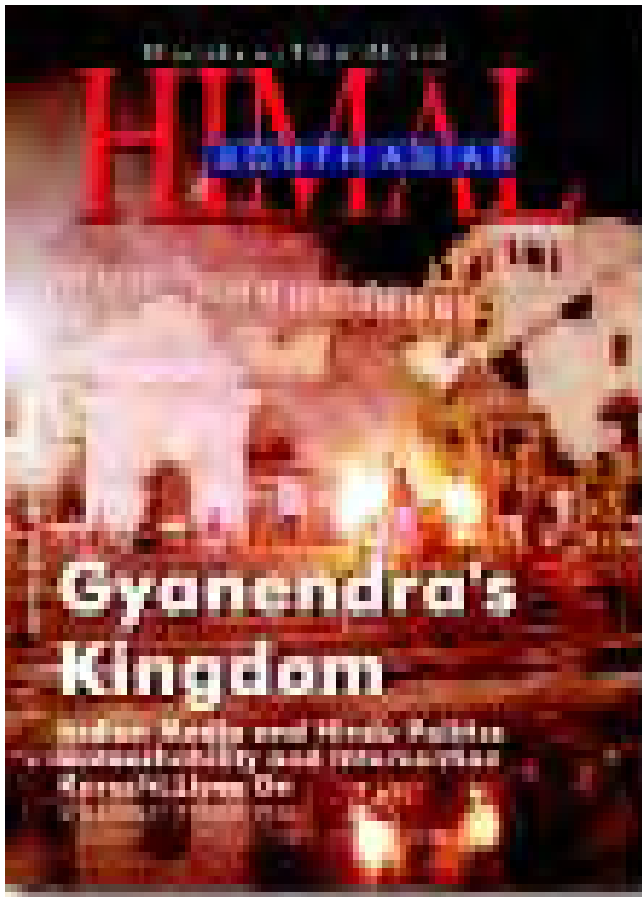
The nucleus from a human cell is inserted into an egg that had its nucleus removed. An embryo forms, but it will not be implanted in a uterus. Instead, embryonic stem cells will be derived from its inner cell mass. These cells have the potential to become every cell-type in the body, a potential which may lead to cures for many chronic diseases. Stem cells cannot become a baby. While Britain has legalised therapeutic cloning, they are poised to ban reproductive cloning. They oppose projects such as that of Drs. Severino Antinori of Rome and Panayiotis Zavos of Kentucky in America, who plan to enable infertile

immune systems. Weight is a problem too. Dolly the sheep, although still going strong five years after her birth, and the mother of six (all conceived the old-fashioned way), has always been plump. During a trip to the Roslin Institute where Dolly was cloned, I found her, shorn of her fleece and revealing an ample midsection, mournfully staring from behind a sign that said, "hay only". The Duchess of York, Sarah Ferguson is not the only British celebrity on a diet. Being overweight is obvious. Other defects may be subtler and, perhaps, insignificant for farm animals. But where humans are concerned, safety must come first. Because the defects found in clones are not genetic mutations, pre-implantation diagnosis at the embryo stage will not reveal their existence. Problems caused by these defects could emerge at any point in the person's life. We would see a greater range of defects than we do in animals like mice because it is easier to analyse human behaviour and physiology. Therapeutic cloning would probably be safer than reproductive cloning because any reprogramming defects would not affect every cell in the body, just the cells used in therapy. Thus far, only the UK has legalised therapeutic cloning. A law passed late last year in Japan permits it but forbids transferring the embryo to the uterus. In March, Denmark's Council of Ethics endorsed therapeutic cloning. Will any country that legalises therapeutic cloning inevitably slide down the so-called slippery slope and end up tolerating reproductive cloning? The idea behind a slippery slope is that if you do x, which is

acceptable, you will end up doing y, which is not. Indeed, two types of slippery slopes, logical and sociological, exist. On the logical slippery slope, you slide to the bottom and embrace the morally unacceptable because there is no way to distinguish it from an acceptable practice. You can slide down the sociological slippery slope from one practice to the other, even if the two are conceptually different, just because the existence of one creates a social climate receptive to the other. Therapeutic cloning is conceptually distinct from reproductive cloning. Although the first step is the same, the intent behind the practices is not. The former would be done in order to save lives by treating diseases now incurable, say, Parkinson's, ALS, and multiple sclerosis. The latter—creating a person by cloning—would be done for reasons extending from egomania, to confusion between replication and resurrection, to the understandable desire to have a biologically related child. Will therapeutic cloning make it more likely that people come to accept reproductive cloning? I don't think so. Therapeutic cloning is intended to heal the sick. The cells created through cloning would be an extension of the patient: a means to treat him with cells generated by his own body. It's almost like donating a pint of blood for yourself in case you need it for subsequent surgery.

Even though I do not believe in a slippery slope from therapeutic to reproductive cloning, a society's laws should give voice to its values. In countries which allow for the former, it is probably a good idea to ban the latter. ♦ (Project Syndicate) Arlene Klotzko is Scholar in Residence at the Science Museum, London. Her study *The Cloning Sourcebook* was published last month by Oxford University Press.

On newsstands this weekend



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 1973 film *Sleeper*, attempts are made to clone Hitler from his preserved nose. Today, instead of cloning people from spare parts—or spare cells, as is the case with reproductive cloning—scientists hope to grow those parts by cloning people. The first part of this procedure is similar to that used to create Dolly the sheep, the first cloned mammal.

men to become fathers by inserting their DNA into an egg from their partner. Reproductive cloning raises several moral issues, principally those of safety. Scientists believe that human clones would have defects. Because the egg that receives the new nucleus has to reprogram it quickly—teaching it to give the instructions necessary to construct an entire human being—genes that should be "turned on" might well be "turned off," and vice versa. This probably explains why at least some animal clones have problems with their hearts, lungs, and

Where do you want to be?

or here?

Food for thought (and more!)



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Human rights, human wrongs

- 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- 1961 AI formed in London as a permanent international movement to defend freedom of opinion and religion. Member groups in six countries
- 1972 World-wide campaign for abolition of torture
- 1973 First "Urgent Action" issued over imprisonment of Brazilian Luiz Basilio Rossi
- 1986 Mandate expanded to include work for refugees
- 1991 Mandate expanded to include work on abuses by armed opposition groups (as well as by the state) and hostage-taking. Prisoners of conscience now includes those jailed for sexual orientation
- 1992 Membership exceeds 1m with 6,000 local groups in over 70 countries
- 1999 AI begins work on economic relations and human rights, and pledges to empower human rights defenders and to campaign against impunity
- 2001 40th Anniversary of AI

TANYA BIRKBECK
IN LONDON

The website of the giant multinational British Petroleum talks of “changing public expectation”, “responsibility” and “accountability”. Canadian oil company Talisman Energy’s website contains a report on Corporate Social Responsibility. Both companies face charges of human rights violations from campaigners: BP is criticised for hiring a private security company aligned with the tainted Colombian army. Talisman has been widely criticised for its operations in Sudan.

At the landmark 40th anniversary of Amnesty International in London in May, activists and pioneers of the movement celebrated victories but also discussed work undone, including the challenge posed by huge business groups. Campaigners say multinational companies, with their ever-mushrooming branches, sub-contractors and subsidiaries are making it hard to pinpoint exactly who is to blame when human rights are violated. And, says Salil Tripathi, Economic Relations and Human Rights Campaign Coordinator for Amnesty International in London,

LE MOT JUSTE

Multinationals are talking a worrying new talk.

“the language of human rights is increasingly being adopted by companies when it suits the point they wish to make.”

Talisman and BP say respect for human rights is a fundamental part of the way they do business, and not a PR exercise. Tripathi sees the current rush toward corporate use of human rights language as the result of “trigger points”—incidents in the last few years in which corporations found themselves spotlighted by the media. He also points to Shell’s support of the former Nigerian military regime that executed Ogoni activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others in 1995. “Because oil has been the focus and oil companies have had to respond to human rights concern from these... incidents, you find Talisman in Sudan, making the claim that they intend to protect human rights,” Tripathi says.

Denise Deegan, a public relations representative for leading pharmaceutical companies, agrees that companies are often caught off guard, and she aims to change that. Deegan’s recent book, *Managing Activism*, is a step-by-step guide for corporations targeted by pressure groups. “Across the board [companies] seem to be taken by surprise” by activists, Deegan says. She suggests corporations learn the language of their critics. Her book suggests “constructive engagement” with activists. Knowing there will always be some groups resistant to

talks, Deegan suggests corporations gain credibility by bringing in “softer” groups first.

Human rights activists don’t like this. “It’s potentially very, very dangerous,” says Derek Wall, a volunteer with the British-based organisation Corporate Watch. “The problem is people will be taken in and reduce the pressure.” Wall argues that corporations’ talk is often just that—rhetoric. “Activists are attacking the companies’ means of making money, which is the last thing they are willing to give up, so any concessions they make will generally turn out to be either purely cosmetic or empty promises.”

Amnesty International is willing to work with corporations to help produce a code of conduct based on a commitment to human rights under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But, Tripathi warns, the organisation will hold corporations to their promises. Talisman Energy’s Corporate Social Responsibility Report 2000 listed details of compensation for lost land, human rights monitoring and human rights awareness programmes in Sudan. But Amnesty has taken Talisman to task for “underplaying” serious violations. Amnesty sees “little evidence that the company had taken effective action in its area of operations to protect human rights.” Talisman operations in Sudan are criticised for displacing large numbers of people. ♦ (GEMINI)

Most corrupt

WASHINGTON - Bangladesh, Nigeria, Uganda, and Indonesia are seen by international banks, risk analysts, and businesspeople as the most corrupt of 91 nations which attract foreign investment, says the latest annual Corruption Perception Index (CPI) released by Transparency International (TI). Scandinavian countries, New Zealand, Singapore, Canada, and the Netherlands are the least corrupt. Finland was the best with a 9.9 score and Bangladesh, which appeared on the index for the first time, had a score of 0.4. The US ranked 16th, between Israel and Chile. Singapore was fourth with 9.2, Hong Kong 14th, Japan 21st, and China 57th with 3.5 points. India was at 71st position with 2.7. The index is based on 14 international surveys, including those by the World Bank, the World Economic Forum and PricewaterhouseCoopers. 56 countries—all but two developing—received five points or less. The six-year-old CPI has a strong following among bankers and ratings agencies. “With few exceptions, international capital won’t go to countries seen as hotbeds of corruption,” says Frank Vogl, TI’s vice chair. China is a notable exception. Vogl said the traffic in small arms is particularly corrupt, citing the investigation of former Argentine President Menem, the media sting of senior Indian Defence Ministry officials, and the pending prosecution of Peruvian spymaster, Vladimiro Montesinos. The index should be read cautiously—over 100 countries, including some that attract substantial foreign investment, were not rated. The media coverage the CPI receives may also affect the surveys upon which it bases its report. The surveys cover a three-year period, and changes in the past year may not be reflected in this year’s index. And finally, different surveys can produce remarkably different results. Pakistan got 0.8 points in one survey, and 4.2 in another. (IPS)

The payoff

BRUSSELS - International donors and creditors pledged \$1.28 billion in aid and loans to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) Friday, the day after Serbian authorities handed over former president Slobodan Milosevic to a UN war crimes tribunal. The US, which refused to commit funds until Belgrade cooperated with the war crimes tribunal, pledged \$181.6 million, nearly twice as much as originally planned. The FRY, which includes the republics of Serbia and Montenegro as well as UN-administered Kosovo, suffers from 150 percent annual inflation, 50 percent unemployment, and a foreign debt burden of \$12 billion. Public sector wages are in arrears. Last week’s conference was the first international attempt to throw a lifeline to Belgrade’s new reformist leaders. Yugoslavia sought funding for nearly 40 projects aimed at reviving key areas: energy, transport, mining, roads, railways and airports. Yugoslav Deputy Prime Minister Miroslav Labus rejected any direct link to the timing of Milosevic’s handover and the donor conference, saying the figures “had been negotiated months in advance.” Catherine Day, the EC’s deputy director general for external relations, was more forthcoming. “The authorities in Belgrade have dramatically demonstrated their determination to meet (international) conditions as part of their own agenda for building a democratic market economy which shares the core values of the EU.” (IPS)

Asterix in Russia

SHLYOP! SHBLYAMS! BAKH! BUMM! is what Gauls bashing Roman soldiers sounds like in Russian. Not many Russians know that yet, although 300 million readers have read in 80 languages the adventures of Asterix, Obelix and their plucky village holding out against the mighty Roman empire in 50 BCE. French publisher Emmanuel Durand intends to change that. He recently published a Russian-language version of *Asterix and the Goths* hoping Russians will take to Asterix and a comics culture in a land with so few comics that the Asterix translators had to make up versions of Kapow! Wham! and Bam! *Asterix and the Goths*, or *Asteriks i Goty* started selling in Moscow for 70 rubles (\$2.50) last month. The books, published since 1959, mix old and modern humour. The Romans often speak in Latin, mixing quotes from Cicero with phrases like “Credo Elvem ipsum etiam vivere,” or “I think Elvis is still alive.” Surrounding Asterix are characters whose names tell their own stories—the village bard is Cacophonix, and the large village chief, Vitalstatix. Many names were changed to suit the Russian ear—Cacophonix became Conservatoriks. Apart from the problems of wordplay, another difficulty in translating came in choosing words that would fit into the bubbles, as Russian words tend to be much longer than French and English ones. Whether *Asteriks i Goty* will be a success remains to be seen. Comics have never been popular in Russia or the Soviet Union among grown-ups especially. “Maybe comics were bourgeois,” says Durand. Inside *Asteriks i Goty* is a note saying the book “will [also] be interesting for adults who can fully understand humour.” Durand decided to publish the book after hearing that over 120,000 Muscovites watched the French film *Asterix the Gaul* starring Gerard Depardieu as Obelix.



How do we understand the new forms of human trafficking?

regular operations. The relative effectiveness of the existing legal instruments is limited by the conflict of interests at the national scale over control of transnational movements of people and the fight against crime. Unless this conflict is resolved, criminals will continue to find market niches carved out by forces of globalisation that render life for specific segments of the world population insecure, politically and economically.

Reform is possible. At the international level, the ongoing flirtation between the market and the state must be subjected to ethical rules that protect losers and insure that winners are more socially responsible. At the national level, stricter limits must be placed on the abuse of the human body and the trade in organs and people. This might include the establishment of an International Criminal Tribunal and a permanent organisation that would enforce its decisions. From the point of view of crime prevention, the social technology of organised crime must be undermined and its effectiveness limited. This would mean more severe sentences for fraud and bribery and a more specific monitoring of the specific spaces used by organised crime to traffic human beings. ♦ (IPS)

Thanh-Dam Truong is a professor of studies of women and development at the Institute for Social Studies in The Hague.

No man's land

KUMUDINI HETTIARACHCHI
PIRIMANALANKULAM, SRI LANKA

Rolls of barbed wire glint in the morning sun as unarmed soldiers await the weary people straggling along the long path through no man's land in this tense northern Sri Lankan village. These people are being helped by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to cross into government-controlled territory from areas run by Tamil Tiger rebels.

Fresh-faced young soldiers man sandbagged, camouflaged bunkers along the only road crossing between northern and southern Sri Lanka with quiet efficiency. Along the crossing, about 15 km off the government-controlled town of Vavuniya, lies a cluster of huts with a Red Cross flag. A few Red Cross vehicles are parked in no man's land. Tiger rebels are visible a 300 m from the government barrier, watching the soldiers. The silence is eerie. There have been some shootouts but the Red Cross, which supervises the crossing, has intervened to ensure rebels and government forces abide by an ICRC-initiated agreement in December 1999 to allow civilians and vehicles to cross the "border". The rebels have sporadically controlled large stretches of land in the northern Wanni region. Both sides have restricted crossing across the territories. The only transit point used to be Mankulam on the Jaffna-Kandy road, which went straight to Sri Lanka's northernmost point.

The current crossing lies on the Vavuniya-Mannar road heading toward the northwest coast and residents are forced to detour to travel to areas north and east of the Wanni region. While government supply



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 twice a week, 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 74-year-old S Mylvaganam. He has seen it all—the close bonds between the Tamil and the Sinhalese in the 1950-1970s, then the frustration of Tamils over not getting their share of jobs, discrimination and the demand for separation and an unending conflict. "I don't like this division. We used to go to Sinhala homes in the south and Sinhalese came to our homes in Jaffna. Now we are afraid to speak to each other. Politicians are at fault."

There is no direct transport in the Wanni. Travellers have to break journey at three points and pay SLRs 1,200 rupees (\$13) for transport alone. The journey costs a fraction of this during peace time. Residents going north have to travel through

Pirimanalankulam and fly to Jaffna, the northern capital, in a costly military-run transport plane with limited space. "It's 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 5am, some 800 people gather outside the gates of the government office in Vavuniya with their belongings. Kerosene, coconut oil, fuel, cycle tubes, water bottles, a child's rocking horse, a tricycle, plastic chairs are strewn along the road. Some have spent a week awaiting permission to travel. The procedure seems simple. To visit rebel territory, which the government calls "undeclared areas", hand in a form with a photocopy of your identity card to officials. Once cleared by the army, 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 sick, and the rest for others. Each is allowed 40 kg, 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 no-man's land to the army side and undergo body checks.

At 5pm the army gate of sticks and barbed wire is closed. But as dusk falls families fleeing to the cleared side and rebels who want to surrender approach the checkpoint. "We greet those who come to surrender or find refuge under cover of darkness. We check to see whether they are armed. We give them food if they've not eaten anything," says an army official. (IPS) ♦

COMMENT

by MJ
AKBAR



A dream waiting for its chance

Rajiv Gandhi wanted to give Benazir Bhutto a welcome like no visiting dignitary had ever received in India. Was this innocence or overconfidence? The opening moves were promising. They had signed an agreement promising no first-attack on each other's nuclear installations.

The 1980s, another world, much more distant from today than the lapse of a mere decade would suggest. So many of the principals are dead. Rajiv Gandhi. Zia-ul-Haq. Najibullah. Even the Soviet Union. There was debate in Delhi even in the 1980s about whether India should deal with the leader of a military coup, General Zia-ul-Haq, or wait for the establishment of a democratic order, which meant the arrival of Benazir Bhutto. Gen Zia, who had to hang Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to preserve his coup, made efforts to open a peace front with India. He had a deep knowledge and consequent respect for the abilities of the enemy. Rajiv Gandhi treated Zia's overtures with disdain. He knew the price India and his family had paid for Punjab. The official line was democracy. But there was an unmentioned element—Zia was not "one of us"; Benazir Bhutto was.

The Oxbridge factor was of great help to Benazir who maintained sometimes indiscreet channels to Rajiv Gandhi through her years of exile and during her struggle against Zia. The Oxbridge types, who wanted to trust Benazir instead of the "unreliable" Zia, were elated when time and circumstance brought her to power through an election. Rajiv took his first chance—a SAARC summit in Islamabad was extended into a bilateral visit. There was agreement in that first summit on protection for nuclear installations, progress towards a common position on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Rajiv Gandhi suggested secret negotiations continue on this: the "invisible" dialogue. More visible would be talks on reduction of conventional arms and Siachen. Rajiv urged free flow of information, travel and popular-cultural exchanges. Benazir part stressed that only controlling the arms race could alter the "poverty-heritage." There was no shortage of good metaphor.

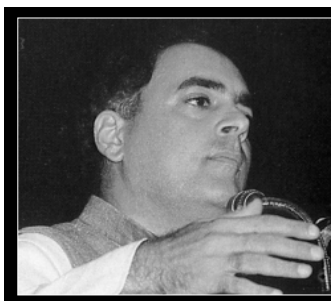
Benazir mentioned Kashmir; Rajiv opted for silence. He realised later that this was not playing well at home on the eve of a general election, which opinion polls said would result in a sharp setback, if not defeat. The two shared at least one problem. Because they were elected to power they assumed they understood

Who could want nuclear destruction when there is so much to live for?

the complexities of power. But both inherited an election victory with the martyrdom of a parent. They needed to learn on the job, and took too long to do so. Rajiv Gandhi's government and credibility had weakened when he launched his Pakistan initiative. However, there was no objective reason for any radical rethink on Kashmir in the late eighties: the problem of Kashmir waxed only after Rajiv began to wane. Benazir Bhutto's naiveté may be understandable in retrospect but that hardly makes it forgivable. She learnt nothing from the dismissal of her first government, within a year of Rajiv's defeat. In her second term she became hysterical on Kashmir, using language that would embarrass a *jihadi* to sway an election she would lose to Nawaz Sharif (who kept his cool and advocated better relations with India). In Delhi at that time was the sphinx PV Narasimha Rao. The visual comparison between a ranting Benazir and a pouting Rao as the two dominated their obedient television channels was almost funny.

Now, those who ran the Kargil sideshow are in charge of Pakistan, and they want dialogue with India. Is this an invitation to an Abbasid dinner? (The Abbasids seized power in Baghdad after they invited their rivals to a dinner at which they massacred them.) Prime Minister Vajpayee is, understandably, anxious: a man who has felt cold steel in his back is loath to expose it a second time. Is there a rational reason for a change of attitude in the Pakistan Army? Is there a reason to expect sincerity? Yes. India and Pakistan, rescued from any self-induced sense of insecurity by their nuclear status, are at a point where their people dearly want to leave the poison of confrontation behind and challenge the poverty-heritage. Who could want nuclear destruction when there is so much to live for? There is so much faith in the idea that if India and Pakistan cooperated they could leap towards prosperity. It is a dream waiting for its chance. And, of course, the army and the BJP are in power in Pakistan and India. ♦

By arrangement with the Asian Age



Hard labour

JAKARTA - After weeks of nationwide, sometimes riotous agitation, Indonesia's labour unions scored a major victory last month when the Wahid government delayed implementation of two new decrees hit for undermining workers' interests. The IMF, whose handouts are crucial to the functioning of the national economy and foreign investors, threatening to close down factories, are lobbying hard with Jakarta to curb the burgeoning labour movement. The latest row between labour organisations and the Indonesian ministry of manpower relates to changes to labour law regarding severance conditions and payments. It began with a decree introduced last year protecting workers from downsizing—it provided the same compensation to personnel leaving a company voluntarily as to those laid off. Domestic and foreign businesses protested, and two decrees were issued recently annulling the requirement that employers provide severance pay and service fees to workers who resigned or were sacked for committing major violations. Labour activists say the provisions for sacking workers under the new decrees infringed on the right to legal trade union and protest activity. The militant labour protests come in the context of increasing unemployment and decreasing income in recent years. Indonesian workers, even during the economic boom, were among the least paid and protected in southeast Asia. The legal minimum wage under Suharto was \$1.27 a day, the lowest in Asia after Bangladesh. Activists say if Wahid, considered soft on labour, is impeached in August, this will further impact long-term legislative gains made by trade unions already under pressure from investors and more particularly the IMF with its free-market "reforms". (IPS)

Refugee, defector, prisoner

BEIJING - "We ask on behalf of thousands of North Koreans hiding in China that the world pays more attention to our situation," said a family of North Koreans who entered a UN office here last week demanding asylum in South Korea. International aid groups estimate that 150,000 to 300,000 North Korean refugees fleeing a devastating famine and repression are hiding in northeast China and Mongolia. South Korea's National Intelligence Service (NIS) said in May that 1,470 North Koreans have defected to South Korea since the 1950-53 Korean War, about half in the last five years. Ties between Pyongyang and Beijing have improved in the past two years and Kim Jong Il has visited twice. China is obligated by treaty to return defectors to North Korea. In the past Beijing, worried by the possibility of thousands of refugees, has forcibly repatriated many. The family that went to the UN mission in Beijing reached Seoul earlier this week. China fears that granting them refugee status has created a precedent. But repatriating them would have tarnished China's image weeks before the International Olympic Committee decides on whether to grant Beijing the 2008 games. The family sought refuge because they had published a book of drawings depicting the famine and political oppression in North Korea. If not given refugee status, they would have been returned to North Korea where



The North Korean family arriving in Seoul

the criminal code says defectors are political prisoners, liable to at least seven years in jail or even execution. While the UNCHR recognises North Koreans escaping in recent years as refugees fleeing persecution under the 1951 Convention on Refugees to which China is a signatory, Beijing insists they are economic migrants who must be deported under the North Korea-China treaty. (IPS)

Child sex

Thailand's top legal officials recently asked that Thai Airways International, the country's national carrier, show in-flight videos warning travellers not to engage in child sex. Wanchai Roujanavong, executive director of the Thai attorney general's office, said that although it was an unpleasant subject, his office felt strongly that it would be a sign of responsibility on the part of the carrier. "We think the airline that shows this kind of campaign shows that it is a responsible airline, that it can speak openly and say it doesn't want to support this." Roujanavong added that the airline and other tourism-related businesses needed to work harder and together to stamp out the trade in children's bodies.



"The birth of a republic"

राजधानी

Dr Babu Ram Bhattarai, Rajdhani, 29 June

The monarchy

...A modern day Kot Parba took place in Narayanhiti Darbar on the night of 1 June this year. Not only did this incident destroy the entire dynasty of Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, it also unexpectedly gave birth to a republic in this country. It is but natural, then, for the issues of constitutional monarchy and the birth of a republic to become an issue to be debated...

Scientific analysis of monarchies

First of all we have to be very clear on certain issues. All monarchies and socio-political issues concerning them or connected with them in any way evolved during a certain period of time when the idea of a nation state was developing. Monarchies were the necessity of that particular period. They were born, but once the requirement of that time was fulfilled, they went into oblivion. Monarchies were born to solve leadership problems when a class society existed, when there was slavery and systems of class and caste dominated the political and social landscape. Remember, at that time there were fewer people scattered over a very wide area, and slavery and bonded labour were rife. Somebody had to be in control of this structure and therefore a supernatural quasi-religious feudal power had to be created. This led to the birth of monarchy. That is why until the 18th century, monarchies existed in many parts of the world.

The industrial revolution sowed the seeds of change. With it there came about changes in the modes of production. Profit was the main motive for doing any work, the capitalist class started growing and starting competing with each other. Ordinary people became more aware of their rights, stopped believing in their caste- and class-ridden society, and started revolting against this quasi-religious feudal system. They realised that the system of monarchies and kings was outdated and incompatible with their time. They finally realised that a republic would be the ideal system for them and slowly pushed this idea forward. Therefore in all histories, we will find that although republics existed at different times in different forms, they did not survive for long. It was only after the rise of European capitalists in general and the French Revolution in particular that the notion of all men being born equal came into existence.

...Now there are two kinds of monarchies in the world. There are the constitutional monarchies in wealthy, developed countries like England, Japan, Sweden, etc. where they are just living museums and nothing else. Then there is the second type, mostly found in poor, underdeveloped countries, who wield the same powers their forefathers did and who survive just because of the support of the ruling capitalist class. The days of the imperialists have been consigned to the pages of history, but these monarchists, ruling and capitalist classes are giving continuity to this outdated system to forward their vested interests. They have even added to it commission agents, stooges, etc. All these factors are prolonging this outdated system. What's more, the quasi-religious powers that be are shielding these people. They all want to extend the life of the system for their own benefit.

Remember that the inhabitants of these poor countries are very backward and can be easily taken for a ride. In fact, the quasi-religious class has turned into agents for these monarchists and capitalists. But on the other hand, history shows us how these very quasi-religious groups have helped the ordinary folk to some extent in fighting imperialists, monarchists and expansionists to retain

their independence, and for justice and freedom. Even if only to save their throne and power, we will find that many kings and monarchs have sided with ordinary people in their fight for justice, equality and liberty. In fact, they have even on many occasions sided with communists. Take for example Cambodia, Laos and Mongolia. Mao once said that instead of the physical being, we should give more importance to the spirit of a person. And in this context, he said, the king of Cambodia was more reformist and progressive than the president of Vietnam, and that the king of Nepal was more progressive than the president of India.

Role of the Nepali monarch

...From Prithvi Narayan Shah to Birendra Bir Bikram, a total of 10 monarchs ruled this country but only three, Prithvi, Mahendra and Birendra did any work. The others did hardly anything. Singh Pratap, who ruled after Prithvi, lasted only two years. After him came Rana Bahadur, Girvanyudha and Rajendra Bikram, who all became monarchs while they were minors and Bhim Sen Thapa, a nationalist, wielded the real power. After the Kot Parba, the Ranas became powerful. They consolidated all power in their own hands and were slaves of the British imperialists. Thus, Surendra, Prithvi Bir Bikram and Tribhuvan did not play any significant role in history.

Of the three who did something for the country, Prithvi Narayan, although he was despotic, hand-in-glove with the feudal class and suppressed the people, fought against the imperialist British forces and was able to keep Nepal an independent and free country. This is a historical fact and all nationalist Nepalis should embrace this truth. Yes, Prithvi Narayan committed a lot of atrocities, he burdened the people with his religion, helped the feudal class and captured other kingdoms, but that is another bitter truth of history.

In the same way, although Mahendra had fascist tendencies, he took a very strong stand against Indian expansionist powers and safeguarded the independence and integrity of the country, which we should never forget. Birendra also stood his ground against expansionist Indian powers. He introduced democracy and took a keen interest in the well-being of our country, for which his whole family was assassinated by extremist reactionaries. We should not consign him and his values to a footnote in history. Nepali history cannot afford to discard him.

Some people have asked why the Maoists have started praising Birendra only after his death. Some reactionaries even suggest that ours are crocodile tears. To our detractors, we only say that they should read all our statements on the king so far, and especially what we said in *Jana Adesh* on 10 Falgun, 2056 (mid-February, 1999). Our representatives had a meeting with Dharendra Shah and all that was discussed there is written about in *Jana Adesh*. Please read this before raising questions. This is all we have to say.

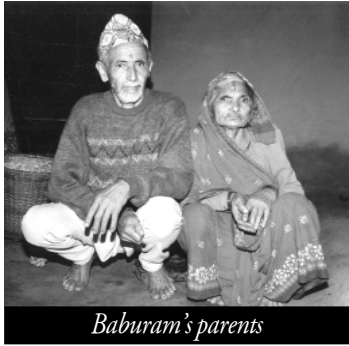
...Birendra's whole family was wiped out and now it is the duty of all nationalist Nepalis to help in the establishment of a republic. It is the bitter truth. If what has been said about Dipendra is true, it only proves that the monarchy is outdated and it is time to discard it. There is no point in carrying on with a system that has outlived its purpose. What has been proved is that it was not Dipendra who committed this act but the reactionaries, expansionists, fascists and imperialists. All this proves that anyone crowned king will only be a puppet in their hands. ... From any point of view traditional, feudal monarchy is dead and the birth of the republic has already taken place.

did not show any signs of regret. He was feeling a bit uncomfortable, though, and kept looking towards Koirala; the MPs seemed to enjoy his discomfort thoroughly. Even the prime minister's security personnel were surprised by Chataut's presence. In May, the CIAA filed charges against 10 people, and Chataut had absconded.

Mukti Prasad's parents talk

Ujit Magar in Kantipur, 19 June

He (Babu Ram Bhattarai) was born on a Wednesday, 4 Asad, 2010 (mid-June, 1953). He was born at



9am. It is but natural for a father to remember the birthday of his eldest son, and perhaps be a little nostalgic and so, on 4 Asad, Bhoj Prasad Bhattarai remembered his 48-year-old son.

"We used to lovingly call him Babu when he was small and this is how he came to be named Babu Ram although the priest after studying his astrological signs had named him Mukti Prasad," (Mukti translates as liberation) Bhoj Prasad told this reporter. It has been six years since his parents last saw him, after Mukti left to fight for the "liberation" of the people and his country. Today we know Mukti as Dr Babu Ram Bhattarai.

His parents are longing to meet their eldest son. "We really want to meet him, but we do not know his whereabouts, we have no clue where he is," Dharma Kumari, Babu Ram's mother says. But they are satisfied for now that they can see their son's picture almost everyday in the newspapers. Dharma Kumari further says, "It might be dangerous for him to visit us and so we satisfy ourselves by just hearing his name."

"Our first child died very young and so when Mukti was born, we were very happy and we feel that any moment now, he may come in saying *Ba-Amra*, since it is his birthday today," Bhoj Prasad and Dharma Kumari said in one voice.

The couple, both over 70, hope and pray that whatever work Mukti is doing is successful because he is dedicated and making every effort. They are sad and hurt when they hear of people being killed in encounters between the police and the Maoists. "Human beings should not kill one other. It would be very good, if the party led by our son and the police did not kill one another."

Babu Ram's parents could not control themselves when they heard about the 1 June incident in Narayanhiti Darbar. "The king is considered an incarnation of Lord Visnu, his dynasty came from Gorkha (their home), now his family has been wiped out. In order to remember, we have collected photos of all the dead members of the royal family," Bhoj Prasad said.

Emergency family gathering

Tarun, 25 June

The Koirala family is at the helm of Nepali politics and recently the family held an emergency meeting which has resulted in the reshuffling of responsibilities of some members. It has also instructed some members not to discuss certain topics publicly.

As a rule, Prime Minister Koirala has lunch every Saturday with Sushila Koirala, wife of the late BP Koirala, at her residence. Only in emergencies does he break this rule. An emergency led the family to meet at Sushila's place on a recent Wednesday. Most members of the family were present. Nona Koirala broke the ice and said, "Right now the country and we are passing through a very critical situation, and so no member of the family shall speak publicly about party infighting, or criticise the leaders. At least till the budget session of parliament ends." Most, including the prime minister, agreed with what she said. She added, "Sujata will only speak about the social sector, Sushil will handle all political affairs."

The conclusion of that 35-minute meeting was that Sushil would analyse the political situation and brief the prime minister. Mahesh Acharya was asked to report on the army. Sriharsh (PM's nephew) was given the responsibility of keeping track of all the family members and their whereabouts. The only person who did not utter a word was Sushila. Shailaja Acharya, Chakra Bastola and Dr Sashank Koirala were not present at the meeting.

Maoists, INGOs

Jana Ahwan, 29 June

According to Maoist secretaries Kalyan of Argakhachi and Prajuwal of Gulmi, the Maoist fighters on 25 Baishak (8 May) attacked a vehicle of GARDEP, the Gulmi Argakhachi Rural Development Project, funded by the European Union.

A press release of the Maoists said that foreigners and foreign organisations are corrupt, that they interfere in matters of national interest. They mislead people by saying they are working for development, while all they do is work against nationalists. They spread terror and carry out massacres. GARDEP is also accused of all these. The release further says that the fascist government in Nepal is scared that the American imperialists and Indian expansionists who support their government will leave them high and dry. This is why they are doing all they can to stop such organisations from leaving the country. These organisations, says the statement, always mislead poor people by stating that they are working for their development. They are corrupt, out to line their own pockets.

The statement goes on to request these organisations to not interfere in national affairs. It warns all organisations working in Argakhachi and Gulmi to behave properly, but goes on to clarify that they, the Maoist secretaries, do not have a policy of disallowing such organisations from working in the two districts.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

If the present government starts oppressing the people, that too when there's a feeling that the king is involved in it, another People's Movement might be sparked off and one of its targets would be the monarchy. We already sensed this during the 1990 movement.

Padma Ratna Tuladhar, Senior Communist Leader in an interview with *Jana Dharana*, 28 June



"No money please... I need national consensus"
Gun: Security Act, Suitcase: Lauda case

Budhabar, 4 July, Wednesday

Chataut surfaces

Drishi, 26 June

Almost after a month in hiding Tarini Dutt Chataut, the main person accused in the Lauda Air scam, suddenly surfaced recently. He came to at the prime minister's residence in Baluwatar, surprising all present. He arrived in time for the NC meeting being held at Baluwatar on 24 June. As soon as he reached Baluwatar, the MPs present started whispering among themselves that if the prime minister had not been shielding him, it would have been impossible for Chataut to attend the meeting. As a result, the Lauda Air issue hogged the limelight at that meeting. Some MPs joked, sarcastically asking Chataut if he had gone to Vienna on the Lauda Air flight. Despite everything, Chataut

Summer madness at Wimbledon



Henman: all eyes on me

LONDON: A gentle midsummer madness descends on this sleepy corner of the capital during Wimbledon fortnight. Parents hauling reluctant children to school abandon their normal playground garb in favour of pristine white. Youths appear on street corners sporting back to front baseball caps and towelling wristbands as if wearing Andy Roddick accessories will make them irresistible to the under-16s. Middle-aged men fill the municipal tennis courts, their pale legs and burgeoning bellies a testament to once-a-year-only activity. Nearly everyone seems to be carrying a tennis racket, sunglasses perched on their heads, stiff new tennis trainers on their feet.

In a couple of weeks tennis will be forgotten, abandoned as soon as the school holidays start in favour of surfing in Spain or — come the British Open at the end of the month — golf. But as Wimbledon entered its second week, tennis fervour, mostly involving watching wall-to-wall coverage on television, had

reached its zenith, especially as Britain's Tim Henman remained in the draw. And it is not just the locals whose heads are turned. Fans disgorge from Southfields underground station to walk the two kilometres to the All England Club swathed in union flags and sporting foam stove hats emblazoned with the names of Tim Henman and Greg Rusedski. These are not adolescent girls but women of a certain age who abandon all pretence of maturity to scream for their heroes. Wimbledon is unlike other big sporting events in attracting more women than men. The All England Club ran a survey last year which showed 55 per cent of spectators were women and 64 per cent tennis players. Some 46 per cent belong to tennis clubs, which in spite of recent efforts by Britain's Lawn Tennis Association to take the sport to the masses, are still bastions of the genteel and well-heeled. Wimbledon reflects its clientele. Honorary stewards who marshal the lengthy but impeccably behaved queues up and down Church road are mostly retired

gentlemen, with cut-glass accents wearing smart navy blazers and straw hats. Cafes in the ground serve Pimms and strawberries and cream alongside lager and hotdogs.

Everything is in the best possible taste. An army of gardeners tend flower beds and hanging baskets where petunias are planted in graduated hues of violet and mauve to reflect the Championships' colours of purple and green. Even the temporary lavatories set up in the car park opposite are painted Wimbledon green, complementing the purple council-provided rubbish bags. Dropped rubbish is almost instantly retrieved by one of the 70 youthful cleaners who patrol the grounds. But the biggest difference between Wimbledon and other sporting events is the lack of advertising. There are no billboards in the grounds or round the courts, just logos of official suppliers alongside where their products are being used. "The brand Wimbledon is bigger than any of the players, any of the suppliers, any of the advertisers," spokeswoman Lynnie Farrant said. "We want to keep the unique image and character of the tournament." The Club's location in one of London's greenest suburbs, Wimbledon Park and golf club opposite, Wimbledon Common behind, helps preserve that image. Two bedroom flats overlooking the courts and with views to the park beyond change hands for £350,000, those facing the wrong way go for £75,000 less. A local estate agent said on Monday he had recently sold three houses in Wimbledon Village at the top of the hill for more than three million pounds each. Further down the hill, though, a big council estate borders the well-heeled streets and just beyond the park lies an industrial estate to remind visitors that Wimbledon remains part of London. And just a month after the Club closes its gates on the last spectator next Sunday, the football season gets underway and tennis in most of the city will be forgotten again for another year. ♦ (Reuters)

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 12,800 million pesetas (£46.4 million) was agreed for the French international midfielder. That would smash the £37.5 million Real paid Barcelona to buy Portugal's Luis Figo out of his contract 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 then to bring in Figo from 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 £30million move to the Rossoneri. On Monday, Milan signed Italian international striker Filippo Inzaghi in a £21.7m 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 goalkeeper Francesco Toldo to their Serie A rivals for £43m.

King tempts Lewis camp

Boxing promoter Don King has offered \$12.5million to the Lennox Lewis camp to stage a world heavyweight title rematch with Hasim Rahman. 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 on Monday and 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 Izon but will still be going to China anyway as part of the broadcast team.

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Exercise raises systolic pressure. But this is nothing to worry about, because as long as your diastolic pressure remains the same or even drops a little, you're fine, since your heart is getting the rest it needs between each beat. A healthy lifestyle is the best way to significantly reduce hypertension. Regular aerobic exercise directly lowers blood pressure through increased cardiovascular efficiency, and indirectly through fat loss.

High blood pressure is not a natural accompaniment to ageing, and neither is inactivity, rather, ageing results from inactivity. So regular cardiovascular exercise is important even one grows older. One of the major factors contributing to hypertension is stress. Regular exercise is a great way to manage stress. Exercise, together with a sensible diet, low in sodium and including only moderate alcohol consumption, are a sure way to beat hypertension.



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Carlsberg

The forgotten shrine of the sikhs

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

Books on Kathmandu are silent about the shrine. It is not on the tourist map. No coaches park below the small forested hill by the river on the road to Balaju. The temple is left to bird song and the occasional visitor who either knows it is there or by chance comes upon the small weathered sign which says ‘Guru Nanak Math’.

An arching stairway leads through trees and bamboo to the small building which from the outside looks like a Nepali farmhouse. I find the climb up the stairs refreshing even though a bit breathless. The city, which now encroaches on the fields about the hill, is screened by greenery and might not exist. The busy sound of traffic trails further and further behind. Through windows in the trees can be seen the river and a high mountain. A small grassy

clearing just before the house is just the kind of place a weary traveller would have welcomed. Cool. Quiet. Undisturbed.

The doorway to the lime-washed house is plastered with ochre earth. The black painted door is small in the way of old Nepal, so one stoops to enter. An old man, asleep on the clean, earthen 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 freshly plastered courtyard at the centre of which is a small shrine with a *tulsi* 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, reposes 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 Sikhism; turban, *kada*, *kirpan* or *kanga*. However, his greying hair is unshorn and, for a Nepali, he sports a fair beard. I learn, with undisguised excitement, that he belongs to the earliest unreformed order of Sikhs who are often unrecognisable from Vaishnavite Hindus. At Pashupatinath, I would have taken him for a sadhu.

He whispered me out of the courtyard into a small garden wild with shrubs and flowers. 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 buried 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

bulbuls pecking about the carved feet. And there he told me the story of the temple of the golden book and the shrine against which we sat.

It seems a Malla king of the early sixteenth century—the priest did not know his name—suffered a disturbed mind. His brothers, alarmed by his behaviour, banished him to India. Roaming forlornly through the holy city of Benares he came upon the saint Guru Nanak and begged him to cure his affliction. After many visits and much beseeching, the guru advised the king to return to his kingdom where his health would be restored.

Miraculously, the saint preceded the king to Kathmandu for there he was, meditating under a pipal tree on a hill beside the river. The king visited him at once, begging the guru to return with him to the palace. Guru Nanak refused to do so, saying that in this serene spot he had all he wanted. So the king had a temple built for his guru and a small shrine for himself where he often came to meditate. When the king died, some of his ashes were buried in the shrine according to his last wishes.

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 it might never want for support.

Perhaps the records have long since perished because slowly the



gurdwara lands have been encroached upon until only the hill remains. It would be a tragedy if modern hungers consume the trees and push concrete within reach of the peaceful old building.

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 guru’s footprints. “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. “Sri Chand, the guru’s

son,” he said. Was it not Guru Nanak?

By then the guru had gone to Tibet, he said. “But it is all the same. Our gods are our gods.”

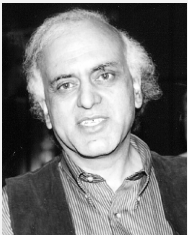
Obviously the lovely, lonely Guru Nanak Math is in need of a Sikh scholar to unravel its truths and legends. Until then it will remain a half-forgotten temple on a wooded hill threatened by the brick and concrete advances of Kathmandu. ♦

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



NEPALITERATURE

by MANJUSHREE THAPA



Abhi Subedi A CALL FOR FREE EXPRESSION

In recent weeks, lawyers, journalists, human rights and political activists, academics, writers and artists, and other members of the intelligentsia have been up in arms about the anti-democratic regulations drafted under the Public Security Act. These regulations hand authority to the Chief District Officer to detain or arrest anyone suspected of acting against the interest of Nepal’s sovereignty, unity, or public peace and order. Any appeals must go through the Home Ministry. Effectively, this means that the Home Ministry can, on extra-judicial grounds, suppress free expression and the right to gather and associate freely. These draconian regulations amount to emergency measures without any declaration of a state of emergency.

At a play performed by the theatre group Aarohan at the Nepal Academy of Fine Arts on 22 June, Abhi Subedi became one of the first writers to publicly express his opposition to these new regulations through literature. The poem translated below mocks short-sighted attempts to silence that which can never be silenced: the riotous, unrestrained human utterance. It is a fine example of Nepali writers’ ability to rally to save our threatened democracy.

I Will Speak

I will speak
My expression—
a ripple of power
moving swiftly with the light

No one has been able to stop me speaking
Unconquerable
I was offered up to the gale,
the gale became a ripple of my speech
Colours were daubed over my sky,
those hues arose as a conflagration
My mouth was forced shut,
each limb stood like a dance of destruction
My feet were bound,
pen in hand I left for a thousand years’ journey
I was unconquerable

I will speak
My expression—
a ripple of power
moving swiftly with the light

At times when I say nothing
Don’t assume I’m lost to silence
The speechlessness of the Bamiyan
Buddhas
was a bellow, a roar

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

The one who tries to stop this expression
disappears in the deluge of time
Only the one who speaks remains
Like a waterfall dropping words from
opened lips
splattering hues everywhere
over the sky of heart and time
in every street and courtyard
the one who speaks makes history and
ascends
with the insanity of a spilled-over sun

I will speak
My expression—
a ripple of power
moving swiftly with the light

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

History is made by the one who speaks
Love is experienced by the one who raises

his heart to expression
Brightness is the sky of expression:
it breaks the ranks of the power blind
and of the cycle of time

A deluge of a thousand free eyes and
hearts
ebbs and courses through history

A martyr is one who places
the burden of speech upon
us and the sky

Expression is the name
of one who ascends brightness and
spreads through the sky
of all our undefeated liberation dreams

I will speak
My expression—
a ripple of power
moving swiftly with the light

Om Mani Padme Hum!

Abhi Sudedi is the head of the English Department at Tribhuvan University. He is the author of several books of poems, essays, and criticism, including the Nepali poetry collection *Shabda and Chot*, and the English poetry collection *Chasing Dreams*.

ABOUT TOWN

MOVIES

❖ **Nepali and Hindi movies** online ticket booking at www.nepalshop.com

EATING OUT

❖ **Breakfast with birds** Lunch with butterflies, dinner with fireflies. Traditional Nepali, Indian and Chinese cuisine. Farm House Café in the Park Village Hotel, Buddhanilkantha. 373935

❖ **All American Week** Cajun, Tex-Mex, California cuisine and a Boston tea-party at Durbar, Chimney and the Piano Lounge Bar. Until 8 July. Hotel Yak & Yeti. 248999
Mangoes Desserts, smoothies, icecreams. Hyatt Regency. 491234.

❖ **LaSoon Restaurant and Vinotheque** Lunch, tea and dinner with European and American food, fine wines. Pulchowk. 535290

❖ **Rice around the world** Complete non-Nepali rice meals with exciting condiments. Until 13 July. 7pm-10.30pm, The Fun Café, Radisson Hotel. 411818

❖ **Peking Duck** and other special family platters by a chef from Sichuan. Tien Shan Chinese Restaurant, Shangri La Hotel. 412999

❖ **Wet and Wild Summer** Swimming in a cool pool and a buffet lunch. Saturdays at Godavari Village Resort. Adults Rs 600, children Rs 350. Taxes extra. 560675, 560775

❖ **Mango Tango** Exotic mangoes desserts Hotel de l'Annapurna. All day, all food and beverage outlets.

❖ **Exotic Nepali Food.** Mongolian Restaurant and Bar. Exotic Nepali food, dhindo, gundruk, good family environment. Putalisadak, 425454

❖ **Dakshin food, mangoes** Food from South India and 15 kinds of dosa. 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 299 for children under three ft. Everest Hotel. 488100

EVENTS

❖ **Contemporary Jazz Dance** Classes at the Alliance Française by Meghana Thapa. Thrice weekly, starting 26 June. Alliance Française. 241163, 242 832.

❖ **Weekly cocktail, monthly beer** Buy one get one free. The Radisson Corner Bar. 411818

❖ **Dwarika's Saturday Escape** Afternoon tea, cocktail, dinner, room, massage and breakfast. Every Saturday until end-September. \$130 per couple. Dwarika's Hotel 479488

❖ **Disco party** Buffet dinner, dance with DJ Raju. Hotel Shahenshah, Dhapasi. 13 July, 7pm on. Rs 600. Tickets at Irish Pub, Pub Maya, Hotel Red Planet, Thamel; International English Language Centre, Dilli Bazar, Koshi Tours 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. Dwarika'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, week-end brunch, late check out Sunday. Rs 9000 plus tax. Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 491234

MUSIC

❖ **Rox Bar** Weekends Chris and Abhaya create Motown and Latino music nights. DJ Neil all other nights. Cocktails and snacks. Hyatt Regency. 491234.

❖ **Himalatte Café** Live acoustic music by Dinesh Rai and Deependra every Friday, 7pm-10.30pm. Free. Thamel.

❖ **Romance at the Jazz Bar** Happy hour 6pm-8 pm. Thursdays with The Jazz Commission, Other days with An Fainne. Hotel Shangri La. 412999

TALK

❖ **The Vagaries of Travel Writing:** travellers who get carried away or travellers who wonder where they are. Dr Chloe Chard. 17 July, 6pm, British Embassy Hall. Organised by the Nepal Britain Society (410555, 227749) and the British Council (410798).

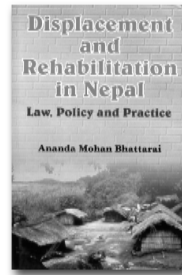
EXHIBITION

❖ **Free Exhibitions** Art and craft by four students of the Alliance Française. 10-20 July. 9am-6pm, except Saturdays. Alliance Française.

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



BOOKWORM



Displacement and Rehabilitation in Nepal: Law, Policy and Practice Ananda Mohan Bhattarai

Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 2001

Rs 700

Nepal's constitutional provisions say project-affected persons have the right not to be displaced. The author analyses the normative and constitutional framework and state practices of the SAARC countries and China, and two projects in Nepal, and proposes a draft legislation on acquisition, resettlement and rehabilitation.

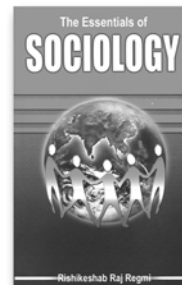
Development Theory: Deconstructions/ Reconstructions Jan Nederveen

Pieterse

Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 2001

Rs 440

Pieterse discusses Eurocentrism, critical globalism, intercultural transaction, delinking and alternatives, human and post-development theory. He discusses reorienting and restructuring the field and connects development with new thought in sociology, critical theory and social science.



The Essentials of Sociology Rishikeshab Raj Regmi

Sandeep Raj Regmi, 2001

Rs 500

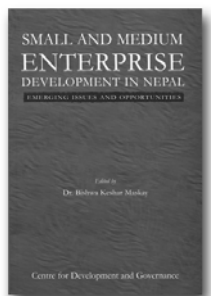
The head of TU's Department of Sociology/ Anthropology discusses the roots of sociology, research methods, theories of social structure and stratification, religious, economic and political systems, the family, gender roles, deviation, socialisation and social change.

Small and Medium Enterprise Development in Nepal:

Emerging Issues and Opportunities Dr Bishwa Keshar Maskay, ed
Centre for Development and Governance, Kathmandu, 2001

Rs 400

The book explores the increasingly important Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) sector in Nepal and explores government and international donor policy and programme approaches. It also discusses constraints that may discourage small businesses in Nepal and other developing countries.



Courtesy: Mandala Book Point, Kantipath, 227711, books@mos.com.np

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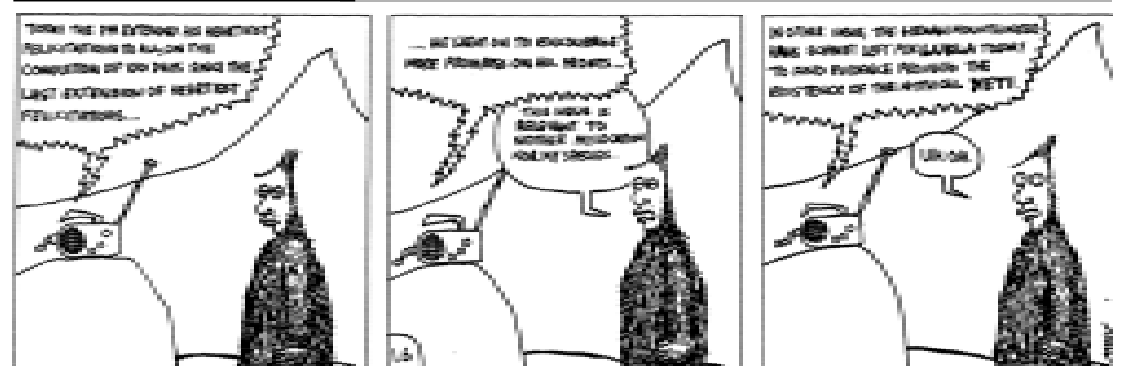
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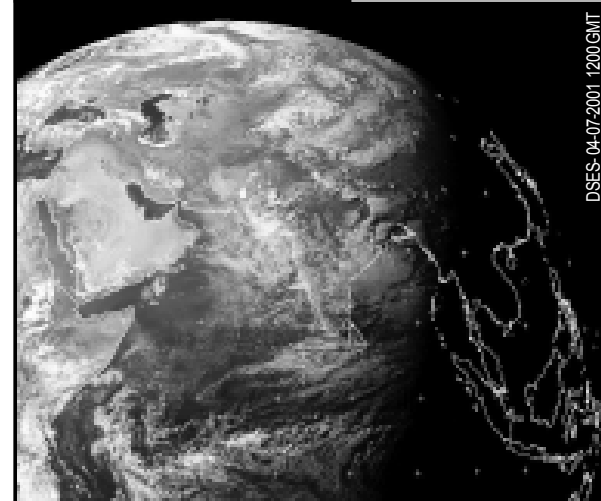
YAK YETI YAK

by MIKU



NEPALI WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL



DSES-04-07-2001 1200GMT

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 former's movement is along Nepal's southern border and will bring vigorous rainfalls, some of it in concentrated cloudbursts triggering landslides and floods in central and eastern Nepal. The monsoon fronts from Arabian Sea may also bring stormy rains in western Nepal.

KATHMANDU



30-20



29-19



30-20



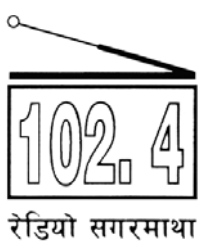
30-21



29-20

BBC on FM 102.4

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Sat	0615-0645	BBC	Science in Action
Sun	0615-0645	BBC	Agenda
Daily	2045-2115	BBC	नेपाली सेवा
Daily	2245-2300	BBC	नेपाली सेवा



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The learning zone

ALL PHOTOS SALIL SUBEDI



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 Atkins, a British architect and is supposed to be the first of 110 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 foyer you enter into. "This canteen 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 to 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 Test 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's 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 DFID," says Raju Shakya, 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. ♦

The Learning Zone is open Monday-Friday from 8.30am to 5.45pm.
www.britishcouncil.org/nepal

HAPPENINGS



SHAKE IT: Prime Minister Girija Koirala shakes hands with UML leader Madhav Nepal in parliament on 29 June. The two are said to be close to a deal on getting parliament back on track.



MT EVEREST AT THE ANNAPURNA: A make-believe Mt Everest made of bedsheets at a Hotel de l'Annapurna function 30 June to mark the successful ascent of the world's highest peak by an Indian Army expedition.



IT'S A BULL'S LIFE: Farmers use oxen to plough a narrow paddy terrace at Jivanpur northwest of Kathmandu on 30 June. Bulls are not used for ploughing in Kathmandu Valley in deference to Lord Pashupatinath.

Shangrila Hotel



Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Monsoon survival tips

Many readers from all worldwide nooks and crannies have been writing worried notes to us to ask if it is safe and sound to return to Nepal for the summer holidays during the ongoing annual monsoon season, and if they do, whether they can eat the salad. Because most of the queries have come from highly litigious countries in the western hemisphere, we have consulted our lawyers and now can be brutally frank: no, keep off, leave us alone this monsoon season. And, yes, you can eat the salad.

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...Die-Ria...Diary-ah...Dire-hoohah...Do-re-mi-fa...Diarrhoea (got it). This amusingly spelt affliction 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 joking. The medical profession has been trying to come to grips with the runs ever since unsuspecting cave-dwelling human beings roamed a place 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 adventuresome ones should 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 Yam-like Fashion between A Rock and a Hard Place (hereinafter referred to as "HMG/N") shall have only limited liability for personal gastric infections of a duration of, and not exceeding, three



days and three nights. In such cases, the total arrearage of HMG/N, her government, people and exchequer, shall be of an amount not in excess of Rs 350 per gastroenteritis attack per person per day refundable at the Tribhuvan Intestinal Airport before departure upon submission of a signed affidavit in triplicate from a doctor certified by public notary. (SAARC rate: Rs 250, and children under 12 get in for half.)

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 Convulsion and if it can be proven beyond reasonable doubt that the infection took place outside the sovereign territory and air

space 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 rain.

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 crawlies. These are blood-sucking invertebrates from the family anarchinidae which includes leeches, rural vampires and airport customs officers. For all three types of blood suckers, there is only one antidote: pepper spray. Bring lots. ♦

NEPALI SOCIETY

Roop's inner light



MIN BAURACHARYA

with excitement," he confessed to us. "But a bit nervous too, people have high expectations of me." His spacious office at Jyoti Bhavan is cluttered with flower bouquets and congratulatory letters and faxes.

So, what does Roop want to accomplish in the Upper House?

"It is too premature to be made public," says the soft-spoken Roop. He is using his first week at the parliament to study the "political environment" and assess possibilities. Royal nominees have one advantage over elected members: they are free from party interests and the mental burden of getting re-elected. "They can devote themselves to the country's well-being rather than making populist decisions that might harm the national interest," he says.

As the second son of legendary Nepali entrepreneur, Mani Harsha Jyoti, Roop studied engineering in India and then did a doctorate in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. He also holds a double masters in public and business administration from the same university.

Asked what he regards as

his main achievement, Roop does not hesitate: it is the Vipasana meditation centre. Roop was converted to this meditation technique when he saw how it helped his father cope with terminal cancer. "He was in great pain, but he was calm, collected and completely at peace with himself right to the end." Roop wants to become a fulltime Vipasana guru so he can show other people the path to inner peace and how easy it is to cleanse the mind of extremes of emotion. "In a sense it is the art of living," he says with the calm conviction of someone completely self-assured. Roop recalls the time he showed King Birendra around the centre last year, answering the late king's many questions on spirituality and peace. There is a reverent silence in memory of that departed soul. ♦



The late King Birendra being shown around the Vipasana Centre by Roop Jyoti last year.

Pepsi

Lever