9 - 15 November 2001

Shanghaied to Shangrila 9 HIMALAYAN MOUNTAIN BIKE RACE SERIES 2001 Rough riding in the Valley 10-1





Deuba's gam

The prime minister may be frittering away a strong hand.

It was the combined support of Koiralabashers in the Left and the Right that helped Deuba oust Giriia in July Now that the honeymoon is over, the main left UML is getting impatient. It brought together an everyone-except-Congress meeting on Tuesday, and the message was: "We can't expect much from Deuba anymore on talks with the Maoists, we'll forge a unity of all non Congress forces."

Within the Congress, Koirala is now wellsted and restless. He is going around the country exhorting villagers to rise up against the Maoists, who are now into kidnapping UML cadre in what appears to be a warm-up

hen Prime Minister Sher Bahadur tussle in the run-up to next year's local polls.

Deuba must know that political restless-Deuba took office four months ago, he told everyone he had one goal and ss is contagious. And he knows he needs to one goal only: to make peace with the Maoists. get Round Three off and running as soon as And sure enough, he struck a truce with possible. The trouble is the talks are stalled he rebels and went about systematically trying ecause the Maoist leadership can't decide what to ask for, and are having trouble Deuba was, and is still, earnbling on a regotiated settlement so that he can bask in the

econstituting their negotiating team. "The talks will resume early next week r immediately after Tihar," a Deuba aide told us. "The prime minister is fully aware of the stakes. He knows there are rumbling within the party

The other Congress septuagenarian, Krishna Prasad Bhatarai, is miffed that his protégé is not consulting him anymore. In fact, that seems to be the gripe even within the cabinet: the powerful home minister Khum Bahadur Khadga is publicly saying the prime minister is keeping him out of the loop on the Maoist negotiations. Koirala, for his part, accuses Deuba of giving in too much to the Maoists, and says the peace process should be stopped until the Maoists disarm. They all know Deuba is gambling, and don't want him to take all the credit if he wins peace.

Deuba now wants to announce local elections immediately after Tihar to stave off noves to unseat him. Koirala controls the narty's organisation and its vote banks, he ould like to use elections to get Deuba out Chakra Bastola is another Congress MP who is disillusioned with Deuba. "The government wasting time," he told us. "It has nothing

to show, it's just bragging about the Maoists not having killed policemen after the peace process began." The big question now is whether the

Maoists can be enticed to take part in next year's local election. The ideal solution for Deuba would be to get them to contest openly: that way he gets the kudos, and puts the UML and Maoists head-to-head. But the ikelihood of a peace agreement in time to allow Maoists to prepare for the polls is slim. And holding elections without the Maoists could give the rebels a reason to

head back to the jungles.
On the talks itself, there is a feeling that they have reached a dead-end. A member of the government negotiation panel told us: We know what they want, they know we can't give it to them. We could just go on chatting away forever about things that don't

Deuba's aide Prakash Sharan Mahat lisagrees. "The talks are getting to the core issues. We have reached the compromise stage," he told us. But both the Maoists and Deuba need to deal with hardliners within their own fold who are getting impatient with the talks dragging on. Both are sabre rattling: the Maoists with their abductions and the Congress will its tough talk.

The Maoists political demands are setting up an interim government, rewriting the onstitution and

declaring a republic. The government says it won't Editorial p 2 give an inch on either the After the honeymoor constitution or the

epublic. The only option is to convince the Maoists to join an interim government, but this is opposed by Koirala and the hardliners For Deuba, the moment of truth will

ome after Tihar when he has to either show that the talks are progressing, or face Koirala, the UML and the Maoists. In that order.

Fairy tale hydro

KUNDA DIXIT

BINOD BHATTARAI

to lure them out in the open

itical glory of being a peacemaker. For a

while, it looked like he had a strong hand, but

shore up support within his party, Deuba doled

everyone. The cronies were happy, but the 41-

member cabinet was an unpopular move.

lately he has started frittering it all away. To

out ministerial portfolios to just about

Nature doesn't make hydropower projects more feasible than this. A 140 m drop through a tunnel of just 2.2 km on a bend in the Kamali river in western Nepal. Little submergence, an eight-hour storage for peak power, project site already accessible on the Surkhet-Jumla road. Then there is the price-tag: an incredibly cheap \$455 million for a project generating 300MW. There is more: Nepal does not have to pay even one cent,

and we get 30 percent equity in the project from a French charity—for free!

It's all too good to be true. So what's the catch? "We are a trust that supports infrastructure projects in developing countries around the world," says Sylvain Leveque of the Singapore-based French trust, Elysee-Frontiere. "This is a fund for peace, stability and democracy. We chose Nepal because it is trying to develop by making democracy work."

On 22 October Flysee signed a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with the Negal Electricity Authority (NEA) to buy electricity from the Upper Kamali project at a rock hottom chean Rs 2.90 per kW/h during the dry season and Rs 1.45 during the rainy season. (Compare this to the more than 6 cents per unit the NEA pays to other private producers.)
The agreement is conditional on Elysee coming up with its share of cash by

December. If all goes according to plan, this one project will add Nepal's entire present hydropower capacity to the grid by 2008. In addition, the country's neglected far-western hills will get a development boost. Elysee says it is setting aside another \$200 million for education, health care and other infrastructure projects in western Nepal.

"The terms of association with Elysee are just too good to ignore." says Devi B Thapa, deputy managing director at the NEA. "We're getting a good PPA and equity in the project, which is what we need to keep tariffs down." The NEA admits it doesn't know the exact details of where the windfall is coming from, but Leveque told us in a phone interview from Singapore that the trust is backed by wealthy

investors and runs on earnings from investments in the financia markets. "The idea is to re-invest the profits into viable development projects to raise living standards in poor countries." I evegue told us.

Elysee came in through a fast-track investment committee chaired by Prime Minister Deuba and did not have to compete with other bidders because it took on a project for which the NEA already had the license. Ex-prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala strongly pushed for the project last year during his tenure.

"If it is a serious party then this is the best thing that could be happening to Nepal," says Bikash Pandey, an energy economist. And that seems to be a big if. The fear is that Elysee came in through the back door, and is going to squat on the license and hand it over to a third party. Leveque flatly denies this, saying his group will meet the December deadline for the financial commitment to obtain its power generation license. "Most of the work has been finalised, it is no problem at all to meet the deadline," he said.

Ratna Sansar Shrestha, a lawyer and Chartered Accountant who was involved with the Khimti project is sceptical. "There are no free lunches these days. There has to be money coming from somewhere for Flysee to give the NFA 30 percent equity," he said. We put this to Leveque, who told us the money is mainly from donors in Europe, Canada and Australia, Come December, we may finally find out if it is all too good to be true.

Northwest and KLM promotional fares to USA and Europe from Kathmandu



District Council and State

INCOME OF A SQUARE

SHAPE SHOW

Via Pacific on Northwest (valid till 15 Dec'01)		Via Atlantic on KLM / Northwest	
US\$ 1,130	West Coast (San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle)	US\$ 800 US\$ 1.200	Europe New York
US\$ 1,290	New York	U3\$ 1,200	New Tork

For details please contact your nearest travel agent or call us at 410089, e-mail:NW-KLM@Mallatreks.com.np Northwest / KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, Lekhnath Marg, Kathmandu.

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AFTER THE HONEYMOON

When Sher Bahadur Deuba ousted Girija Prasad Koirala after a long and bruising light on 24 July, we wrote in this space that he did not need a political honeymone precio. But as it turned out, he got one anyway. Friends and foes alike have been kind to Deuba for the first 100 days of his second term as prime minister. Compared to the hand-to-hand combat of Girija's terure, Deuba's four months have salled by in relative serenity. The country is asleep, but at least there is peace.

The prime minister seems to have learnt from the mistakes of his first term, and moved with determination and purpose to fulf his single-point agends of resolving the Maist icriss. Deutic are he stubborn when he wants to be, and he refuses to be distracted from the goal. That is why we get the feeling that eventyling selse is on hidd

Remember the mood preceding Dasain last year when policemen were being buthered like buffalses at the Kot, and compare it with this year's relative calm. True, there has been intrinidation and violence by anti-Maosist village vigilantes, and Maoist counter-fichiappings of UML cader. True, and Maosist counter-fichiappings of UML cader. True will be supported to the programment of the programment of the programment will be supported by the properties of the programment Maosist talks seem to be stuck, and rebel cadre are iteching for a fight. This believe Neal, even the pose catals took a breather during Dasain fully.

Still, despite it all, the truce has put a stop to the mindless violence of the past year in which 70 policeman were killed during some weeks in Maoist ratiost. It would be a scanlege to the memory of the more fram 2,000 Nepalis who have been killed by other Nepalis in the past six years if, after coming this far, we were to return to violence. The obscenity of the past cannot be allowed to be a rehearsal for even greater carrage in tuture.

Cutting through the posturing and rhetoric of both sides about the release of detainees, the third round of talks appears to be delayed because the Maoist leadership cannot decide on what to settle for. It has now taken the comrades nearly a month to prepare their bargaining position for substantive qive-and-take on the question of power sharinar.

Of the three agenda points, there is no very the government is going to be in on the first, the Maiost demand for a republic. That will have the remain as stogan for now. On the second demand for an interim government, there is a very until if the Massists agree to emerge above ground and go into general elections. Deuba is even willing to consider an all-party national government to precede elections. On the third Maiost demand for a brand new conscitution, the government says it is willing to consider a constitutional reform committee, while the Maosits want a constitutional assembly.

The Maoists need a face-saving way out to sell a future agreement to their own cadre. A constitutional review committee would be a compromise both could agree on. As far as we can tell, it is a question of semantics. We all agree the constitution needs tinkering. Let's not be hung up about this.

The dock is ticking for the Maoists, it is also in their interest to have a nouncibuded settlement. If they had settled three months ago, they may have got a constitutional assembly of sort. Two months ago they may have got their national government. Today, the best they can hope for is perhaps a constitutional review committee.

But just as we were beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel on the negotiations, what happens? Dealer's rives in the party start getting file ground the property of the party start getting file ground the property of the party start getting file ground the property of the party start growing or large start. Party president Koriala has given dersive speeches accusing the prime minister of going soft on Maests. His cousia and general secretary Sushil Koriala is making similar beligerent noises against his own colleianuse in coverment.

Surprisingly—or maybe it is not so surprising—there is more support for Deuba's negotiating stance from the UML than from within his own party. UML's Madhaw Kumar Nepal calls Modists "terrorists". Even the Congress hasn't gone that far. Maoists are now targeting UML cadres at

the grassroots for abductions. It could be they are testing the waters to field front candidates in local elections next year.

The opposition of the Koirala cousins to Deuba is understandable. But why are Deuba and his home minister, Khum Bahadur Khadka, having a slanging match in public? Deuba has sidelined the ambitious Khadka, and the home minister is doing a solo on the Maoist negotiations.

So at a time when the ruling party needs to have a consensus on providing the Maoists a flace-saving way out so the whole party can benefit from the peace dividend, we have this clawing and scratching going on. Just goes to prove our old axiom: the Nepali Congress is its own worst

Nepalis have extraordinary patience. But it is running out. And when the people lose their patience, neither the government nor the Maoists will be spared their wrath.



STATE OF THE STATE

For the people, by the people, of the people

A constitution that has endured so much can't be static.

ing Cyanendra this Dasain had a poignant message to the nation. It was ressuring to be a thion attending the constitution, but it was cody uncertaing use that the felt in enessary to do so. He belahoured the obvious. Perhaps the real meaning of the message is a thumb down to the Musics. The king appeared to be telling Comrade Prachanda directly; a) no mational government, b) no constituent assembly, and, c) forget about your republic in our kingdom. In effect, the king has ruled out any major revision in the fundamental law of the land.

This is at isbudd be. The Constitution of Kingstom of Nepal 1990 has stood us in good stead over a period of unundinous events in national politics. We have held three parliamentary electrons and two for focal governments. Five national electrions—as successfully completed and declared to be largely fair and impartial by international observers—should be proof enough, if at all any was needed, that Nepal hant it needed a neutral caretake government of the Bangdadesh model to conduct its polls. Our legation of the proof of the proof

period when Nepal faced the most brutal insurgency in its history. At aftermath of Hrithik Roshan riots, it appeared as if the country would have to compromise its integrity in order to save it from itself. But it was democracy has nurtured that helped us overcome our collective insanity. All-party rallies for communal harmony proved once again that may be raucous, but in the end, it works. In a nulti-cultural society, it's either democracy or

> When the entire nuclear family of King Birendra was wiped out in the royal massacre of 1 June, the constitution

faced a challenge that has no parallel anywhere in the world. We Nepalis love to wallow in self-pity and we lack the self-confidence to accept credit for our accomplishments, but let's face it-it is nothing short of a sociological miracle that citizens of a struggling democracy faced a crisis of this unpreca magnitude with such stoic fortitude. Not that an exact comparison is necessary, or even possible, but it helps to remember that the entire political elite of the country was replaced in the aftermath of Kot Parba of 14 September, 1846, in our own country. In neighbouring India, New Delhi plunged into the savagery of communal carnage when Indira Gandhi was shot dead by her own bodyguards on 31 October, 1984. For all its flaws, it is the constitution that prevented anarchy from erupting even in the face of a crisis of unimaginable proportions.

The logic that the constitution needs to be amended to ensure stability does not hold water. The main concern should be the stability of the system, not the longevity of a particular government. The explanation that we are too poor to have frequent elections is like accepting that we are too impoverished to afford democracy. This can then be extended further to say that we don't deserve to be even dependent. Those who talk of a fixed tenure for the legislature or a constructive vote of confidence fail to realise that it isn't possible to tinker with the parts of the system without whole. To solve the problem of revolving doo governments and frequent elections, it is not ssary to virtually contract out the system for a fixed period to a group of legislators.

No one understands the convolutions of the Constitution of Niggle and Niggle Andrews (Niggle and Niggle Andrews). The Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews) and Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews) and Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews) and Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews). The Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews) and Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews) and Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews). The Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews) and Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews) and Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews). The Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews) and Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews) and Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews). The Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews) and Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews) and Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews). The Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews) and Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews) and Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews). The Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews) and Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews). The Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews) and Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews) and Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews). The Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews) and Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews) and Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews) and Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews). The Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andrews) and Niggle Andrews (Niggle Andr

That said, it needs to be accepted that certain aberrations have crept into the constitution due to contradictory interpretations of its provisions. The court once ruled that the prime minister could not go to the people if and when he wanted to. This has severely limited his options. It is this serious undermining of the prime minister's prerogative that has made him hostage to the threats of legislators of his own party. It has led to a ludicrous situation where a prime minister can become a ball to be thrown around between the levislature, the court and the rolace.

The other aberration—the belittling of the authority of local government units-also owes its origin not to the constitution, but its terpretation. By declaring that the Dhanusha District Development Committee and Rajbiraj Municipality weren't free to use the national language of their choice, the court dealt a bigger blow to their autonomy than merely denying them their mother tongue. Implicit in the ruling is another aning: in the interpretation of our learned iudges, the constitution is unitary in character. and brooks no interference from local vernments for autonomy. If this indeed is the reality, then it has to change. In the postmodern world, all politics is local. Denying legally constituted local governmen units their rights can lead to unconstitutional forms of protests.

forms of protests.

Krishna Prasad Bhattana'i sassertion that
the constitution doesn't need to be changed
should not be interpreted to mean that it
doesn't need improvements. It is in the nature
doesn't need improvements. It is in the nature
control lithings that if they don't change, anopaly
set in. Unfortunately, instead of being at the
cutting edge of cost clange, the legal lumination of Nepal limp helplessly belind it,
dangged down on by the polemics of activities
like Nanbari Acharya and Govinda Neupane.
Consequently, not even a credible again of
dictations has emerged over last ten years to
contemplate the constitution as a famework
of classocure between the rustional lites that

make up the kingdom of Nepul.

Bott formansel, we still have in our midst
most of finoe who helped finame and enat art
mestern constitution. As we enter the neelfit,
year of a resilient constitution, it would be a
salute to democracy to form a high-level
committee to review our experiences and
suggest improvements to reflect the new
resilients of our society. To suggest that the
fundamental law is not dynamic enough to
incorporate the aspirations of a new generation of Nepalis who have come of age after
1990 to high perhap. A constitution that has

endured so much can't be static.

Nepal still holds the potential of
becoming a model of social democracy in
South Asia. But for that to happen, we need
to have more faith in our own capabilities.

"Kathmandu is an island in an ocean of poverty."

Nepali Times:What changes do you see in the past two years?

National Intervention of the work of the w

And in the villages you visited?

There it is a confirmation of what I learn I sat time, the difficult lives that poor people lead in this country, especially women. And how different their life is from yours in Kuthmandu. The gap between Kuthmandu and the rest of the country is getting wider. Kuthmandu is an island in an ocean of poverty. And Dhading is a distinct just next door to Kathmandu. It gave me a sense of urgency about how important good development policies are to narrow that gap.

The last time you were here you told us you were angry with the poverty you saw?

How has the Bank helped the government to address it?

People tend to think World Bank has a lot of money and dout to help Nepal. This is a misconception. The money the Bank can provide is a dop in a huge bucket. The bucket is Nepal's town domestic resources, including the taxes people pay. What we do is really, a part of the government s development program and hopefully good policy. In terms of policies, in this trip I have a sense of encouragement.

In the past two years there hasn't been any major Bank lending ... has that got to do with policies not being right?

with policies not being right?

You have to remember that we have financed many projects in the past. The money is being disbursed, millions of dollars, for education, clean drinking water for people to manage forests on their own.

But no new lending?

That is not true. We have executly completed negotiations for a new project in telecommunication. There is a good people with foresight here in Nepal who have been hard at work in creating a modern telecommunication scent, with modern regulation that enhances not control, but private-government paramethips for highing information technology. We feel that development cannot be brought about by money only, but though information, thing in information, that is the future and these people anticipated it and are starting to create a regulatory regime to prepare Nepal for the future, so we decided to finance.

Did you have a special purpose for this visit? Since the last time I was here, there is a new government. Same purly but a new prime minister and cabinet. So my main purpose was to come and meet the prime minister and key leaders in his cabinet who are working on some very important reforms. I needed to meet them face to face to have a better understanding of the quality of policies they mean to introduce in this country.

What was your impression?

I found the people I met to be very candid so I don't have to worny about what lay. I've kion of this prime minister is Nepal without powerty. He has a very strong focus on the silent majority, the people who are marginalised from society, including women. Having listered to him. I believe that the focus and the vision is a genuine one, not rhetoric. As for the process of social transformation, part of which is higher income, he believes very strongly that the process has to be participatory. It has to be one nation, not Kathmandus with erest, or the rich vs the poor. He talks about empowerment, but the way be describes it, I feel he understands the understands that



The World Bank's Vice President for South Asia, Meiko Nishimizu was in Nepal this week. After a field visit to Dhading, she spoke to Nepali Times and talked extensively about Nepal's progress in the past two years, financial sector reforms and the empowerment of Nepali women.

the future of Nepal lies with the women. He wants to give the invisible women a voice. He really is focussing on the empowerment of women and dalits.

What about economic reforms?

There is something that Negal really ought to be proud of what was announced in the last budget and is being implemented. That is the Medium Term Framework. The value of financial discipline that process can bring to development expenditure is enormous. There are very few developing countries in the world that have implemented combenling like this. Everybody ralls about it, but to actually have the gut to say we'll do it and do it, is different. I commend the government and this is something that Nepal sa a nation ought to be proud of. The people need to make sure this implementation goes well so that the whole country benefits from this medium term framework asy oug forward.

On financial sector reforms there has been a hiatus from time to time, but I am leaving with a sense of hope and encouragement that things will really start to move. Since the budget there has been a small group of people

in Nepal who have been doing a lot of technical work preparing, but it is not an easy reform and it is not just about the two sick banks the newspapers write about. It is much more than that. It's about the entire banking system, how to help the central bank to regulate the banking system much better so that good money is

made, as opposed to bed money.

In Negal there seems to be the impression that this is a World Bank idea. It is far from the truth. I feel insulted when I read that, and reformers in this country would be doubly insulted by such a remark. It is really, really homegown. The reforms are challenging and there is no way it cancer near starf it is only the World Bank easying so. It has to come from within, with conviction, with determination and with policial will. The prime minister undestands the issue is convinced that this reform is about his vision.

From the point of view of a common, hardworking, but pore Nergal cities what would happen! (god-forbid, I handing crisis happens! Igeth several times, first lose my assing deposit, then the goorement will have to spend millions of oblists to stop the crisis from assmooty. Who post, it is It lege that is given the man some of Who post, it, is It lege that sign. I lose my saving and my tax goes into this to rescue all the crisis, powerful, corrupt people who have ruined some of these banks who were once premier institutions, by being defaulters.

What are they doing, they are essentially setaling my more, I get hit wice, and again. Because all tuxes are going to stop in this crisis, what happens to development expenditure? The school I was hoping would come up next year a mile down the road in! to going to be built. So the hope that I can finally educate my grifs and hops is out of the window again. So. I get hit the third time. Then because the problem could be severe, the cononny will go into a recession and I will probably lose my job. I get hit for the fourth. A bad solicy his the noor first and most.

bad policy hits the poor first and most.
What really comforted me is that the prime
minister understands this and that is why he is committed. It is very rare for me to speak to a leader of a
country who understands such important linkages,
without me explaining it, and with a voice of

What would be your wish list for things to happen in Nepal?

Inapper in Nepau (Laughs) I em ethink. Obviously because banking reform is a very important reform that will change the course of this country when this work is finished. After it is done, given everything remains the same, you can hope for the growth rate to go up to 4 percentage faster. I hope that the commitment of the leadership will be translated quickly into constant, consistent

action. I have no illusions, it is not going to be easy.

Another is related to the women I saw in Dhading and other marginalised people, the so called "untouchable" people, that I also met. Men in government and civil society will have to try to think from the point of bries of twomen.

Last wish?

(Laughs) How about peace. The underlying cause of the Maoist movement had a lot to do with the destinution in emote areas, sono just dialogue with Maoists, which is continuing, but using the whole might of the government through development, I hope that every citizen of this country can get to a point where they can take peace and security for granted. That they don't have to worry about it constantly.

How did the Nepalis you meet come across?

Nepals are extremely patient people, they have tremendous resilience and inner strength. I could sense that again in Dhading, I would like the people in positions of power, with wealth, with influence in the public and private sectors to understand how important that inner strength is, of the entire people of Nepal. The people who are better off, when they think of the poor and the under-classes, have to think of them so human beings with enormous wisdom. A good democracy that really helps raise everyone is bring stundard an really happen when more and more Nepali people value the differences, and we all bring different perspectives to democracy. Learn to value the enormous diversity of this country as a asset, not as a divisor, as a set, not as a divisor, and a set of the control of the co

LETTERS

CROWN PRINCE PARAS

It was good to read the sentiments of Prince Paras ('Has Crown Prince Paras mended his ways?", #66), but we Nepalis don't trust him. The palace took advantage of Dasain so there would be no protest. He does not trust the Nepalis, and Nepalis should not trust him.

N Shar

I am not an authority on Negal Industy, but I do Inone Negal Industy, but I do Inone I is today because of the Shah Dynasty. We could have been a country divided into small principalities waterable to foreign powers of waterable to region powers of waterable to the property of the country o

my stomach.

What have these "gentlemen" done for Nepal besides trying to look radical with their witless questions trying to garner votes in such a pathetic manner?

votes in such a pathetic manner?

Siddharth Thapa
Boston

Paras being declared the crown prince

Paras being declared the crown prince when the wounds of the royal massacre are still fresh is a serious blow to many Nepalis, especially when his well-documented acts of Indiscriminate violence is still fresh in many peoples minds. The implication of this decision deserves better analysis than trumpeting medicore verses which Paras allegaedy wrote.

Arun Neupane

What the announcement of the crown prince shows is that Nepal is all a long way from being a true democracy. The palace's method showed that the dut, dark ways of doing things in secret are still prevalent. If Nepal is to be a modern, transparent monarchy and earn the respect of the people like the monarchy in Japan the palace has to change the way it

Seema Chhetri Tokvo

Thank you for a balanced and objective overview of the royal appointment of Paras as crown prince. As you correctly point out, the king really had no choice but the could have done it in a more contained to the contained of the contained with the contained wit

G Tha

For the sake of Nepal's unity and nationalism, the monarchy needs to have continuity. With only two men left in the royal family, there was no other option. But let us use this opportunity to modernise and reform the rules of succession so that Paras' daughter can be the next in line. And next time let us do it with more deliberation and grace.

Naresh Pradhan

MAYDAY, MAYDAY

Binod Bhattarai's report ("Mayday, mayday", #64) is right on the mark. What is shows is that the private sector is not the super-efficient answer to everything that it is made out to be. The domestic airline business has become a dog-eat-dog situation. The reason is private greed and

the government's inability to regulate.

S Lai

Kathman

UNDER HIS HAT
I'm afraid Kunda Dixit has finally lost it
("Lights, camera, action", #65). But who
can blame him, given the state of the
country and the world. There is a message
in his lunacy. Hang on to your hat!

Gwen Ridle

Bridge builders think nationally



HEMLATA RAI ast December Maoist insurgent destroyed a vital suspension bridge over the Kamali river at Regilghat in Kalikot. Thousands of illagers were affected, the bridge was their social and economic lifeline. Children could not attend school and basic commodities like salt, cooking oi and grain were in short supply.

Suddenly residents across the

mighty Karnali could as well have been ing on the other side of the country. The district headquarters, Manma, which used to be less than a threenour walk away when the suspensio oridoe was in place was now at least lso felt the effect of the destruction of lifeline—the postal service to Mugu, iainra and Achham was disrupted. What the Maoists had done was bomb

ealth post, a road. In village after want a bridge." A bridge was and still of roadless Nepal.

Kalikot back to the 1950s.

When Swiss geologist Toni

hey wanted the most: a school, a

Hagen was walking across Nepal 50 years ago, he would ask villagers what



Development takes a great leap forward as suspension bridges span rivers across Nepal.

suspension bridge at Sitka Ghat in

Ramochhan the sloony isolated

ettlement evolved into a vibrant

market square that on average does Rs

our years after the bridge was built,

land prices shot up by 1,140 percent Most rural communities know all

too well the advantages a simple

suspension bridge can bring Every

to 200 new bridges, but the govern-

nent can only take on about a quarte

of those requests. An overwhelming 9

percent of the requests come from

short span (under 120 metres)

ommunities who desperately need

destrian bridges to ease communic

New Nepali adaptations have beer

ar the SBD receives requests for 100

80.000 worth of business everyday

scattered across the Nepali hills are the | following a construction of the a Swiss experts invited in at the beginning of Nepal's planned 1950s recommended that river ossing facilities for isolated commu nities and settlements would be the ker ment. In 1964, the government established the Suspension Bridge Division (SBD) under the Ministry of Works and Transport, and eight years later Helvetas (the Swiss Association for International Co-operation) came up with technical and financial port. Later on, the US and the British governments and multilateral agencies like the Asian Developmen Bank also not involved

Since it was established, the SBD as constructed some 500 bridges in made to the bridges after studying how they are used. For instance, bridges are 1 districts with a cumulative span than now exceeds 50 km. The bridge livestock, mule and vak trains have been instrumental in catalysing onomic activities and social changes Animals are terrified of suspension in their localities A 1999 bridge bridges and villagers goading water

addition, early bridges used to ha planks and the hooses of goats and attle used to get stuck in the gaps between them. The design was changed, and the new models now have grills that ensure a good grip for both shoes and hooves. Suspension ridges also used to sway in the wind and they are now reinforced with side wires and much more care is taken in site selection and einforcements so that bridges don't get washed off in flash floods

conomically and socially is only one ispect of Nepal's bridge-building access story. When the government tarted its accelerated bridge onstruction at important location ixties, the technology was fabricated n Scotland and constructed by a Scottish firm Pedestrian trail bridges, for their part, benefited But the country has come a long way

Strengthening communities

The info war

ISLAMABAD: There's a new front in the "war against terror". For days now, verbal air strikes on the media have been proliferating. US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld spent about half of a news briefing during a recent visit here castigating questioners from newspapers and television networks about their "failure to understand what we're doing"

British ministers-even Tony Blair who ranks with Bill Clinton as one of the great all-time handlers of media—are constantly critical of TV pictures of suffering Afghans, and commentators who point out that hombing of Afghanistan has yet to produce visible results.

By contrast, the verbal campaign has scored a significant victory. CNN is now putting "health warnings" on its coverage. A report showing pictures of dead Afghan civilians, or the catastrophic humanitarian situation there, will also have to mention that "Afghanistan harbours terrorists who have praised the September 11th attacks in America that have killed more than 5000 people'

Praising an atrocity is now enough to justify war, at least for CNN's management. Their journalists in the field aren't happy with this, but none have yet protested publicly. Interestingly only the American people are deemed worthy, or perhaps in need of, the health warning. CNN's international service, seen everywhere but the continental United States, will not be required to add comment to coverage of casualties.

My own frequent employers, the BBC, are horrified at this, although a

spokesman said it was up to individual correspondents to add what context they deemed fit to such reports. Other American networks, who capitulated to earlier pressure from the US administration to stop showing video of Osama bin Laden, have drawn their line in the sand well short of what CNN has agreed to. American newspapers have roundly condemned the news network, in part because a print journalist rarely misses an opportunity to rubbish colleagues in television for being much less in-depth. And

Lak is back in Pak, holding a mirror to the media.



more popular. I daresav

The Pentagon has hired a PR firm to monitor the media around the world particularly in Muslim countries. That's throwing good money after bad in many ways since so few of those countries have a free media. If the local authorities deem the American message to their taste, it gets on. If they don't, i exists only on the BBC, CNN and the World Wide Web. But the Pentagon, never forget, throws far more money around than ordnance.

Truth, it's famously said, is the first casualty of war. Phillip Knightley the author of a book called The First Casualty has challenged Rumsfeld.

Blair and others who attack the media for its Afghan coverage. He is calling for wartime censorship—if necessary— to be overt, and justified by a full explanation of what is to be gained from restrictions on the press, other than political advantage for elected politicians worried that they are failing to get their message across, and finding reporters an easy scapegoat

Winston Churchill, for many the greatest wartime leader of all, not only imposed censorship during World War Two. He is alleged to have prevented information from decoded messages getting to the people of the English city of Coventry that might have saved lives in German bombing raids. The reason? Enemy spies would deduce from an evacuation that their secret codes had been cracked and endanger the future war effort. "The truth," he told his cabinet, "must be protected by a

Perhaps. But consider also these words from a woman who lives a few miles from where the World Trade Centre used to ominate lower Manhattan. "As appalled, horrified and saddened by the events, (the lingering sickening smell alone reminds us New Yorkers constantly) I am more enraged by the blatant manipulation of the press. It is as painful to watch and hear...as it is to view the formally spectacular skyline where the towers have simply vanished."

Me, I think the journalist must always try to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable-a clicke that came about long before television and politicians (and now terrorists) began the devil dance that blurs entertainment, enlightenment and the peoples' legitimate right to know. It's going to be a long war, and this front will be no easier than the one in Afghanistan.

and act locally

responsible for designing and constructing suspension bridges, and communities are being mobilised for the maintenance As a result, bridge technology is cheaper, and bridges ca be located at more strategically appropriate locations to benefit the ing for time saved by a construction of a suspension bridge in conservative manner of Rs. 5 per hour, the 1999 impact study found that Molung bridge in Okhaldhuga district recouped its cost in 1.5 years, while better located Sitkaghat bridge took les than six months.

Once there were enough trained rsonnel to build bridges, the challenge was to spread that knowledge around and get more people involved in the building and maintenance process. So, engineering institutes no help design bridges, but also conduct classes on suspension bridge technology. Private firms are also encouraged to design and even construct the bridges. Everyone involved in building bridges is now so confident, there are some pretty ambitious projects being undertaken. The central government, together with local government bodies and partners in th private sector, are now all set to construct a 1.450 metre-long pedestrian bridge joining the Dudhara and Chadani villages that lie across the Mahakali, with the rest of the nation. The proposed bridge will be the pedestrian bridge built by Nepali technicians so far

Soon, bridge-building will be an all-Nepali venture. The Swiss government, whose financial contribufrom 100 percent to 37 percent will year phase of its support. Jan Roukema, Project Manager of the Trial Bridge Sub-Sector Project at Helvetas avs: "We will now be decentralising uspension bridges." The Suspension Bridge Division

was shifted to the Ministry of Local Development last year Under the of the bridges in place have been ommunities. Proposals coming from local groups that actively involve omen and marginalised communitie re prioritised, says Roukema, Village groups identify the need for bridges and provide locally available construc ion materials and labour, and take charge of routine maintenance. The osts of major maintenance are shared by the government and District

Development Committees equally The people who actually need and ise the bridges in this way have a far reater sense of ownership and thus esponsibility. And it shows. Instead of the few dozen bridges that used to get constructed annually earlier, in th ast year, the Helvetas project partnere with the SBD and got local government and communities involved—t construct 165 bridges. Even old oridges were upgraded, with steel grating replacing the wooden walkway decks.

The concept of local ownership is reat in theory, and even in practice, as this shows. But there are some strumbling blocks. "Local governme everywhere are not confident about



their technical capacity to build and villing to take over identifying the specific crossing needs and managing the budget, they are hesitant to take over the technical part," said Neeraj Shah, Project Manager at SBD. And this cannot be resolved unless another major problem is addressed—the high nobility among the young and skilled cople makes it difficult to develop ical skills to sustain the bridges.

The only way to deal with this is by emphasising the social impact of



bridges, getting them to realise that with a bridge there might perhaps be less reason to move away. It takes time, but it happens. Says Shiv Chandra Kantha, Deputy Programn Manager of the Helvetas project Initially, the social elements of development activities were hard to see, but now all our partners have realised that society cannot be alienated from development



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AIDS undate

An alarming picture of AIDS is emerging in the country. A report conducted by Dr Hari Krishna Baskota for UN-AIDS indicates that on average 14 people are infected with HIV/AIDS everyday in Nepal—that means more than 38,000 HIV/AIDS carriers by end of this year. While intravenous drug users comprise nearly half the population of HIV/AIDS carriers, commercial sex workers make up about 17 percent. It's time the government acted. In a follow-up seminar to the Sixth International Congress on AIDS in the Asia and the Pacific held in Australia last month. Health Minister Sharad Sinch Bhandari said the government would soon constitute a special parliamentary committee on AIDS and develop a multi-propoed approach to prevent the spread of the disease.

Missing Indian

The Indian Embassy in Kathmandu is seeking information about the whereabouts of Pradip Bhattacharya, a 49-year-old Indian from Kolkata. Bhattacharya was last seen trekking in the Manaslu region at Village Dharapani in Manang District on the morning of 15 October. The Embassy says that anyonw helping to trace Bhattacharya will be suitably rewarded. Contact telephone numbers are 413347, 423390.

Peace stupa

May peace prevail. That was the message at the inauguration of the biggest stupa in South Asia in Lumbini last week. At 41.5 m in height and 59 m in diameter, the World Peace Stupa towers above Nawagram and is part of the Lumbini Master Plan designed by Japanese Professor Kenzo Tenge to commemorate the Buddha's birthplace. The stupa, constructed from 900 metric tonnes of cement and 411 metric tonnes of torsteel iron, is the largest of more than 70 stupas constructed worldwide by Nippozan Myohoji, a Japanese Buddhist Organisation that wants to realise the dreams of Nichidatsu Fuji, a Japanese Buddhist ascetic.

Dusty city

hold their breath Studies indicate that wheelers and their passengers are the most suscentible to air pollution. Only then come cyclists and pedestrians. WHO studies say



spend Rs 30-50 million annually treating pneumonia, bronchitis, dry cough and cold, and red eyes, all caused by minuscule dust particles in the air, especially in the dry, dusty winters. Air pollution tests indicate that traffic heavy areas like Putali Sadak, Chabalhil, Patan, and Paknaiol have a high concentration of suspended particles—five times above WHO-recommended 70 micrograms pe cubic metre. Tests at Putali Sadak showed 210-375 microgram per cubic metre, Patan 300-350 microgram per cubic metre, and Chahabil 280 microgram per cubic metre. While health experts say masks can, to a certain extent, prevent dust particles from entering the body, the best way to deal with the menace is by reducing traffic and closing off congested junctions every once in a while Presently, a record 171,678 vehicles ply Kathmandu's roads everyday—30,000 more than the city's road infrastructure is designed to hold. Over 110,000 of these are motorcycles.

Agitated teachers

There's another potential upheaval in store for Nepal's long-suffering education sector. Nearly 150,000 public school teachers are threatening to take to the streets soon. The teachers, organised under the Nepal National Teachers Association (NNTA) and the Nepal Teachers' Organisation (NTO), are unhappy with the seventh amendment to the Education Act approved by the House of Representative a month ago, especially the clause that requires them to sit for exams to acquire licences within five years of implementation of the amendment. Failing to do so would mean losing their jobs. The teachers plan to publish appeals, hold dialogues with parliamentarians and educationists, and wear black bands to work. If the government fails to respond positively, they will organise rallies and sit-in protests at district education offices starting 21 December. The NNTA and the NTO allege that the government is trying to evade its responsibility of providing education, and is encouraging the commercialisation of education. But that's as far as their like-mindedness goes. The Nepali Congress-supported NTO and UML-supported NNTA plan to protest





Hyart Regency Koftmands welcomes interested gall players, patrons and friends to join in for a one day tournement or Howenber 10, 2001 of the Gobarna Forest Golf Resort. The heighting of a sentex in the years to contr

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Host Regardy Kolhmands Hallora Cop.

TO THE RESIDENCE AND ADDRESS OF THE PARTY BETWEEN THE PARTY OF THE PAR

Climb every mountain, but slowly



There are three rules to avoid mountain sickness. And commercial expeditions on the world's highest peaks may need more,

ast week, for the first time, medical experts from around the world descended upon the Valley to discuss various aspects of mountain sickness and high altitude medicine. sion of the LITAA

The Nepal Mountaineering Association sponsored the International Symposium on Mountain Medicine, organised by the international mountaineering body the Union Internationale Des Associations D'Alpinisme (UIIAA). and the Society of Internal Medicine of Nepal (SIMON)

"It is important to enhance the interest in and understanding of mountain medicine, especially in countries like Nepal where this

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40.00 1800.00

topic is immensely relevant," says Dr Buddha Basnyat, Medical Director of the Himalayan Rescue Association (HRA) and newly appointed vice president of MedCom, the medical commis-

"Contrary to popular belief, Nepalis trekking at high altitudes are equally susceptible to acute mountain sickness as their WWestern counterparts," says Dr Basnyat. "This is not just a bideshi affliction but a swadeshi one too A recent epidemiological study of Nepali pilgrim populations that Dr Basnyat conducted with fellow researchers showed that 68 percent of pilgrims travelling to Gosainkunda, a sacred lake at

4.300 m. were susceptible to Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) headaches, gastrointestinal troubles insomnia, dizziness and fatigue The symptoms of mountain

severely impairs breathing.

usceptible," says Dr Basnyat

Seventy-three percent of the

population we studied were men

and yet women had significantly

higher rates of AMS, HAPE and

A cross-sectional study of nor

herpa porters, one at 4,300 m-

high Pheriche in Khumbu, and a

controlled study lower down at

1,500 m, concluded that approxi

mately one-third of the porters

suffered from AMS, and two

HACE.

"Women seem to be very

ickness are basically caused by lack of oxygen—the medical term is hypoxia—as a result of the decrease in atmospheric pressure. Dr Basnyat's study indicated that 32 percent of the pilgrims had High Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE), a more malignant form of AMS in which fluid collection the brain leads to a dangerous lack of muscular coordination Another acute, if relatively rare form of AMS is High Altitude Pulmonary Edema or HAPE, fluid

Trekkers to the Himalayas need to remain alert about safety precautions for their porters, who usually aren't insured so that both trekker and the porters are secure in the

Discussions at the symposium ranged from high altitude physiology, Himalayan high altitude plants n medicine, the impact of high altitude tourism on local populations, the effects of altitude raining on physiological and biochemical parameters of health. and the practical aspects of acclimatisation to high altitude.

Professor Dr Franz Berghold

from the Austrian Society for

Mountain and Altitude Medicine reiterated that the most reliable key to success is to follow the tactical rules of altitude climbing, especially above 2,000 metres, "Severe AMS, HAPE and HACE are not at all fatal, but they are always the result of disregard of the rules of acclimatisation," said Berghold, who is associated with the University of Salzburg, Austria, and Institute for Sports Sciences. Dr Berghold set out the three major rules of thuml to avoid mountain sickness: don't go too fast too high, avoid verexerting yourself during cclimatisation, and always sleep wer than the maximum altitude

ou climb in the day Dr James A Litch, a medical loctor, Everest summitteer and streme altitude guide, urged the I II A A to review its Recommended Code of Practices for High Altitude With more and more experienced and not-so-experienced climbers that advertise guided climbs up 7 000 m and 8 000 m peaks the isk has become greater for clients as well as guides. Recent studies indicate that of the 4.664 individual ascents of 8,000 m peaks before January 2000, there ove been 591 deaths—close to one death for every seven ascents. And it isn't only summitteers who are in danger—estimating a 10 nercent success rate, the risk of death on 8,000 m peaks is 1 in 79 climbers. In the US, where the highest mountain is Denali (6,195 n), the risk of death while climbing is 1 in 6,000.

"The current UIAA guidelines

ack strict definitions of exactly

what the duties of commercial expeditions, guides and the like re. They may be insufficient for altitude when mountaineers particularly those climbing above 3,000 m, may reach the limit of their mental and physical anabilities, and so may not be capable of assisting others," says Dr Litch. He suggests a specific LITAA Code of Practice for commercial expeditions to 8,000 n peaks, the majority of which fall in Nepal and Pakistan "There's a difference in terms of knowledge and experience etween guides and clients, but not in the terms of physiology.

collection in the lungs that We are every proof of Car Location I. But our hidden strength are the solid back-up services: Central air-conditioning Central hot water boiler Full canacity generator Own perennial source of potable water; and above all, the experienced managerial support of the ACE Hotels & Resorts team ! For SPECIAL RATES Mrs. Bindu Sakya (Managing Director) Mr. Hari Shvam Shrestha C/o Hotel Ambassador P.O.Box: 2769, Lazimpat, Kathmandu, Nepal Tel: 410432, 414432, 419432, (res) 612383 Fax: 977-1-413641, E-mail: acehotels@acehotels.c M. R. Breich & Breech



Democracy in a time of individualism

anesh Man Singh used to recall how the Nepali Congress had envisioned the panchayat system as a non-party structure for local governance. Nepal's democracy, the argument went, was too nascent to sustain party divisions and distinctions at the lower rungs of society. The real extent of the Kangresis' shock at having been supplanted by their own scheme in national politics can

perhans never be measured The first generation of panchas who were expected by the professional ethics of the day to uphold the fundamental tenets of partylessnes was too enmeshed in the culture of association to be so disorganised. Since an overwhelming number of recruits to the new order had crossed over from the formathy dominan Nanali Congress in different phases after the Paush 1, 2017 putsch, they simply found it difficult to abandon their predilection for organised politics

These tendencies were particularly evident during the graduateconstituency elections to the pre-adult franchise Rastriya Panchayat. Since Nepalis then were only allowed to join organisations that represented their age, occupation or sex, most promis g candidates who ran on platforms of political philosophies

Nepal's first experience with no confidence politics, against Surya

Translation: "I had to get on board as many people as I possibly could to save my wobbly government? One reason why political analysis goes awfully wrong during these transpar ent rimes is that nundits have to take into account who is not in the minority in the majority party at any

directive directly, and not through a This pattern of organisational politics, which was referred to as samuhagat rainiti in order to avoid having to use the maligned, albeit shorter, bahudalbadi adjective. continued until the system's collapse seven wears later. In the end, the three way Thapa-Lokendra Bahadur Chand-Marich Man Singh Shrestha internal split did as much to basten the nolition of the partyless edifice as did the hollering hordes on the

within the

ruling party

Twelve years later, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba began voicing dissatisfaction with the composition of his cabinet the day after he swore in

Bahadur Thana's government in

dynamics that had orinned Rastriya

ew remained shoard to back the prime

minister until the very bitter end. One

assistant ministrae later said ha umuld

have done much more than vote

against Thapa had he received the

notorious bhumiant airoba

Panchayat members. Most of the

ministers abided by the palace

secretariat's whin and quit the

sometimes become so mesmerising at opposition groups simply tend to lose their relevance Public interest in feuding politicians has become so intense that the internecine squabbling endemic in squabbling endemic in almost all of the other becomes front-page news.

One reason political analysis goes awfully wrong during these transparent times is that pundits have to take into account who is not in the minority in the majority party at any given moment.

The Nepali Congress Recent comments by parliamentary party has mutated into a Congress leaders encourage one to mana. encourage one to make a of MPswho have long learned to ssert their individuality over their chief whin knows that no amount of lashing would work to restrain MPs who know they can't soil. Considering e-election unless the chief of a parts they have served three decades of in the council of ministers. 素素素 opposition was

compromise on the principle of special weight

Its significance becomes more conspicuous when you recall that the Kanonesis almost succeeded in toppling the panchayat system in 1979 riding on a wave of student things the New Education Plan which was touted as being more responsive to the realities of Nepal's earth, air and water

To be sure, Koirala has maintained an envisible record when it comes to thinking aloud. When he described the restoration of multipart democracy as a victory for the panchas as well, the audience in Tundikhel lost no time in beckling him. It took seven years, after Chand and Thapa returned to the prime minister's office in felt proudly vindicated. Koirala's clain that the sonal commissioners of the tive tools whose continuation could nave stopped the Maoist steamroller paved the way for the two ordinance on setting up regional administrations.

In the annals of post-1990 politics. Koirala embodies the perfect olending of personal assertiveness with

steadfast

the ferment of party politics.

Ram Chandra Poudel, Jaroely dismissed as a one-man army by his own party colleagues too seems to be loyally wedded to cultivating the high tradition of democratic individualis He recently warned of the dangers Manists perched in the high-altitude forests and the political parvenus proliferating in the capital's expandng concrete jungle. Few can accuse Poudel of belonging to either group which may be his greatest disadvan-tage. It's quite lonely out there in the middle ground, especially when you have to fend off endless accusa tions of sitting on the fence.

However, the real merit of Poudel's method lies in his (perhaps unintended) undertaking to amalgamate the cultures of tyless and multiparty politics in a real spirit of generational borrowed much more than their polity from the Kangresis, erhaps it's only fair that the Kangresis should be practising the brand of political individual ism the panchas could only

Jamuna gets a road

If you ask Nepalis what they want most desperately in their village, more often than not, the answer will be: a road. In the more remote parts of Nepal, many have waited their entire lives for the road to get to their village. But in some places, they don't wait for the govern ment: they build the road themselves. This is what happened in the north-east of Ilam

It isn't long, just 5 km. But that is all it took to join Jamuna with the mad to the district headquarters, and what a world of difference it is going to make. It took the local people over six months to complete the task, and on 24 October two Land Rovers arrived here amidst much

fanfare and jubilation.

"A gadi before Dasain" was the slogan in Jamuna and it happened with two days to spare. It proved to many here that where there s commitment, there is a way. The going was not smooth, especially on a road designed and built entirely by the villagers. The Land Rovers needed a bit of human power to get over the rough hits. The fast-flowing Mai Khola was still swollen with water because of recent rains, and the road builders had waited two

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On the 24th they decided to take on the river, within half a day, there was a temporary log bridge in place. By early afternoon the vehicles were on their way, negotiating sharp bends up the spur on which the village rests. Villagers clung to every inch of space in the cars, dismounting to get around the quick twists that local engineering had not been able to get right. A loudspeaker mounted on the hood of the first vehicle croaked continuously—tinny music that was supposed to be festive. But no one was really that bothered, it was the sound of revving engines that was music to most ears.

As a visitor, I was co-opted to be the official photographer of the eremony, My grandfather, 90-year-old Devi Prasad Bhattarai, was cutting ribbons. The bazaar folk had readied two ceremonial copper ahadas to mark the arrival of the cars and had strung marigold garlands he everyone that deserved one—including the Land Rovers.

It took some time for the moment to come because one road gang

had marched ahead to level the road beyond the bazaar to take the

vehicles to the high school from where it would be visible to large parts of the village. Local donors, drivers of the vehicles, village elders all had marigold garlands on their necks and vermilion all over their faces. It was a celebration of victory over the difficult mountain terrain and the triumph of self-help. I was born and raised in Jamuna and was visiting after a gap of about six years. The time that had elapsed since my last visit had effectively made me an outsider and I was initially unable to soak up the joys of the road getting there. My admiration of my compatriots grew only when I heard the full story

This was the second road the villagers had built in the past three years. The first one, of almost the same distance, connected it with the Indian border to the east. But soon after it was completed, a change in customs rules made it difficult for vehicles with Indian license plates to rice the village. That was the end of the road, and all the money and

labour that Jamuna had put into it.

"We realised we had to connect with the district headquarters," Jit Bahadur Sawa, VDC chairman told me. He begar the work with a Rs 75,000 grant from the Village Development Committee, a promise by MP Keshab Thapa to contribute Rs 25,000 and Rs 120,000 from two local contributors. The villagers out in Jahour-some families up to 32 worker days A villager with road building experience in the Indian hills was hired to be the surveyor, engineer

The road has injected new energy into Jamuna. "We'll get back to road building again after Tihar," Sawa said. Surprisingly for a politician, Sawa worked on the road-gangs alongside the other labourers throughout the construction period. "It will be a shame if we don't fix the road and make it usable throughout the year." he adds. "Now we've an additional responsibility, thinking about how to build a permanent bridge across the Mai." That may take some time because with less than Rs 500,000 to spend every year, it is clearly beyond the VDC's budget. So what does Jamuna get from the road? Will the quiet little village be converted, like most other newly-connected settlements, into a squalid and noisy town? Perhaps not. The people of llam are very industrious, and this village of 6,000 people produces over 20 tons of cardamom, 40 tons of ginger, over 15 tons of potatoes and several hundred kilograms of tea leaves every year. They are sold mainly in India. carried on horseback or by porters. Now there is the road. "We are about to take a great leap forward," Sawa tells me, as the Land Rovers give off a mighty cloud of soot and heave up to the school grounds with blaring horns. "This road will help make it happen.

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Trade Treaty update

Nepal and India moved a step closer toward coming to an agreement on renewing the trade treaty before if expires on 5 December. At the centre of the dispute are five Nepali exports whose surge India says has hurt its domestic producers. There's another unarticulated issue that India wants addressed—a safeguard to ensure that it will not be hurt when Nepal joins the World Trade Organisation (WTO). WTO rules say a member country must extend to all members the same treatment, and though there are safeguards for concessions given to least developed countries, India would like to ensure that the treaty does not require it to grant facilities similar to the provisions of the treaty to other LDCs. Still, things appear to be progressing. Finally, in the last round (3-4 November) officials took the advice of lobbies in both countries and began talking about value addition as a way to deal with the problem of surge, an indication that a resolution is imminent. Indian officials are said to have suggested different models for calculating value addition and Nepal has its own ideas on how that should be done. Finalising a formula acceptable to both sides, fixing value added percentages and ironing out the implications of this on industry and trade may take some more meetings.

More Belgians

The global impact of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington are beginning to reflect on tourism here.

Arrivals for the first ten months of the year fell by roughly 14 percent. Indian arrivals fell by about 29 percent and third country tourists by about eight percent. The October arrivals, which directly reflect travel plans after the terrorist strikes in the United States and the war in Afghanistan, were 34 percent lower compared with the same period last year-Indian tourists were down by 50 percent and third country visitors by 30 percent. The only nationality that saw an upturn were Belgians, with 13 percent more arrivials.

The slowdown begins

We are now officially facing an economic slowdown. The Nepal Rastra Bank's economic report for August-September records a drop in government spending. including development expenditure, a slump in resource mobilisation, and an unswing in inflation. Overall government spending grew by just 9.7 percent to Rs. 6.25 billion, compared with 26 percent growth in the same period last year. The unusual enending slowdown in the early months of the fiscal year is because of delays in disbursement, which was slower this year because of the extra time it took in getting the budget approved by parliament. However, a worrying trend is that over 58 percent of the allocation was spent on recurrent expenses and only 12 percent on development projects. Regular spending dropped by 4.3 percent while the drop in spending on development was 11 percent.



"Special Editions" for Tihar

S&Y Mills Ltd, a Chennai, India-based Public Limited Company has added two new outlets to market its upmarket shirts and trousers, sold with the "Special Editions" label. The new outlets are Shrestha Tailoring Centre, Bag Bazar and Chabahil, and the Kasthamandap Bazaar, Kamaladi. The company says its Special Editions garments are "five-star stuff without a five-star price tag."

New NEPSE listings

The Nepal Stock Exchange (NEPSE) has listed two joint ventures: Nepal Aloic (CHK SPL) Everest Finance Limited, and the Bangladesh Finance and Leasing Limited. Alpic applied for 200,000 of its shares to be listed, and Bangladesh Finance has 300,000 shares for trading at the exchange.

That sinking feeling 🤱

Every treaty time, we learn anew the importance of timely tete-a-tetes, and firm mano a manos,

t least we agreed on something But, this Beed and others of our ilk, dear reader, agree that s becoming a bad habit in this part of the world to agree to talk, and then agree in talks to talk again. A frag the fourth gound of talle

tween India and Nepal on the trade

the embargo days of 1989, which

treaty, diplomat-speak says there is progress'. Fair enough, but where on earth are we progressing? With less than a month to go before the 5 December deadline, that perennial trade matters so successfully in 1996. has returned to being the dumpy handmaiden of less competent, if South Asian rone trick will be nulled out—miraculously, things will be higher bodies. Five years ago, the sorted out, wrapped up etc. But, a few forts of the Federation of Nepales months down the line, or when the Chambers of Commerce and Industr (FNCCI) and the Confederation of omeone will realise that an adequate Indian Industry (CII) expedited the process, and Nepal also managed to solution was not found and we wil have to go through this whole painful a pretty nice deal. There seems to be a sense on the

pussyfooting again. For India especially the commerce other side that Nepal has become ministry, renewing this treaty is not a priority. The WTO summit in Doha complacent, and that we cannot be trusted to make good on our commit is priority number one right now, as that is where India's interests lie. The ments to curtail smuggling of goods to India. This, together with India's own commerce ministry is working more domestic industry pressuring the under pressure from the country's External Affairs Ministry. Of course, it is in Nepal's interest o sort out this matter post haste. But rather than deal with it preemtively, we procrastinated. We have forpotter

government for protectionism has meant real complications. Indian domestic industries. like those in Nepal, have enjoyed protectionism i various forms, and now with the WTO regime nearing, they are nervous. The situation has already resulted almost solely due to Nepal's become pretty nightmarish with the invasion of Indian markets by cheaper late-firing national synapses. This time around, the blame lies not only with quality Chinese goods. Unfortunately the government, but also the anex for us, domestic Indian industries ar bodies of Nepali trade and industry. venting their spleen on poor us. What

hue and cry about a 'surge' in Nepali exports that continue to be on the ong side of the decimal, compared with total Indian imports For Nepal, the sops provided by

the 1996 renewal of the treaty have been good for those businesspeople ave taken advantage of the oonholes Overnight husinessmer engaged in informal trade with India became 'industrialists' Only a few multinationals came, as the industrial and business environment never became conducive. The increase in investments from reputed Indian and multinational companies envisaged materialised. Nepal missed a great opportunity for industrialisation and

The treaty renewal discussions have centred only on issues relating to value addition. Other major issues for Nepal remain buried in the arguments on content percentages. We need to get the issue of the railway link to Birgun before the machinery and equipment from the dry port finishes its vanishing act. (See "Treaty time",#55) Nepali exports from taxation by Indian provincial governments. For instance, a luxury tax of 20 percent is imposed on tea by the West Bengal of course, be reciprocal.

Right then, to work. Speed is of

Readers can post their views at arthabeed@vahoo.com

communities that live in such Shanghai "Our first target group is

China's wealthy expat community says Subodh Rana of Marco Polo Travels and Director of NICA (Nepal Incentives and Conventions on the Kathmandu Valley.

Royal Nepal Airlines already flies Jian Ming Wu is a Shanghai twice a week between Kathmandu to essman and restaurateur who Osaka with a stonover in Shanghai said through an interpreter that he Despite the midnight departure there is chatter in the cabin, primarily from Japan-bound Nepalis, some Japanese probably also name the restaurant Fulbari. Just hope Wu gets his nterprise fares better than the

ignage. The airline is not in the ings in local periodicals. At the is the Nepali Director of Finance and Business Support. His wife Soma Pant teaches French in a anywhere in any travel magazine or both are well-connected in the

than most Englishmen. Massood has been the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza regional director for South Asia. has visited Nepal several times, and is happy to help promote Nanal Habar man offered to part office space to Royal Nepal Airlines in the Crowne Plaza (easier to find. better exposure and support), as the airline's lease at the cubby hole (monthly rental about \$1,300)

Shangrila to Shanghai (and back)

recently for local media at Nepali Kitchen, the one Nepali restau Shanohai, nun by Kanchha Ghale from Manang, Although it seats only about 40 persons, it is very cosy, tastefully rated by an Italian interior designer. The occasion was to publicise the airline's summer oromotion fare for Kathmandu for only \$400 return. Ghale who used to work in Taiwan is well-connected with both Taiwanese and Iananese expatriates who patronise th restaurant, and has already hought some groups to Nepal.

Other expats with connection with Neval are Dominic Bauquis Director of a Beijing-based public relations firm hired by Nepal Tourism Board for its media campaign in China, Sigrid Seel, a German travel consultant in Shanghai who had already brought groups to Nepal. Then there is Dorice Sherpa. viously with the Soaltee Cros Plaza in Kathmandu, now general manager of the Gloria Hotel in nearby Suzhou Massood of Crowne Plaza

has offered to run a Nepali food

romotion in cooperation with Royal Venal and to send Chinese artists to Kathmandu's Soaltee to promote their new restaurant, China Garden. The concern among travel agents in Shanghai is the unstable political situation in Nepal and the

region, and the fact that Royal Nenal fares are expensive compared always guarantee seats on the

In addition, Royal Nepal cannot Shanghai-Kathmandu sector. Once all the red tape gets sorted out will Neval be ready for inbound tourists from China? Expats living in

Shanohai may make it as adventure tourists, for trekking, rafting or safari. But what of the Chinese themselves What does Nepal have to offer them it and when they come? Gambling is one attraction, but

Macau's casinos are a lot closer than Nepal and they speak manda rin, Then, are Kathmandu's Chinese restaurants authentic enough to satisfy finicky Chinese palates? There is the Mandarin Room at the Everest, the Imperial Pavilion, or the Tien Shan. But will the avante garde Shanghainese undertake the long march (er, long flight) to Kathmandu

tourists or aid personnel, and a few That is why Nepal's nervous tourism industry is desperately hoping to fill returning home. By and large, most of fenøshui right and that the Shanghai the vacuum left by dwindling overseas the passengers are flying to Osaka, via Shanghai, although a metropolis of 17 Petra 188 185 per parson and Indian arrivals with Chinese. Of course, nobody in Nepal's million (China's second-largest city) The Royal Nepal Airlines office is is used by RNAC primarily as a tourism hiz really expects masses of a small plass cubby-hole in an out-ofworld. Instead of privatising it, it may be cheaper to just close it down. No privatisation. The government shouldn't blindly privatise RNAC. shopaholic Chinese tour groups to refueling stop. There are over a the-way location-even the Chinese And let other private airlines come in mmediately start flocking to the quarter million expatriates living in driver got lost since there is no visibl Former RNAC passenger Privatise RNAC and turn it into the Bansbari Leather Factory? Hand Groups and Expuss Discount Josephally Himalavan kingdom. hanghai and it would be useful to tar Privatise. Take it away from the politicians. Let Singapore Airlines run it RNAC to Indians? What can they get here that they into that market, to convince some of them to spend their holidays in Nepa wne Plaza Hotel, Lok Raj Pant Anyone who has worked in the remote districts of Nepal knows the In Shanghai the first thing to do is to head straight for the shopping

xpatriate community. Crowne Plaza's General Manager is Mahmood Massood, one of those suave UK-educated Pathans from

(a) www.wavemag.com.np

nalls, and plunk into a Starbuck

Royal Nepal Airlines is not listed

prochure. Nobody even knew it

flew to Shanghai except for one

magazine called City Weekend.

which a few weeks earlier had

published a pictorial travel feature

Royal Nepal hosted a dinner

Nepal's "look east" tourism policy will have to focus on the China market. But what can they get here they can't get at home?

DANIEL R HARER

IN SHANGHAI eement between China and Nepal has approved Nepal China's outhound tourists. Nepal Rastra Bank has agreed to make the Chinese vuan a convertible currency.

Many, however, are initially banking on the large expatriate "hardship" postings as Beijing and would like to open a Nepali restaurant in Shanghai in partnership with Fulbari Resort, and that they would

European school in Shanghai, and





Should Royal Nepal Airlines be privatised?

There is no other way to save RNAC than to hand it over to private entrepreneurs. A virtually resourceless state can not rescue a bankrupt and mismanaged state corporation. The corporation should find its bread and butter from it's own revenue. Once it ones to private hands, the state coffers will stop bleeding and the CIAA, Parliament, the Courts, the Press, and even the general public can use their time and resources for other constructive business. Time is running out, we may not get quality investors if we delay the process for long.

RNAC is marred by inefficiency, mismanagement and frequent scandals, it needs a complete overhaul. The government has proved to be incapable of running any sort of business, including civil aviation. RNAC must be privatised, but it must go to a party that can run the airline efficiently and profitably for the greater interest of the nation

Pukar Bista

No privatisation. Already there is a huge gap between the rich and the

The way the government is sucking RNAC dry, it is better to keep the airline out of the government's reach. Deependra P Acharva, UK

Privatisation may not be the best solution to the problem. Nepal is not yet ready for full-blown privatisation. Due care must be taken in protecting the domestic sector so that ordinary Nepalis will still be able to fly.

Batu Krishna Sankota Before privatising think of what happened to other companies that were

Political interference has ruined RNAC, but everyone blames the staff, So let the government hand it over to the public

A loval RNAC staffer for 25 years RNAC should be 51% owned by the government, the rest should be

Iswar Atreva RNAC should be privatised so it is no longer a cash cow for politicians for funding elections and employing cadre.

Purshottam Ra

It is a disgrace to call RNAC a national flag carrier. It is an embarrassment for the country. The attitude of the staff is appalling, rude to say the least, and the on-time record is very poor. As a passenger, you just can't plan around an RNAC flight. Flight cancellations are rampant and worst of all, it still boasts of one of the highest number of employees per aircraft in the

importance and service provided by RNAC. Life without RNAC is unimaginable there. Tell me how a private airline can take you to Taplejung for just Rs 500. RNAC connects poor and remote areas. What will happen to them if you privatise the airline? An RNAC aircraft engineer

Give it to business entrepreneurs, and not politicians, to run.

Varat Pokhrel

All good citizens of Nepal should join together to voice loud and clear our determination to rescue RNAC. We've seen how other governments are pouring extra cash to save their

respective flag carriers following the attacks in the USA. In RNAC's case the government just keeps taking money from the airline. S Bhattarai

Knowing the way business is done in Nepal, it really makes no difference whether airlines operate under the government or the private sector. Both

Privatise. And save RNAC from corruption and destruction. Disgusting and rude flight crew, unreliable service, how long will we let RNAC

Good question. But you think corrupt politicians will allow privatisation to happen? They won't privatise unless they get a good dakshina.

Dharma Gurung Navarai Dhakal

Chandra Prasad Mishra Korea It should be privatised at least to control the corruption so that RNAC can be an airline with an image like other Asian airlines. Pramod Dawadi, Japan

Yes. Government is too busy being corrupt to improve the airline. Yeah, privatise it. But who is going to buy a bankrupt airline? And why should the government privatise its milking cow? Just ask Girija!

RNAC staff are not even getting their salary. Privatise it. If RNAC disappears from the sky nobody will shed any tears. The privatisation unit in the Ministry of Finance is not moving. There is

point of privatisation?

no political will to privatise RNAC. Shvam Subba, Khotang Yes. Not only RNAC, everything must be privatised. Dev Guruna, Hona Kona

Rajesh Adhikari

Kumar Adhikari

Look at the scandals: Dhamija, China Southwest, Lauda, Chase Air. And

then ten years ago, RNAC sold two perfectly good 727s for scrap.

Royal Nepal Airlines is destroying Nepal's image. Privatise it immedi

Privatisation is good, but private companies in Nepal do not have the

expertise to run an international airline. It will be another mess. There

may be hope for privatisation if the process of privatisation went honestly without any nepotism. But there is no chance of that, is there?

Rajeeb L Satyal

RNAC, like everything else the government runs (Sajha, Trolley Bus,

There are pros and cons. If RNAC goes into the hands of those private companies with vested interest to make hefty profits, then what is the

Banijya Bank) are all bankrupt. They should all be privatised.

Privatisation is the only solution...but Nepal is not yet ready for full-blown privatisation. Due care must be taken in protection the domestic sector so that ordinary Nepalis can still afford to fly. The selection of bidders or a parent company should be done in a transparent manner. International airlines like KLM, SAS or Air France should be approached individually Leave out Asian carriers with the exception of Cathy Pacific, Singapore Airlines and JAL. Many others are doing okay but do not have enough experience of managing a subsidiary company. Politicians must not

And they're off.



ADVENTURE

ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY amphitheatre that is the Himalaya. w that autumn is finally A number of Nepali youth ionesing for the distinctive adrenaline ere, and the clear blue skies nd sunny afternoons with it, rush of biking, and tourists longing orty types, especially for a taste of adventure, have ensured that the sport has captured public cycling enthusiasts, say it is time to start gearing up for a season of ups and downs. Mountain biking, which has imagination. And it all comes to a head this season, with several biking events become an increasingly popular peing organised, the most exciting and adventure sport here in the last few lamest of which is the Siemens Action years, is the sport of the season, and Asia Himalayan Mountain Bike Race one of the biggest cycling events is about to begin in the splendid Series 2001. This three-day race series, to be held around the Valley on 10,



And we are about to be hit by its biggest event.

number of high-ranking government officials, ambassadors, prominent

figures from the Nepali sporting

world, the race participants, naturally and also Village Development

Committee members from Lubhu, Sankhu, and Kakani, where the races

will take place. Ceremony over, the

streets of Thamel in decorated

celebrities will be sent off through the

rickshaws behind a police band, while some 1,000 flags, whistles and ticker

tapes will be handed out to onlookers The procession will end at the

Himalayan Mountain Bike office in

Organisers are expecting about

200 cyclists, Nepalis and foreigners to compete in five different categories:

Thamel with a cultural show.

18, and 24 November, might be just open to all and will be attended by a that extra boost Nepal's flagging tourism industry needs.

The races will be filmed by TransWorld International, one of the world's leading producers of sport documentaries, and 30 minute packages will be distributed to international television channel networks such as ESPN and National Geographic, with a potential viewing audience of 64 million. "This could be just what was needed to kick start ourism," says Pradeep Raj Pandey CEO of the Nepal Tourism Board. one of the sponsors of the event.

The event opens this afternoon or Tridevi Marg, and the organisers say Thamel has not seen a show of this size for quite some time. The ceremony is

...., open, women's, masters (over 40), juniors (under 16), and the interschool competition. Besides local stars like Ranjan Rajbhandary, who came second in last year's race, the Series will also have big-name international participants like Marc Weichert and Christoph Muller both top European cyclists. The open and masters race will cover a distance of 35 km over five laps, the women go 18 km, while the juniors cover 12 km. Winners will take home hefty cash prizes, trophies, and certificates, and other goodies like mund trip air tickets to Europe. In addition, the organisers have also decided to give away great prizes to onlookers-three mountain bikes worth \$650 each

from the world famous brand Fuii

With all this ahead it is not surprising we see all these bikers out raining in the mornings and Raibhandary is said to be in Tibet preparing for the race. Peter Stewart race director thinks the Nepali riders have a fair chance "Given that hings are tough as it is, what with quipment being so expensive, Vepali riders who take the sport iously have it in them to do well. Their only disadvantage is that they don't have up-to-date equipment,

once Stowart

Antu Charan Shrestha is a young businessman and an amateu rider. He recently discovered the joys of pedalling uphill and eeding down muddy tracks, and is ooked. The monsoon season for him was exceptional. "This was my first season of mountain biking and I loved it," he says, laughing at how he was covered with leaches and mud when he and a friend biked from Kaloni to Budhanillontha during the rains. He plans to do everything he can to keep riding and getting better, including participating in the Race Series, "Some friends of mine and I will certainly be taking part, even if we will be competing with professional riders," he says enthusiastically.

And he isn't the only one There is great enthusiasm, especially among young men, for jolting around and even falling off bikes, and with events like this race series to add that professional edge, it will be surprising if in a few years Nepal does not have at least a couple of world class bikers. There are endless places to ride out to, so go! And if you need some inspiration, just get out and watch the races.



and have been been a first framewood fragging Spring Control of Williams Francisco Spring for Spring Street, W. (1977).

9-15 NOVEMBER 2001 NEPALITIMES 1 ADVENTURE



series on 10 Novem her starts from the South Gate of Ranihan Forest two m off the turn from

the Ring Road to Balaju. The course follows a steady 22 km uphill climb that intermediate in difficulty. This might just be one of the most picturesque /allow rim ac it

winds through small villages, occasionally opening up to glimpset of terraces on both sides. The road is mostly sealed with rough patches, minor water crossings and the occasional muddy and sandy sections. Even for non-participants, for those who love the sport or simply want to see what the sport is all about, the view of the Himalaya from Kakani, at 2,066 m, comes as a splendid bonus. But spectators need to get into the perimeter of the race course before 9.30AM, as the roads will be closed to all traffic and policed

during the event, while Race Marshals man the course Participants in the open and seniors category will complete the whole 21.9 km course, while those in the women and juniors segments will start their event from the 14.5 km mark of the race and complete the last 7 km. The school relay teams will complete the entire course, with each member riding approximately 7 km.
Wheelchair riders will start from the main starting gate and complete the first 7.85 km, up to the first change-over in the



RACE 3

town gate of the old village of Lubhu, is moderate to difficult, town gate of the old village of Loons, is moderate to diffied depending on the race category as there are different courses for some. All riders follow the same route from Lubhu out to the village bus park near Siserni adjoining a large pinal tree. From here the wheelchair riders will return to Lubhu while the junior and women riders will continue to the gate of the Elite's Co-Ed School grounds and then return to Lubhu over the same course. Participants in the open and senior categories will ascend the challenging 7 kms to Lakuri Bhanjyang testing everyone's endurance and then their downhill abilities on the return to Lubhu. The course starts at downlini abilities on the feature of Lourie. The Course starts at an elevation of approximately 1,310 m and climbs steadily as it winds up to Lakuri Bhanjyang at 2,066 m. Once again, Nepali villages and a forested terrain set the landscape, with a stunning display of the Himalaya across the northern edge of the Valley nm. The road is a dirt jeep track, and in sections is stony and rinned

Race course three on 24 November, which starts from the

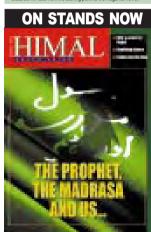


This will be the first international sporting event in Nepal where the disabled will also have the chance to prove themselves. Some 30 disabled people will be participating in wheelchairs in all three races. The race courses have been adjusted to accommodate the participants, but be certain, it will a challenging task, Savs Rakunuz Zaman. program manager of Handicap International Nepal, and one of the members of the race committee, "This will give an opportunity to the disabled to prove that they are normal. and ensure they are recognised by society." There is even talk of recognising this event as a national championship





The second race on 18 November will commence from the Club Himalaya in Nagarkot. From a starting altitude of approximately 1,950m, the road descends across a fantastic Himalayan backdrop and typical Nepali countryside that will make every stretch memora ble. The road is nearly all jeep track, with some rough and monsoon-ripped sections that will require cautious riding. Pros. describe the course as intermediate to challenging, with a progres sive drop of 515m over 9 kms after a short uphill at the start of the race. All participants will complete the entire length while the disabled will race from the starting point to the Nagarkot Towe





MICHELLE DELIO

infections seem to have slowed nlike most of its headline omewhat last month, suddenly rabbing predecessors, the in the last week, new and mor SirCam virus that hit us in notent variants have surfaced. July was not a transient threat. And experts say it will continue Almost four months after it was to spread until computer users develop a healthy scepticism of any and all e-mail attachments, first spotted, the virus and deadlier variants are still pouring into e-mail inboxes no matter who sent them, how Most viruses peak and then rapidly fade away two or three legitimate they look, or how tempting the contents of those days after their Internet debuts. attachments promise to be. But so far. SirCam has been "Viruses like LoveBug and more like a monsoon than a Kournikova all had the same squall Lists by antiviral subject line, body text, and companies that track virus attachment name," Shipp said. infections have SirCam topping So they were easily spotted the all-time active threat lists and all turned out to be oneday wonders, fading out within by a huge margin. So, either SirCam is one incredibly 48 hours of being identified But viruses like SirCam. pervasive and persuasive virus. or its much-heralded predeces Magistr and Hybris change their sors didn't have a huge effect on identity and all these viruses most e-mail users have been very long-lived in Rob Rosenberger of

comparison to the one-day vMyths, a virus hoax site, argues that most "red alert Hybris, first spotted in October 2000, was still rated as viruses are really just tempests in a teacup, dubbing them the third most active virus on "Hystericanes" that do little Sophos' summer list, with 4.1 damage to few users and fade percent of all reported infecfast. Impact statistics for the tions. It often cops a top spot best-known viruses seem to on virus threat lists, but confirm Rosenberger's theory. infection rates have continued Melissa, which spread across to diminish significantly since last October. Hybris updates networks in March 1999, only reached fifth place on antiviral itself by downloading little pieces of code that allow it to company Sophos' list that month, with a mere 6 percent perform new, malicious actions. of all reported infections. But so far, the text of an "VBS/LoveLet," better known infected e-mail always refers to as the Love Bug, came in first snow White and the Seven place when it debuted in May Dwarves, which makes it easie 2000, but claimed only 36 for computer users to identify percent of all reported infec tions. That record was barely Magistr has appeared in the topped by AnnaK in February ton five of most antivirus 2001, with 38.2 percent of all companies' lists since it was

occasionally turn up, but the originals sputtered out after only a few days of running wild. SirCam's infection rate is far greater than that of its predecessors and, although

reported infections. Variants of

all three of these viruses

and influencing people. sometimes includes random file attachments from its victims with the infected e-mail: SirCam always includes a file plucked from the

infected machine. And like SirCam, Magistr has its own e-mail engine that allows it to connect directly to a mail server. But Magistr trashes infected comput ers, which has limited its ability to spread widely. It's hard to transfer a virus when the computer that harbours it is unusable Dr Wise Young, recently honoured by Time magazine as one of America's best scientists. said SirCam and Magistr have many of the same features as

biological viruses and bacteria 'A virus cannot reproduce by itself. It must do so with host cells because it contains little or no machinery for protein synthesis," Young said. "In contrast a bacterium is a unicellular organism that contains its own machinery for reproduction. A biological worm such as a taneworm or a liver fluke is a multicellular organism that not only contains its own machinery for reproduction but has many multiple cells that perform specialised functions."

Computer viruses are malicious programs that spread only through physical actions such as clicking on an e-mail attachment or sharing an nfected diskette. In this respect they are similar to biological viruses. A computer wormmalicious code that can automatically replicate itself over networks—is biologically similar to bacteria, which is capable of reproducing without any outside help, Technically, both Magistr and SirCam are worms as well as viruses. Both require an actionclicking on an infected attach-

other ways of winning friends ment-to be activated, but once

"Sir Cam. I presume?" And

punch with its viral ability to appeal to humans' 'curiosity' cell. and its bacteria-like ability to self-replicate," Young, the head of high-tech WM Keck Center for Collaborative Neuroscience, said. "So there is a good chance that SirCam may be with us for a long time." Inboxes filled with messages asking for advice have already become the norm for those hit hardest by SirCam anyone whose e-mail address appears on a website. Each time the user of an infected computer boots up a program on that machine, SirCam infects a randomly selected document from the My Documents folder and attaches the document to an e-

mail. It then sends that e-mail to

randomly selected names gathered

from an infected computer's e-

mail address book and Internet

cache files, which contain copies

of recently visited websites.

activated they are capable of replicating themselves.

"SirCam packs a double



can be safely pried open by the ech-savvy, so some SirCam victims have been turned into unwilling exhibitionists, flashing their private parts to nosy nerds around the world. Some people who have been reading the attachments speak almost fondly of their new plague-ridden "friends," saying they feel they have come to know them by peeking into their private documents. "Yes, I read all the attachments," said Terry Anders, freelance technical researcher. "There's Enrique, he's looking for a job and is getting desperate. I keep getting new 'upgraded' sions of his resume and cover letters. Maria is in human resources and is struggling hard to keep a large corporation happy. Gerald is an immigration lawyer with a heavy caseload and a short

temper he sends sarcastic memos to his staff. And Thomas is an accountant with a wicked porn collection '

Anders and others who are eading the attachments said they first attempted to alert the sender of SirCam-infested e-mails that they had been infected. But the alert e-mails often were returned with error messages indicating that the infected user's return address was incorrect. SirCam's built-in email program can spoof addresses. And so, when the e-mailed attachments just kept coming, some people started reading them. "SirCam has been like a sleazy soap opera for geeks, so I'll be sorry to see it fade away," Anders said. "But it's got to suck for all the people who suddenly realise that their little secrets have been providing mad amusement for techies around the world." (Wind)



The State Color is Science and Broughest is an internationally procured name of madiene is de Reporte Indicaptured Inspiritue. Unde sei una passi of NAM applied, minorismuch stands declarages and come suggests. producting the lateral experience of the production of the lateral parties of the lateral late We also with a requirement proved analysis and advantage faculty becomes used in the technological development of Yorks produce a forcer descrip-



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In defence of media

ou see and read and hear, suck it



Are TV and newspapers really to blame for all the spin, war-mongering and fear?

ou can rant and can pule and bunch of liberal hype-mongers or conservative war-drunk jingoists controlled by heartless corporate money-slugs who would sell their own mothers for a juicy 175-poin banner headline.

Either one you choose it's still a rarified cabal of fear-happy headline whores who only occasionally stumb across the truth, and almost by accident, moments of genuine emotion to commercial

It's the typical cynical outlook, amplified by innumerable anthrax hoaxes and uncountable collateral

down, every Rumsfeld shuffle, every Dubya flub and every robotic CNN talking head, spinning yarns, prepackaging wars and leaving enormou rs of information out because either you can't handle it or they can't tell you because it would kill the ratings or affect your vote—or maybe ecause, very simply, they don't really know Which isn't unlikely There's nothing like a complicated, nasty, lie-riddled war that's not

really a war to get people riled about the media. And it's a slippery slope, all major media outlets trying to package the war as attractively and scitingly as possible while downlaying the sensationalism and the blood and death, but also clearly everaging the horror like hell. hu en denying it because they're accused of pandering, hyping and lying. Call it a dilemma, a conundrum. Just don't call it reasonable or in any way something you can ndemn with 100 percent impun

But know this about journalists nd editors-in-chief and news directors and etc : Most take their sponsibility to the public seriously inely want to tell the "real" story et at the honest truth, not overhyne r instil wanton fear and cause you to build a bunker and wear a baymat sui to have sex and never open another eeting card. Most want to deliver balanced and thorough information i

entertained and informed, and do so such that they can still make their car

payments. Really.

The bottom line is, there is no bjective truth in the fluxive worlds of religion and hate and politics (or love, sex, or fine dining, but that's another column), during wartime in particu-lar. No black/white absolutes about the human condition or what drives the dark mind or what the appropria response is when a nation is attacked, where to draw the lines of what's acceptable and moral, and what's

intless, barbarous war-mongering.
"We must consider how very little history there is; I mean real authentic history," wrote Samuel Johnson, back in 1755. "That certain kings reigned and certain battles were fought, we car depend on as true; but the colouring. all the philosophy, of history is conjecture." There are few facts. There are few known truths. It's all about context. And contex

is all about perspective. And perspec-tive is all about personal experience, a mad tangle of synapses and memory. ignifying nothing. Nobody knows the proper spin, the right words, the correct answer. You filter and learn and do your best to make sense of it a and if you're honest, really, really nest about it, you simply say, I don't really know. But I'm trying to.

(Mark Morford writes a column on sfgate.com/newsletters/.)

Back in business

BELGRADE - Macedonia has ordered weapons worth "millions of dollars" from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), marking, say analysts, the revival of the country's military industry. The deal was clinched in capital Belgrade in late October. "The important thing is, the military industry is being revived " military analyst Stine Sikavica told us. "Thirteen percent of all the exports of the former Yugoslavia in the

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1080e were from the military industry." Since the Federal Directorate for Special Goods (SDPR), the FRY's military trading company, was reorganised in 1949, the country has exported military equipment worth \$23 million

Customers were Third World countries who bought the equipment when the former Yugoslavia was a "respected" member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). "We combined (former) Soviet and East European weaponry with the Western technology at our disposal and made sophisticated goods," said Jovan Cekovic, head of SDPR, "The crown was the M-84A tanks made for Kuwait, and successfully used by the allied forces in the 1991 Gulf War." he added. The tanks raked in \$500 million in exports. Until 1990, Yugoslavia was a non-traditional Communist country that had good relations with the former Soviet Union and the West. After the bloody 1990s wars of disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, the FRY was placed under sanctions, including an arms trade embargo that was lifted after the 1996 Dayton Peace Accord ended the Bosnian conflict. It was re-introduced in March 1998 to curb the military adventures in Kosovo by the regime of Slobodan Milosevic. After Milosevic was ousted last October , the UN Security Council lifted the embargo last month. (IPS)

GTZ gets active

FRANKFURT - The state-owned German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) has acquired a crucial role in Germany's aid policy following the recent decision by the German parliament to focus on bilateral cooperation with 70 developing countries, rather than the 118 that Germany provided official aid to until recently. The objective, say officials at GTZ's largest client, the Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, is to increase the efficiency of aid and strendthen regional cooperation. "This (new policy) enables us to respond flexibly, and at short notice, within a setting that is changing at an ever-quicker pace—a crucial factor, especially in the case of emergency assistance measures," says GTZ director-general Bernd Eisenblaetter. The new policy will enable GTZ to respond directly to tensions and conflicts and reconcile divergent interests. This is becoming increasingly important as crisis prevention and conflict management move higher up Germany's development cooperation agenda. Other areas of GTZ activity include helping implement the UN Convention to Combat Desertification in development cooperation for natural resource management and desertification control in dry zones where 1.3 billion people live. GTZ also has a crucial role in bringing private companies to co-finance government-aided development projects. An example of the so-called public-private partnerships (PPPs) is an innovative solid waste management system in Peru being introduced in cooperation with a Frankfurt company. In Nepal, in cooperation with the Sulzburg firm Primavera Life, GTZ is training local specialists in organic farming. Germany's annual budget for development cooperation is about \$4 billion, just under 0.3 percent of gross national income. The UN target is 0.7 percent. (IPS)

Fix it, don't sink it

damaging bombs and absurd TV

images of old ladies walking around i

ras masks. Donald Rumsfeld placing

nis foot in his mouth and quickly

emoving it after a nasty phone call

rom Ari Fleischer. Repackaged reality

and dissecting the human drama into

tidy sound-bites until your eyes glaze

over and you think, there they go

igain, the goddamn media, skewing

verything, pumping out one-sided

versions and pro-America headlines a

ratings magnets until you don't know who to believe anymore, the ostensibly

liberal iournalists, the octensibly

media cynics, or somewhere in

between. You can trust no one

conservative media owners, the anti-



w people question the benefits of international trade. And since global vivine international institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO) is in many ways the most fully developed such institution. It has cessful at creating international law, and adjudicating disputes and enforcing its decisions. But the economic dislocations of the last decade, and the lack of adequate social safety nets in less developed countries have generated tremendous resentment against globalisation. As member states meet in Qatar today, globalisation's opponents want to "shrink or sink the WTO." They are misguided.

The WTO has its shortcomings, but it is designed to guide international trade, not pursue social goals. The trouble is not the WTO, but the lack of similarly effective institutions devoted to social goals like environmental protect tion, food safety, human rights and labour rights. The WTO's modus operands is unsuitable for social development. Its strength is its enforcement mechanism, which states accept because they want the benefits of trade. They will not accept it in other areas. Would China, soon to be a member, agree to the inclusion of human rights? Would the United States be amenable on the environment? Enforcing agreed-upon rules is not appropriate for achieving social goals, as man countries lack the resources to meet international standards. Instead, it would be better to provide resources to enable poor countries to comply voluntarily. For example, instead of introducing a WTO rule prohibiting child labour, we ought to provide resources for universal primary education and then demand that recipients of such support eliminate child labour over time.

Still, there are valid objections that call for significant changes in WTO rules. The WTO is practically the only international institution to which countries willingly subordinate themselves. This makes it too powerful, because its trade liberalisation rules trump domestic regulations aimed at social values. The

The WTO could do with a better-defined mandate and less sweeping powers, but it needs to stay.

WTO's regal status needs to be changed. First, the order of precedence between WTO and national laws should be reversed. As things stand, no country can use trade sanction to impose its own standards on another country when an orted product is the same as the nationally produced ne. Banning imported hormone-treated beef, for example, disallowed, unless there is evidence that that beef is different from domestically produced beef. The exception is if there is an international agreement to which both countries have subscribed. But such agreements are hard to reach. Countries should be allowed to enforce their higher national standards on imported and domestic goods unless WTO experts find that such domestic standards

should be prohibited or are unnecessary Second the WTO was overreaching when it became involved in intellectual property rights. Intellectual property rights have turned science into business, which is motivated by profit. This process has gone too far, posing an obstacle to important research for developing countries. Far more money, for example, is spent today on developing cosmetics than on curing tropical diseases. Patent and copyright protection are needed, but this constitutes a restraint of trade. How much is justified? The calculus is different for technologically advanced countrie that profit from innovations and press for their protection by the WTO, and less developed countries that have to pay for them. LDCs have reason to be resentful about Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs).

Third, the agreement on Trade Related Investment Measures (TRIMs) uld be renegotiated to allow support for homegrown small and medium enterprises. TRIMs are designed to provide a level playing field between foreign and domestic enterprises. But in a world in which capital is free to move around, the playing field is heavily tilted in favour of international investors and multinational comorations TRIMs institutionalise and reinforce this bias Countries often offer tax incentives and other subsidies, often even bribes, to transnational corporations because they have to compete to attract foreign investment. The WTO does not address these issues and there are no rules against activities of transnational corporations harmful to the countries in which they operate.

Although incentives for domestic small and medium businesses (microcredit and better financing) should be provided outside the WTO, trade rules should be modified to make room for such support. (Project Syndicate)

George Soros is Chairman of the Open Society Institute and of Soros Fund Management.

40.0001/sft.BAR



..... Where the tales are as tall as the mountains

Succulent steaks and burgers bountiful, with a vegetarian variety. The friendliest har around the most convinial fireplace between Tibet and Timbuctoo, Live band on Tuesdays and fridays!





first spotted in March, and has

infection. SirCam is similar to

subject, body and attachment

text of their infectious e-mail

attachments from files on an

infected computer. Magistr

maintained a steady rate of

Magistr. Both create the

NEW DELHI - Recent disclosures that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is not safe, coming amid unrest over the war in Afghanistan, and rumours that the US might be planning to "neutralise" it, once more highlight South Asia's nuclear dangers. The region, which crossed the nuclear threshold in May 1998, could be on the brink of a confrontation unless India-Pakistas rivalry is defused and pro-Taliban protests abate in Pakistan To omplicate matters, US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld on 29 October refused to "rule out" the possibility that the US could use tactical nuclear weapons against bir Laden's suspected hide-outs.

Numerous recent developments including media reports, suggest that the danger of Pakistan's nuclear weapons or materials falling into the handsofnm-Talihan and al-Oarda elements is very real. The New York Times, Guardian, the (London) Times, and the Washington Post hav all carried articles quoting US and British intelligence officials on the vulnerability of Pakistan's nuclear weapons. The most revealing is a story by Seymour Hersh in the 29 October New Yorker. This is a credible accoun of the high vulnerability of Pakistan's nuclear stockpile, and of how the US security establishment sees it. Hersh says the US military has a special deep enetration unit to seize, take out or defang Pakistan's nuclear weapons. The commando group is supposed training with an Israeli outfir. Unit 262, known for covert operations including theft and assa Pakistan is believed to have

between 20 and 60 nuclear weapons

(India probably has twice as many).

Both states lack reliable command

unauthorised access to the weapons, o

their accidental use. If Pakistan's street

protests against the war escalate and

the state is destabilised. Islamabad's

and control systems to prevent

Nuclear worries Just how safe are South Asia's

nuclear arsenals?

nuclear weapons could fall into the wrong hands. The Pakistan army which controls the nuclear programme, may split over militarily orting the US-led war. Alterna ively if the existing state structure collapses, radical Islamicists sympathetic to bin Laden or the Talihan could take over the nuclear arsenal. US government

pokepersons refuse to confirm or denv if there is a special unit engaged in nuclear surveillance in Pakistan, and if it is training with Israeli forces But Joseph R Biden, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has confirmed that President George W Bush is consulting senior leaders on plans to neutralise Pakistan's nuclear capabilities if Mushamaf's

reports, and action by the deep-penetration

intensify the crisis in Pakistan.

Pakistani and Indian authoritie

re downplaying the vulnerability of

Islamabad's poorly-safeguarded

nuclear arsenal. An official Pakistan

weapons falling into unauthorised

hands is "unthinkable "The Indian

government, otherwise extremely

dversarial towards Pakistan, also says

Pakistan's nuclear programme is safe.

Defence Minister George Fernandes

responsible people." He said he was

certain that Pakistan would not allow

anybody to tamper with the devices.

This is an irresponsible comment, not based on real familiarity with

gramme or practices. There has never

ocen any clarity among Indian officials

on these issues. (Some had dismissed

he possibility of Pakistan ability to

make and test a bomb until the day it

deflect questions about the safety of

has a high potential for mishaps and

dismiss concerns about the unique

orone. And both their nuclear

nuclear danger in South Asia India

and Pakistan are disaster- and mishap-

rogrammes are marked by appalling

reaches of safety regulations. Even

heir military infrastructures have a

former senior scientists of the Atomic

mested and detained for alleged pro

Taliban views and links Both are said

to be experts on plutonium technol-

ogy. Media reports, denied by Islamabad, say they have been handed

bad safety record. In Pakistan, two

Energy Commission have been

sted.) Femandes' remark is meant to

India's own nuclear arsenal (which also

accidental or unauthorised use), and to

Pakistan's nuclear weapons pro

said last week: "Those concerned with

snokesman says the danger of nuclear

But both offers ran up against patents held on the drug by the German pharmaceutical giant Bayer in the US, valid until this time fostered the growth of its legendary, privately-owned under government control

US lawmakers have been calling for lifting Bayer's patent Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Associations (IEPMA) opposes compulsory licensing, arguing that it constricts incentives for now, she says, the US is not interested in reforming the global

patent regime, only in solving ciprofloxacin shortages.

The vaccine was developed at Delhi's Jawaharalal Nehru to mass producing it at a fraction of what existing vaccines cost. using recombinant technology, says it is far superior to existing "supernatant" vaccines produced in the US and in Britain, which the LIS has not yet developed safe recombinant technology

Amit Sen Gupta, an expert on pharmaceutical drugs with the Delhi Science Forum, sees a lesson in this: "It is finally dawning on everyone that even developed countries need cheap drugs in times of crisis." He added that the argument that compulsory 30 years—though this may change with teh resurgence of TB in the \$56 billion spent worldwide on health-related R&D, only 0.2 tropical and developing countries that cannot be manufactured

over to US intelligence agencies for

In the shadow of Tamarlane



I NE NEW UZDEK-AMERICAN AIHANCE IS SURE TO WORTY Central Asia. China and Russia.

merica has officially entered into a strategic alliance with Uzbekistan, a relationship certain to reshape the geopolitical map of Central Asia.

While the US has quietly sought to ingratiate itself with the Central Asian states of Kazakstan, Kyrgizstan, Tadjikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan ever since they broke away from the Soviet Union a decade ago forging military relations with several of them under the auspices of NATO's Partnership for Peace program, a US military presence close to Russia's southern border would have been unthinkable even weeks ago. What America's new relationship with Central Asia will mean for the region' geopolitics is impossible to predict. No one can now foretell how long the US will be engaged in Uzbekistan, or whether America will extend its reach deeper into Central Asia. Much depends on how the ground-war evolves in Afghanistan, and if US military presence will make way for a UNsponsored supervisory mission as in Kosovo.

If there is no international military presence in the region, the US may make its military presence permanent. If it does, Uzbekistan could play the same cooperative-neighbour role for it that Pakistan did in the latter years of the Cold War. Even if the US were to fully withdraw, the military balance

within Central Asia would change, as the US will certainly offer Uzbekistan long-term military assistance as a reward for serving as a gateway for US litary engagement in Afghanistan.

Either way. Uzbekistan will distance itself from Russia militarily, which will

not please Russian President Vladimir Putin. But the degree of his displeasure will be shaped by the nature of the evolving relationship between Russia and NATO, A future US military base in Uzbekistan won't seem as troubling to Russia if Moscow is itself preparing for eventual NATO membership, a once fanciful idea that has been a subject for serious discussion in recent weeks. Putin is also aware of an implicit quid pro quo with the US—Washington's use of Uzbekistan as a stronghold to protect US strategic interests in Central and outh Asia creates room for Russian manoeuvring in Chechnya, and possibl Georgia as well. This may only partly appease Russia's displeasure, but it will allow Russia to address its own self-defined strategic interests

A US military presence in Central Asia is of even greater potential interest to China, which, like Russia, has a security relationship with Uzbekistan through membership in the six-pation Shanghai Forum. China would clearly benefit from the removal of bin Laden and his multinational terrorist network from Afghanistan and might seize this opportunity to crack down pre-emptively on Uighu separatists in China's southwest regions and other Chinese Muslim dissidents But China's interest in the security relationships of the Central Asian republics is no short-term matter. Given the region's energy supplies, it will be a fixed objective of Chinese foreign policy in the years ahead. But for now, China's government is likely to be content advancing China's economic interests in Central Asia and ensuring that none of its enemies can take refuge there.

Russian and Chinese strategic intersts across Central Asia need not be affected penatively by the LIS formy there but Lizbekistan's neighbours will feel their future security and the regional balance of power might be compromised by the almost inevitable increase in Uzbek military capacity, a predictable byproduct of cooperation with the US. Uzbek President Islam Karimov has long believed it is his country's destiny to dominate Central Asia and neighbouring leaders view the recently erected statue in Tashkent of the ancient conqueror l'amarlane as a warning of that. Many feel American weapons will only fuel Uzbek ambitions. (Project Syndicate)

Martha Brill Olcott is Senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and author of the forthcoming Kazakhstan Unfulfilled Promise.

The new drug problem

NEW DELHI - India has followed up its offer to supply cheap anti-anthrax drugs to the United States with the announcement of an affordable and effective vaccine against the deadly bacteria being used in bio-terrorist attacks in America. Last month India cocked a snook at the global patents system by offering the US 20 million tablets of ciprofloxacin, the drug of choice against anthrax, at a fraction of going costs. Apart from this offer by private pharmaceu tical companies, Foreign inister Jaswant Singh offered a gift of a \$1 million worth of ciprofloxacin to the US to tide over shortages. December 2003, Ironically, the US took India to the WTO dispute settlement tribunal, and in 1999 compelled India to begin work on legislation to introduce product patents and allow foreign patent holders exclusive marketing rights until then. India's policies until pharmaceutical industry and ensured that drug prices remained

restrictions given the huge rise in purchases of the antidote there.

One way out now is the compulsory licensing route under the Trade
Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), which enables WTO members to allow cheap local manufacture in the public interest.

But compulsory licensing has long been resisted by transnational drug corporations that demand higher levels of patent protection than provided under TRIPs. The International Federation of research and development and slows the search for better drugs.

Mira Shiva of the Voluntary Health Association of India, says the IFPMA is over-reacting, given the negligible share of developing countries in the \$400 billion global pharmaceutical market. Even

University, and Panacea Biotec, an Indian company, is committed Professor Rakesh Bhatnagar, who helped develop the new vaccine are expensive have side-effects and need hooster doses. Sameer machari, a biotechnology expert, says it is inconceivable that accines. "They probably have them stashed away because of their strategic value in biological warfare situations," he said. The new vaccine, which is patented, will be cheap—no high royalties are to be paid because of the government's low wages.

licensing destroys incentives for R&D was specious, as much of it happens in areas of little relevance for developing countries. "Take the case of tuberculosis where no new drug has been developed for developed countries " Sen Gunta said A 1996 WHO report says of percent is spent on pneumonia, diarrhoeal diseases and TB, which ent 18 percent of the global disease burden. Sen Gupta also referred to "orphan drugs", medicines effective against diseases in because they make no profits for transnational companies. (IPS)

Keeping China trucking

BEUING - With the 'war' against Afghanistan in its sixth week and uncertainty gripping the Middle East and Central Asia, China faces new fears about oil security and has accelerated plans to establish a strategic oil reserve. For long-term oil security, China needs to reduce dependence on the Middle East as an energy supplier and on the US, whose military controls the tanker routes across the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. China imports about 30 percent of its oil consumption, two-thirds of this from the Middle East. With economic growth steady at around 7 percent in the foreseeable future, the country's need for oil could only rise-it is expected to reach 390 million tonnes by 2020, with domestic production at around 180 million tonnes. Last year despite soaring international prices, China imported 70 million tonnes of oil, up from 36 million tonnes in 1999, Wang Zhongming, an official from the State Economic and Trade Commission, recently emphasised: "We must quickly form regulations in such fields as Sino-foreign cooperation in land and offshore oil exploration, oil and gas pipeline protection and the State oil stockpile to pave way for the law," Wang said. Experts say Beijing should take advantage of depressed oil prices and triple its planned strategic oil stockpile to 18 million tonnes. China is also looking anew at gas pipeline projects that previously had more political than economic benefit. Beijing has announced plans to build a "west-east" pipeline linking the natural gas fields in the Tarim basin in Xinjiang with Shanghai. The official rationale is that the project will bring employment and jump-start China's poverty-stricken far west, long troubled by separatist movements. But the pipeline faces daunting challenges It will cost \$15 billion to build, 11 ministries will be involved in its management, and the trunk line alone will traverse 12 provinces and 50 cities. Experts see the pipeline as the first part of a much larger grid linking gas fields in Central Asia and China with Japan Central Asian states such as Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan hold some of the largest untagged gas resources in the world. Reijing is discussing plans with the Kazakh government to build a pipeline from gas fields on the Caspian Sea to Xinjiang and further east to markets in Japan and South Korea. (IPS)

Speech, after long silence



FROM THE NEPALL PRESS

Kantipur, 21 October

..Till date two rounds of dialogue have already taken place, and we are now preparing for the third round. The tragedy of the situation is that although the third round of dialogue is set to begin, there are very many learned people who have no idea about what it is being held for who just refuse to listen to it, or pretend they know nothing while, in fact they know everything. Do they really think that after making these great sacrifices we will be willing to join the present political system. which is rotten to the core? Don't you think that we are ready for a dialogue to find a way out of the mess the country is currently in?

If we try a little and remember the situation of the country to 23 July, we will definitely get the answer. Haven't our great fighters achieved one victory after another, from Dunai to Holeri? Doesn't the "people's government" formed in almost all districts now, show that the nation is ready for a change that the

people have accepted us and support us fully? Isn't this proof of our success and our achievements? So how can you imagine that a force which has been victorious on the military and non-military fronts is surrendering when they come to the negotiating table? It is stupidity to even think so. Doesn't this show our greatness, in fact, that as the reactionary forces are moving from one disaster to another and we are moving from one victory to another, we are still prepared to come to the negotiating table and speak with them? Despite this, the reactionary government is not prepared to find a peaceful way out of this problem and only harps on that it is not prepared to compromise on the present constitution or the constitutional monarchy

Keeping the aspirations of the people in mind, our party has agreed to an agenda that meets its goals only halfway. We have put aside our main demands and are ready to meet the other party. For now, we only want an interim government, a new constitution and a republic. This is our minimum-noints agenda at the moment. These are not communist principles but are, in fact, pure capitalist ideas that we have put forward...

The above three points are indivisible and inter-related. Negating one makes the others incomplete—it only takes common sense to figure this out. Anyone can understand that an interim government leads to a new constitution, and a new constitution leads to a republic. Anyone can figure that out. If we say an interim government only, it means staying within the

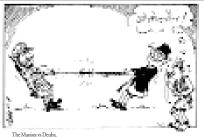
present system and constitution and this is not in our interests. There are certain issues that we had put forward right in the beginning, but it seems that many people simply did not get it, or analysed it incorrectly. First of all, we have agreed to stop all military activities. We have in no way stopped our political activities-we have continued the process of forming people's governments, the collection of donations and other economic and peaceful activities. No one has ever objected to these activities. If people do not understand this, there is little we can do to help them. During this ceasefire we will be carrying out our regular activities-everything but our military campaign. We have the right to do what we want and no one can tell us what to do.

I think it will be proper to talk about donations. A donation is something given voluntarily It is not collected forcefully and that is not what we do. Revolutionaries collect donations in a peaceful manner, while the enemies of the revolution collect taxes and fines forcefully from the people. In fact, the enemies confiscate property forcefully at times, too. We also have the right to collect economic wealth, that is a fundamental belief of any revolution. In our efforts to collect donations, we have heard, some difficulties crept in, in the way we were doing it. Our leader Prachanda has publicly apologised for that. This does not mean that we have stopped collecting donations, for the time being or for all time. We are still collecting in many areas. We are just requesting people to be cautious and make sure no one is cheating them in our name.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

If you consider the nature of the wrongs that Paras has committed, he should be put in jail, not on the throne.

-Shvam Shrestha, editor of Mulvankan, in Iana Aastha Saptahik, 7 November



Onlooker: "Oh dear...!

Jana Bhawana, 5 November

Jumbo Cabinet

THIS PAGE CONTAINS MATERIAL SELECTED FROM THE NEPALL PRES

Recently Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba expanded his 13member cabinet to 41. This expansion has placed a bigger financial burden on the country. H has got together all the smugglers and made them ministers, at a cost of Rs 50 million per year, an additional burden on the country It was estimated that the total expenditure of the earlier cabinet that had only 13 ministers would b only Rs 25 million per year. This estimate has been revised for this huge cabinet, and now stands at Rs

There were not enough flag bearing vehicles for all these ministers and so the governmen has hired seven vehicles for the ministers of state. The people realise that the prime minister formed this huge cabinet only to tighten his grip on power, and to



increase the duration of his term as prime minister. People also realise that this is not beneficial to the nation and is a purely politica move. Immediately after the formation of this huge cabinet a decree was passed allowing the prime minister to appoint 49 ministers. In addition, each ministe of cabinet rank could appoint seven people and each minister of state nd deputy minister could appoint

five people. Recently Prince Paras and his wife were made Crown Prince and Crown Princess. The palace has sent a letter to the government requesting that they be given their due as set out by the civil list. The nalace has asked for Rs 3.5 million immediately, though in this fiscal year no money was set aside for them. This year's hudget for the civil list was Rs 12 million.

Maoist education

Madhav Prasad Sapkota [who?] The students' wing of our organisation has just concluded its historic 15th convention, Every decision taken in this convention has been made public through decisions were that the students would accept the Prachanda Path and Maoism as their guiding principles, and that they would pla an active part in the "people's revolution". The state of the education sector is one issue on everyone's minds these days. In faceven right before the convention. everyone was curious to know wha line would be taken concerning the private and commercially-run education sector. Even people who did not understand the posit taken by the student wing started publicising it.

The nation is in a state of war, and so the situation keeps changing

Since education is a very imp area, it is only natural that it will be directly affected by the situation of the country. Our party has always raised its voice against the privatisation and commercialisa of education, and it is in this ontext that you have to under

tand our stance We have to realise that the resent system is a multi-party constitutional monarchy. So all governments that work within this stem have to work for the benefit of the monarchy. This means that until the present system is not completely destroyed, we will no he able to completely liberate the education sector. The main goal of our student wing is to establish a revolutionary education system once we come to power

We demand that private schools should be handed over to the government. At the moment, we are involved in handing over private schools to local communities, and they will later be brought under government control. Education is the responsibility of the govern ment, and it must never back out of this duty. We want education that will benefit society, not schools that are run with the intention of turning a profit. Education must b provided free of cost and work for the well-being of all society.

On the issue of giving schools back to communities, we have said that any person can start a ommunity fund and then a school but not to make money off it. nyone can work for the benefit of ciety. Education must be a social service, it must work for the benefit of society. This was the stand taken at the recently concluded convention of our students' wing. .

Quit, or else Spacetime, 20 October

Ram Bahadur Biswokarma of Dolakha district is terrified and ha moved to Kathmandu. His son. Bimal, is in the police force, and the Maoists had put a lot of pressure on him, asking him to make his son resign from the service. Some 20 t 30 students affiliated with the Maoist party visited Biswokarma's nouse a couple of days ago to ask

The students visited Siswokarma's house at night and told him that the whole family would face a lot of problems it Bimal did not resign immediately members of the family, who are in a tate of shock. The women of the family urged Ram Bahadur to come to

Kathmandu and speak with his son. Ram Bahaduris in a fiv He told Spacetime: "If he leaves his job, how vill we run the family, how will the children continue their education? If he does not quit his job, then any noment he we will be killed."

"We are in the process of destroying the present reactionary government. In its place we will pu a new revolutionary force that will be peaceful and for the people. Your son is helping the reactionar es suppress the will of the people So, ask your son to immediately esign from the police." This is what the Maoists who came visi

in the night told Ram Bahadur. Bal Bahadur Tamang of Sindhupalchok is also a very disturbed man. The Maoists hav threatened him too, as a result of which his family could not spend Dasain together this year either. Ba Bahadur's brother is in the army,

and the Maoists want him to resion. He has not been able to come home for Dasain for the las three years, because the Maoists told Bal Bahadur that his brother should send in his resignation once he reaches home There is presently a truce

ween government and Maoist forces. Also, most army and police ersonnel have returned home for Dasain. The Maoists are taking dvantage of this and pressuring the families of people in the army and the police to ask their members to resign. Sources say that the Maoist adre are moving from house to house and threatening the families of army and police personnel. The students' wing of the Maoists had said earlier that it would try and convince the children of army and police personnel to ask their rents to resign from their jobs and try and enlist these children into the Maoist cadre. Given this situation, many people are threatening people according to their whims and fancies.

The Maoists have started isiting the families of army and olice personnel in more than 35 districts. Their message is simple "We will soon be forming a rovernment. If you do not ask you amily members to resign from the army or the police as soon as possible, you may have to leave the country for ever

Poor, but proud

Kantipur, 3 November Kantipur, 5 Nove..... by Khagendra Sangroula

I heard this a couple of months ago An Indian businessman wanted to start a newspaper in Nepal and he was on the look out for a Nepali who would help him in this endeayour. He did not find anyone and I was quite happy. I was happy because I believed that although the Nepalis are poor, they have a lot of self-respect and are national ists to the core. A few weeks later, heard that finally some Nepali was willing to help the businessman, I felt disheartened. Some Nepali was willing to help this Indian, willing to become his stooge. The Nepali is willing to start this English paper. This paper is going to be published in Nepal, but its heart is not going o be on this side of the border.

In India there is an organisation related to this field. It is called the Asia Pacific Media Association, APCA for short. APCA is now going to set itself up in Nepal and start an English daily called Himalayan Times with Ram Pradhan as editor. There can be vo motives for starting this paper in Neval One is the profit aspect, the other could be a desire to destroy the very basis of this country and its

The media is a field that helps pread information, knowledge and will inform the people. It can help build the power of the people, but it can also destroy it. Media is directly related to the administra tion, the rule of law and the political situation of the country. It can shape the thinking of people, it can introduce nations and cultures to the outside world. But it is not a sector where there is a lot of profit to be earned. Realising the importance and seriousness of thi sector, most countries in the world do not allow foreign investment in it. India has one of the most stringent policies concerning this And a person from this very country, India, is now all set to start a paper in Nepal. . . .

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CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Writer Bhuvan Dhungana is the author of the

short story collection Yuddhako Ghoshana

Garnubhanda Aghi (Before the Declaration

of Gunjan, a group of woman writers who

organise monthly meetings in Kathmandu

as a means of overcoming both minor and major restrictions on women's intellectual

Dhungana's ability to compress time and space in order to throw together a tale that

is fresh, surprising and quite unexpected

This story originally appeared in Nepal

In her childhood she had heard the

tolling of temple bells. Those bells weren't

set up a shrine right next to the kitchen, a

ringing at a temple, though. Her mother had

small version of a temple. The daily routines

housework also involved daily worship. And

so she would awaken to the tan-tan tan-tan

rang just like the alarm clock she now keeps

tolling of the bell, the bell that her mother

Once there had even been a pact be-

must hide their mother's bell that disturbed

tween her and her younger brother: they

her mother performed before getting down to

mobility. The story below shows off

SYMBOL OF RELIGION

of War), a literary translator, an independentminded intellectual, and an active member

South Africa could eventually replace Australia as

THRASY PETROPOULOS ■ I hile the cricket world continues to salute the current Australia side as one of the best in the game's history, South Africa are rapidly emerging as challengers to their superiority. True, they cannot match Australia's record run of 16 successive Test wins. But a lool at the International Cricket Council's Test table, reveals them to be far



The Aussies lead the field with an average of 1.62. South Africa lie is second place with 1.50, while England are third with 1.14. The gulf ween Australia and South Africa and the rest is, therefore, immense South Africa have managed to win 12 out of their last 17 Test series, including victories in Pakistan and India. They are the only team that can match the Aussies for consistency both home and away. Australia have lost only three times abroad over the past four years—to India, Sri Lanka and

South Africa have lost three times in 17 series, to Australia (home and way) and to England abroad. It is perhaps true that South Africa lack Australia's ruthlessness, but when they had the opportunity to wipe the

are warming up for that battle. South Africa have just beaten India in the the first Test at Brisbane on Thursday. Their impressive records should continue. But while they are close, there is clearly a gan between the side and that lies in Australia's staggering strength in depth.

would walk into other national sides, and fast bowlers like Damien Flemins Andy Bichel and spinners Colin Miller and Stuart MacGill to call on. South Africa have few such luxuries. Andre Nel and Justin Kemp do not quite match up to their frontline attack of Shaup Pollock and Allan Donald (when fit). They do have in Boeta Dippenaar a young batsman versatile enough to cover all bases and Neil McKenzie has promise, but there is not much else ready to step in. And as Australia have shown so readily, it is not so much the personnel as the attitude.

match for Australia. Their performances have instilled a belief in not only their players but also their politicians. Sports minister Naconde Balfour said: "I think we are going to do very well against Australia with the depth of talent we (South Africa) have.

Show us the proof

with the commission any information he has on the suspicions he has raised on the World Cup matches." Kazim Ali Malik, the commission

by the Pakistan government to investigate allegations that two matches at the 1999 World Cup in Britain involving Pakistan were fixed. Pakistan lost both matches to Bangladesh and India. Bacher, executive director for the 2003 World Cup to be hosted by South Africa, said last year that Maiid Khan, former chief executive of the Pakistan Cricket Board, had told him of his suspicions of the results. Four senior players, Wagar Younis Inzamamul-Han Saeed Anwar and Moin Khan, have told the inquiry the two matches, as well as Pakistan's losing final against Australia, were not fixed. However, former pace bowler Sarfraz Nawaz and Majid have recorded statements saying they believed there was sub-

"Dr Bacher is a very important figure in this inquiry. The commissio

Who will be #1?

the best Test cricket side in the world.

Pakistan, and are unbeaten at home.

floor with the West Indies, they achieved the same 5-0 scoreline.

The two top teams in Test cricket collide in December and January with six Tests split evenly home and away and only then will we know who can lay claim to the title of the world's best side. Right now the two teams first Test of three and Australia warm up by entertaining New Zealand with

There are Aussie batsmen in England's County Championship who

But South Africa are now showing a toughness and resolve that is now a

"Come here Australia, we are going to murder vou." he said Come the end of March we will see if Balfour's faith is backed by

KARACHI: Former South African cricket head Ali Bacher has been asked to present any information of alleged match-fixing by Pakistan cricketers at the 1999 World Cup to a Pakistani judicial commission.

"We have sent a letter to Dr Bacher asking him to come and share

registrar, said.

The inquiry, headed by Justice Karamat Bhandari, has been ordered. stance to the allegations.

would like to hear him personally, but so far we have not received any answer to our letter," said Malik. "What the commission wants is to hear out Dr Bacher so that it is in a better position to reach a conclusion." The Cup. to its next hearing on 10 November.

Bhuvan Dhungana

One day, towards afternoon time, when her brother tried to hide the bell somewhere, their mother heard it ring at a most inopportune time. and she scolded her brother- "You're not supposed to ring the bell at off-times, it's only rung to invoke the gods, in the morning and evening. You think a bell is a toy?"

As her age increased, she came to understand, too, that a bell is not a toy.

In the passage of time, she turned from a girl into a young woman.

She remembers—the day of her first menstruation, when she had to stay locked up in a dark room, a stream of tears had poured out of her quilt-ridden eyes. She thought she had committed a sin. In the days that she remained in that dark room she discovered much about herself. She conceived a sense of what was sin, what was merit in a young woman's form. The customs that her mother taught her, taking menstruation as a symbol of religion, seemed sometimes like religion. sometimes like sin, sometimes like an accusation, and at other times like a gift she'd been granted, and this is how it seemed to her for

On the twelfth day after her menstruation, after she had taken her morning bath, put on a vellow blouse and sari, and sat down on a special mat to pray, according to tradition, she hung her head in embarrassment, unable to even look at the nundit who was teaching her how to make a water offering from cupped palms with a banana placed on top. Those cupped palms, the symbol of a woman's vulvaand the banana lying on top of it made her quiver. Her hands trembled as she offered the

comparison. Every year during the Teej Panchami festivals when the women of the house were rapt in worship pouring water on top of a banana placed in cupped palms, a corner of her mind would centre on male and female sexual symbols, and she couldn't lose herself in worship as the others did. She never probed the mystery of that symbol, it's been vears she's kent this sin safeguarded in religion, the mystery of the cupped palms and banana—this symbol of religion.

She couldn't become like her mother Yielding to the pressures of time she became a housewife as well as a modern woman working outside the house. Her daily routine was extremely hectic. Some days, as she reached home in the worn out, exhausted, darkening evening she could hear mixed in with the sound of bells in the neighborhood, the voice of her absent mother asking, Why so late? The evening bell's already rung, and you've come back tired, haven't you? Before she could come up with any response, the long sigh of exhaustion inside her, finding no reflection outside, chose to stay inside. Outside the bell kept on ringing, and inside the house her voice stayed

In the passage of time she turned from a young woman into a mother.

It was a winter's morning. She had taken off her year-old son's clothes so that she could oil him in the sun, and then had fallen into a quandary. As she slathered oil on him, her hands stopped suddenly. Her infant son's small-shaped penis was like that small instru ment-like dong that hung, tolling, from the bell in her mother's hand. Forgetting all about sin

and merit, she stooped over and kissed her son's small, soundless musical instrument. He chuckled as though he'd been tickled, and she too smiled in maternal love.

crowds, in lines, at the gates of temples in a sinless state of mind, fully liberated from sexual longing, in the hope of receiving the blessings of the gods, or in delusion. When someone rings the bell in front of the temple, sin and merit suddenly smile at that bell, that symbol of religion, that upside down vulvashaped bell and the hanging musical instrument of a penis that it tries to cover, but cannot fully hide. Tolls and echoes emanate from the penis-shaped instrument as it knocks and thunders against the crevices of the vulva-shaped hell, the tolls outdoing even the hullabaloo of the crowds. She listens, enchanted, to that tolling,

Today she finds that hell symbol as mysterious as she once found the cupped palms and banana. That bell symbol, that instrument which without the touch of a woman's vulva, cannot make a sound but just hangs there uselessly. She feels a kind of pride at the woman's sexual organ, which, upside-down, subdues the machismo of men When she widens her nostrils to take in the fragrance of the incense at the temple grounds, she feels that her entire being is being perfumed

She's already forgotten many of the pleasurable entrapments of sex; but the symbol of the bell hangs straight in front of her eyes, bringing back memories. A faint but unforgettable image appears before her like a nicture. The hell reminds her of an image of male/female coupling. To remove this sinful thought that arises even in a temple courtyard she lurches forward, grabs the instrument hanging on the bell, and starts tolling: ta-nana-na, ta-na-na-na, ta-na-na-na.

in her room.

Everything you always wanted to know about trekking in Nepal (but didn't know where to find out) encourage an influx of travellers." love: riddled with factoids, small



enty years after launching Trekking in the Nenal Himalaya, Lonely Planet guide books has brought out its muchawaited, new improved edition. After taking the book out for a field trial in the Annapurnas recently, we can say that it has been worth waiting for. The author is that walking encyclone dia of hiking in Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet, Stan Armington.

Nepalis have been trekking long before tourists got here. This is a country where locomotion is mainly walking and the national motto is: Two Legs Good. We walk to the paddy terraces, we walk to collect water or fodder, to the nearest health post, we walk to and from market, we walk in marriage processions, we walk the word "trek" entered the English lexicon from Afrikaans after Col Jimmy Roberts pioneered the first reanised trek for tourists, it fit the description of trudging across the ountryside in Nepal.

So what's the fun in that, one m isk Where is the amusement in climbing rough trails, staying in rustic accommodation, eating strange food? Many Nepalis are perplexed: when we walk we walk for a purpose, and yet al hese foreigners wearing big boots are walking up and down our mounains—just for fun?

The stupendous scenery is of course a part of the reward. But trekking in Nepal, as Armington suggests in his book, is not just about

to Kathmandu to find work. And when | the vast vistas. It is about the Nepali eople and how the trekking trails al a slice of their everyday lives and bring to visitors a glimpse of an omplicated world far away fron the mad, material rush of the 21st entury. Away from the Internet, fou lane autobahns from cities lit by halogens that blot out the stars at

> ilgrimage of the soul. In a little note at the beginning of the book Lonely Planet cautions that it cannot include all nice places, and exclusion does not imply criticism "There are a number of reasons why we might exclude a place," it goes on, "sometimes it is just inappropriate to

night. It is true, Nepal is catching

trekking trails can still be a

with that world, but many of the

Sounds like something Leonardo di Caprio might have said about a certain lagoon in the Andaman Sea. But there you have it: the dilemma of wild and exotic places which are wild and exotic because no one knows about them yet Should you tell the others?

Armington's new edition is full of new treks, side-treks from the main trails, places where it is worth tarrying He has collected and incomprated estions of readers of the 1979 edition, like the one who stopped for breakfast at the Komrong Hilton and staved for four days.

Most trekkers are on a tigh schedule, but Armington notes that flight uncertainties and the weather can wreck the best-laid plans, so it is better to have a buffer. It is also important not to hurry past the

scenery, and this is not just so you can savour the ambience. There is an mportant health reason: to give your body time to acclimatise. With its altitude warnings for every trek, this is a book that could quite literally save your life, (For example, it tells you that trekkers are much more prone to altitude sickness on the Gokyo trail than on the one to Everest Base Camp and how the dimb to Kyanjin Gompo may seem easy but it is a 1000 m in one day from Lama Hotel) To show why you should not trek in a hurry, Armington quotes a cryptic conversation between two trekkers

> "I've heard it is possible to do the Annapuma circuit in 14 days." "It's possible to do it in 40 days, myfriend"

one never knew there were so many different types of gastric infections. But as anyone who has got the runs during walk will tell you: it is vitally nportant to know prevention and cure for the exact bug you have. Shoes, ocks, a minimum equipment list, the book has all the little fine points that may look inconsequential before a trek, but take on enormous importance when you run out of dry socks on Teshi Lahtsa Pass

details, little things that you would

never imagine were important until

ou got to Manang and suddenly it is a

matter of great significance where the bakery is. Or, why you should never

wave at a low-flying helicopter in the

ountains because it may be on a

group with the injured patient. Now

why didn't I think of that during all

The book has other background

nformation that is useful for trekkers

the history of trekking, ecological tips,

the ethics of hiring porters, the

different types of trekking and how

and a full 12-page special section on

by the way). There is also a whole

they contribute to the local economy.

the flora and fauna of Nepal (there are

only four pages on the people of Nepal,

medical treatise on diarrhoea, and I for

these years of trekking?

rescue mission and mistake you for the

The back of the book has a peginner's guide to basic trekking entences like how to say "Is the trail teep?" in Nepali. Armington has also tried valiantly to translate some staple campfire Nepali folk songs like Resham pheeree me. There are reader Armington's guide is a labour of friendly boxes scattered across the

pages on subjects from leeches (dab salt on the fellows, and they'll drop off) to Maoists (you have to be more careful about khaobadis).

Westerners who are squeamish about hiring porters should take Armington's advice about being less vorried about the moral dilemma of hiring someone to carry your load. and be more careful about whether they are paid and equipped adequately. (If you are paying less than \$28 a day for your organised trek, he says, then the porters are probably not being paid enough.) "Using a porter is not that different than hiring a taxi in which we pay someone to drive us," Dr Raju Tuladhar is quoted as saying The new edition also has excellent maps with contours, and even side ams marked

Armington also shatters some myths like the over-reported story of garbage on the Everest trail. The real truth about other mythe it is nossible to have a good enjoyable trek even during the rainy season. Despite what people say, you should try not to trek alone, take a guide/porter as companion for safety and also to generate local employment.

Other trivia: where to get the best ngba east of the Arun, where to buy rak heads in Manang, which police osts are less strict than others Trekking in the Nepal Himalaya is ot a guidebook, it is a trekker's bible

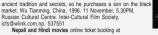
Trekking in the Nepal Himalaya Stan Armington Lonely Planet, 2001, pp 477 approx Rs 1,500 lpi@lonelvplanet.com.au

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The King of Masks An aged street performer in 1930s Sichuan realises he has no heir to whom he can pass on his ancient tradition and secrets, so he purchases a son on the black market. Wu Tianming, China, 1996. 11 November, 5.30PM, Russian Cultural Centre, Inter-Cultural Film Society.





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ABOUT TOWN

Digital Art 1995-2001 by Jyoti Duwadi. Until 26 November. Siddharta Art Gallery Baber Mahal Revisited, 411122

Paintings and sculptures by Surendra Pradhan and Ram K Bhandari, Park Gallery. Pulchowk. Until 20 November, 10AM-6PM, Sunday-Friday. 522307

The Swiss Alps Photo exhibition, Videos on various aspects of the Swiss mountains including the highest train in Europe and cheese-making, everyday at 5.30PM, except Sunday. 6-11 November, 10AM-5PM, Hotel de l'Annapurna. Organised by the Embassy of Switzerland, New Delhi and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation for the International Year of Mountains 2002

Action Asia Himalayan Mountain Bike Race Series 2001 Opening 9 November, 3PM, parade from Himalavan Bank through Thamel, 10, 18 and 24 November, Open to all, five race categories, great prizes. Himalayan Mountain Bike. Info@bikingnepal.com. 437437

Contemporary Jazz dance classes by Meghna Thapa. At Alliance Francaise Sundays and Tuesdavs 4.30PM-6.30PM, 241163. At Banu's, Kamal Pokhari, Wednesdays 6.30PM-8PM, Saturdays 1.30PM, 434024, 434830

Live music Saturday nights with dinner and wine at La'Soon Restaurant and Vinotheque.

Weekends at The Jazz Bar The Jazz Commission on Thursdays, Chris Masand's Latin band on Fridays and on Saturdays An Fainne. 7PM onwards, Shangri-La Hotel. 412999 Live music Tuesday and Friday nights at the 40,000 ½ ft Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant.

Live acoustic music Dinesh Rai and Deependra every Friday at the Himalatte Café, 7,30PM-10PM 262526



Le Cafe des Trekkers New Tibetan and French restaurant. Special Spanish Paella on 2,3,4, 9,10,11 November. Jyatha, Thamel, opposite Hotel Blue Diamond.

> Splash Bar and Grill New fifth-floor outlet with view of city and surrounding hills, Radisson Hotel, 411818

Barbecue lunch with complementary wine or beer for adults, soft drink for children, Saturdays and Sundays at the Godayari Village Resort, 560675 Rox Restaurant Traditional home-style European cuisine from a wood-fired oven. Steaks,

trout, roasted vegetables, desserts. Hotel Hyatt Regency. 491234 Peking Duck and Mandarin Music Chinese chefs' mild and spicy delicacies from the fareast at the Imperial Pavilion every Sunday, Hotel Shangri-La, 412999

Saturday lunch at Restaurant Kantipur, Club Himalaya, Nagarkot. BBQ buffet Rs 500 per

Sandwiches Over the Rainbow American Diner with Fifth Avenue sandwiches, full meals at backpacker prices. Opposite Pilgrims Book House, Thamel. 426518

Saturdays at the Malla Swimming and French chef's barbecue lunch. 11AM-5PM. The Malla Hotel, 418385, 410966

Chiso Chiso Hawama Summer R&R package for Nepalis and expatriates Rs 1 250 per head, Club Himalava Nagarkot Resort, 410432, 414432

Escape to Jomsom Two nights, three days, B&B package with tours and Pokhara-Jomsom return airfare. Expats \$250 per head. Valid until New Year. Jomsom Mountain Resort.

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keyman@wlink.com.np 436850 Reynlatie wilmk.cumi.pt 9-osou Himalayan Feelings fusion band playing every Friday night at Dwarika's Hotel. Rs555 per person, Rs1010 per couple includes full Sekuwa dinner and complimentary beer/soft drink. Call 479-488 for reservations.

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

This satellite picture taken Wednesday evening shows a strong westerly band moving across central Nepal, the reason for overcast skies and a drop in maximum emperature. Nepal has also been hit by winter Gangetic haze much earlier than usual this year, bringing down visibility throughout the midhills up to an altitude of 3.300 m. More westerlies are expected and they will bring he season's first snows to the high passes. Winter rains have failed for the past two years, but all indications are that this year there will be normal precipitation. Mininum temperatures are now into the single digits.









Wild Orchids in Nepal: The Guide to the Himalayan Orchids of the Tribhuvan Rajpath and Chitwan Jungle Kevin White and Bhagirath Sharma White Lotus, Bangkok, 2000

The result of 20 years of observing Nepal's orchids, this is a hands-on companion to Nepal's most accessible orchid habitats, with practical advice for the visitor, and a handbook for the orchid grower or armchair traveller. This volume has a wealth of data on wild species and detailed descriptions, and also reports on sixteen new Nepal records

The Throne of the Gods: An Account of the First Swiss Expedition to the Himalayas Arnold Heim and August Gansser White Lotus, Bangkok, 2000 Re 2 550

Originally published in German in 1938, this account was written by two geologists who spent eight months in the Himalaya, including in the "forbidden" lands of Nepal and Tibet. The authors made geological studies, recorded altitudes and observed the lives of the people, animals and plants. The volume includes period photos and maps and is a valuable resource for naturalists, geologists and mountaineer



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The perfect shape

A new book shows that in the

Buddha's Asia, there are many forms,



ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY he Buddha said, "The path

HERITAGE

to nirvana is enlightenment That may have been just what author loe Cummings and photographer Bill Wassman were after in the more than eight years they spent researching the and author Joe Cummings of the partphilosophical, part-coffee table book Buddhist Stupas in Asia: The Shape of Perfection. Published by the international muidebook purveyors Lonely Planet, the volume has just been released in

Nepal and is sure to be a bestseller. Cummings and Wassman, both well known names in the travel guidebook industry, and both devout Ruddhists began

their journey in the late 1960's when they realised that there were more ways to happiness than the West offered.

Cummings was a political science student in North Carolina when he came to his own realisation. On his first day at college in 1970, he recalls thinking about America's involvement in Vietnam I had to establish myself as a moral object," he says. He began searching for more information on the East and later came to Thailand as a Peace Corps volunteer. Eventually there came a Master's degree in Asian art history and Thai language from the

University of California at Berkley

followed by more than 35 works

on Thailand, Laos, Myanmar and other south-east Asian countries. Not surprisingly Cummings is today considered an expert on the area. Trekking in Helambu in the nid-1970's, Wassman realised his

calling was capturing moments of life in pictures. He began as an amateur photographer and soon worked his way to professional standards. In 1987, he won the Pacific Area Travel Association (PATA) Gold Award for his story on Pashunatinath and was one of the 50 photographers chosen to cover Thailand for the Kodakonsored Seven Days in the Kingdom Since the eternal eyes of Swovambhunath first stared back at him in 1968, Wassman has had a rather strong case of obsession with stupas. But it wasn't until about a decade ago that he began working on an entire book dedicated to these architectural masterpieces. Wassman was ourneying across Asia, staring into ts very soul, when he ran into

the subject to write about what he was photographing.
That old cliché about not udging a book by its cover is right on about Buddhist Stupas in Asia. It may look like just another glossy on Asia but the talented

Cummings at a festival in southern

Laos in 1998. That, he decided,

was what he needed a master in

duo have managed to judiciously balance eye-candy with little-known facts and theories. The book covers 11 Asian nations from Japan to Afghanistan, where the Bamiyan Buddhas are now just a memory. With a foreword by the renowned American authority on Buddhism Rober Thurman, Buddhist Stupas in Asia attempts to explain the essence of a stupa, the soul. something the collaborators on this volume feel the many modern

globe lack. "The stupa needs a soul. The new stupa being built in Godavari certainly has one and transcends politics," says Wassman, referring to the new structure being built in Lalitpur, which is inspired by Burmese, Tibetan and Nepali designs.

stupas sprouting all over the

Although Cummings says he writes "as an art historian", he is quick to add that for him, ersonally, stupas are more than just works of art. It is this combination of the aesthetic and the academic that is the book's biggest strength, and sets the tone for what it attempts to doillustrate the different ways that Buddhist communities across Asia have understood the teachings of the master through the difference in the architectural design of



the 27th Aishwarva Shield spelling contest at St Xaviers School on



and Nepal over "harmonisation and verification" of Bhutanese refugees began in Shital Niwas on 5 November.



ALPS COME TO THE HIMALAYA: Swiss Ambassador to Nepal, Walte Gyger showing Prime Minister Deuba pictures of the Swiss Alps at an exhibition at Hotel de l'Annanurna on 4 November

Green/Moments





20 9-15 NOVEMBER 2001 NEPALI TIMES



Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

rom all corners of the world, reports are pouring in of Nepalis who have made it big and got major breaks. About time, Nepalis are now awardwinning international authors, dot comentrepreneurs. they have done double PhDs in the mating habits of the Greater Himalayan Red-nosed Langur, and Nepalis like Kirtiman Lama have become the first to jog up to the summit of Mt Everest Alpine Style in shorts, without

only last week to restrict all non-essential travel. He

was just being careful, that's all. What has gone completely unnoticed in all this hullabaloo is that in Nepal, a khukuri is part of our national dress. We don't think twice about sticking cold steel into our patuka in the morning before heading off to our ten-to-five jagir at Charkhal Adda. But America is different: there it is every man for

oxygen, and without a stun gun. And here is some news just in: a Nepali has

shattered all previous world records for the number of khukuris ever carried by an airline passenger in his carry-on luggage. It is indeed a matter of great national pride that a Nepali will now go into the Guinness Book of World Records in the category "Number of Knives Taken Undetected Through Security Check" by beating the previous record holder by eight knives and a pepper spray. Yet another indication that when it comes to brandishing the khukuri and setting new thresh-olds of achievement with the Knational Knife, Knepalis are right up there with the best the world has to offer.

We don't know what motivated the heavily armed dude to muster the courage to go through with his feat, but given the terror that our Gurkha forebears have struck in the hearts of the enemy by waving khukuris around in the world's wars, we know that this brave young man was just carrying on a glorious tradition of valour and gallantry. But like all humble, modest and self-effacing Nepalis who tend to downplay their own achievements, our man told American network TV that he was carrying the knives to protect himself against the al-Qaeda. After all, Shirall Niwas had issued a trave

self or herself. One knife is not ough. Overwhelming force is the only terrence against mugging on the mean

By allowing himself to get caught. ibash has also become the first Nepali after Giriia Prasad Koirala to make an stended appearance on CNN, and raise the country's national profile in the ternational arena. All this free publicity an only be good for our tourism and ashmina industries which, as we know, are both going through a somewhat sleepy period. It has been calculated that if we had pay for all the air time Nepal got after the O'Hare episode, it would have run into \$9 sillion, almost the exact cost of a brand new Difficult as it is for us these days to make it

to prime time news, Nepalis have found verage of Afghanistan. (Network News Editor: Look at this coming in the ticker, another Nepali caught trying to take two pressure cookers past security. We'll lead with that, drop the capture of bin Laden to second main.") Now, everyone worldwide who thought Nepal

was just another banana kingdom knows that it is one with a great martial tradition. No one messes around with us. And it is also a country where a major world record is shattered every day. Kirtiman has done it again: advisory to all Nepalis planning to visit the Chicago area first person to climb Everest without breathing.



obligations to tradition.

of modesty.

far as making sweets are

concerned, and I am an expert

on the traditions and norms of

sweet-making," he says with a

twinkle in his eve, and no hint

Kathmandu Valley is a complex

sociological matter that brings

marriages, birthdays, deaths

boggling variety of sweets with

particular shapes and ingredi-

ents, each symbolic of certain

norms and beliefs. And these

might differ among the many

sub-clans within the Newar

communities. A real sweet-

maker needs to know all of

and other cultural and social

occasions require a mind-

together art and tradition. Births,

Traditional sweet-making in

"I am a master craftsman as

f you think fast food is a new phenomenon in Nepali society, consider this: Gobinda Das Raibhandari. 73. claims that his roti outlet in nowcrowded Maru has been serving quick meals to government employees and traders for the last 100 hundred years.

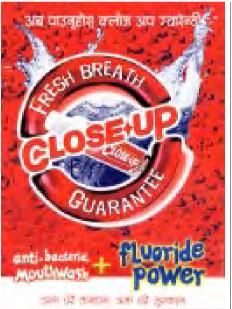
In recent decades many

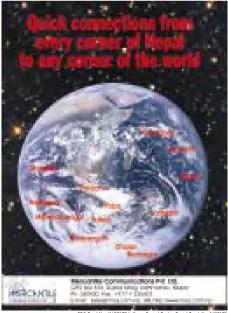
have relinquished their generations-old family occupation of making traditional, labourintensive Nepali sweets and snacks, or have felt the need to include more eye-catching Indian items on their menus to survive changing demands. But Gobinda Das, 73, is undeterred. He firmly believes that trading only in good old Nepali delicacies is still economically viable Moreover, he believes he has

this-this is not a tradition that forgives negligence.
The devotion of Gobinda

Das' family to the national sweet heritage of the country means their store has quite a reputation The Hanuman Dhoka Darbar still relies on supplies from his shop for all the royal pujas there The Kumari's house ordered the 32 varieties of traditionally prescribed sweets when the new Kumari was instated recently. And during the Rana on Gohinda Das' family to keen them dudh swari mohan keshari and other delectations required for their Tij fasts.

For eight generations, sweetmaking has been the main amily business of the Raibhandaris, His greatgrandfather Bhandas, migrated from Patan in search of fortune. His start-up capital: "nyarka nyamo" (Rs 5), his skill: traditional sweet-making, already his family's occupation. He did well for himself. So well, that five generations later his outlet sells sweets worth some Rs 60,000 per day during the festival and wedding seasons. Gobinda Das's 21-year-old son now spends all his time supervising production and managing the shop. And young Durlahh Das is determined to pass on the family business to his son, one day. Take a walk down Maru and watch Gobinda Das getting ready for the Tihar rush.





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