



# Peace dividend

The government is finding it hard to win donor hearts and minds.

**BINDU BHATTARAI**  
The government is looking beyond the peace talks at a massive hearts-and-minds programme to accelerate development in Maoist-affected districts, but is turning into serious donor reluctance to back it.

The Integrated Security and Development Programme (ISDP) is patterned after a post-Vietnam counter-insurgency strategy, but its price tag of \$114 million for three years is way beyond the government's own capacity. Last week, the National Planning Commission (NPC) presented what appears to be a hurriedly-prepared 13-page proposal to a consortium of donors, most of whom were sceptical about the government's ability to implement it.

Among the donors, Japan, Germany, Canada, Finland and Denmark as well as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank appear to have serious doubts about the ISDP, while the United Nations

Development Programme was fence-sitting. However, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the British Department for International Development (DFID) and the Norwegian Development Agency NORAD were for it.

"Few of us disagreed with its goals and the interest service delivery the government wants to make," one donor source told us. "But the political and security aspects made many uncomfortable." Those that said no were reportedly polite, but the message seems to be that donor support is not going to be easy. Added to our source: "It will be a waste of time for the NPC if it still thinks it could get broad-based support for the program."

The ISDP was launched earlier this year in seven districts and this year the government allocated Rs 600 million for it, but much of this was budgeted with the expectation that the donors would come through. The ISDP is being implemented in seven districts—Gorkha, Rukum, Rolpa, Kalikot, Jajarkot, Salyan and Pyuthan—and the government would like to extend it to six more as soon as possible: Dhaulagiri, Ramechhap, Sankhu, Dailech, Dang and Lamjung. Prithvi Raj Legal and his team at the NPC also told donors that the situation was getting so bad that it may ultimately have to extend the ISDP to another 30 of Nepal's 75 districts.

The idea for the donor fund-raising meeting for ISDP is said to have come up after a group of Western ambassadors met Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba a month ago. The diplomats reportedly wanted Deuba to have to produce results to make a difference, to which the prime minister is said to have hinted that if there was money to back the new defence and development plan, he could do it.

Donors keen to back the ISDP had their reasons. DFID, for instance, felt an efficiently implemented ISDP could be critical in delivering basic services and infrastructure to districts where development has come to a standstill because of the insurgency. USAID, on the other hand, is said to prefer a more cautious "transitional" approach, first testing out the programme in reasonably safe areas. The Norwegians, for their part, appear convinced that conflict resolution has to go hand-in-hand with development.

Among the multilaterals, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, who have their own performance criteria and are generally against doles, had no fresh comments. Other bilateral donors told the government it may be wiser to use the money already in the pipeline better, while some said the government could change priorities rather than seek new commitments.

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NPC officials played down the importance of the meeting. Legal told us: "It was not a pledging meeting but one to update donors on the ISDP, its rationale, how it works, which programs we were taking forward and the overall status." He added that last week's meeting was the first round, and that Nepal could go to donors formally if it needed assistance through the finance ministry.

The government plans to spend Rs10 million in each Village Development Committee under the ISDP to achieve noble goals, such as 100 percent literacy and school enrolment. It also wants to speed up infrastructure building, and launch income-generation activities. The government says it will chip in half the Rs10

million and wants donors to help with the rest, including purchase of communications and rescue equipment—not guns—for security agencies.

Patterned after the US government's Integrated Defence and Development (IDAD), the ultimate goal is to win the people away from the insurgents, ensuring stability so that further development can take place. Security is to be provided by the police, the new paramilitary and the Royal Nepal Army under a co-ordinated chain of command.

The prime minister heads the ISDP implementation team, which includes a number of ministers and the Chief of Army Staff. The program has four sub-committees: political, publicity, programs and security. D

**Times** Weekly National Poll #10

**Do you agree with the Maoists demand for a new constitution?**

Selected responses: 4. Total votes: 100

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## Nyu daya bhintuna 1122



stop by Shankhwa's house on the way back. Shankhwa is said to have wine and dried the porters, and slyly replaced the gold with sand using it to free the people of the Valley from their debts.

"Mha Pujan is now a part of Newari folk culture and is one ritual where there is no need for priests to dictate the proceedings, maybe everyone felt so light-hearted after being freed from debt that they decided to

worship themselves" quips Ukesh Bhuju, president of the Nepal Heritage Society. The worship is conducted by the female head of the household and the paraphernalia is full of symbolism: walnuts for strength, the nimra citrus for purity, the marigold blossom for longevity, Salyamohan Joshi, historian and expert on Nepal folk culture, thinks the word mha could be an acknowledgment of the connections between consciousness and the physical being.

"Nepal Sambat" as the Newari calendar is known, is more than 1000 years behind Nepal's official Bikram calendar which is into its 2058<sup>th</sup> year. Although younger, there is a growing feeling that if Nepal needs a non-Gregorian calendar, the Nepal Sambat is better suited than the present one named after the Indian Emperor Bikramaditya. Says Padma Rama Tuladhar of the Nepal Manakhalia: "The Bikram calendar is not even recognised in India. Nepal Sambat is based on the lunar calendar, which is

already in use in Nepal."

Over the years, Nepal Sambat and its unique blend of folk culture and religion has come to symbolise Newari identity in Nepal's multi-ethnic tapestry.

There would be a certain historical symmetry to making Nepal Sambat the official calendar since the name Nepal itself came from the Newari word for Kathmandu Valley after Gurkha unification of the kingdom in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. "The Bikram calendar is a vestige of dictatorial Rana rule, we need to bring back our own calendar," says Kul Lal Dongol of the Jyapu Sama, Patan.

Others oppose the move to replace the Bikram calendar, saying it would open a can of worms. Says Basanta Thapa, columnist at Himal Khabarpatra: "If the official calendar is to be changed in this age of economic globalisation, then Nepal may as well join the rest of the world and adopt the Gregorian calendar."

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BIZ NEWS Spending rules

The government has announced new expenditure regulations to lighten spending on projects. Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat says this is to eliminate one of the 'loopholes' in development administration...

Nepal Lever profits down

Nepal Lever, a subsidiary of Hindustan Lever, has reported a roughly 50 percent drop in net profits for the fiscal year that ended mid-July 2001. Profits fell from about Rs 120.5 million in July 2000 to Rs 68 million in July 2001.

Mind our business

- The Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) invited Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba over to tell him how bad things were for business. Deuba said he was willing to help and that he'd amend labour laws...

Sanitary ware

India's Hindware has begun marketing its bathroom fittings and tiles in Nepal. The products are to be retailed through eight outlets in Kathmandu Valley, and gradually more all over Nepal.

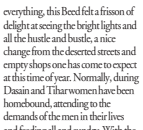
ECONOMIC SENSE

Silly season

This Tihar, think about doing business the next festive season.

Nepal undeniably needs a good kick in the pants to spur economic growth. And obviously taking a month off is the way to do it. Dasain and Tihar are wonderful festivals, a time to reaffirm one's commitment to family, society and so forth through the copious swilling of liquor, eating of goat and gantling of savings.

But, the Beed, ever the clear-eyed killjoy also sees it as a month during which productivity is at a disgraceful low, and many offices take on the appearance of ghost-towns. It is autumn, and most of the population, sensing the end of the warm season, unthinkingly makes merry and, like the grasshopper, regrets it through the winter. This year, while the government imposes operating out of tax havens in India Chowk and its by-lanes may argue that there has been a viable recession, retailers nevertheless did frenzied business during the festival. A good reason is always a good prelude to a good Dasain, and agricultural productivity has been on the up this year. The dim, but noticeable, rays of hope emanated by the peace between the government and the Maoists have also fuelled some optimism in villages. Cries like 'Pokhara and Dharan, which have historically been happy to buy, buy, buy, your brick Dasain business will be the making of it. But, I'm tired of doing too well, and retailers, hotels and restaurants there say



they don't remember a festival time in recent years when there have been such few tourists.

This, the Beed was thinking, is actually the best time to assess the state of the economy, based on the money that changes hands. Gambling is as much part of our national psyche as are drinking and the darsa-saruwal, and since the festival legitimises betting day and night, we see the stakes pretty high and a mind-boggling amount of cash is exchanged. It is always rude to ask people the source of their income, and never more so than during Tihar, nevertheless, there ought to be something that can be done when in one night businesses bet amounts that officially they have earned over three years, and government employees play more than their life-time savings.

From below sea level to the highest mountain

Nepal and the Netherlands are an unlikely, but curiously compatible couple.



Transavia is a daughter company of KLM, the Dutch flag-carrier, and has its own fleet of 25 planes. Already a well-established charter airline in the Netherlands, the bulk of Transavia's traditional business was built around transporting Dutch holiday-makers to beach destinations like Ibiza and Mallorca in the summer holidays. So adding Kathmandu as a seasonal destination from September to April dovetailed nicely with the supply and demand of their staff and fleet, which are fully occupied in the summer months, but less so in the northern winter.

And how Transavia came to fly to Kathmandu is a story in its own right. The unexpected catalyst were the crown princes of both kingdoms, though they surely did not know things would turn out this way. In 1967, King Mahendra was on an official visit to the Netherlands. Unfortunately, the evening of the royal banquet did not go as planned. The palace was a little frazzled, and Queen Juliana was absent—the war was giving birth to the future crown prince of the Netherlands, Willem-Alexander. Almost three years later, this incident helped Cas F de Stoppelaar, the Royal Nepalese-Honorary Consul General to the Netherlands, get Transavia to fly to Nepal.



Cas F de Stoppelaar helped bring Transavia to Nepal.

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Do you agree with the Maoists demand for a new constitution?

No, I don't agree. First of all who are the Maoists to demand? No government in the world can succumb to terrorist threats. Second, they are not the people's representatives, they point guns at innocent people to agree with their rhetoric. Third, our constitution has the provision to change itself with two-thirds majority of the parliament sabbha. If the Maoists want to change the constitution, let them fight elections peacefully and get a two-thirds majority in the house and amend it. However, this does not give our present rulers the excuse to be complacent and ignorant towards the plight of Nepalis.

ministers rather than loyal policemen. There is no point making other laws, because laws are written to be broken. Damar Bahadur Kharel, Delhi

towards improving the quality of life of all citizens. Without a democratic political framework in place, the alternative is the danger of totalitarianism, authoritarianism, arbitrary, civil, war, and fragmentation of the sovereign Nepal as we know and love it today. Padam Sharma, Minnesota

Government shouldn't panic. We need to think critically, and make the right decision that does not put the country in danger. A few years ago, the Maoists were nobody, now they want to take over the country and change the constitution. This is not far from other citizens who want democracy. Sushmita

What we need is a change of attitude, not constitution. What we need is action, not speech, and we need to not expect that from others, but set examples ourselves. Rajesh Bhat, Nepal

Progress means going forward, not backward. This constitution is not doing anything for the people. After 12 years it hasn't brought change, if Nepal is to go into the 21st century, we need total change, become a republic and have a presidential system. Dipak Sharma

There is nothing wrong with the current constitution, only with the people implementing it. Nepal needs a group of honest people to be elected who will run the country in its best interest, not their own. The political powers and the powers-to-be should remember that they are elected by the people to serve the interest of the people. If instead of worrying about who sits in which chair and holds what powerful position, they worry about the needs of the people, a lot of the troubles that we all slowly disappear, including the trouble caused by the criminals masquerading as Maoists. It seems to be the nature of all those who acquire positions of power in Nepal to become corrupt. A new constitution will not solve the problem, what that is needed is to change the way people think. DDP

Amend the constitution, but the way the Maoists want it. The past decade of Westminster-style parliamentary system in Nepal has bred khaoists and Maoists. The former created the latter. The proliferation of khaoist-like khaoists and the very existence of the Maoist insurgency expose the structural cracks of the present Nepal constitution. The current practice by which the leader of the majority party in parliament becomes prime minister is flawed, more critically so when no political party has a majority. The institution of prime minister needs to be strengthened to elect a strong leader who carries forward the development vision as per the aspirations of the majority. This leadership development process can be accomplished by electing the prime minister and his/her deputy directly by adult franchise for a set period of years. The elected prime minister should form a cabinet consisting of individuals of high ethics and proven public service from amongst political parties, civil service, business, non-governmental institutions, technocrats, educators, and other sectors of society. If MPs become ministers, they should resign from the legislature. A simple majority of parliament should have the power to remove any incompetent minister, and a two-thirds majority of the whole legislature should be allowed to impeach an incompetent prime minister. The king should remain the commander-in-chief of the army with a set of clearly defined constitutional roles. However, he should be responsible to the people. Every decade, the Nepali people should be given an opportunity to decide on the status of the royal institution through a referendum. A two-thirds majority of parliament should vote on question on the referendum. A king in command of the Royal Nepal Army would preclude the prime minister and his entourage from being authoritarian. With amendments to the current constitution, the multiparty political system can be improved to create an environment where leaders can rise with experience from village level public office to that of prime minister. Eventually, the system will produce principled visionary leaders who command the respect and support of the populace in leading Nepal.

It will be real stupidity to change the constitution. But, we can certainly do some changes that are promptly needed, such as in the case of royal powers and so on. It is better for Maoist to quit their crazy demands. CL Duval

Yes, Nepal needs radical change, fresh blood, something new. If the current politicians run the country, we are going to be poorer. D Koirala, Biratnagar

It is my opinion this is not the time to change the constitution. There is no better ruling system than this. But it has not been handled properly by those elected by the people. If I were a Maoist, I would get rid of corrupt Babul Pakhrin

The Maoist demand for changes in the constitution has a certain validity. The present constitution was the outcome of the popular movement, but all segments of the people did not participate in framing the constitution. The people should have a say in the kind of constitution they want. Atma Shrestha

# Dhulikhel shows small is bountiful



**By concentrating on education, health and tourism Dhulikhel has become a model town.**

**ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY**  
 Dhulikhel has for centuries prospered from its location on the ancient trade route between Nepal and Tibet. Now, the country's smallest and best-run municipality is gearing up for the rush that will accompany the opening of a new highway that will soon be the only direct road access from Kathmandu Valley to the

eastern tarai. Half the traffic moving through Thakot is going to be diverted through Dhulikhel. Is this going to bring more dhulids (dust) or dhun (riches) to Dhulikhel? Dhulikhel is gearing for some well-planned honest-goodness commercial and social development. It helps that Dhulikhel has a population of only 12,000, there is

a thriving sense of community despite the cosmopolitanism. Part of the reason Dhulikhel is so well run is its mayor, Bel Prasad Shrestha. "We have set three objectives we would like to meet," says Shrestha. "We want quality education for our children, better health services and the promotion of tourism." There is good reason to take

Mayor Shrestha's words seriously. An independent candidate serving his third term as mayor, Shrestha managed to bring in a successful university and a modern hospital. To take full advantage of Kathmandu University, which set up home here in 1993 on the western edge of the town, the municipality has been working to improve the quality of education in its schools, so more students from the area can get into KU. Locals even donated a large part of the land the university stands on. (See 'College comes to Dhulikhel—and the country', #64)

Set up in 1996, the Dhulikhel Hospital, a modern medical facility with out-patient and in-patient departments, is said to be better than many Kathmandu clinics. The town has other, more pro-active ways of keeping its residents healthy—it has one of the most efficient and safe drinking water systems in the country. "Stomach ailments caused by poor drinking water have almost disappeared from here," says Govinda Neupane an old-timer on the main street who runs a homoeopathic medical store.

The drinking water program is admirable, but reaches only seven of the nine wards of the municipality. "The program was started before the municipality came into existence, but we are trying to provide for the remaining two wards as well," says the mayor.

Everywhere you go in Dhulikhel, you see signs of change. A large community ground has been constructed with the help of the Japanese government, and an artificial lake is on the way as an added tourist attraction. The town has also conserved the forest in its backyard, which is now a jungle that drapes the ridge connecting Dhulikhel to Nano Buddha. The trees have brought the birds back, and bird watchers flock here, as do Kathmanduites on weekend picnics.

But the most important change will be the Banepa-Bardibas highway being built by the Japanese, 22 km of which has just been completed. In another five years,

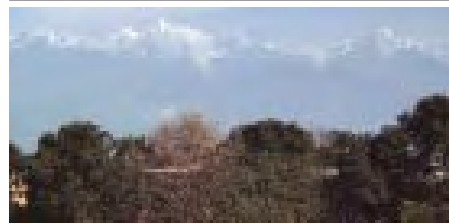


when the road becomes fully operational, it will provide a shortcut to eastern Nepal. The fact that Dhulikhel is so well managed will probably help it overcome the Mugling-effect—that wild west look that afflicts all major highway junctions in Nepal.

Dhulikhel is heavily preparing for full-scale war. Since the water supply was improved and the university moved in, real estate has become scarce and expensive. But, with the help of a German government grant, the municipality has already started building a bus park to make commuting easy should offices move here. "We plan to cash in on this road and convert the region into a major trading point that offers better deals to traders than Kathmandu," says Shrestha. Those residents of Dhulikhel not in the tourism industry will, he hopes, work to

establish a wholesale market. Shipments of Chinese goods would hopefully skip here first, encouraging the Valley traders to take advantage of the lower prices. The road would also make it easier for Dhulikhel to leverage its tomatoes, potatoes and milk.

But there are doubts. "How can Dhulikhel be a stopping point when Banepa, 15 minutes down the road, is already a major business centre?" asks Biswa Shrestha, who has been running the Mt View Guest House for 14 years. Dhulikhel and Banepa have endured centuries of healthy competition, and the tradition endures. It isn't as if residents of Dhulikhel don't like the idea of developing their town. They are all for it. In fact, the Sanjeevani High School here was built with the small savings sent home by Dhulikhelites who ventured further. The problem is



time. Many residents are getting impatient, waiting for the benefits to trickle down. "A handful of moneypod entrepreneurs have profited from the tourism industry. Smaller ones like us have it hard," says Purna Man of the Nawaranga Restaurant and Guest House. Others, like Purna Bahadur Karki, a teacher at the Sanjeevani High School, remain hopeful. "If there is proper infrastructure tourism here could do much better," he says.

Dhulikhel is swiftly turning into a modern municipality, with good infrastructure. It is still a united town where citizens are very much concerned with development. What it needs as it moves forward is consensus, so its residents continue to have a say in the future of their town. Mohan Prasad Shrestha who owns a stationary shop summed it up: "Dhulikhel people have always shown much love for this place even if they do not live here. The important thing now is for all of us to remain united, whether we are hoteliers, farmers, or other professionals." □

## Things to see

Whether it's a mountain sunrise you're after, or 400 km of horizon from the Annapurnas in the west to Numbur in the east, the Himalayan skyline dominates Dhulikhel. And unlike that Thamel-on-the-Hill, Nagarkot, Dhulikhel has culture with its old Newari heritage. At 1,500 m it is also milder in winter than Nagarkot.

Dhulikhel was once known by the Buddhist name of Shivharadpur and still has a few Buddhist stupas in memory of the old days. Nano Buddha is an interesting and pleasant three-hour hike from the town, and has a nice mix of Buddhist flavour and old Hindu temples. Dhulikhel also has several ancient temples dedicated to Sweta Bhairava, Hari Siddhi, Shiva, and Narayana, each with an interesting story related to how they came into being.

There are plenty of other short hikes to undertake from Dhulikhel, but one of the best is the pleasant half-hour uphill from Dhulikhel to the telecommunication tower. Walk through a lush forest echoing with the chattering of racquet tailed drongos and turtle doves to come to a temple dedicated to Kaili. If you can manage to wake up early and get up there, it is a sunrise you will remember for years.

And there are more than a dozen hotels to stay for the night if you want to do this, from the upmarket Himalayan Shangri-la, which stands at the highest point here and offers the best views to the 28-year-old Nawaranga Restaurant and Guest House, which with its gallery of local art is a backpacker's dream come true.



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# How to inoculate computers

### It's quite simple, really. You write programs to identify virus DNA, and disallow bad computer behaviour.

Help for those poor, beleaguered hosts is now available. Two new security programs use what scientists know about human physical and psychological makeup to check for malware.

Harris' STAT Neutralizer stops humans from doing bad things to computers. ASTAT-protected machine can't have its vital files deleted or altered, either purposely or by well-intentioned error.

TASC's eDNA program identifies and stops malicious programs such as viruses in the same way that a human's DNA can be used to identify his or her centuries-old genetic makeup. eDNA does not rely on heuristics scanning as many antiviral programs do.

**MICHELLE DELIO** ... tools used to detect computer viruses and stop malicious back attacks may not be as effective as they could be because they lack the human touch. Security experts contend that protecting computers by piecing together clues and problems requires technology based on human biology and behaviour.



TASC's eDNA application was not originally designed to work against malicious code, but was intended to assist computer forensics examiners—people who check out computers for evidence used in legal investigations or criminal trials.

But as computer hard drives increase in size, forensics experts are faced with not only finding the proverbial needle in the haystack but also contending with a lot more hay.

Sanders' team used a two-step process to accurately ID all specific patterns of code associated with known viruses in order to spot new or rewritten viruses.

Sounds foolproof, but as any programmer knows, two legitimate copies of a program may produce slightly different MD5 hash fingerprints from their code files.

rewritten, altered versions of BO. EDNA has also found previously unknown "parents" of malicious code.

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retired from the US Army in 1997. He has over 16 years experience as a Special Agent with Army Counter-intelligence and has taught at the Army's Advanced Foreign Counter-intelligence Training Course.

"I'd love to discuss specifics, but I really can't go there," Sanders says. "We are really sensitive about not making the bad guys smarter."

Harris' STAT Neutralizer also defines bad guy or bad code behaviour, and even blocks good people or code that are innocently attempting to do bad things.

Dr.Chin Feudo, the director of the Global Information Assurance Group's technical consulting firm, has tested STAT Neutralizer. Feudo says he is impressed with its ability to detect the computer viruses he set loose on his test system.

Some systems administrators were particularly interested in STAT Neutralizer's ability to protect computers from their users.

## Move over, Al Jazeera, here comes Ajeeb.com

Ask most people what they think of free Internet translation services, and their first associations are of bizarre sentence structures and amusing syntactic snafus.

But where others see garbled grammar, Fahad Al Sharekh of the Arabic-English portal site, Ajeeb.com, sees a new era of global communication.

Al Sharekh, a Kuwaiti citizen educated in the United States, admits that machine translation—despite momentous improvements in recent years—is still far from perfect.

But given the voracious demand for news from abroad in the wake of the 11 September attacks, Al Sharekh says users are learning to live with a little weird grammar.

In October, Ajeeb.com hit 14 million requests for English to Arabic translation and a million requests to translate Arabic to English.

Residents of the Afghan capital peered through the open doors of abandoned Taliban military bases on Tuesday and whispered to each other.

In the money market here, Taliban soldiers on tanks stopped in front of the shops, demanded the money and then rummaged out of the city.

Opinion pollsters predicted the crisp early morning air in Northern Alliance soldiers celebrated their victory over the Islamic militia that ousted them from the capital in 1996.

"We are happy. Now I have to go to the barber to shave my beard," said Zahidullah, an ethnic Tajik.

### COMMENT

by JOSEPH STIGLITZ

## Lessons from the global slowdown

The world is in a global slowdown. Growth in 2001 is expected to be half of last year's.

Several policy lessons emerge. For one, there is a palpable over the Clinton administration's promise that capitalism American-style assures unprecedented and sustained prosperity.

The IMF needs to ensure global liquidity to enable sustained growth.

The IMF needs to ensure global liquidity to enable sustained growth. The IMF's role is to provide a pool of resources to supplement members' existing reserves.

## Aid on schedule

BRUSSELS — Top EU development officials agreed last week to adopt a common calendar for the bloc's members to make good on international promises to raise official development assistance (ODA) to 0.7 percent of GNP.

In the money market here, Taliban soldiers on tanks stopped in front of the shops, demanded the money and then rummaged out of the city.

## Water of life

BONN — More than one billion people lack access to safe water supplies. Almost three billion are deprived of adequate sanitation.

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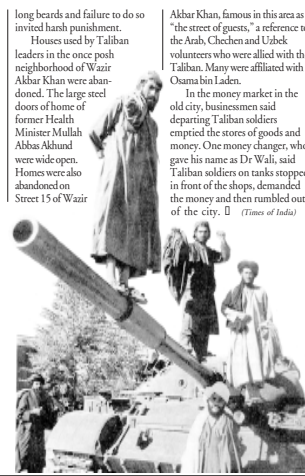
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Taliban soldiers on tanks stopped in front of the shops, demanded the money and then rummaged out of the city.













### Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

## The mother of all inventions

A s a card-carrying nabob of negativism and a chronic cynic, it is difficult for this scribe to see non-existent silver linings on alleged clouds because usually pessimistic sources have just told us on condition of complete anonymity that the sky is about to fall anyway.

However, stung by recent criticism that I am habitually putting down the accomplishments of Nepalis from all walks of life, I have vowed now never to make fun again of the great strides taken by this country in the field of high technology research and development. My Nepal Era New Year Resolution this week is to make amends and recognise the tremendous achievements of our young scientists as they

Moving swiftly along, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and senior members of his cabinet took a couple of hours off their strategy meetings in preparation for talks with Maoist guerrillas on Monday, to meet the inventor in a secure bunker inside Balamara where the decision seems to have been taken that Nepal should pursue its research into a Missile Defence Shield and weapons of mass destruction.

The Prime Minister is also extremely concerned about Biraj's security in this age of international terrorism, and has instructed that the young scientist be given 24-hour security to prevent al-Qaeda operatives from kidnapping him. We cannot let such sensitive technology get into the wrong hands.

पिछिल्लो समयमा नेपाली विज्ञानकर्मीहरूले गरेको कामहरू

push the frontiers of science.

Nepalis are today going boldly forth where no Nepali has gone before, and this includes to the Federated States of Micronesia.

The best example of Nepalis dazzling the world is the news published in a national daily on Monday (right) of an eighth grader named Biraj who has designed a Three-stage, Booster-assisted, Laser-tracking, Heat-seeking, Sub-orbital, Semi-guided Launch Vehicle with a 50 Kilo-ton, Autonomous Nuclear Ultra-warhead capable of flattening an area of 27,000 sq km. Let me take a moment here to pay tribute to the intrepid investigative journalists who brought this news to the attention of the Nepal public, thereby restoring our confidence in this country's glorious future, and to show that if we all pull together there is nothing to stop us from being a parish nation that is feared and respected by all.

The Royal Nepal Academy for Science and Technology (RONAST), which has always shown exemplary open-mindedness to new ideas, has passed on this Star Wars invention to its Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Research Division, and will soon be giving 15-year-old Biraj permission to use the Army's missile test range in Rohini Bhanjyang.



Since this last report came out, we have also learnt that RONAST has been secretly involved in other areas of high-technology applications. Documents leaked to us show:

- The Royal Nepal Navy has already designed and built a prototype nuclear-powered submarine which has undergone high-speed, hot-pansuit trials in Begnas Lake.
- Nepal's space programme suffered a set-back when the countdown for the launch of our nation's first hunter-killer satellite (codename: *Dandi-Bu 1-B*) from the summit of Mt Everest had to be called off at the last minute as word came from Paris that a minister had just sold off our geostationary Indian Ocean orbital slot to a private company.
- Our labs have bred a genetically modified Turbo Yam endowed with a sylem that allows the super tuber not to be restricted in its growth by stones to the north or south.
- Our researchers haven't forgotten consumer electronics, and in an effort to automate every facet of national life, they are presently conducting field trials of a laser-guided precision nostril hair plucker that can also multi-task as an ear wax excavator and a belly-button lint remover. (Especially useful for civil servants who don't have much to do in their offices between the festivals.)

### NEPALI SOCIETY

## Bhakta Bahadur's Malaya

At the age of six, his parents left their home village in Gopika and took Bhakta Bahadur Rana with them to Burma. That was a time when thousands of Nepalis from the midhills left their impoverished villages and headed east in search of work—to Darjeeling, Assam and further to Burma and Thailand. Bhakta Bahadur's parents were in the Thai town of Surat Thani when the war erupted. The Japanese were in Burma, and at age 16 Bhakta Bahadur left his parents and went to work in a rubber plantation in Malaya.

But in 1942 the war pursued him there. When it was all over, south-east Asia lay in ruins, the Japanese were gone but anti-colonial civil wars continued. In the jungles of the Malayan peninsula, Maoist guerrillas were

battling the British, and Bhakta Bahadur joined up with the colonial police as a staff sergeant. "Fifty years ago I fought Maoists in Malaya, now I see Maoists in my own country. Sometimes life is very ironic," rued Bhakta Bahadur during a Dasain trip to Nepal to make pilgrimages to Janakpur, Manakamana and Muktinath. Bhakta Bahadur looks much younger than his 80 years, and despite a fall from a horse in Muktinath after which he was evacuated by helicopter to Jomsom, he looked none the worse for it.

Today, Bhakta Bahadur and his son run a successful security agency. "I hire only Nepalis, they are my blood, you have to help people of your own blood," Bhakta Bahadur has given employment to more than 300 Nepalis in Malaysia many of them body guards for VIPs and business executives.

Bhakta Bahadur is the patriarch of the Nepali community in Malaysia, and often takes up the problems of the estimated 5,000 Malaysians of Nepali origin directly with Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad. The latest case involved the predominantly-Nepali town of Rawang which was directly in the path of a new highway, the inhabitants were relocated and their housing needs taken care of.

Bhakta Bahadur says he has deep attachment to his Nepali roots and is worried about how younger Malaysian Nepalis are losing touch. That is why he gets the community to celebrate Dasain, speak Nepali and keep their Nepali identity. His only regret in life: "I never really had the time to study. Today the youngsters are all well-educated and it has opened their eyes."

Even without education, Bhakta Bahadur has the wisdom and vision to lead his community. Common sense and generosity, it seems, do not need education. "I have become religious in my old age," he admitted to us. "I have understood the value of my homeland, my soil, my water. I will come back and die here." □

