

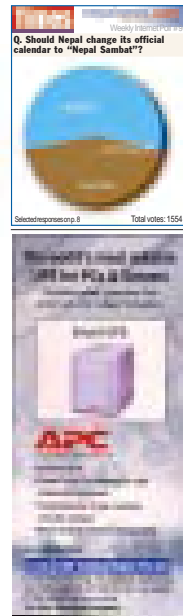
**COMMENT**

**Resume fire?**

Maolist leader Prachanda's statement Wednesday that there was no point anymore carrying on with peace talks shows that the group is under a lot of internal pressure. The government either doesn't know this, or has chosen to ignore it. Result: the Maolist leadership is not getting a face-saving way to enter mainstream politics. After all, they downgraded from a people's republic to a bourgeois republic, and then dropped the demand for a republic altogether. They climbed down on interim government, and were sticking to a constitutional assembly as the minimum acceptable demand. The government rejected it outright.

Trapped, there was no other way than for Baburam Bhattarai to warn this week of a "Mahabharat War", and for Prachanda to say the ceasefire didn't make sense anymore. For Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, who has staked all on achieving peace, there may be a sense that he pushed the Maolist leaders too far too fast. But he was under pressure himself from rivals within his own party who felt he was too soft on the Maolists.

Prachanda has left one small opening: he says he is still committed to peace but under a "new process". Deuba can grasp that olive branch and agree to discuss a constitutional assembly, or organise an all-party conference, including the Maolists, to thrash things out. The alternative is a resumption of the war, this time with deadlier weapons. The only winners will be the arms merchants.



# \$70,000,000

## That's how much the army is spending over the next five years on weapons upgrades. Who is going to pay for it?

Five arms suppliers from Korea, Germany, Israel, the United States and Belgium are hoping to win the contract to replace the army's ageing self-loading rifles (SLR). The bidding process began in September, but no decision yet.

And then there are reports that the army is also thinking about second-hand reconditioned Mi-24 helicopter gunships of the type seen in the film *Rambo II*. The army's earlier effort to buy a French Super Puma helicopter AS 332 L2 with a price tag of \$10.8 million for VIP transport remains stuck in the parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC). A defence analyst told us the offer was to trade in an existing Super Puma (valued at \$5 million) for four Soviet Afghan vintage Mi-24 gunships at \$1 million each.

The Nepal tax-payer will be footing bill for the army's \$70 million shopping list, and has the right to ask: who are we defending ourselves against? Will the money be diverted from vital development programmes? And, most of all, can we afford it?

"Security is a national priority, but we have to redefine security", argues Dr Chaitanya Mishra, sociologist and former member of the National Planning Commission. "Weapons don't make a country like ours more secure, our security comes from better health, better education, guaranteed civil liberties."

Assistant Home Minister Devendra Raj Kandel is exasperated by all this dove talk. "We need transport helicopters, the police needs at least two," he told us. "If we cannot find donors, we may even have to buy them, to

improve mobility." Kandel was quoted by media recently saying security forces would soon be getting 10 transport helicopters from the United States as a gift. He told us he was misquoted. However, sources told us the Americans have made an offer of Brl UH-1 Huey helicopters for the APE.

Still, with the money the army is about to spend on guns and helicopters, we could build thousands of primary schools, 30 new district hospitals and 5,000 bridges all over the country. But the government, rattled by the Maolist insurgency and a stalled peace process, has endorsed the army's plan to upgrade. This being Nepal, a lot of eyes are on who wins the deal and who runs off with the kickbacks.

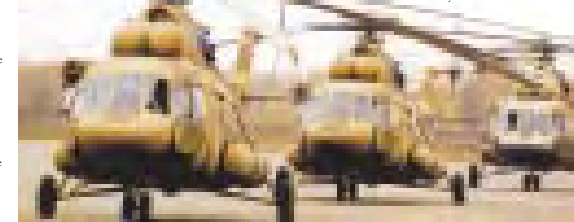
To be sure, parliamentary oversight is working. The purchase of the two Mi-17s has been the most transparent defence purchase to date, having been approved by both the government and the PAC, the parliament's spending watchdog. The very fact that the military is complaining bitterly that procedures are too cumbersome means that the PAC is doing its job, even though it is hobbled by rules that prevent it from investigating anything with a "security" tag.

That is why little is known about the other deals in the pipeline, and information for this article had to be gathered from local agents of prospective suppliers. The army is currently evaluating five suppliers for the 50,000 rifles, which it says it needs to replace its SLRs. The offers quoted by suppliers for the rifles range from \$600-970 apiece. On the

shortlist are the Daewoo K2, the Heckler and Koch G36, the Colt M16, and rifles made by FN Herstal and Galil. "This is not like buying a new CD," one army source told us. "The new weapon needs to be rugged, suited to our conditions and cheap."

If that is true, then the weapon conspicuous by its absence from the shortlist is the Russian Kalashnikov, the famous AK-47 which cost under \$500. The army wants to standardise its arsenal, and is trying to switch from 7.62mm to 5.56mm calibre weapons. The 5.56mm give a soldier more fire-power, while the 7.62mm has longer range.

With the ceasefire in danger of being broken, the \$70 million question is: can this country to afford to plunge on weapons, or is it going to buy only what is appropriate and necessary? □



Poles Apart...

The Indo-Nepal treaty is deadlocked as deadline nears, only a last-minute miracle can save it.

change the rules of origin: either capping imported material content, or fixing local value addition.

India also wants a safeguard clause giving it the power to suspend and eventually cancel preferential treatment for the product in question.

Nepal negotiators seem undecided on how to respond, and also about the nature of the technicality we want in place. Commerce Minister Purna Bahadur Khadka even took the same flight back to New Delhi from Doha with his Indian counterpart Murali Maran to see if he could untie the knot. Officials say that unless there was a political breakthrough after the Khadka-Marana talks, it is unlikely that the treaty can be salvaged.

Meanwhile, the Indians have been turning on the heat. They nearly walked out of the last round of joint secretary level talks "because nothing was moving". Nepal apparently had no response at the talks to the Indian proposal for a 50

percent cap on imported material content on our exports to India, or a 50 percent local value addition threshold. At present there is a roughly 20 percent value addition requirement for goods seeking duty-refunds on exports to Indian markets.

Nepali officials who had initially proposed a formula on value addition proposed by Nepal's Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) and India's Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), are now said to have decided that could be the way to go. But India now wants value-addition calculation done differently.

Indian officials are under pressure from their manufacturers of vegetable ghee, acrylic yarn, copper wires and steel pipes, who say a surge in Nepal exports of these items since 1996 has destroyed their business. They've already lobbied for anti-dumping duties on acrylic and zinc oxide and local taxes in some states. They say the Nepal products have high third-

country content, and there has been exploitation in the entry of these items into India.

The Indians had been complaining about this for about a year, but it appears that Nepal failed to gauge the extent of Indian anger about the 1996 treaty. "Now we are trapped," says industrialist Binod Chaudhary. "If the government accepts the Indian proposal, trade will regress to pre-1996 and our exports will be doomed."

Others argue that a few exporters who benefit from questionable "exports" are holding Nepal's trade with India hostage, and sabotaging the country's industrialisation. □

Interview p 3  
Deb Maharij



"Nepal should not be turned into another Afghanistan." It has become irresistible for politicians of every hue to proclaim those words from pulpits across the land.

They mouth the words, but it is doubtful if they have studied the history of how multi-ethnic Afghanistan entered such a hopeless vortex of violence and destruction. A lot had to do with failed governance within Afghanistan, its fickle alliances and frequent back-stabbing. Sound familiar?

Let's forget these intractable internal rivalries were largely stoked and fomented by Afghanistan's proxies on their own short-term advantage. The Afghans were proxies of regional powers who in turn were the proxies of the super-powers. Bin Laden used to be an American proxy, Mullah Omar was a Pakistani proxy, Ahmed Shah Massoud was a Russian proxy.

As Michael Ignatieff warns in this issue (p 13) proxy wars are easy to fight, but the danger is that proxies run away with their own agenda, and then mess up the agenda of those who think they are controlling the proxies. History shows us that in geo-politics, short-term advantage is almost always a long-term disadvantage.

It was, and is, Afghanistan's great misfortune that it is so strategic, straddling the crossroads between civilisations. Ever since the Moghuls rode over the Khyber Pass, all through the Russo-British Great Game, the disastrous Soviet occupation, and finally to the present day when the country became a haven for extremists from all over the Islamic world, no one has ever left Afghanistan alone. This hostile land peopled by fierce tribes became the graveyard for many invaders who had to sink away with tails between their legs.

This month, the Taliban political structure finally collapsed under the weight of American firepower. Something happened in Afghanistan in the first week of November 2001 that probably marked a turning point in the history of military campaigns. As a response to suicidal terror, we saw the application of a new doctrine of high-tech distance warfare à la Tom Clancy. Twelve years after the Gulf War, we have seen the awesome advances in military hardware and technology which now obviate the need for full frontal invasions, supposedly minimise "collateral" and "friendly" casualties, and allows the conduct of virtual remote control warfare.

So far so good. But however euphoric the talking heads on CNN may sound, America's war on terror is not over. In fact, it may just be beginning. The Taliban could just dig in and keep fighting a guerrilla war. Afghanistan may be partitioned between north and south. But how is this new high-tech war going to fare in the next phase when it can't be fought by remote control anymore?

And the most frightening part: al-Qaeda is still loose and it is more enraged than ever before. Is America more secure than it was before the Afghan bombing began. They'd be fooling themselves if they thought so.

Despite all this, if there was a worthy outcome from the deaths of innocents in New York and the misery of millions in Afghanistan, then it must be that one of the most repressive, intolerant and corrupt regimes on earth has been ousted. Also, the world's only superpower seems to have realised that multilateralism is the way to go and may be some use for the United Nations after all. (Now maybe Washington will finally pay up its UN dues.)

Yet, in our own region, India and Pakistan continue to see the unfolding drama in the Hindu Kush from their own narrow prisms. For them, it's still about Kashmir. Numerous pundits on satellite talk shows continue to rant about how India or Pakistan can earn brownie points from the misfortune of the

other. There are few with the clarity of thought of Indian analyst K Subrahmanyam, who argue that after the Taliban is defeated, everyone's (the US's, India's, Russia's, Pakistan's) common goal should be a moderate Pakistan.

So what lessons for us? Nepali history and geography have parallels with Afghanistan. We are also multi-ethnic, we are strategically located, we also have a history of domestic intrigue and outside meddling, and we are as fiercely independent as the Afghans. Our strength can come from visionary leadership that can show integrity and commitment to economic progress that makes us more self-reliant and in control of our own destiny.

Our squabbling politicians may want to learn the lessons of Afghanistan and resolve not be proxies for anyone for short-term gain. Proxies are expendable, and they are abandoned first by their mentors.

The forthcoming and much-delayed SAARC Summit in Kathmandu in January will be largely symbolic photo-op. Anything can happen during December. Still, it could be an opportunity to forge a "Kathmandu alliance" to declare Nepal and the smaller South Asians a proxy-free zone.

## A PROXY-FREE ZONE

### INTERVIEW



**Indian ambassador to Nepal, Deb Mukharji, is completing his tenure in Nepal and retiring from diplomatic service at the end of November. He spoke to Nepali Times about his brief posting in tumultuous Kathmandu, addressing issues such as Indo-Nepal trade, cross-border Maoism, bilateral relations and power sharing.**

**Nepali Times: By all accounts you have been the least controversial Indian ambassador posted in Nepal. And yet, the last two years have been among the most challenging for our bilateral relations. How did you do it?**

Deb Mukharji: Thanks. That is for my friends in Nepal to judge.

**These have been very eventful times for Nepal. How has it been for you?**

Deb Mukharji: India has had ups and downs in the past year and a half. But most obviously the basic strength and resilience of our relations have continued to assert themselves. It has also been a period when I

have been witness to some tragic events in Nepal, as also certain other developments in the internal scene which have deep ramifications. I've seen the resilience and the determination of the Nepali people, the Nepali polity, in dealing with these tragic and momentous events.

**Are there lessons we can draw from the Indian-Rakshak riots?**

I think it would be appropriate both in Nepal as well as in India if we draw the appropriate conclusions or lessons from the unfortunate series of events. While one need not dwell on this for ever and ever, I think for thinking people and for decision-makers there are lessons that would need to be drawn for future relationships. Only time will tell if we have learnt those lessons.

**One of the things that the riots and the aftermath showed is that India and Nepal just cannot seem to get anything started because of our mutual hang-ups. Little problems get in the way of bigger things that need to be done.**

A very crucial aspect of this relationship is that the problem is not only on one side. I think that because we have so much in common, we tend to take each other for granted. We assume we know all there is to know, when in fact in our own ways we are both growing up. I think likely relationship, ties between nations need to be worked at and I think both of us have fallen short of the desirable levels of understanding.

**So what kind of confidence-building measures should be taken? How about cultural exchanges?**

I think at the highest level there is no absence of understanding. Cultural exchanges would help. I am really looking at greater interaction and understanding, particularly between journalists and academics, so both can see the other's picture in life. We must expect that all points of view will always converge. We each have our national priorities and interests. It should not be expected that we agree on everything.

Equally, I think that while our views may not converge on everything, there is no issue—none—on which we have a conflict of interest. We should not import negative emotions to the other person in every instance. We should accept people at face value. Neighbours have to understand each other's problems and perceptions to ensure that they don't transgress each other's interests in any way.

**Has something changed after 11 September? Your Foreign Minister came out and called the Tamil Tigers and our Maoists 'terrorists'. You have tightened security along the Indo-Nepal border. There have been raids on Maoist safe-houses in Sikkim.**

I think globally there is a heightened awareness of the different forms terrorism can take, and how this affects us. John Donne wrote 400 years ago: "Ask not for whom the bells toll, for they toll for thee." You cannot compartmentalise terrorism. It is a hydra-headed monster that has its linkages, ramifications all over. I don't want to go into the links the Maoists have with external organisations, who, in turn, might have other links. These things cannot be seen in isolation.

India has been a direct victim of international terrorism for a long time. With regard to your specific query, I don't think there is anything very new that has happened. We have similar problems in India, though in our larger geographical context we may not have the same exposure as in Nepal. Our exposure has always been with the government of Nepal, in combating any movement that seeks to overthrow existing legal institutions by means of the gun.

**Have there been any special moves to sever the links between the Maoists and you?**

I have to honestly answer that given the kinds of movements that take place across the border, say between your Maoists and Indian Maoists, in Judhism in Andhra Pradesh, that would be an empty statement. We don't know if they have interactions, and if so, what kind of interactions they have. Within the limitations of managing this open border that

we are both trying to do, it would be difficult to give any credible assurance on something over which one does not have total control.

**Is there a way out of the impasse on joint water and river projects?**

I think we need to firstly, primarily, dissociate politics from such economic decisions. Nepal has to decide whether collaboration with India in the development of water resources is beneficial to Nepal. And I think once such a decision is taken, the rest must be allowed to move ahead without hindrance. I think it is necessary to have a political consensus in Nepal on this subject. Having said that, we seem finally to be making some progress towards the development of projects on Panchsarovar. The Government of India offered assistance to Nepal the setting up of a small-to-medium hydroelectric plant for which some sites have been visited. I trust that if those are allowed to move ahead, they will create the level of confidence needed for much more extensive collaboration in water resources.

**After the prime minister's visit to Delhi last year things looked rosy. There were no problems at the leadership level, but later things seemed to get stuck in the bureaucracy. Is it a problem of bad blood on both sides?**

I will speak primarily of India. I will say categorically that when a political decision is made, bureaucracy does not obstruct. But, in all fairness to my breed, I should get a little harsh. Sometimes promises can be made and assurances given without a full analysis of the implications. Now, while I do not claim the Indian bureaucracy to be the safeguard of national interest, it is our duty to look at all aspects of a question so that any final decision that is taken is taken on the basis of full knowledge of facts. I think political wisdom and statesmanship are essential in resolving issues which can only be resolved with political involvement. But I must emphasise that the majority of issues require in-depth analysis by experts. By-passing this process eventually causes more problems than are

seen to be solved at a given moment of euphoria.

**What are the real reasons preventing the automatic renewal of the 1996 trade treaty. Does it signify that the Gujral Doctrine is finally dead?**

As you know the 1996 protocol to the Indo-Nepal trade treaty was quite unique in some respects. Now the fact that in the operation of the treaty in the past five years, India feels that some shortcomings have been noticed which need to be rectified. There are, I think, essentially two areas where some modifications may be necessary. One is with regard to value addition made to products manufactured in Nepal with goods imported from third parties—the foreign material content in goods exported from Nepal.

The other issue is with regard to a very substantial expansion in exports which could damage selected Indian industries. Let me also say that if you look at the totality of the Indian market—the foreign material content in goods exported from Nepal.

As to what I believe to be the essence of the Gujral Doctrine, that India has a special duty towards her neighbours, I think this certainly holds. This does not mean a one-sided relationship, for no relationship can be sustainable on that basis.

**What memories will you take back from Nepal?**

I have enjoyed myself greatly. Hopefully, I have made some friends. I have had some occasion to see some of your very beautiful country.

(A selection of black-and-white photographs taken by Deb Mukharji in Nepal are reproduced on page 10-11.)

### STATE OF THE STATE

## A nation in hard labour

Ganga and Jamuna return to their homeland, where more mothers die at childbirth than anywhere else in the world.

The day Siamese twins Ganga and Jamuna arrived at two independent babies in Kathmandu, one in every ten children born in their homeland died before completing their first birthday. It may look inopportune to talk about this silent catastrophe ahead the celebration of a glorious medical achievement but it is times of joy that we must not forget the sorrows of the less fortunate.

The maternal mortality rate in Nepal is also one of the highest in the world. More than 27 percent (27 percent) of all deaths of women between the ages of 15 and 45 are the result of childbirth complications. In most families, pregnancy is managed according to practices passed down from generation to generation. Almost all deliveries in rural areas are attended by *sudhis* in the hills and *chamains* in the tarai—women who have learnt their craft of midwifery by apprenticeship, and have no knowledge of modern medicine or tools. The use of rusted razorbaites to cut umbilical cords, and the application of cow-dung to treat birth-wounds are not uncommon.

But between the black picture

of utter neglect in the hinterland and national attention given to the extraordinary in the metropolises, there is an expanding middle ground where the definition of 'minimum level of service' is slowly changing. *Sutikeri Samagri* (a packet of bare necessities to help *sudhis* do their job) and training of women paramedics at the village level is slowly improving the services available to the newborn and mothers alike. While it is true that most health posts in the country lack enough trained personnel and essential supplies, their role in delivering basic health care cannot be denied.

Then there are medical practitioners in urban areas who render valuable service, even though only to those who can afford their fees. It limits the reach of some outstanding physicians, but that still doesn't reduce the importance of their services. After all, every one life saved, or every moment of agony reduced, is an important service. Each human being is unique and deserves the best treatment. This justifies the tortuous hours of surgery by an international team of doctors in Singapore on Ganga-

Jamuna, and the generous donations made by the citizens of that affluent city-state. As long as specialised medical services aren't being provided at the cost of general health care for every one, public investment in advanced medical facilities need not be questioned. It is a grim reality of this country that a poor *sudhi* in Achham or an illegitimate *chamain* in Mahabubpur cannot even buy a subsidised packet of *Sutikeri Samagri*, either because she is unaware of its location or it is not available there at all. Even so, this does not mean that famous gynaecologists like Dr Jm Thapa and Dr Rupatra Koirala should stop examining expectant mothers in Kathmandu, and fly away to some faraway country where they can practice their profession with a clear conscience.

But what is it that makes Dr Jm Thapa and Dr Rupatra Koirala get up in the morning and face another grueling day of often full service. Each human being is unique and deserves the best treatment. This justifies the tortuous hours of surgery by an international team of doctors in Singapore on Ganga-

repeated calls for her presence in the ward. She doesn't even have the time to look at the faces of those who come to her more for reassurance than anything else. *Sutakra* hasn't changed, it's just that now she has become a victim of her own professionalism. But that is a different story.

In those days, Om Nursing Home was a modest establishment, quite unlike the huge private hospitals that it has grown into today. *Sutakra's* consultations were often more like counselling sessions for nervous couples. Sometimes she would call expecting mothers and their husbands together and talk calmly about the challenges of parenthood. Sadly, all that a history now. These days, she rushes from one patient on the examination table, another standing on the weighing machine, one more in a chair, and manages to ward off

never budged from his ideals. Dr Shashank Koirala is an erudite eye specialist, he talks loftily about Koirala legacy, and likes to quote Kant to clarify a complex theory of vision. *Sutakra* may be his wife, but she has no such pretensions. Instead, she is much more compelling with her natural simplicity, sincere smile and earthy wisdom. In the labour-room of Om, attendants aware that *Sutakra* knows best how to make babies cry to their enter the world. Her touch makes the little ones read the room with the music of a new human life. What her colleagues probably don't know is that she is equally capable of making grown men cry too.

Koiralas are something akin to royal commoners in Nepal, much like the political dynasty of the Nepcha-Gandhis in India. *Sutakra* could have easily chosen to bask in the glory of her surname alone, particularly after 1990. Or she could have gone into social service mode. Instead, she chose to remain what she trained to be—a counselling gynaecologist for the urban middle class. There is only one lament however: her dedication has bred a popularity that has turned a counsellor of human souls into just another famous physician with a high market value. Whether *BP* would have approved. Or, whether *Sutakra* still remembers what she told a would-be father about her illustrious father-in-law. **D**

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**DEUBA AND DEUBA**  
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Why does he not realise that Nepal gets nothing by supporting countries like Afghanistan, Iraq or Sudan? But if we support the US, Nepal can benefit. It is possible that Sher Bahadur Deuba has some understanding with the Americans, who after all were his *lami* (matchmaker). Maybe we will get America help to fight the Maoists in Nepal. CK Lal should be happy that Deuba supported the USA immediately in its war with Afghanistan. The fundamentalists are helping set up madrasas in Nepal, spreading Islam in a Hindu country.

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CK Lal has done it again. He criticises the Taliban and al-Qaeda, but unleashes his full wrath, with no stones left unturned, upon his favourite target—the Big Bad Wolf of the planet, in his view, the United States of America. Buoyed by hot air from such Blame America icons as the ever-

liberating the Afghan people, and riding the world of terror. Roughly fifty years ago, an evil unlike the al-Qaeda and the Taliban was visited upon this world in the name of Nazism. Their leader was Hitler. There were people then, like Neville Chamberlain, who thought that a civilised dialogue with such a gentle dose of appeasement would be enough to melt Hitler's heart and save civilisation from ruin. But in the end, it took force to defeat this evil. Already in Kabul, with the initial success of the allied forces, the Taliban are on the run, there is music on the streets, the women are starting to unveil their burkles in defiance, men are lining up outside barber shops to get rid of the Taliban-mandated beards, and children are flying kites again, and people are shouting "America! America!" in utter expression of gratitude. And CK Lal has either missed it all, or has selective amnesia.

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Finally Daniel Lak has shown his true colours ("Two months after", #68). He pretends to sympathise with the objects that he covers

for the western media, but his loyalty remains with his subject—furthering western interests in developing countries. Lak should read his fellow columnist CK Lal ("Oh, say, can you see Osama and Omar", #68) to understand why US policies in these parts of the world are despised there.

If the United States practiced what it preaches, there would have been no Taliban, no al-Qaeda, and no bin Laden, and 9-11 would not have taken place at all. America needs to correct itself rather than keep bombing Iraq, Sudan or Afghanistan at its whims and fancies. Instead of writing western propaganda in his widely read column, Lak would be better for Mr Lak to expose the hypocrisy of Britain and America.

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is a guy who is incompetent and completely clueless, who is hungry for power and whose greed exceeds his ego, going around assailing people to rise against the Maoists when there is a peace process being undertaken by his own party member. When will he finally accept his failure and let the world move forward?

**D Karmacharya**  
**New Jersey, USA**  
**PRACHANDA**  
Thanks to Puskas Bhura ("Prachanda comes alive", #68) for exposing Comrade Prachanda for what he is: a failed, phoney revolutionary who has brought untold suffering to the Nepali people, and set in motion an irreversible brutalisation of our society and nation. The fellow hasn't learnt his lesson. He wants to take on the Indian Army. Then he has the cheek to use eloquent about Karisma Manandhar. She should immediately disown him.

**P Shrestha**  
**by email**  
CORRECTION  
An editor error in a sentence about the 1967 banquet for King Mahendra in the Netherlands incorrectly identified Queen Juliana as being absent as she was going birth to Prince John of Greece and the Prince of Greece. The present Queen, Her Majesty Queen Beatrix, Ed

I agree fully with Dr Milan Piya ("How much is too much?", #68). I had worked in Inarawa Hospital, and even though most people in Inarawa have a very positive

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**D Karmacharya**  
**New Jersey, USA**  
**PRACHANDA**  
Thanks to Puskas Bhura ("Prachanda comes alive", #68) for exposing Comrade Prachanda for what he is: a failed, phoney revolutionary who has brought untold suffering to the Nepali people, and set in motion an irreversible brutalisation of our society and nation. The fellow hasn't learnt his lesson. He wants to take on the Indian Army. Then he has the cheek to use eloquent about Karisma Manandhar. She should immediately disown him.

**P Shrestha**  
**by email**  
CORRECTION  
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# "All these will not be destroyed..."



Nature's weave



Machhapuchhre from Annapurna Base Camp



Autumn morning above Dudh Kosi



Forever untiring



Early spring en route Annapurna Base Camp



Outgoing Indian ambassador, Deb Mukharji, is sometimes better known as an accomplished photographer with a keen eye for the splendours of nature. It was perhaps fitting that his last posting before retirement from the foreign service is in Nepal, a country where he had all along wanted to be assigned.

In the past year-and-half, he has trekked across Nepal taking pictures and rediscovering the challenge and charm of black-and-white photography. "It is a very exacting medium. There is something about black-and-white that brings out purity, strength and expression," he says, adding with a laugh: "My colours aren't bad either."

We asked Deb Mukharji to pick out his best black-and-whites from Nepal for this farewell exhibition in Nepali Times. (See also: Mountains and water, NT 23-29 August 2000, #6 for his pictures from India and Tibet)

Mukharji also likes to recite his favourite lines which is part of an old Bönpo saying about the holy mountain, Kalash:

*All these will not be destroyed  
by fire, water, earth, or wind.  
Without becoming extinguished,  
they will pass into ethereal peace.*



En route Gokyo from Machhermo.



A glimpse of Machhapuchhre above Modi Khola

## Green Moments

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# Will interactive Internet television turn into a two-headed monster?

It should come as no surprise that the Internet is headed to a very familiar technology: your television.

run a modified version of the open source operating system, Linux. Ch. 1 is using Linux in the hope it will lure designers to write applications for example to transfer data to Palm and other hand-held computers, and embedding certain kinds of video and audio formats in the system.

"We don't see our product as a replacement to the PC but as a supplement to it," says Ray Roque, vice president of Ch.1. Today, there's a lot of content emerging on the web that can be viewed or heard, such as streaming video, Internet radio, MP3 music, weather maps, sports scores, and online games, large graphics such as

photographs and Flash animations. All of these things become more accessible with a fast broadband connection to the Internet.

The Web site Yack.com (<http://www.yack.com>), for example, lists hundreds of live and recorded Web events in video or audio formats, everything from talking pundits at the Cato Institute in Washington to an interview with a Belgian dominatrix. There's every reason to believe that people will watch a wide variety of web content online through their TV sets, sharing the experience with others.

There also are growing opportunities for creating audio and video content for others to see. Apple Computer's user-friendly (and free) iMovie software is being used by thousands of people to create quick and interesting video files. The Independent Media Center, whose Los Angeles branch was created during the Democratic Convention last year, allows people to post video and audio files (under 100 megabytes) on the Web for free (<http://la.indymedia.org>).

It's obvious that a battle is shaping up about whether the Internet will quickly become dominated by giant companies that will mimic the programming and advertising models of TV today, or an explosion of creative and diverse content gradually will replace mass-market programming. Whichever model wins will have an immense effect on society for years to come. □ □ (A7)

Gary Chapman is director of The 21st Century Project at the University of Texas.

The idea of merging TV and the web typically has been greeted with scorn, scepticism and disbelief among heavy Internet users. Critics of the concept have pointed out that the Internet is a "lean-forward" technology of active engagement, whereas TV is a "lean-back" technology of passive absorption.

However, market studies have shown that at least one in four Internet users watches TV while online, and companies are keen on catching the interest of these "multi-taskers". There are also new kinds of content on the web that might be better suited to TV than to the PC monitor, and at least one of these innovative, interactive web TV systems is Linux-based.

But plainly, some of these new Internet-based interactive TV systems are not likely to convert critics. For example, Microsoft's WebTV—a set-top box and subscription service that allows limited Web and e-mail access on a TV screen—is being

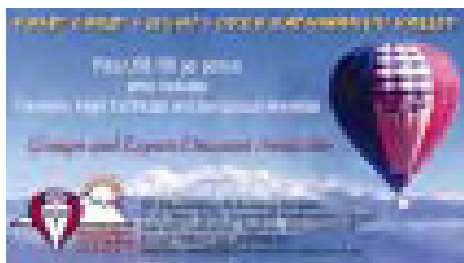
replaced by the company's new Ultimate TV platform. And giant AOL Time Warner is rolling out AOL TV at the same time. Both of these services will feature Internet access on TV as well as the features found in products such as TiVo or Replay TV, which let TV viewers record programs on a hard drive or stop and replay live TV broadcasts. Both Ultimate TV and AOL TV also will provide unique content to subscribers, a step toward both services becoming new, national TV networks.

But AOL TV and Ultimate TV still have the constraints that hard-core Internet users disdain: the low resolution of current TV screens, which makes web pages look cartoonish and often unreadable; the "dumbest-down" look and feel of services oriented to people who feel intimidated by a personal computer; and the overwhelming sense that interactive TV is aimed primarily at vacuuming users' wallets.

Among longtime Internet users there is a widespread contempt for commercial TV and its "lowest-common-denominator" marketing and programming, and thus irritation that the Internet might be pulled in this direction by the likes of Microsoft and AOL.

There are some emerging alternatives for interactive. Internet-based TV that might appeal even to the critics. A company in Santa Ana called Ch.1 (<http://www.ch1.com>) is working with TV set producers such as Princeton Graphics and Syntara to hook high-definition, digital TV's directly to the Internet. The Ch.1 system, which is both the hardware inside a digital TV and a subscription service, allows full access to the Internet through any Internet Service Provider, even high-speed cable and DSL services, and the high-definition sets display web pages and e-mail the same way they appear on computer screens.

The Ch.1 TV sets offered now



# Closer to whom?

The US is feeling rather warmly towards China. But this may be challenged as the focus on Asia blurs.



Jiang Zemin's government has executed a record number of people in the past year, and the suppression of the Falun Gong (above) continues.

TIM SHORROCK

WASHINGTON—US-China ties have improved dramatically since 11 September, but Washington's single-minded focus on the "war against terrorism" and its new emphasis on "broad-based defence" is likely to draw the Bush administration away from key issues in Asia, say analysts here.

"There's a very real prospect of the United States spending much less time thinking and worrying and strategically minding the store when it comes to Asia," said Kurt Campbell, the former deputy assistant secretary of defence for Asian and Pacific Affairs in the Clinton administration.

Campbell, now senior vice president at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, said "there really is a sense already of not very much high-level attention about being paid to Asia," adding, "that will likely be a much more significant development than people realise." But the focus on terrorism and what US policymakers like to call "asymmetric threats" coincides with a major shift in US-China relations, away from the deep tensions of recent years over Taiwan, human rights, weapons proliferation and other sensitive issues, and toward a new era of cooperation and diplomatic engagement, said Ja Qingguo, a professor at the School of International Studies at Beijing University who is a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution.

After the attacks, Chinese leaders acted forcefully to condemn the acts of terrorism and make clear their determination to work with Washington to prevent future incidents. The Chinese response included a \$1.6 billion purchase of Boeing aircraft when Boeing's prospects were very bad, the sharing of intelligence about Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network suspected of masterminding the attacks, and the case of the Shanghai meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic

Cooperation (APCEC) in October, which Bush attended, to further the anti-terrorism cause.

The Bush administration responded by dropping references to China as a "strategic competitor." At the APEC meeting, where Bush met Chinese President Jiang Zemin, Bush referred to China as a "great power" and emphasised the US desire to shape a constructive relationship with Beijing. "This was a contrast with his former statements," said Ja. "US-China relations are far better since 11 September. But the important question is, will it last?"

Over the past decade, as China has moved from a centrally planned economy to one dominated by market forces, US policymakers have grown uncomfortable, as they perceived little accompanying change on the political front, said Ja. With US China-watchers in government and the private sector concerned about China challenging US supremacy, pushing for internal change in China became a top policy priority for conservative Republicans and liberal groups, such as US organised labour, alike.

This threatened to undermine the political legitimacy of the Chinese government, which strongly resisted and insisted that Washington respect its sovereignty, said Ja. Tensions were exacerbated by the Bush administration's support for a missile defence system designed to counter China's small arsenal of ballistic missiles and finally came to a head over the spy plane incident near Hainan Island in April this year.

Ja believes the September attacks and China's willingness to cooperate in the fight against terrorism showed the Bush administration that the real threat against US security came not from China but from terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda. The Bush administration appears to have dropped its view of Beijing as an implacable future enemy, he said. But the new attitude toward China will only last if the US stops trying to force internal change in China, Ja asserted. Campbell agreed with Ja's thesis, adding, "There was a real sense in the foreign policy community that rising powers (such as China) was where the action was, that inevitably China and the United States were destined to come to headlocks and be absolutely at odds."

The shift in perception and policy has immediate implications for Taiwan, Campbell said. "One hopes Taiwan will not do something in this timeframe that is inappropriate or trigger something not in our interests," he said. David Shambaugh, a professor of political science at George Washington University, said 11 September has strengthened the hands of the moderate internationalists versus the hawkish unilateralists in the Bush administration. But he noted that many problems remain in US-China relations, including Taiwan, missile defence, the role of Japan in East Asian security, and human rights. □ (P5)

COMMENT

by JEFFREY SACHS

# Freedom from want



Defeating terrorism through prosperity is a fine concept. But who will foot the bill?

When Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill set forth the Allies' World War II aims in the Atlantic Charter, they talked about securing "economic advancement and social security" for the entire world. In his 1941 Inaugural Address, Roosevelt said that the world should be founded on four freedoms, including "freedom from want." He called for global economic arrangements to secure for every nation "a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants."

President George Bush recently echoed them by declaring that "we will also defeat terrorism by building an enduring prosperity that promises more opportunity and better lives for all the world's people." This is a worthy and urgent goal, but it requires significant changes in rich-country policies, particularly in the US itself.

Over one billion people struggle each day for mere survival, and many do not succeed. During the past two years I have been Chairman of the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health of the WHO. Our Commission received detailed evidence that millions of impoverished people die each year because they lack the barest means to stay alive. The most shocking losses are those resulting from preventable and treatable diseases, such as measles, respiratory infections, malaria, tuberculosis, and AIDS.

The problem is that prevention and treatment costs money—not a lot, but much more than is available to the world's impoverished. In the poorest countries, annual health spending is around \$11 per person per year, while at least \$33 per person per year is needed to provide minimal health services. Rich countries must provide roughly \$20 per person to close the gap. Instead they provide just \$2 per person and believe they are meeting the needs of the poor. When millions of people die as a result of the lack of financial help, the US and other rich countries act as if this outcome is a "natural" occurrence, not the result of political neglect.

Every rich country contributed one-tenth of 1 percent of its national income—roughly 1 cent for every \$10 dollar earned—the result would be \$25 billion a year, a sum that would make it possible to extend essential health services to the hundreds of millions of people who lack medical attention, including treatment for AIDS, immunisations of children, and the distribution of bed-nets to prevent malaria. Rich countries actually contribute around \$6

billion. The WHO Commission estimated that eight million people each year could be saved by a properly funded effort. America has been the developed world's stingiest donor, a fact recognised by Americans. In recent opinion surveys, Americans believe they are the most generous of all, and estimate that America spends around 10 percent of its federal budget on foreign aid. The real figure is less than one half of 1 percent. When aid is measured as a share of GNP, the US is last among all rich countries. Many European countries contribute ten times more on a relative basis.

President Bush recently demonstrated American attitudes on economic development when he said "trade can conquer poverty and despair." Many Americans believe market forces alone, including international trade, can solve the problems of poverty. As a trade economist I know this is only half-right. Trade does benefit the poor if rich-country markets are opened, but trade by itself is not enough. Targeted financial assistance, not trade policy, can help the millions who die of disease. Besides, where disease rages, export-led growth is nearly impossible to achieve. American stinginess results in high costs to US security. The US intelligence community has long understood that disease and impoverishment contribute to "state failure," the technical term for political collapse, revolutions, civil wars, state-sponsored terrorism, and military coups. When "state failures" occur, they are often followed by costly military interventions by the US and its allies. Rich countries seem only to intervene when it is too late, rather than working to head off crises and collapse in the first place.

It is time for the rich to promote real economic development through foreign assistance commensurate with the needs of the poor and through open markets that allow the poor to export their way to prosperity. Until then, the poor will suffer and die unnecessarily, and instability and political upheaval will reign. □ □ (Project Syndicate)

Jeffrey D. Sachs is Gaklen I. Stone Professor of Economics, and Director of the Center for International Development, Harvard University.

## Fuming over diesel

LONDON—Tiny particles found in diesel exhaust fumes can penetrate into the lungs of children, research indicates. The study is the first offering what is said to be conclusive evidence that PM10, particles from diesel exhaust, reach, and are taken up by, cells that reside on the deepest part of the lung. PM10 are tiny particles—less than 10 micrometers in diameter—and their small size allows them to penetrate deep into the lung, where they can aggravate respiratory disease. Dr Jonathan Grigg and his team at the Institute for Lung Health at the University of Leicester looked for particles in cells sampled from the lungs of 22 healthy children—and found evidence of diesel particles in them all. The level of particles was significantly higher in children living on a main road, although there was no difference in the proportion of these particles in children of different ages. The government has estimated that there are 24,000 deaths of adults a year, which can be attributed to the inhalation of PM10. Dr Grigg said, "This research, which shows particles in cells that are known to cause lung injury, supports epidemiological studies which demonstrate an adverse effect of particles on the respiratory health of children. PM10 are one of the most damaging pollutants and can penetrate far into the lungs—causing inflammation, coughing, respiratory symptoms and even permanent damage. This biological evidence is very important in furthering our understanding of air pollution and its effects."

## Aid, but no blue helmets

BRUSSELS—The United Nations has ruled out creating a traditional blue-helmet peacekeeping force in Afghanistan and is instead considering a multinational force, Francesc Vendrell, UN deputy special representative to Afghanistan said recently. But the EU, in cooperation with UN bodies, hopes to resume humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. The EU Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) is finalising \$13.5 million in aid for needy Afghans. This includes significant assistance for the area around Mazar-i-Sharif, a town captured by the anti-Taliban forces that should allow the establishment of a vital corridor to send food aid via Uzbekistan.

There are an estimated one million internally displaced people (IDP) in Afghanistan and nearly four times that who fled the violence and drought and remain outside the country. In northern Afghanistan, the country's so-called "hunger belt," about three million people will have to rely on aid agencies to feed them through the winter. ECHO will support three NGOs (Action Centre is Fair-France, SCF-UK and Aide Médicale Internationale-FR) in Mazar-i-Sharif that are implementing relief and aid programmes. Measures for this region include therapeutic and supplementary feeding centres, special food rations for children, and support for hospital and clinics. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the UN World Food Programme (WFP) have already begun assistance, with help from ECHO. But the WFP is concerned for the safety of its local staff, problems with communications, and the coming winter. Doubts also remain over whether the food is being distributed to the most needy, or whether rival fighters are commandeering the supplies to feed their armies. NATO is reportedly considering offering logistical support to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid. (P5)



## After the elections

**GALOUTTA**—Thousands of Hindus and many Muslims who support the Awami League party, defeated in the Bangladesh elections, have crossed into India, with tales of rape, torture and murder, as well as extortion and destruction of property. As former Awami League Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina handed over power to a caretaker administration last July, the first of the attacks began against Hindus, who form 10 percent of Bangladesh's population. The caretaker chief, former Justice Latifur Rahman, who has been accused of favouring the fundamentalist anti-Awami League coalition overlooked reports of the attacks by alleged supporters of the now ruling coalition. Bangladesh's anti-fundamentalist leader says Hindus were targeted because they were seen as a huge Awami League vote bank. The size of the Hindu electorate, whose enrolment the Awami League was encouraging, jumped to 8.2 million this time—almost one-sixth of the total voters. "If they had all voted, there was no way the Awami League would have lost. But not more than 10 percent could vote," says Kabir Choudhury of the South Asian Coalition against Fundamentalism. (NS)

## India's Vitamin A tragedy

**DELHI**—The deaths of 16 children in a village of hundreds more following a Vitamin A supplementation drive in India's north-eastern Assam state last week may be a classic case of too much of a good thing. Internationally-known nutritionists, such as C Gopalan of the Nutrition Foundation of India (NFI), say it was a case of toxic overdoses. Gopalan said the tragedy underscores the need for India to have "a food-based approach rather than a medicinal one to Vitamin A deficiency." He added that "these massive doses should be reserved only for emergencies." He hinted that the "commercial exploitation of malnutrition" was linked to a mishandling of the approach to Vitamin A deficiency. UNICEF, which is responsible for a prophylactic programme directed against deficiency diseases, especially childhood blindness, sees no link between the programme and the tragedy. Maria Calvis, UNICEF representative in India, said: "I see no correlation between these most regrettable deaths and the programme. We are still trying to find out what happened." Although the reports are not yet released, the central government has issued a circular directing all states to stop mass Vitamin A drives. Soon after the deaths were reported, Union Health Minister CP Thakur, himself a doctor, said that the federal government was opposed to the Vitamin A campaigns and that the states were carrying them out on their own with UNICEF support. Calvis, who toured the affected districts, said a Vitamin A overdose could not have produced such disastrous results. UNICEF experts said Vitamin A supplementation was being carried out in 40 countries and that it was absolutely essential in states like Assam, where coverage has actually dropped over the years. "It is all very well for nutritionists like C Gopalan to talk about leafy vegetables and papayas, but how many people in this country can afford these?" a UNICEF expert, who asked not to be named, said. (NS)

## The big test

The UN believes the former king and the Cambodia model may be vital to Afghanistan's future.

N JANARDHAN IN DUBAI

With an ominous political vacuum in war-ravaged Afghanistan, the world is at the sign of the shape of things to come is that the United Nations must and will play in establishing a consensual and working government. Diplomats say the manner Kabul was taken over—against the US garrison—represents an important opening for the UN, whose representative Lakshmi Bhatnagar has been negotiating the formation of a new government. Among the formulas being thrown up as solutions for Afghanistan are the UN-sponsored plans in Cambodia, Kosovo and East Timor.

The Cambodian peace-agreement, signed a decade ago with the UN in charge until elections were held, is being touted as the best model for transition in the present circumstances. "There is a lot of talk about what to do in a post-Taliban Afghanistan, and Cambodia is the first model that comes to everybody's mind."

Nancy Soderberg, a former American ambassador to the UN Security Council, said, "Decades of war,

communist rule and overbearing external influence are the common denominators for the two countries. But, says Anisul Karim, Professor at the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies at the Australian National University: "It's possible but wrought with difficulties, going by the deep divisions along ethnic, tribal and linguistic lines."

Some analysts predict another round of prolonged civil war in the shattered country of the Northern Alliance used the Kabul takeover to block a major role for majority ethnic Pashtuns in a post-Taliban administration. Between 1930 and the 1970s, Afghan ethnic groups—majority Pashtun, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmen—were a cohesive force, thanks largely to Mohammed Zahir Shah, the ex-king who has been in exile in Rome after being overthrown in 1973.

"What is needed is to create a centre of political gravity, in the form of a Supreme Council. A political system will have to evolve around this and that can be done under UN supervision," said Saikal. That centre of gravity is possible if Shah returns. Though most factions have vowed allegiance to the 84-year-old former king, he appears reluctant to take up the shambles, promising to return as a "worker" rather than a "ruler".

Northern Alliance leaders have also poured cold water on the suggestion that the former king return from exile, except as a private citizen.

For now, the UN Security Council has unanimously endorsed an Afghan political plan envisaging a two-year interim government bringing all ethnic groups under one umbrella with a multinational security force to protect them. The UN has also proposed a five-point plan to establish an inclusive post-Taliban government in Afghanistan, which it said should be backed by an all-Afghan security force rather than a UN or multinational peacekeeping operation.

As those plans are operationalised, another factor bound to play progress will be the composition of a multinational peacekeeping force. (The UN has ruled out a blue-helmed force.)

Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world, is ready to join the peacekeeping mission. But Egypt—Washington's biggest Middle Eastern ally—has ruled out sending troops to Afghanistan as part of a US-proposed "Muslim peacekeeping force", fearing the soldiers might return to Egypt as "terrorists", alluding to Egyptians who went to Afghanistan to fight the Soviet occupation in the 1980s and returned to Egypt in the 1990s to wage a violent campaign against the government. Cairo advises that it is better to look to Muslim countries from East Asia.

Commenting on the economy of the task for the UN, Soderberg said if one compares the Cambodian operation, which cost about \$1.6 billion over two years, the likely UN role in Afghanistan, would probably require \$45 billion worth of support over a period of time, including the cost of peace-keeping and also rehabilitation and reconstruction. (NS)

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Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world, is ready to join the peacekeeping mission. But Egypt—Washington's biggest Middle Eastern ally—has ruled out sending troops to Afghanistan as part of a US-proposed "Muslim peacekeeping force", fearing the soldiers might return to Egypt as "terrorists", alluding to Egyptians who went to Afghanistan to fight the Soviet occupation in the 1980s and returned to Egypt in the 1990s to wage a violent campaign against the government. Cairo advises that it is better to look to Muslim countries from East Asia.

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## Stand up for your community's rights

Durga Bahadur Darji, Dilli Jan Samaj, Parbat  
Jana Ekata, 12 November

Dalits are barred from entering the very places that have been built using their skills and labour. They, too, are Hindus, but the doors of most places of worship are closed to them. Why is this? Dalits must unite to break the barriers in their way. They entered the Baglung Kalika Mandir on 15 October. But the question arises, "Why do Dalits have to enter temples, and what do they gain by doing so?" Thinking that by entering the temples they have broken all barriers, is a very shallow way of thinking and one that will prove detrimental to them in the long run.

Dalits are in the state they are in today largely because of the Hindu religion and the reactionaries who use it as a shield for their own selfish purposes. This religion is a curse on us—they use our skills to erect places of worship, but bar us from entering them. Temples are public places, so we must also have the right to enter and utilise them. Entry into such places is our right and we need to oppose moves to stop us.

In our country today, our enemies are very active and they are inciting people against us. It is necessary for all Dalits to be aware of this. We will be our own greatest enemies if we do not unite and make an effort to bring down social barriers. Our enemies will gain greatly from this. But some of our Dalit brothers are singing the praises of our enemies, they are prepared to sacrifice our community for their own personal benefit. We need to remove such characters from our ranks.

The liberation of all Dalits is a political question. Dalits should be active in the political arena and Dalit struggles should become political struggles. The Dalit problem is a political problem. If our struggle does not turn political then it will not be very effective, it may even just fizzle out. We have to be politically active, but in such a way that it helps our struggle. We have to organise ourselves, form platforms and participate in politics.

We know that many political changes have taken place in the past. Many different people have attained positions of power and prestige. They said all kinds of things, and we Dalits have believed them and voted for them. They promised us the sky. We believed them. But, as you can see, there has been no change in our lives. We Dalits have been exploited on all fronts, political, social, economic, cultural, even in the field of education. Despite all this, we still vote for the same parties. This will only make our situation worse. From now on, if anyone speaks in our favour, we should not take social barriers. They really want to help us and will make fools of us again.

Many organisations are using our cause to reap economic benefits for themselves. They are collecting donations in our name and not giving us anything. It is time we took this seriously. This does not mean that we should not accept any help that is extended to us. But we should do so only if those who come to help us come as equals and with respect. In fact, we were assisted by human rights organisations when we entered the temple in Baglung. We must work for the liberation of Dalits with an open mind and not fight to take credit for the work done. Raising slogans will not help, actions will. If we keep jostling for individual glory, it will never be free. We must fight to liberate all Dalits. That will mean freedom for all of us.

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

Our main point... is that Nepal's present constitution is not even a capitalist constitution. The biggest proof for this that this constitution was not written by elected people's representatives, or issued by them, or ratified by them.

Maotist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai in Kantipur, 21 November

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## The rise of Comrade Badal

Jana Bhawan, 12 November

It is becoming public that differences on policy and means of action are growing within the Maoist party. There are differences among its leaders and supporters even on the issue of dialogue with the government. It is understandable that the party leadership is trying very hard to conceal this.

Prachanda is the most important leader in the Maoist party. After him come Dr Babu Ram Bhattarai, Ram Bahadur Thapa, Mohan Vaidya and others. Even though the differences are not out in the open, there are unofficial reports that differences have in fact crept in.

The differences are mainly on the issue of dialogue with the government—a faction within the party is opposed to the talks. Ram Bahadur Thapa, alias Badal, seems more inclined to support the military thrust of the revolution, its military campaign, than dialogue. The party organisation has been trying to downplay the fact that most of the militia support Badal.

A source tells that Badal does not want compromise on any issue the Maoists have put forward for dialogue, even less giving any of them up. The source further states that most of the party cadre disagree with the flexibility the party has shown on the issue of a republic. And Badal, who was never in favour of dialogue, is convinced that the talks won't produce a solution. Since he has a minority in the party, he never raised this issue earlier. But now he has developed a very good rapport with the armed cadre. He has won them over and begun letting other party leaders know his views. Sources say that most party cadre now support Thapa's views, which has created problems for the top leadership.

## Who is Prachanda leading?

Sunglu, 12 November

Maotist leader Prachanda recently said in a press statement that his party does not have a policy of harming members of other parties. But on the night of 10 November, a group of Maoists manhandled Pemba Rungthi Lama of UML's Village Development

Committee in Solukhumbu. Lama had refused to feed the Maoists and was beaten up so badly that he is now fighting for his life at the Teaching Hospital in Kathmandu. Lama is a former chairman of the VDC and also an active member of the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist). Similarly, the Maoists also kidnapped Bhujing Lama from Nawalpur VDC in Sindhupalchok on 7 November. He has not yet been freed. The UML has previously condemned these activities and has demanded that the captives be freed immediately.

In light of all these incidents, one is forced to ask if Prachanda is actually leading the party.

UML committee member and secretary Yuvraj Karki recently said that UML leader Madhav Nepal and Maoist leader Prachanda had recently agreed (in a telephone conversation) that violence between their two parties would stop immediately. This attack came right after this agreement was reached.

Either the Maoists are not honest in their commitments or anti-social elements and hoodlums have hijacked the Maoist party. Whatever the reasons, this is detrimental to the progress of the nation, the people, democracy and the communist forces. Although the Maoists claim that they use arms for defence, the recent attacks prove that it is no longer true.

"The government is lying"

Sunglu, 12 November

Excerpts from an interview with Shanta Neupane

Shanta Neupane lives in Ghatangar, Chitwan with her two daughters and one son. She was married to Dhandapani Neupane in 1981. In the age of 13, Dhandapani lived in Chhipche Village Development Committee in Tanahun and joined student politics in the 1970s. In 1973 the couple migrated to Chitwan.

Dhandapani, member of the Maoist Party, was arrested on and off at regular intervals. He was last arrested in 1999 and his whereabouts are not yet known. Even lawsuits that require his presence in court have failed to produce results. His wife has given up hope; she is still looking for him.

Following are excerpts from an interview with Shanta Neupane. **When was your husband arrested? Were there any witnesses?**

He was arrested in the third week of April 1999 at around 7:00 PM by police in Teshbal near Sundhara. My neighbours Poudel and Sita Adhikary, who are students, saw him being taken away. In fact they were the ones who informed me about the arrest.

**The government says Dhandapani is not in its custody. The government is lying. After arresting him they kept him in Mahajuguni Banskali for a month. On the 25th day of his arrest, he was blindfolded and allowed to move out of his room. A policeman who happens to be from Chitwan told me this. He told me that they also questioned him. The policeman's description matches the name, address and age. Later they started moving him to Pokhara, Bhaktapur and other places. I came to know last February that he was ill.**

**What steps have you taken to locate him?**

In the first week of May 1999, I filed a writ with the Supreme Court, which was overruled in the third week of June. I filed another writ some days

later. That too was overturned. Last year, I held two press conferences, nothing came out of them. Human rights activists have tried to locate him, and the party is also looking for him.

**Why do you think the government wants to hide him?**

Maybe the government wanted him to surrender. It would be in the way of getting back at the party. Leaders will never want to do anything that would bring shame to their party. That is why they might have just locked him up.

## Girija's other, dangerous side

Jana Ekata, 12 November

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba recently said that he is open to the idea of forming an interim government. As soon as he has made the announcement, Girija Prasad Koirala, president of the Nepal Congress stated that the Maoists should be classified as terrorists, adding that even the king was in favour of mobilising the army against them so they could be dealt with in a proper manner. This shows that he is in favour of a military solution. This also clearly shows that Koirala wants to be in power again. The only way he sees of getting Deuba out is by claiming there has been a breakdown in the law and order situation. If the dialogue with the Maoists is successful, then it will definitely give a major boost to Deuba and his camp. The very existence of Koirala and his followers will be at stake.

They say that they are also protesting the proposed system of licenses, which permanent teachers will have to take exams to obtain if they want to keep their jobs. They feel that asking teachers to take exams is an insult and that it is detrimental to those who have been teaching for over 30 years and are now close to retirement age. Many teachers say such a move is against the law.

The teachers state that the examination is not necessary for teachers who have passed the Public Service Commission examinations. Earlier the NTO and the NNTA had asked that teachers be provided with teaching permits. To clear the mess in the education system the government has taken the easy way out. To weed out teachers who have acquired fake certificates, the government will now require all teachers to take an examination within five years of being hired. If they do not, they will be dismissed. Teachers think that this is an insult to them.

The teachers also believe that the government will increase politicisation of the education sector. People on the managing committees of schools feel that education should not be held completely in the hands of the government but should be the responsibility of the community, and this is the best way to decide what is best for community schools. They feel that parents will also certainly take an interest in the management of the schools once they are given a voice in the day-to-day affairs of the institutions. The active interest of parents and communities as a whole will be beneficial for the whole education sector.

Efforts are also being made to institutionalise all private and community schools. The government will give all new teachers temporary teaching permission within six months of their being hired. Teachers will have to take the government-administered NTO examination within five years of receiving teaching permission. If they do not, they will automatically be dismissed.

Parliament recently passed the seventh amendment to the Education Act, which the Nepal Teachers' Organisation (NTO) and the Nepal National Teachers Association (NNTA) have both vehemently opposed. The

organisations claim that this amendment will destroy the education sector, which is already in shambles, and they are both now preparing to start an agitation against the bill. On 20 October, the two organisations presented a protest letter to the Ministry of Education and Sports.

Many teachers formerly aligned with Nepal Congress-supported NTO are now slowly leaving the party. Already 350 members of the organisation have left the party in Nuwakot, 147 in Nuwakot, 129 in Bura, 32 in Dang and 1,200 in Kavre. This is happening in other districts too. According to the seventh amendment, teachers will be required to take an examination to become members of any political party, canvas for political parties or start publicly expressing their political affiliations. It is because of these clauses that many teachers have now started deserting the Nepal Congress, says NTO President Bhatnagar.

But both the major teachers' associations claim that this is not the only reason they are starting an agitation. The new amendment clearly states that all aspects of naming schools—especially those runned through salaried allowances, pensions and provident funds—will be handed over to public school management committees. The teachers have made this the main agenda of their protest.

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## ABOUT TOWN

## MOVIES

□ □ **Festival of French Films** 12 feature films presented by the French Embassy and Alliance Française. All films subtitled. Free passes at the French Embassy (Lazimpat), Alliance Française (Thapathali), Chez Caroline (Babar Mahal Revisited), Himal Media (Sanchay Kosh Building, Pulchowk), Tlik n Tok (New Road), 27 November-2 December, Russian Cultural Centre.

## EXHIBITION

□ □ **Kenichi Komatsu 2001** Exhibition and sale of photographs by Japanese photographer of Mustang, Dolpa and pilgrimages to old Nepali temples. Organised by Japan-Nepal Photographic Exchange Society, 22 November-7 December, Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal, 220735  
□ □ **Digital Art 1995-2001** by Jyoti Duvadi. Until 26 November. Siddhanta Art Gallery Baber Mahal Revisited, 411122  
□ □ **Colour of my mind** Paintings by Mona Ghosh. 20 November-2 December, Alliance Française, Thapathali, 241163

## EVENTS

□ □ **Nepali classical dance and folk music** at Hotel Vajra. Dances of Hindu and Buddhist gods. Tuesdays and Fridays, 7PM onwards, the Great Pagoda Hall. Ticket and tea Rs 400. Nepali folk tunes Wednesdays and Saturdays, 6.30PM onwards, hotel restaurant. Hotel Vajra, 271545.  
□ □ **Siemens Action Asia Himalayan Mountain Bike Race Series 2001** Final event 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 Française Sundays and Tuesdays 4.30PM-6.30PM, 241163. At Banu's, Kamal Pokhari, Wednesdays 6.30PM-8PM, Saturdays 1.30PM, 434024, 434830  
□ □ **Visions 2001: The World of Fashion** Nepali and Indian professional models model ethnic and modern ensembles designed by top Nepali designers. Modelled clothes and jewellery on sale. Rs 1,500, including dinner, Baber Mahal Revisited, 23 November 6PM. Tickets at Baithak, K2 (251647), and Chez Caroline (263070).  
□ □ **Ganesh's Trunk** Exhibition and sale of Christmas ornaments and cards, hand-painted baskets, woven Thankas, paper products, jewellery, hand crafted soaps and herbal products, Newar wood carving, luxury homeware, cashmere and silks, carpets. Raffle with prizes to benefit the Hareip Project. 24 November, 11AM- 6PM Hotel Yak & Yeti.  
□ □ **Blast from the past** Sixties theme night with Rusty Nails, Red Sky Walkers, Robin & Lozza. 28 November, 6PM onwards, Radisson Hotel. Rs 450 including one beer or soft drink. 423888

## MUSIC

□ □ **Live acoustic music** Dinesh Ran and Deependra every Friday and Sunday at the Himalate Café, 7.30PM-10PM 262526  
□ □ **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** by Catch-22 Tuesday and Friday nights at the 40,000 ½ ft Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, 414336

## EATING OUT

□ □ **Airo-Caribbean** night with music and speciality food. Rs 500, 30 November, La'Soon Restaurant and Vinotheque, Pulchowk. For reservations ring 525290.  
□ □ **BBQ and Thai buffet dinner** every Friday with live band Las Sonidos Latinos. Adults Rs 500, children under 12 Rs 250. Taxes extra. Summit Hotel, Sanepa, 521810  
□ □ **Far Pavilion** Indian cuisine with Sapania Parivar and Suresh Manandhar. Everyday except Tuesday, 8PM-11PM. The Everest Hotel  
□ □ **Spa Rejuvenation Cuisine** Special brunch offer with use of health club and swimming pool. 25 November, 11.30AM-5PM. Rs 750 Hotel Yak & Yeti  
□ □ **Himalayan Feelings** Fusion band every Friday night with full Sekuwa dinner and complimentary beer or soft drink. Rs 555 per head, Rs1010 per couple at Dwarika's Hotel, 479488  
□ □ **Le Cafe des Trekkers** New Tibetan and French restaurant. Special 10 percent discount on Nepali menu until 7 December. Jaytha, Thamel, opposite Hotel Blue Diamond, 225777  
□ □ **Barbecue lunch** with complementary wine or beer for adults, soft drink for children. Saturdays and Sundays at the Godavari Village Resort, 560675  
□ □ **Rox Restaurant** Traditional home-style European cuisine from a wood-fired oven. Steaks, trout, roasted vegetables, desserts. Hotel Hyatt Regency, 491234

## GETAWAYS

□ □ **Chiso Chiso Hawana** Summer B&B package for Nepalis and expatriates. Rs 1,250 per head. Club Himalaya 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, 434870  
□ □ **Nagarkot Escape** Weekends in cottages, views of the Himalayas, valleys and forests. Special rates for Nepalis and resident expatriates. Hotel Keyman Chautari. keyman@wlink.com.np 436850

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

## NEPALI WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

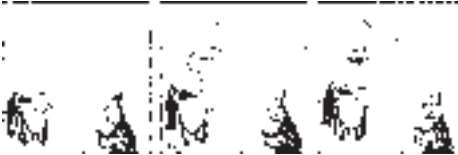
Not much to report. The westerlies travel across Iran and Afghanistan, and then just when it looks like they are headed our way they veer off northwards to the Pamirs. This is why Nepal has only seen the edges of several of these fronts in the past two weeks. Western Nepal has received a dusting of snow, but otherwise it has been an uncharacteristically warm and dry November so far. And it looks like it will stay that way for the foreseeable future. What this means is dry days ahead, thicker ground fog in Kathmandu Valley and a further drop in minimum temperatures, while the maximum stays at a balmy 24.

## KATHMANDU VALLEY

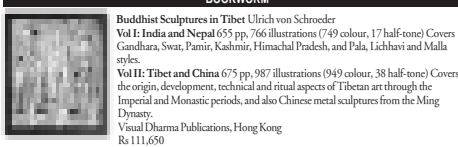
Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
24/07	24/06	23/06	24/05	23/06

## YAK YETI YAK

by MIKU



## BOOKWORM



From the Sacred Realm: Treasures of Tibetan Art from the Newark Museum

Vol I: India and Nepal 655 pp, 766 illustrations (749 colour, 17 half-tone) Covers Gandhara, Swat, Pamir, Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Pala, Lichhavi and Malla styles.  
Vol II: Tibet and China 675 pp, 987 illustrations (949 colour, 38 half-tone) Covers the origin, development, technical and ritual aspects of Tibetan art through the Imperial and Monastic periods, and also Chinese metal sculptures from the Ming Dynasty.  
Visual Dharma Publications, Hong Kong  
Rs 111,650

Courtesy Mandala Book Point, Kantipath, 227711, mandala@csl.com.np

## CLASSIFIED

**To let** Spacious furnished apartment near Jawalakhel Zoo. Two bedrooms, two bath, large living-dining, modern kitchen, terrace overlooking garden. Quiet surroundings. Contact Mrs Singh at 524589.

**The way to Mexico** is too far. Boteqa Restaurant and Tequila Bar is near Thamel Chowk. 266433. 15 percent off-season discount.

**The Borderlands Resort** For canyoning, rafting, trekking at Tibet borders, Professional Development Program, Leadership Courses and many more. 425836/425894. info@borderlandsresorts.com. www.borderlandsresorts.com.

**K-Tool Beer and Steakhouse** not the "longest", "highest", "first" or any other superlative. Just a relaxed, easy-going bar and restaurant with the coldest beer and juiciest steaks this side of the moon. By the Kathmandu Guest House, 433043

**HMB Mountain Biking** Have your bike serviced or repaired by HMB's Professional Mechanics at the HMB Workshop. Riding gear, accessories and parts available. Second hand bikes bought/sold/fixed. New and reconditioned mountain bikes for sale. Himalayan Mountain Bikes—Tours and Expeditions. 437437.

**For immediate hire** Toyota Land Cruiser. Three-door, air-conditioned, CD player. Excellent condition, great price. No brokers. Contact 9810-4192.

**Kodari Eco Resort** Peace in natural surroundings, good views of Nepal/Tibet border, jungle-covered mountains, Buddhist monasteries, ancient Shiva cave. Hike to villages with various ethnic groups, vantage points to Himalayas. Comfortable accommodation, attached bath, balcony or terraces, good food, friendly service. 480262, kodari@mos.com.np

**Best Room in Thamel** Long-term only. Private terrace, bath, double-bed, wardrobe, shelves. Quiet, private, and a great view. US\$5 per day. Contact John 548119.

**Stupa View and Restaurant & Terrace** at Baudhanath Stupa. Well-appointed restaurant and terraces with views of stupas and Himalayas. International vegetarian specialities, pizza from day oven, ice cream, soft guitar tunes on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays from 5PM on. Special events on full moon. Open daily 11AM-8.30PM. 480262.

**Gourmet weekend** for Nepalis and expatriates at Naked Chef, Nagarkot. B&B, three-course international gourmet dinner, transportation both ways. Rs 1,100, 417386, 680115

For insertions ring NT Marketing at 543333-336.

## BBC on FM 102.4

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



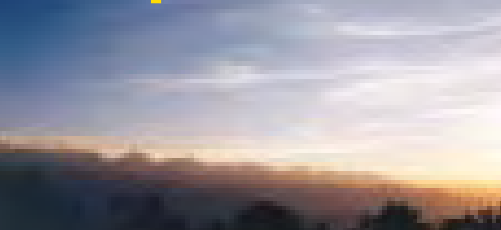
## Radio Sagarmatha

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Tel: ++977-1-545680, 545681 Fax: ++977-1-530227  
E-mail: radio@radiosagarmatha.org  
www.radiosagarmatha.org

## OFF THE BEATEN TREK

by JANAKI GURUNG

## Champadevi sunrise



## Shhh. Here is Kathmandu's best kept secret.

As the eastern sky turns from grey to pink, silhouetting the mountains and framing the sky, a few early risers are huffing and puffing along the pine ridge. They are racing the sun to the top of Champadevi on Kathmandu Valley's southern rim.

But the sun is rising at the speed of the earth's rotation, and pretty soon the first rays catch up with the climbers and bathe the dew-wet pine forest in a warm golden glow. Below, the scene is primordial, the fog covering Kathmandu like a blanket at the exact height of the lake that was once there. Only the temple at the top of Kirtipur and Swoyambhu's golden stupa pierce through the mist like islands.

To the north, the snow pyramids of Dhaulagiri and Langtang reflect the yellow light and loom over the Valley. Along the horizon, dwarfed by the saw-tooth summits of the near Rothing mountains, is Mt Everest. You'll miss it if you don't know where to look, but the bhadrakar topi outline of the world's highest mountain is unmistakable. Gauri Shankar's imposing west face is in shadow and despite being more than 100 km away, it has a dominating presence. Welcome to Kathmandu's best-kept secret: The Champadevi Sunrise.

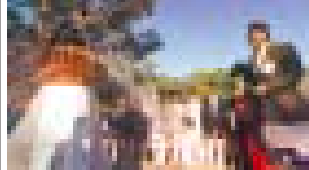
Start early. If leathery or hangover conspire to keep you in bed, persevere. This time of year, 5.00AM is a good time to start off, because the sun rises early and your progress along the Dakshinkali road will be slowed by fog. By the time you pass Chobhar, the fog will be as thick as pea soup, mixed up with the overnight dust from the cement factory smokestack. But as

the car climbs up the hill, you break through the mist to be accounted by a sky full of stars. Venus is rising behind Phulchowki, just beginning to be visible in the pale pre-dawn to the east. Take the turnoff to Hartanab Resort, and climb the narrow, steep, serpentine bends through pine forests. Pass the resort and drive up another kilometre along the ridge and park the car. The smell of fresh air after the stale air of the Valley floor is so intense that the oxygen makes you dizzy.

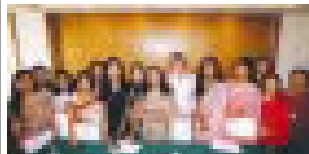
The climb to Champadevi should take one-and-a-half hours, and the last bit to the round and wide summit at 6,200 ft is steep. The more adventurous can continue along the ridge and climb another two hours to the summit of Chandragiri at 8,700 ft, from where the views of the Himalaya range from Dhaulagiri to Everest are even

more spectacular. The great thing about this hike is you can just keep walking along the ridge for as long as you can take it. Some hike right up to Chitlang Pass and descend to Thankot, but this will take you the whole day. Unlike other tourist areas around the Valley, there are no resorts, and the likelihood of seeing other hikers is minimal. Take plenty of water, there are no streams or water sources. One great way to finish off your Champadevi climb is to make a leisurely descent to Hartanab Resort (keeping an eye out for the abundant bird life), order brunch and stay around for tea while watching the haze clear from Kathmandu Valley laid out at your feet. □

## HAPPENINGS



**PREMIER AND HERO.** Prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba unveiling a statue of national hero, Shankar Shukla in Thimi on 16 November to mark the New Year 1122.



**HAIR TODAY:** Indian hair stylist Sylvie with beautiful Dolly Singh with trainees of the National Hair Institute at the Royal Singh Hotel on 20 November.



**THINKING ALOUD:** South Asian participants at a conference on "Regionalism and the Nation State" organised by HIMAI. South Asian magazine at the Dwarika's Hotel on 18 November.



View from Champadevi in 1956 (above); and in 2000, with the built-up town and the plume of the Chobhar cement factory in the foreground.



Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Bijuli ko tar, tar, tar...

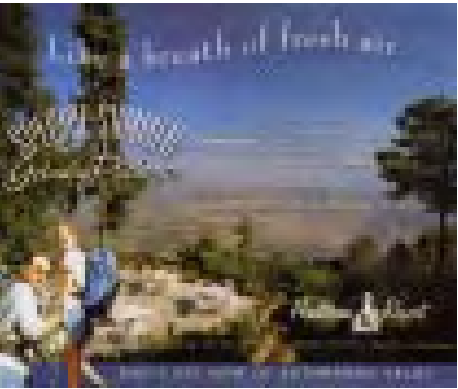


There are a few things that distinguish human beings from non-human ones. Humans, for instance, have the well-known tendency to sprout fur under their armpits, whereas other lesser mammals whose armpits I have personally inspected while researching this article, don't. Humans are also the only species aside from the Common Himalayan Blue-throated Bush Chat that can compose music and sing. How the genes responsible for music evolved in early humans is still a matter of conjecture in the scientific community at large, but the latest theory is that our primate ancestors made rudimentary attempts at singing when, after a hard day of hunting, gathering and talking mammals in the peat bogs, they started taking the first pre-historic showers. This is why, to this day, my significant other sings popular Nepali folks songs while in the tub. In fact, she is doing so even as we speak.

Nepali folk songs, as those of us who have made multiple visits to Bhojan Griha know, are a fascinating blend of rhythm, melody and poetic lyrics. It is the harmony of these three important musical elements that make Nepali folk so irresistible. There is not a reekier who does not leave this country humming *Resham phiriri* while being frisked amidst heightened security at the departure gate. I have often wondered at the popularity of that particular song, and have come to the conclusion that it is the lyrics that make it the hot favourite. The words are imbued with deep symbolism and relevance. Take the second stanza of the chorus:

*Ek nale banduk. Dui nale banduk. Miigadi take ko. Miigadi male take ko hoira, maya lai dake ko.*

Translation:  
One-barrel gun, two-barrel gun, aiming at a deer.  
I'm not aiming at no deer.  
I'm aiming at you, my dear.



These are poignant words. And the juxtaposition of an emerging gun-culture and latent violence with words of endearment lend the song an ominous sense of foreboding. The uncertainties of love are symbolic in a land where life itself has become uncertain.

Let's take another popular Nepali song from yesteryear where the lyrics evoke the nostalgia for a time when the world was young, love was sweet, while through the medium of music the Nepali public gets a lesson in horticulture and the vital significance of the insect kingdom in cross-pollination.

*Ma mahuri hun Radha,  
Tini aarp ko manjati hau.*

My good friend Sall assisted me in translating it thus:

*I am a bee, Radha,  
You are a mango tree.*

I see some dancing in the aisles, so let me present another popular folk tune, this one by Sambhujit Banskota:

*Rato rika nidharma, talakka talkiyo  
Chhuti bhuta mayako, ago salkiyo.  
Eh bijuli ko tar, tar, tar...  
Phuesata bhaye, ch hajut, bhetaun sanibar.*

Red dot on your forehead shining, brightly  
Flame of love burning in my chest, fiercely.  
Hey, electricity wire, wire, wire...  
Let's meet on Saturday if you're not tied up already.

Here, the lyricist has cleverly shown us the connection between a high-voltage transmission line and thermal energy. Then, subtly, he drives home the important message that our nation's future rests in the prudent harnessing of our hydropower potential so that young citizens will have the leisure to rendezvous on weekends.

Hydropower is a recurring theme in Nepali folk songs, as we can see in this next one which is the lament of a paan-chewing technician working in the Middle Maryanghi Project whose responsibility it is to power the nation day and night:

*Paan ko pat  
Maya tundi aarpunchhu din ko rat  
Maryanghi sa la...*

Darling betel leaf,  
I think of you day and night  
Like the lean season flow of the Maryangdi.

And it is when the river goes dry because all the water has been diverted to the turbines that there is hint of trouble in paradise and the first signs of psychosis:

*Dhungo bagara, dajai, dhungo bagara  
Maya chhadachha halla nagara.*

Rocky bugger, brother, rocky bugger  
OK, OK, I love you, so shut-up-already.

NEPALI SOCIETY

Headline twins



PHOTOGRAPH BY KUNDU NEUPA

Eighteen months after they were born joined at the head at Prasuti Griha in Thapathali, twins Ganga and Jamuna are back in Kathmandu. These conjoined sisters, the youngest Nepali duo to hit world headlines, were separated at the Singapore General Hospital in early April. The operation, initially expected to last 30 hours, ended up taking the team of about 20 expert surgeons over 90 hours to complete.

There have been only four instances of twins joined at the head being successfully separated and it was, if nothing else, an extremely expensive undertaking. Neurologist Dr Basant Pant says Nepali doctors did a commendable job, but the operation was impossible in Nepal due to lack of equipment. Even in Singapore, the procedure could only be undertaken because after news of the twins' plight hit the headlines, generous contributions came in from Singaporeans and Nepalis. Bhusan KC and Sandhya Shrestha now have enough money to take care of the medical expenses of their children for the next few years.

The twins are said to be in reasonable health and are now at home in Kathmandu

with their parents. Bhusan and Sandhya say Jamuna is the more active of the two, but Ganga is also slowly perking up. However there is one small problem: Because the children had been living in an

Anglophone environment for close to a year, they seem to respond more to English than to Nepali. "No matter," says delighted grandad Arjundev Shrestha. "I'll talk to them in English." □

सन्तितस मिश्रता  
स्वस्थ सम्पन्नताको प्रेम

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