

**EXCLUSIVE**

Three more months

Going by the last three months, political insiders now have a more realistic expectation of the emergency. It is not likely to bring a major change in the battlefield situation, or the political scenario. Prime Minister Shree Bahadur Deuba has bought himself time. He still has to be seen trying to stave off a mutiny within his party to pay much attention to national development and his much-touted socioeconomic-reform package. The Maoists can be expected to keep the public in a general state of panic with boobytraps and ambushes. The fear of major attacks when the next emergency cycle comes to an end towards mid-May. If the security situation does not improve in that time, parliamentary parties will have to get together to ratify a maximum— and final—six-month extension. Government and opposition hope for is that the Maoists will back down through and force the Maoists back to the negotiating table.

25-35

It is like bargaining at a street market. Nepal and India are edging closer towards concurring on value addition, and the meeting in New Delhi next week may actually produce an agreement before the 1996 treaty expires at midnight on 5 March. India had initially proposed 50 per cent value addition as qualification for duty-free export of Nepali goods to India. In the Kathmandu talks this week, the figure came down to 35

Nepal started bargaining at 20 and has gone up to 25, and may be expected to agree on 30 percent, though one Nepali official told us: "Twenty-five percent is as far as we can go." It seems the state elections in Uttar Pradesh were holding New Delhi back from a softer stance.

UMID BAGCHAND IN MANGALSEN

Just about everyone in remote Achham district was expecting a major Maoist attack the week of the sixth anniversary of the start of the "People's War". But no one expected it to be such a devastating defeat for the government, and such a rout of the security forces.

Mangalsen residents are still in a state of shock, and what emerges on piecing together their accounts is a tragic tale of warnings not heeded, of unspeakable carnage and brutality during a long night of terror.

Five loud explosions at midnight on Saturday heralded the start of the attack. It shattered the silence of the sleeping bazaar and reverberated across the surrounding hills. The sound of automatic gunfire rent the air, and bullets whizzed all around. There were frantic footsteps on the cobbled streets. It was pitch dark: the hydropower plant at Kailash Khola and the telecom tower had been knocked out. Half-an-hour later, there was a deafening blast in the bazaar, more gunfire, more explosions, screams and slogan-shouting Maoists.

"We were awakened by the sound of the first explosions, and stayed awake all night," a local resident told us. "But no one dared to look outside until about 10 o'clock the next morning." Like many others we talked to, he did not want us to name him.

The police chief of the district was ordering his forces into position, and tried calling the barracks on the ridge overlooking the town for help. "No one answered the phone initially, then the line went dead," Yam

Bahadur Chettri, Deputy Superintendent of Police told us. He said that one hour into the attack, the Maoists were attacking the town from all sides. Chettri survived because he fell into a trench while trying to escape after the Maoists blew up his office and set his residence on fire. Eye-witnesses said some 2,500 Maoists stormed the town, moving about in batches of 10-15 in a coordinated

The first explosions had come from the top of the spur on which the town sits, where the military barracks are located, a 10-minute

fighting almost to the last man, but they were overwhelmed by numbers and the Maoists' better weapons. The attackers used automatic rifles, mortars and rocket-propelled grenades captured during the Ghorahi raid on 23 November. The Maoists looted another 55 automatic weapons and five machine guns from the Mangelsen barracks.

The question on everyone's mind is why the base was not more prepared. Villagers around Mangalsen had noticed Maoist build-up two weeks before the attack, the rebels had distributed pamphlets, pasted posters and even organised rallies warning that they would attack the district headquarters soon. They even wrote threatening letters to the district administration which were passed on to Kathmandu.

With all signs pointing to an impending attack, the Chief District Officer Mohan Singh Khatri (who was killed in the raid) is said to have lamented at an all-party meeting a few

weeks ago: "It looks like Kathmandu will send reinforcements only for our funerals." As it turned out, the first army helicopters landed only at 10AM the next day. The chief of Achham's Intelligence Department had sent in a report—which usually goes to the government, army headquarters and palace—warning of the impending attack.

Nepali Congress MP for Achham Ram Bahadur Bista is livid, and says there was negligence at the highest level. He said: "I myself had informed the prime minister and home minister of the build up. And nothing was done until after it was all over on Sunday morning." This is what remains puzzling. Why, if so much information was available, was nothing done to safeguard Mangelsen and Sanjibagar?

(With additional reporting in Kathmandu.)

Small is feasible

RAMYATA LIMBU IN SYANGGE

There is a revolution sweeping hydropower development in Nepal. No, we are not talking about mammoth projects like the \$ 450 million Kali Gandaki A which will come on line this year. Across Nepal, small-scale power projects, privately-financed and locally built, are starting to feed electricity into the national grid and helping rural electrification.

The beauty of these projects is that they don't need foreign consultants, foreign aid, or foreign investment. And here in upper Lamjung District on a snow-fed tributary of the Marsyangdi is a shining example of how it works.

Last month, the Rs 19 million Syange Project delivered the first unit of electricity to the national grid, the first kW of hydro electricity supplied to the NEA by a private producer since the 36 megawatt Bhote Kosi Project came on line last year. But there is a difference. Electricity from the \$100 million Bhote Kosi costs the government 7 cents approximately Rs 5.40, per unit all year round, and is charged in dollars. Buying

electricity from the Syange projects costs Rs 3.57 per unit during the wet season and Rs 5.06 during the dry season—in rupees—and even though for the next three years the price will increase by six percent

Locally-designed and locally-financed small hydros are changing Nepal's energy future.



more competitive.

"The development of water resources by foreign parties, which inevitably had to be big enough to justify their costs, led to the price of energy being unaffordable for the Nepali population," says Kumar Pandey of the Lamjung Electricity Development Company (LEDCO). "This is a new model of hydropower development in Nepal. This the future."

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COMING OUT OF SLAUGHTER

What can we say that we haven't said before? And is there any point repeating it? All we can do is pray and mourn for the recent dead, the 3,200 killed in the past six years, the thousands upon thousands of Nepalis who have been bereaved. We mourn for a nation in mourning.

The political decay that led us down this slippery slope was in full display in parliament this week as we prepared to mark the death of democracy 50 years ago. It was hard to stomach the sight of the people's representatives tearing at each other, yanking microphones, and gheraoing the podium—even before the bodies in the ruins of the barracks and police posts of Achham had stopped smouldering.

It is hard to take this feigned outrage seriously when overturning the podium becomes the ultimate expression of political anger in our fledgling democracy. Our opposition MPs have a problem with calibrating protest: an

airliner leasing scam and the biggest debacle in the nation's history elicit the same level of rage. And either way, it is the furniture in the House of Representatives that bears the brunt. And about the ruling party, the less said the better. Nepalis are thoroughly sick of these plutocrats and their back-room intrigue, the callous immorality, and a fatal ignorance of statecraft. Their petty games and narrow minds has brought this crisis upon us. Why does the country have to pay in blood for the personality clash of these failed, venal and power-crazed individuals? How long do we have to endure them?

If a crisis of this magnitude and national peril cannot bring our politicians together, it is hard to imagine what will. There go Girija Prasad Koirala and Sher Bahadur Deuba challenging each other to a duel on the Titanic. There is Madhav Kumar Nepal playing his fiddle on the tilting deck. And everyone else is rushing madly for the lifeboats.

To be sure, democracy is supposed to thrive precisely on this partisanship, on competition between those who disagree,



STATE OF THE STATE

Who has gained from the past six years of conflict? We know who has lost: the Nepali people.

After the savage slaughter in Mangelsen Saturday night, it has become clear that the Maoists are more interested in carnage than in political change. Violence has now become an end in itself. The attack on the administration came without warning, and by their dastardly act the Maoists have extended an open invitation to outside forces to intervene in our internal affairs. Comrade Prachanda's wish in an interview in 1998 that he looked forward to fighting Indian forces on Nepali territory does not look insane anymore. Is there a method in the Maoists' madness?

Prachanda last week issued a bombastic press release listing the supposed achievements of his so-called People's War as it entered its seventh year. But in nearly 2,500 words, there is not a single argument that would in any way justify the loss of over 3,000 Nepali lives. What did they die for?

What the insurgency has succeeded in is undermining the limited gains of the People's Movement of 1990. Power seems to be once again shifting away from the people, and it's not just because of the say that the Royal Nepal Army has acquired in matters of the state after the declaration of an emergency in the country.

There have always been three principal players in Nepali politics. The primacy of the military—

administrative elite dates back to the days of unification. The palace represents this traditional elite, and it has kept its hold over two centuries. Between the Shahs and their Rana cousins, the extended Gorkha family has maintained its power.

The 1815 Sugauli Treaty reduced the rulers of Kathmandu to being proxies of the British Empire in Delhi, introducing a second player in Nepal's power centres. When Jang Bahadur usurped power after the Kot and Bhadrachal Massacres of 1846, he accentuated the authority of the empire next door in order to establish his own legitimacy. The third player for power in Nepal is the Nepali people themselves, and they didn't really come into until 1990.

The restoration of the Shah dynasty to the throne at Hanuman Dhoka Palace on 18 February, 1951 was an unprecedented event: the people and the palace had come together for the first time to chart a common destiny. However, it also legitimised the role of India. The New Delhi Compromise was rammed down the throat of Nepali Congress leaders, and proved that the strategists of independent India were not different from the managers of the Honourable East India Company when it came to ways of dealing with the buffer state in the Himalaya.

The royal coup of 15 Decem-

ber, 1960 attempted to shift power from people to the palace, but Delhi adroitly exploited this rift. In the 1815 Sugauli Treaty, India played the palace and the Nepali Congress against each other for its own advantage and maintained its stranglehold over strategic affairs in Kathmandu. When BP Koirala chose to return from exile to try and restore democracy, India lost the card that it had used successfully for behind-the-scenes bargaining with the king. New Delhi's game of arm-twisting Nepal came out into the open and culminated in the eighteen month long economic blockade (officially called the "trade and transit impasse" in India) imposed by Rajiv Gandhi in 1988. There is little doubt that relentless pressure from New Delhi was instrumental in making Narayanhari bow before the public clamour for multi-party democracy.

India's foreign policy pundits in South Block discovered that the shift of power from palace to the people in Kathmandu did not turn out to be of any advantage to them. In fact, it was even more cumbersome to deal with a plethora of leaders working under the pressure of facing an electorate. Hush-hush negotiations with the likes of latter-

day Goro Guraj Misser and Chunder Seker Opedha had been a lot easier. The permutations of the chronic power play at Singha Durbar were unsatisfactory no matter how the chips fell. The uncertainty of hung parliaments and revolving-door governments in the mid-1990s must have made the strategic manipulators long for the obsolete but reliable players of the Panchayat era.

Enter the Maoists with their three acts of 40 demands, the first set of nine completely devoted to matters concerning "nationalism". It is merely accidental that it is precisely this "nationalism" that has suffered the most over last six years? Was undermining the hidden purpose of all the vocal name-calling of our southern neighbours? Had the fire of patriotism smoldered during the Hindu Bhojan riots reached its logical conclusion, Comrade Prachanda may have been declared the dictator of the Confederation of Communist and Maoist Political Organisations of South Asia (CCOMPOSA).

The very concept of popular rule is anathema to Maoists, so it isn't surprising that the Maoists failed even to mention the word

on the marketplace of ideas. But that is true when democracy reaches a certain maturity, stature and stability. Our fragile polity just can't take this kind of chronic abuse.

We have a situation here: democracy is threatened by an ultra-violent group that does not believe in it. Their reach has widened dramatically in the past six years, and they have used brutal violence to cleverly fill the vacuum left by the state. And as the threat to our democracy and freedoms get more and more serious, our parliamentary parties and factions within them continue to use that threat to bring each other down.

This cannot go on, because by doing that, the political parties are chopping off their own legs. Successive rulers since 1998 have squandered the political option: the civil police couldn't fight the war so an armed police force was set up, the laws of the land were not enough and the anti-terrorism act was needed, constitutional provisions did not suffice and so an emergency was declared and the army unleashed. And the problem is still there. If anything, it is getting bigger.

There is a lesson here. If this road is not taking us anywhere we must be flexible—backtrack and look at the political options we abandoned, while maintaining the military pressure on the rebels. Unfortunately, Sher Bahadur Deuba has painted himself into a corner with his no-takers stand that means he has only a stick and no carrot.

And yet, in the final analysis, there is no doubt that parliamentary parties must see a common threat much larger than each other and forge a minimum alliance on the basic things they say they agree on: non-violent struggle, democracy and social progress. It must be parliament that must provide the mechanism for this lowest common denominator to be articulated. The statelessness, as well as a new breed of political leaders to articulate this must emerge from the 205.

That leadership exists, it's just buried underneath a pile of high-profile cynics and crooks. This new leadership must make common cause at the political level to give the people hope and the security forces a sense that they are fighting to preserve something that matters deeply for the country's future.

by CK LAL



NATION

COMMENTARY

In their devastatingly successful attacks on Achham on 16 February, the Maoists were just going by the book. They used classic guerrilla tactics: "Strike will fall close at the weakest spots of the enemy and terrorise them." The impact was as expected: it spread panic in government, parliament, and the people at large. And it has served to demoralise the army's rank-and-file.

The attack not only sent three new anti-Maoist alignments into disarray, but has also focussed attention once again on cracks in the ruling party itself. The proposals for "national government" and "democratic alliance" that were being discussed will now be academic. King Gyanendra's carefully chosen words in his message to the nation on Democracy Day (two days after Achham) have also created a stir, and people are interpreting it to suit their own beliefs.

The Royal Nepal Army has admitted that it has taken a defensive posture from the very beginning of its anti-insurgency campaign three months ago. And, if Achham tells us something, it is that in this time the army has been incapable of assessing what the Maoists had up their sleeves. Lack of information and intelligence always has major repercussions in any battlefield situation.

What is therefore worrisome is that the army, despite having wisdom of the media and the political parties in its counter-insurgency operation, seemingly failed to assess the rebel battle plan and anticipate this raid—even when there were enough reports and warnings about the impending attack. Wars are not only waged with big weapons and better trained soldiers,

Accham post-mortem

The Maoists won the battle in Achham, but the outcome of the war is still far from certain.



The military barracks on a hillside above Mangelsen that was over-run by Maoists on 16 February.

Achham will now remain a textbook example of either our ignorance, or neglect, or inability to use intelligence. Needless to say, this is basic to any military strategy, and assumes crucial importance in fighting a counter-insurgency in our kind of terrain.

What is therefore worrisome is that the army, despite having wisdom of the media and the political parties in its counter-insurgency operation, seemingly failed to assess the rebel battle plan and anticipate this raid—even when there were enough reports and warnings about the impending attack. Wars are not only waged with big weapons and better trained soldiers,

and to serve a major blow to the government's credibility.

The defeat at Achham overturned the psychological edge the government had begun to gain over the Maoists. The shockingly heavy casualty rate suddenly made the general people hesitant, and many who thought things would be set right once the military came riding in, were dismayed. The traditional respect, reputation and prestige that the army commands in the public mind now needs to be restored. The Royal Nepal Army has always been looked upon as the State's last line of defence. And this is why the Maoists themselves call it

the "final enemy"

Any force that you must be capable of defending itself, even if it is unable to defend others. And the RNA had this as policy: first secure yourself and your weapons. By allowing the Maoists to overrun the Mangelsen barracks, the army "showed it was unable to do either." This is a new kind of war; it should have been glaringly evident by now that the traditional defensive approach of relying on sentries at the gate was hopelessly outdated. What would have helped is alert, modern guerrilla tactics and mobility based on maximum knowledge of even the slightest new movement in the surrounding terrain.

"Know and understand the enemy, then try to understand yourself," was what the well-known Chinese war strategist Sun Tzu said. That lesson was learnt well by Mao Zedong and through him, his Nepali disciples. But, alas, not by our security forces.

The army may now react and launch a major operation, or at least get into the offensive mode. That can lead to widespread killings, and if the death toll climbs, it would play right into the Maoists' hands, because they can use the resulting resentment to regain political ground they have lost.

As the events leading to Achham show, the Maoists may now be trying to pursue a strategy to discredit the security forces, and drag the morally bankrupt politicians back to dialogue—but this from a position of strength. Depending on what happens now, the Maoists may even announce another unilateral ceasefire as a strategy to gain support of mainstream left parties, which they hinted at through Prachanda's

12 February statement. They may also launch a couple more attacks on government installations to provoke the security forces as part of their *Dhaka Abhiyan* of massive strikes. (see also "Red terror", #81).

The Maoists say they are presently in the "Strategic Defence" phase of the "people's war," and Achham may tempt them to move on to the next phase: "Strategic Balance". If they decide they are ready for the next phase, they will concentrate future attacks on sensitive infrastructure like roads leading to the capital, major airports, power installations. From there they would move on to the final phase: "Strategic Offensive".

But the Maoists may be underestimating the strength of the army. They may have won the battle in Achham, but the outcome of the war is not so certain. And militaries the world over are good at learning their lessons from defeat, just like our own army did after the Maoist attack in Dang on 23 November.

The Royal Nepal Army has always been trained to fight a guerrilla war, and it must operationalise this against the Maoists. It needs now to be able to anticipate not just the broad strategy of the Maoists, but also their selection of targets and the tactics they employ. It must have its ears on the ground, upgrade the quality of intelligence, infiltrate and penetrate. Whatever the eventual outcome, this is the Royal Nepal Army's first war in home territory, and that makes this its ultimate test. ♦

(Prakash Gautam is a former Maoist district commander for Okhaldhunga and left the movement three years ago.)

LETTERS

MIGRANT WORKERS

Hemilata Rai's "Sending money home" (#81) was a serious review of Nepal's migrant workforce. Nepal's labour export is pumping not just \$850 million a year into the economy, as Rai writes, but as much as \$2.5 billion through the hundi channels. Nepali Gurkhas in Brunei and legal Nepali employees in southeast Asia alone remit more than \$400 million a year. This is how modern Nepal stays afloat. Maybe we should choose Nepal's next cabinet from among this hardworking lot.

J Prasad Botswana



NO GAIN

Pioneer Sharma's critique of foreign aid in "No pain, no gain" (#81) is a real eye-opener. After three decades of pro-donor planning, Nepal is the second poorest country in the world, with the worst human development in the continent. However, Sharma generalises and rushes to conclusions, giving easy escape to those who failed to deliver. We must draw a distinction between development-workers who, even though they were not born in Nepal, made a long-term, often life-time, commitment to the development of this country, and those who are in Nepal because they see business. Yes, there is a lot of money in poverty.

My second concern is: Is it fair to put the entire blame on foreigners for our failed development? I am sure the article reminded every informed, patriotic Nepali of the difficult questions that never got answered. For example: how come a country with the second largest hydroelectric potential in the world only exploits less than five percent of it? While Bhutan doubled its GNP after its second hydropower plant, our own NEA is facing problems just meeting its running costs. Who is to blame? The bideshi advisers, or our own leaders who failed to safeguard the national interests? Perhaps both partly, but what are they

do not to repeat the same mistake?

Malika Shakya LSE, London

WORRIED

Being one of the leading tour operators for Nepal and the Himalayas in Scandinavia I am extremely concerned about the situation in your lovely country. I am worried that corruption and mismanagement are more conspicuous than ever. The Maoist crisis wouldn't have started if it wasn't for this. The government is rather too weak, too apathetic, or too corrupt to do anything about it. One small example: the "quick visa" you can get at Kathmandu airport arrival if you pay \$5 to this-or-that person so you don't have to stay in line. What kind of first impression do you think that provides? The tourists can easily shake their heads and go home, but what about Nepalis who have to suffer corruption every day? The Maoists are a great threat to the stability of Nepal, no doubt. They have changed from a political force using terror to a bunch of bandits stealing from the people. There has to be a way out of this dead end.

Nepal cannot afford not to find a peaceful solution. It is a no-win situation for both sides. Otherwise tourism is just going to divert from Nepal to

Tibet, Sikkim and India.

Lars Gundersen Denmark

CK Lal's "Let them eat cake" (#78) about "Swar Samrat" Narayan Gopal has attracted the attention of this Trust. Lal's recollections are interesting and wonderful, but what disturbed and shattered me badly was his reference to the singer being a taxi driver. I was with my husband during that period, and I am quite sure he never even touched the steering wheel of a taxi, let alone any vehicle with four wheels.

Pemala Gururacharya Narayan Gopal Music Trust

CK Lal replies: "Despite my advancing age, I stand by my memory."

The reference to Jamin Shah jars that brilliant column by CK Lal (#50) about the "no distant" (#51). Poor CK, perhaps he does not know what goes on in the Kathmandu underworld. All that glitters is not gold, so why is the springer to the defence of this guy?

Daniel Gajraj by email

FINGER-POINTING

Rajendra Khadka has made several good points in

"Diaspora in dilemma" (#78) But he suffers from the common Nepali affliction of finger-pointing. This is not helpful. Nepal's condition is not caused by those who are abroad. Who is more responsible, those who say they are helping the country but are corrupt, or those like who know we are not helping Nepal—but at least we are honest about it.

Furthermore, some of us did not "leave" Nepal. We were born overseas. If we are going to use fallacies of logic and make off-base generalisations, you may as well fault me for the pollution of the Valley while you're at it. Instead of addressing the real problems, individuals like Khadka insist on blaming others. One would have thought that the politicians would be more successful of passing the buck but Khadka has taken finger-pointing to a new level. Here is a new acronym: "NewBoPaS"—Nepalis Who Blame Others For All Problems.

R. Uthappa Seattle, USA

I think you should stop printing the cynical comments from abroad in your paper and giving undue importance to their navel-gazing. They have an opinion on everything, and like to preach from their safe and comfortable office. They should either show some

guits and return and try to work for the country's development, or they should shut up.

Lila Sapkota Kathmandu

JUST DO IT?

I enjoyed Binod Bhattarai's "Can Nepal do IT?" (#79) and commend his optimism on Nepal's IT future. Yes, definitely, Nepalis are as capable as anyone else in the world. But if we can't even develop and implement a successful programme to grow potatoes, it is hard to believe we will be successful in IT. With a government that does not reward honesty, hard work, integrity, or competitiveness we cannot do it. There is absolute correlation between these attributes and success. The opposite is valid too—just look at our government.

Girvan Pandey by email

CORRECTION:

In #81, the deadline for renewal of the state of emergency by parliament should have been 22 February as inadvertently appeared in the page one brief, "Death toll", and the editorial, "Emerging from the emergency".

Think nationally, invest locally

"As long as the waters of Syange don't dry up, we will be able to generate electricity"



The Syange waterfall, the penstock pipe and power house. Kuber Ghale (above).

development a kick-start if efficiently managed and honestly built. Biggest is also better for projects like the 700 megawatt \$1 billion West Set project which will one day export to India. And even for domestic consumption, experts say, there is now an urgent need for a medium-size reservoir project like the Andhi Khola, which can provide dry season power when production from run-of-the-river schemes falls below capacity. "Run-of-the-river schemes of snow-fed rivers, unlike the Kali Gandaki, should be promoted. But at the same time, projects like Arun should be developed. It gives you firm energy, but does not have the environmental impact of many large projects," says water expert Dr Binayak Bhandari. "Of course there has to be adequate mechanisms and checks and balances, and room for activists to oppose them if they feel the sociological and environmental impacts of the projects are unjustified."

governmental outfits. The Pokhara-based Machhapuchhare Bank provided a seven-year loan for the project at 12.5 percent interest. Other shareholders in the SBC include individuals in Lamjung and Kathmandu and a finance cooperative. Says Pandey: "This is a model, it involves the local people, they own it, they run it, and the whole country benefits."

To be sure, small hydropower is not the complete answer to Nepal's energy development. Big projects come with economies of scale, and can give

local farmer named Singha Bahadur Gurung on a three-kilowatt micro-hydro plant, and decided to do bigger and better things.

"As long as the waters of Syange don't dry up, we will be able to generate electricity and sell it to the national grid, so I guess there's no reason to worry," says Singha Bahadur. But there is a slight look of concern on his face today as he watches a pair of technicians from Kathmandu fixing a snag at the powerhouse. Kuber put in Rs 100,000, and he is also getting a bit impatient because he knows the clock is ticking. "The project is complete. Everything is in place. Why the delay?" he asks. "The NEA should inform us if there's a problem." If all goes according to plan, the SBC will earn back the investment of its shareholders in four years. Villagers will not only benefit from the power generated from their local stream, but also from revenue earned by selling power to the national grid.

The Syange river has its source on the snowy slopes of the Lamjung Himal, and descends through a series of spectacular waterfalls to the Manyangdi. Water is transferred through a 120 m penstock pipe to the powerhouse. The head gives Syange an installed capacity of 183 kilowatt, and can generate approximately 1.1 million units of energy annually.

"So far we've delivered 2,000 units—Rs 10,000 worth of electricity," says Vinay Bhandari, project coordinator and a director of the SBC. Vinay was in Syange last week to check on some teething problems owing to which the NEA has temporarily disconnected the supply. "It's not an unexpected problem, neither is it a persistent one. Until our local operators get the hang of things, one can expect minor hitches," says the engineer, who also has shares in the Syange plant.

Local shareholders feel more secure about the project because their contractors and engineers are also owners—they say it ensures that they are really committed to the SBC, and will go out of their way to make it work.

It has become easier in recent years for the private sector to move into hydropower due to favourable government policies and financing. (See "Hail, the hydro-entrepreneur," p. 5) In 1998, Shailaja Acharya, then deputy prime minister, Minister for Water Resources pushed forth a set of policies that are a milestone in the development of hydropower in Nepal. The policy was favourable for small hydro developments because it clearly set out a formula for the buying rate of electricity. "The NEA was required to buy back all power and energy generated by hydropower developers, which was the assurance local developers needed to generate and supply electricity to the grid," says Pandey.

Companies like LEDCO were encouraged to take the plunge and promote the Syange Baidyt Company. They build, own and operate it, as well as other small hydro resources in the area in a manner that would be commercially viable.

Recent financing mechanisms introduced by the government have also encouraged local commercial banks to invest in small hydropower projects such as Syange, Piliwala, Khola, Indrawati and Chuku Khola. Explains Pandey: "The government has decided to accept loan investments by banks in the hydropower sector. It's not a priority sector lending. All banks are required to make 12 percent of their entire lending to priority sectors. The banks were having a difficult time meeting this requirement previously, and were

paying penalties to the central bank." Under the new policy Rs 100 million is the amount allocated to lending to one project in the hydropower sector by a bank. This means one bank could easily lend the entire loan component to complete a 1 mW project. So banks now feel more comfortable to lend money to small hydropower projects.

"Now that the SBC has been through the steep learning curve of forming a company and building a mini-hydro project, the only sensible thing to do is to build more projects. Without the additional projects, the per kW overhead cost of the SBC will be very high. It is imperative to build other projects to bring down costs," says Pandey.

The process is underway. In the next few years, villages around Syange expect to be owners of almost 800 kW of power in the area. The SBC has already applied to negotiate for a Power Purchase Agreement for the Tapotani Khola, which will be the appropriate size of Syange.

Another project, identified a half-hour walk from Tapotani, will be capable of generating over 400 kW.

LEDCO says it will continue to develop water resources in Lamjung to promote rural electrification by operating a locally-based enterprise that links local natural resources and local investors through a profitable, professionally managed private enterprise and will include the people of Lamjung in developing their district's water resources. It is presently focused on developing the 20 m Nyadi Hydro Power Project and the 10 m Khadi Hydro Power project, both on tributaries of the Manyangdi. "It is also looking into requests from communities to investigate and develop the energy potential of isolated communities. ♦

by DANIEL LAK

Hari, the hydro-entrepreneur

KUNDA DIXIT

When Hari Bairagi Dahal was the UML MP from Sankhuwasabha district five years ago, the one thing people in his constituency always asked for was electricity. He tried, he went around the government ministries in Kathmandu, he even staged a sit-in outside Singha Darbar to increase the allocation for electricity development for his district. But no one listened. He could not deliver, and he also lost his party ticket to contest the 1998 elections.

Any other ex-politician would have returned to his hometown to lick his wounds and butter the party bosses for a political comeback. Not Dahal. If his people wanted electricity, they would get it. So what, if he wasn't a politician anymore?

Dahal got together a group of local businessmen, took a loan from a consortium of banks in Kathmandu and invested in the Piliwala Khola hydropower plant near Champaur that will star

providing 3 mW of power to the national grid by April. Taking advantage of a landmark policy approved by then deputy prime minister Shailaja Acharya in 1995 which set out a formula for the Nepal Electricity Authority's buy-back rate from private power suppliers, and stipulated an annual six percent increase for a certain period for power from

An ex-MP shows us how to turn water into gold.

small hydro projects, Dahal had no problem convincing bankers that it was a sound return on investment. The buy-back rate was set at Rs 4 per kWh-hour for peak power and Rs 2.75 non-peak.

"Why go grovelling to bureaucrats in Kathmandu, I told myself. We have the water, we have the resources, we will make it ourselves," Dahal told us. So, the Arun Valley Hydro Power Development Company Pvt Ltd was set up. Says Dahal: "What I realised is that if you have a good proposal, and it makes sound business sense, the bankers will bite."

And they did. Dahal's partners put in 30 percent of the Rs 280 million for Piliwala, and the banks put in 70 percent and the project got underway two years ago. In fact, private hydropower development in Nepal has become so lucrative Dahal is surprised more businesses in Kathmandu aren't jumping onto the bandwagon. "In very few ventures do you have both the raw material and the market guaranteed," he says. "With hydropower the raw material is water, and the market is the NEA."



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Asia Urbs
EUROPE - ASIA

Third Call for Proposals – A Reminder

The Asia Urbs Programme is a cultural programme supported by both the development and economic funds of the Commission. Its main activity is to fund two-year development projects, or six-month studies, which seek to improve living and environmental conditions for those living in urban areas. As one of its aims is to strengthen "decentralised cooperation", these projects must be designed and implemented by local governments in Asia together with others in Europe.

Two deadlines are scheduled **20 March** and **2 September 2002**.

Please visit the web page for further details:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/index_en.htm

Select: Tenders and Grants

Go directly to tender opportunities and Calls for Proposals

Select: ALA+open+grants+Asia+Submit+query+Asia Urbs

EU Co-Financing of Actions with NGOs Call for proposals, A reminder

Co-financing with NGOs forms part of the general framework of the European Union (EU) commitment in favour of the campaign against poverty, the rule of law, and the respect of fundamental freedoms, set out in the European Community Treaty.

A call for proposals for "Operations to raise public awareness of development issues (ED)" was launched on 5th December 2001. The deadlines for receipt of applications are:

18th March 2002 at 16.00

For more information on these different types of operations, please visit the web page:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/projects/eng_cd/index_en.htm

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The Asia-Invest programme is a European Community initiative that provides financial support to facilitate business co-operation between European and Asian companies. For more information, please visit the web page:

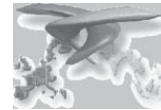
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/projects/asia-invest/newhtml/aboutus.html>

Asia-Link

The Asia-Link Programme is a new initiative by the European Commission to promote regional and multilateral networking between higher education institutions in EU Member States and South Asia, South-East Asia and China. The programme aims to promote the creation of new partnerships and new sustainable links between European and Asian higher education institutions, and to reinforce existing partnerships. For further information, please visit the web page:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/projects/asia-itc/html/about/about01.htm>

Asia IT&C



The European Commission (EC) launched the Asia Information Technology and Communication Programme (Asia IT&C) in October 1999 in order to co-finance mutually beneficial partnerships in Information Technology and Communication between Europe and Asia. The Programme can supply up to 80% co-financing to Information Technology and Communication projects proposed by a consortium of organisations from the EU and participating Asian countries/territories. Please visit the web page for further details:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/projects/asia-itc/html/main.htm>

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HERE AND THERE



The gift of time

Getting elected and staying in power are measured in days and weeks, not in the decades and generations needed for improvements in peoples' lives.

short, may seem callous when you look at the cost in lives and lost opportunity for development, but it should focus the mind.

As for 12, that's the number of years since the officially approved start of the democracy movement in Nepal—71 days, 2046, now observed as Democracy Day. It's not much of a trial period, let alone a chance to really give something a good, meaningful go before pronouncing it unworkable.

The Maoists only waited six years and war is being waged against them. Who then can say that twelve years is adequate time to sit in judgement of an unlikely yet appropriate system of organisation that was wisely described once as the "best worst" way to govern society? Not I.

Finally, there's 51, an approximate measure of the years that have passed since Nepal was more or less quit of the cynical and corrupt oligarchy that had ruled since the Kot massacre of 1846. It's been just over half-a-century since this country started striving to be a nation-state in the modern sense. "Striving" is the word. Accountable government, transparent relations between citizens and state, rights, responsibilities, none of these things happen quickly or by fiat. They took centuries to arrive in the west, where regions and other centres of power like the Catholic Church spent those dark ages before the flowering of democracy making mistakes and bullying the populace. There were revolution, gleams, philosophical discourse and naivety and countless attempts and failures to reform.

None of this is an attempt to excuse failure or provide empty comfort. Nor should any sense of urgency be lessened by awareness of time and how long it takes to bring meaningful change to a bad situation. But isn't it worth keeping in mind that the overall of march of political events around the world, Nepal is a fledgling democracy, however belated?

I submit that this land, full of strong, resilient people of good will, needs to be given time to deal with its problems and then on its approach to modernity

and development.

Development, as defined by the aidocracy that exercises such influence here, is partly to blame. Countries that took centuries to develop politically and economically throw promiscuous amounts of money into places that have barely emerged from the shadow of colonialism and autocracy.

Experts on short assignments, and their political masters at home, demand quick results, quick fixes, in short, unsustainable solutions to deeply rooted, often ancient problems. Later, they even impose political imperatives spawned in overseas think tanks, or appealing to electorate half's world away and irrelevant at ground zero in Nepal. Missing human development, year on year is a good example of this. A worthy exercise up to a point, but largely unconnected to the self-evident notion that reform and improvement happen over varying and usually long periods of time.

So too the demands of democratic politics tarnish and diminish the search for meaningful change. Getting elected and staying in power are imperatives measured in days and weeks, not in the decades and generations needed for real improvement in the lot of the people. Yet don't forget, no better system has emerged to date.

And finally, there's my own lot, the media. We have a lot to answer for. We compress time into minutes and—spurred by competition and relentless demand for "fresh content"—hurled each newly apparent bit of information into the void. It all impacts upon the perception that things are poor, and getting worse with no hope in sight. Until it leaves you with, that is, and I'm sure it will. Given time.

The gift of time is exceedingly precious, no more so than in a place like Nepal, starved of context and perspective in a modern age that seems doomed to repeat the countless errors of the past. ♦

Numbers matter, so here are a few to ponder, 3, 6, 12, 52. All are approximate, even a little arbitrary—give or take a few digits. But each needs to be considered as we bemoan the state and fate of the Kingdom of Nepal.

The first is the number of months that the country has been under a state of emergency. Three months, 90 days, one-quarter of a year. If you're an insect, that's a long time, possibly a generation or six. For us *Homo sapiens*, it's barely a blink of our bloodshot eyes.

Six is the number of years since the Maoists have been battling for their particular version of utopia. They fired their first shot—as if we could forget—on 13 February, 1996. That may seem a long time ago but it wasn't. It was less than a decade, a third of a generation in human terms—six governments ago, if you count the caretaker administration formed before the last general election.

Measuring such a devastating revolt in years or months, then declaring it

The power of positive negativism



So, the kangresis have discovered that honesty is the best foreign-aid policy.

Now that the international donor community has admonished us to dig into the root cause of poor governance and stem the branching out of a fabulously rich political class before expecting more cash, we must encourage the culture of candour that has trickled into the ruling elite's conversation lately.

Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat was among the first leaders to show how seriously they've sensed that honesty is the best foreign-aid policy. At the conclusion of the Nepal Development Forum, the honourable minister exhorted Nepalis to work harder towards ensuring good governance and ending corruption in order to preserve our moral right to seek international assistance.

Instead of mocking Mahat for prancing away the evening in Pokhara, let's try to delve into the circumstances surrounding this reaffirmation of the virtues of rectitude. Amid the swift succession of events Nepal hosted or attended over the last six months, we failed to grasp the gravity of what Mahat was up against. For every Bill Gates who chastises his government for being stingy with foreign aid, a Paul O'Neil cites how poor countries have received trillions of dollars over the decades with precious little to show for it. It is in such a highly polarised atmosphere that Nepal has had to move around cap in hand.

At the NDF, Mahat was held accountable for high-sounding pledges his predecessor made in Paris two years ago before sinking away to the defence and agriculture ministries. Of course, Mahat could have prepared himself better for the inquisition by memorising the contents of the sectoral files. But he's hardly had the chance to be a full-time finance minister this time. Check his schedule for the six months preceding the NDF: lead the delegation to the UN

General Assembly, deliver some of the SAARC summit invitations, chair the SAARC council of ministers meeting, and make sure Colin Powell got that envelope before his aircraft took off. For a man under so much stress in a ministry that's not even his, it is remarkable that Mahat is still available to warn tax evaders to pay up or else.

In the political plane, Mahat's boss, too, has become quite straightforward lately. Responding to critics of his jumbo cabinet, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba asserted that his herd wasn't that elephantine. Actually, his council of ministers contains only four more people than his predecessor's. And Girtija Prasad Koirala was the party president, too. But when Deuba realised how few people understood that a bloated cabinet also brought along massive management

chaos, he decided to become brutally truthful: he needed all those ministers to keep things quiet on the Congress parliamentary party front while the two leaders continued their skirmishes. (One hopes the prime minister soon comes out with an equally apt explanation for why he needs 40-plus advisers and assistants as well.)

Deuba must have inherited part of this frankness from his one-time mentor Koirala. Remember what GP had said was wrong with Nepal's post-1990 leadership? Kangresis and comrades were so fixated on overthrowing the panchayat system that they had forgotten to work out their own strategy for governance. In another moment of heartfelt reflection two years ago, Koirala said the multiparty constitution should have retained some of the good parts of the panchayat regime.

He said the Maoist problem might have been contained had the zonal commissioners not been thrown out with the system. That way, his clear implication was, senior security officials in the districts would have been spared the humiliation of taking their marching orders from Chief District Officers. Koirala's assertion that his party's 113 members in parliament amounted to nothing drew strong criticism from politicians and political scientists. The latter questioned his commitment to the principles of parliamentary democracy while sections of the former wondered whether his mental faculties were as strong as when they had last heard him speak. But all these critics missed the fact that the Kangresi patriarch was speaking from experience.

It is important to remember that

Koirala felt compelled to step down as prime minister last July while he still had a majority of Congress MPs on his side. Moreover, he was well on his way to reconciliation with the opposition parties that had boycotted the entire winter session of parliament demanding he quit. While Koirala was recording his resignation speech, many opposition leaders were checking their watches and wondering why he was running late for the all-important meeting he had convened to discuss their 14- and 22-point covenants.

Ever since he became a serious contender for prime minister, Nepali Congress general secretary Sushil Koirala, too, has developed a fair degree of forthrightness. During the peace talks with the Maoists and after the deployment of the military, his refrain has been consistent: no Kangresi prime minister before Deuba had received such widespread support from the party. Granted, that claim may not match the fiery public speeches Sushil has been delivering lately.

But once you become familiar with the power of positive negativism, you'll understand how shadowy signature campaigns within the party can help the prime minister in taking the Kangresi agenda, especially at a time when the main opposition party is busy healing its own wounds.

It's a harsh fact of life that politics and its practitioners are considered congenitally suspicious almost everywhere on this planet. But if you look hard enough, you can find grains of truth in the most pungent planks of lies. With leading Kangresis having recognised the cash value of candour, we can probably expect a larger proportion of the billions in NDI pledges to be disbursed this time. ♦

NEPALI ECONOMY

INTERVIEW

"Right or wrong, the government has to be decisive."



Tourism pioneer Shyam Bahadur Pandey, chairman of the Shangri-La Group of Hotels and Resorts, has passed on his businesses to his sons, but remains member of the Nepal Tourism Board. Nepali Times spoke to him about the state of tourism, and his plans for a new resort in Pokhara, which have been shelved.

Nepali Times: How bad is the situation?

Shyam Bahadur Pandey: It is very bad. There has been so much investment in tourism that if the industry suffers, it will take the entire economy down with it. We cannot imagine the Nepal economy without

tourism. The way politics is being handled now is wrong and if this uncertainty continues, we won't be able to recover. Without effective governance, nothing is going to work in Nepal. It is about time we woke up. This mindless power-struggle will not just hurt tourism, it will stop all progress.

How badly will the present tourism downturn affect the economy?

I am worried not only in terms of the investment in tourism, but also about the time and effort so many Nepalis have put into the sector, including the workers and those aspiring for careers in tourism. This is one industry which has reached the villages and it is difficult to imagine Nepal without tourism. This is not the best of times for Nepal: now we hear of capital flight. While this is happening, we are rapidly converting industries where we had competitive advantages into disadvantages, and doing nothing to change the larger disadvantages into opportunities.

You don't seem very hopeful!

Recovery is not impossible provided someone is there to take positive action. There must be someone somewhere who must be proactive for the country's sake.

What about the effective actions you said are needed?

That is something which is leading us to give up on the present political leadership. Not that things were different during the panchayat, but now the situation has become worse. The nature of the economy has not changed from the reliance on customs duties for revenue, rather than broad industrialisation. Yet the government says there have been benefits and people have earned piles of money, which was its assumption in starting the voluntary income declaration scheme (VDIS). That is the reason for much of the capital flight that has taken place. What we have gained is about Rs 500 million, which is insignificant in terms of the business confidence that has been lost.

So confidence is very low?

The VDIS has hit confidence and we are still unsure. Rather than do something to restore confidence, now the government has begun raiding businesses. As a nation I think we have lost more than

we have gained from the tax scheme.

What is industry doing to change the state of affairs?

Nothing will happen if we are unable to establish law and order. Tourism takes place even in countries that have terrorist movements, so we are not losing hope yet. If we can ensure law and order, we are confident we can turn around the tourism industry, provided that the national airline is made capable. The airline is losing about a million rupees every year and it cannot stay around with that kind of loss. Its demise is inevitable, especially if we don't take action now, or decide what to do with it. A commission formed on what should be done with the airline has made its recommendations, but if we don't act on them, then no amount of marketing and promotion will help tourism. If we don't have a strong national airline, there will be no tourism in Nepal.

How do we put someone in the cockpit?

These are decisions you can take overnight. It does not take forever to decide how one wants to run the national airline, privatise it or run it as a company. The government has to show some decisions. If you are in government, you are expected to decide. Not everyone is expected to take the right decision, but there has to be a decision.

So we need decisions, someone taking risks?

I don't say risks. I say it is someone taking on the responsibility they have been entrusted with, because they are members of government.

You're a member of Nepal Tourism Board. Has it been effective?

If only we can run the national airline and NTB effectively, we will be able to restore the image we have lost in six months, even reach the 500,000 arrival levels within a few years. But the NTB needs a capable national airline to work with. At this time the government and private sector should have been working together. But now we have a crisis of confidence, we do not trust the government and the government does not trust us.

So what should the government do?

If only we can give a sense that the government has begun to work, that can help restore confidence, now the government has begun to raid businesses. This will not just help tourism, but the country as a whole.

FOLLOW UP

Free money

One pyramid scheme is returning money to its members, but others are still functioning.

800,000 was spent on cleaning up the Padupati temple area and some money was spent on helping shoe-shine boys on New Road. It also had plans to help Bir Hospital and had already conducted feasibility studies, but that plan has now been shelved. Samrakchan says it had also received a large number of scholarship applications and had decided to fund 51, but that has not happened yet.

The scheme, which had on its board prominent Kathmanduites including general trainer and Prime Minister Sher Bahadur

Deuba's wife Azara Kana and Bhanu Chandra Choudhary of the Chaudhari Group, came to public notice after people started doing the maths. Essentially, Samrakchan worked like this: you paid Rs 9,000 and were given three certificates with your name in seventh position. This gave you the right to sell three certificates yourself, for Rs 9,000 each. Of the money you got from each new

recruit, you deposited Rs 3,000 into Samrakchan's account, another Rs 3,000 into the account of the first person on the certificate, and kept the remaining one-third. If you sold all three certificates, you recovered your initial investment and moved up to sixth position on your recruits' certificates. As this scheme progressed, more people bought and sold the certificates, eventually you could reach the top of the list and would "earn" up to Rs 5.56 million.

The problem was the numbers. For Samrakchan to deliver on its promise of making every subscriber a millionaire, there would have to be a never-ending supply of new investors. The chain ends for buyers when they sell to three people, those buyers sell to three more, and on until the 2,187th person in this "pyramid" sells its certificates. Then, you could win over Rs 6 million. For one person to hit the jackpot, 3,280 people must be involved in the scheme. If Nepal's entire population played, 6,500 people would win. You could win,

but only if you bought very early. Samrakchan would make Rs 9.8 million from one chain, and it had made something like Rs 15 million from the 5,000 members it had enrolled at the time of our first report.

And, Samrakchan's brochure said, its mission was to help Nepal while creating opportunities for independent gain. Samrakchan was modelled after similar schemes around the world, including one in Albania which hampered the country's economy and ended in rioting in Tirana that left 2,000 dead, and the Italian scheme Pentagono that many Kathmandu residents are familiar with. But Archana Karki, who started the scheme in Nepal, told us she started the scheme here because the popularity in Kathmandu of pyramid schemes as Pentagono was resulting in huge sums of money leaving the country. Although Karki was quick to explain that Samrakchan was set up purely with social service in mind and that the seven members of the team agreed at their first meeting not to receive salaries or dividends, the company was registered as a profit-making firm at the Company Registrar's Office. Samrakchan's registration papers only claimed that it was a "social marketing" company, although the Laligur Tax Office treated it as a "company".

When the controversy started snowballing, because a number of influential people were involved in

it, the Company Registrar's Office ordered it to close down. A Samrakchan source tells us that the firm has filed a lawsuit challenging that decision. The company also says that because of what could be a long-drawn legal battle, it kept refunding the Rs 3,000 it had begun from each member starting 15 August last year. So far about 3,585 members have collected the refund and another 880 are yet to do so.

Some members who have taken their refund told us they had either managed to sell their certificates to three members and had managed to break even, but many said they had lost the rest of their investment. An accountant who sold his certificates shares and broke even then bought two more memberships from his own chain (to ensure that he got to the top of the list faster) told us that he lost about Rs 6,000 on one membership.

Samarakan says the money that has not yet been refunded is still safe in its bank and that its database of members is intact. But little is known of what has happened to the many similar schemes that have sprung up around when Samrakchan was in its prime, such as 1 Uno, Smartcash, Magicman, Sambandha, PC City, and other schemes that promise computers or gold giveaways. There are also no governmental or legislative checks in place yet, to ensure that pyramid schemes are not institutionalised as legitimate franchise enterprises. ♦

BIZ NEWS

No bidders

No one wants to buy the Hetuuda Textiles Industry. The company was shut down last year because the government decided there was no point propping up the perennial loss-maker, and pumped in a final Rs 250 million to pay off liabilities, mainly the wages and salaries of about 1,100 employees. The company was set up 25 years ago, and managed to do "well" so long as Nepal textiles were protected, but all that changed with the liberalisation of the economy and today even private Nepali textile firms are unable to compete with the cheaper Chinese and Indian goods in the market.

Private television

The Ministry of Information and Communication (MoIC) has moved a step closer to licensing private terrestrial television companies, over a year after it first sought proposals. There now seems to be a sense of urgency, because a committee has been asked to complete screening applications by this week. Eight companies have submitted their bids and some bidders tell us that they are watching to see if the government will only consider royalties in awarding licenses, or if it will also take into account issues of cross-ownership and the creation of media monopolies. They argue that licensing a company that already fully owns other media companies, such as radio and newspapers, makes it difficult for smaller companies to compete, as there are no laws to prevent larger monopolies from cross-subsidising products. They want government to develop a clear policy on cross-ownership before deciding on licensing.

Commercial bank law

The Nepal Rastra Bank is nearing finalisation of a draft umbrella act to regulate all deposit-taking institutions, a move to help clean up the financial sector. The Commercial Banks and Financial Institutions Act is to be finalised and taken to parliament during the current session, and will annul a long list of other laws governing the sector, some of which are not just confusing, but also contradictory.

Agri-census

The Agricultural Census is likely to be put off until next year due to the budget cuts resulting from the increase in security spending this year. The Fifth Agricultural Census was launched on 13 February in 43 districts, and the remaining districts were expected to be surveyed after mid-April. However, with the Census' initial Rs 50 million budget slashed by 25 percent, the Central Bureau of Statistics says it may not be able to analyse the data and make its report according to schedule. The census was to have started in early January, but was delayed after the government declared a state of emergency in the country.

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Lhoze

The most acclaimed ascent last spring was the much tried but highly elusive Middle Summit of the Lhoze group. Lhoze has been designated three summits: Lhoze Main (8,516 m), the world's fourth highest mountain first climbed in 1956 by Fritz Luchinger and Ernst Reiss from a Swiss expedition; Lhoze Shar (8,410 m) the eastern summit first climbed by Sepp Mayr and Rolf Walter from an Austrian expedition; and the long, crenellated connecting ridge between the two, the previously unclimbed Lhoze Middle (8,413 m), often dubbed the highest unclimbed summit in the world. Last spring, there were three expeditions focussed on Lhoze Middle: Um Hong-Gil's Korean team, which reached about 7,500 m on the normal route up Lhoze Shar before giving up and climbing Lhoze by the Standard Route; Oscar Cadiach's Spanish team, which climbed the Main Summit but reached no further; and a 12-member Russian expedition led by Sergei Timofeev. The Russians took a completely different and untied approach, climbing across the relatively easy-angled but highly dangerous snow slopes that form the upper part of the Kangshung Face overlooking the Tibetan glacier of the same name.

Everest

Compared with the fairly dismal autumn 2001 season, last spring was a bonanza for Everest. Nearly 50 teams operated on the mountain and many records were broken—there were 183 successful ascents in just over five days. The majority—101—came from the Nepali side, while the rest were from Tibet. Apart from one expedition, all teams attempted the normal routes: South Col and the South-east Ridge from Nepal and North Col and the North Ridge from Tibet. Including Sherpas and Base Camp staff, an estimated 1,000 people operated on the mountain through the season. Fifty of the 183 ascents were made by people who had already summited Everest at least one time previously, and while in 2000 only two ascents were made without oxygen.



It wasn't only on the Tibetan side that records were set. Six-year-old American Dr Sherman Bull became the oldest person to summit, beating then 63-year-old Toshio Yamamoto's spring 2000

record. Fellow American team-member Erik Weihenmayer became the first blind person to reach the top of Everest.

There were four deaths this season, two on the north side and two on the south side, including the tragic demise of Babu Chhiri that really captured public attention. Babu Chhiri had in recent years become perhaps the best known Sherpa in mountaineering history after Tenzing Norgay. He had made ten ascents, only one less than record holder Apa Sherpa and was

the first person to make two complete ascents of Everest in the same season. He held the record for the fastest ascent (16 hours and 56 minutes in May 2000) and the highest bivouac—over 21 hours on the 8,848 m summit without oxygen in May 1999. Babu Chhiri's other ascents in Nepal include Kangchenjunga with the Russian traverse team in 1989 and several of Cho Oyu, Annapurna and Xizapangma Central Summit. Babu Chhiri was not educated in his youth, as there was no school in the

In preparation for the spring mountaineering season that begins next month, we look back to this season last year through the pages of High Mountain Sports. There were significant accomplishments on major peaks, but the development to watch out for this coming season and in future, is undoubtedly the opening up nine new peaks partly into the last spring season, the first time the government has made such an announcement after the official start of the climbing season. Smaller peaks such as Gangchenpo in the Langtang Valley, and peaks around popular summits such as Manaslu are cheaper to climb, easy to get to and, most importantly, technically

challenging. Although the weather during the 2001 pre-monsoon season was more unsettled than normal, particularly during the first three weeks of May, there were a number of fine achievements and historic climbs on Nepal's mountains: The first ascent of the world's highest unclimbed summit, the first ascent of a hard new route on the 8,000 m giant Manaslu, an almost continuous traverse of the west to east traverse of Pumori which involved new ground climbed in pure Alpine style, many new records set on Everest and, sadly, the death of arguably the most famous Sherpa climber of recent times.

area where he grew up, and his greatest wish was to build a school in his village Thaksindu in Solu Khumbu, so his six daughters and other children in the area could enjoy the education he missed. Babu Chhiri was at Camp two in the Western Cwm guiding a Canadian-American expedition, when he left, saying he wanted to take photographs. He wandered off the marked track unroped and fell 30 m or so down a crevasse. His absence went unremarked for five hours, after which a search was launched and his body was found. Babu Chhiri's body was carried down to Base Camp and then flown to Kathmandu, where tributes poured in from around the world. The Nepali government donated Rs 100,000 to his wife and his main sponsor, Mountain Hardware, has set up a trust fund.

Popular peaks, new routes

Manaslu also saw a major new route being climbed, with a strong Ukrainian team under Mikhail Gorbienko successfully climbing a line up the South-east Face and upper East Ridge of the 8,163 m peak. But the true



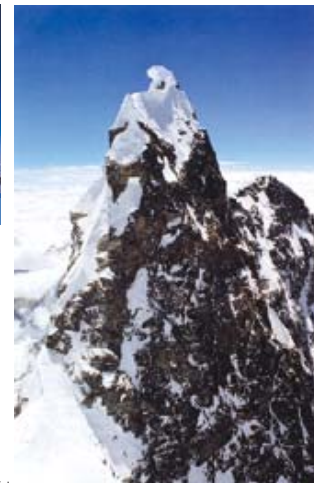
Watched by a long line of summiters, Marco Siffredi leaves the summit of Everest and prepares to snowboard down.

South-east Face remains to be climbed, and traversing the East Ridge will be a long, time-consuming proposition.

The third major new route in Nepal last spring (other than Lhoze Middle and Manaslu) was on Pumori's West Face. With only one 60 m rope and no bivouac gear, Swiss climbers Ueli Buhler and Ueli Steck climbed up South Ridge and then continued over the summit and down the Normal Route on the East Ridge, arriving back at Base Camp after 43 hours on the mountain.

Two of the six expeditions on Ama Dablam (6,812 m) were

successful, and another increasingly popular peak, Baruntse (7,127 m) was attempted by three expeditions using the Standard Route, the South-east Ridge. Approximately 18 expeditions were working on Standard Route, the North-west Flank of Cho Oyu (8,210 m)—some 110 paying mountaineers, excluding Sherpas and Tibetan helpers. A total of 37 climbers, including Sherpas and Tibetans, summited Cho Oyu last season. Only one expedition attempted the North-east Spur to the North Ridge, the Standard



The final pinnacle of Lhoze Middle, seen from where the Russians emerged from the Kangshung Face.

Route, up Tilicho (7,134 m), and it was successful.

Uncommon summits

While the Ukrainians were working on Manaslu, some of their members attempted the 6,251 Peak 2, also called Simang Himal east, one of the nine new peaks added to the permitted list last spring. Peak 2 had never been climbed before and Mikhail Gorbienko, Vadim Leontiev, Sergei Pugachov and Mykhailo Zagimayak reached the summit via the East Ridge, having spent three days on the final ascent. The team first climbed the Pungen Glacier to reach the East Ridge at about 5,200 m, the corniced East Ridge was generally of moderate difficulty, but presented two crux sections: a tricky gendarme around 5,800 m, and later an 80 m covered rock wall. The climb was awarded a 5A grade on the Russian scale, and the team proposed renaming the mountain Peak Ukraine. Peaks 1,2 and 3 are minor summits on the long East Ridge of Nadi Chuli (Peak 29, 7,871 m) and form the true right bank of the Pungen Glacier which flows down from Manaslu to the Buri Gandaki.

A ten-member expedition made the second ascent of the somewhat enigmatic Himlung (7,126 m), which lies on the Tibetan border in the Peri Himal northwest of Manaslu. In 1992, Japanese climber Yukio Niwa discovered that the coordinates assigned by the government corresponded to a peak slightly north of Himlung, climbed in 1983 by a Japanese-Nepali team. So, Niwa attempted the more northerly peak via the West Ridge. The southerly, more difficult mountain is now called Nemjung and stands at 7,140 m. There have been recent attempts to climb Himlung, but no party was successful until last spring, when eight French, a Nepali and a Swede reached the top via the West Ridge.

German Jürgen Schütz and two friends attempted to climb the beautiful 6,387 m Gangchenpo in Langtang valley from the west. It is not clear

whether they tried to repeat the line taken by the all-Nepali expedition that made the first official ascent of this mountain in 1990 via the West Ridge (approached from the southern flanks) or attempted a partially new line on the West/South-west Face. However, the trio gave up, having reached a high point of only 5,550 m. Gangchenpo was first reconnoitred in 1949 during Peter Lloyd and Bill Tilman's historic visit to the Langtang Valley and attempted in 1964 by a predominantly Swiss group that included well-known guide Michel Durbale. The first ascent (unauthorised) took place in 1971 and the situation of the peak geographically and bureaucratically (it was closed to foreigners for many years) has led to a number of unauthorised ascents since. In 1990, nine Nepalis reached the lower West Ridge from the South, climbed over the West Summit, descended into a high snow basin on the south side of the peak and finished up on the East Ridge to the Main Summit. Several lines have now been climbed on the easily accessible fluted North Face.

Mick Fowler and Paul Ramsden planned to attempt the South-east Buttress of the unclimbed Peak 43 (6,769 m), which lies above Hinku Valley south of Kangrag (6,779 m). The buttress is a well-known objective and visible to many parties approaching the popular Meta Peak via the standard route from Lukla. Peak 43 has never been on the list of permitted peaks, but the British duo gained authorisation by obtaining a permit for Kangrag's South Ridge Integral from Tanguang in the Hinku Valley. At Base Camp, however, they discovered the presence of a very active scudal bar, access to the buttress and were unable to find a safe route to the start of the climb. ♦

(High Mountain Sports, February 2002) High magazine is available in bookstores and department stores in Kathmandu. To subscribe, email highmag@mts.co.uk

केवल ६ हप्तामा मेरो जीवनमा छायो नयाँ उज्यालो

हरेक नाइकेको लपका मेरो उज्ज्वल चेहरामा ।
फेवर एण्ड लवलीको लपका केवल ६ हप्तामा मेरो जीवनमा छायो नयाँ उज्यालो ।
किताब: अब नयाँ फेवर एण्ड लवली ४ - स्टेप एण्ड गेट

१. - कसको लागि नयाँ लपका बढ्यो ।
२. - मुनाको अतिरिक्त चिन्ताको घट्यो ।
३. - मुनाको घात नभयो ।
४. - कसको लागि नयाँ लपका बढ्यो ।

त्यसैले न फेवर एण्ड लवली अतिरिक्त चिन्ताको घट्यो ।

१००% सुरक्षा, यममा निष्पक्ष ।

यस जानकारीको लागि कृपया फेवर एण्ड लवली उपयोक्ता घराना र सेवाको फोन नं. ०१-४३४४४० मा बिहान १०:०० बजे देखि साँझ ६:०० बजेसम्म सल्लाह गर्न रुख्ने ।

Stop the carnage and talk

Editorial, Rajdhani, 18 February

The violence and counter-violence underway in this country for the past seven years took a devastating and unimaginable turn Sunday morning at Mangalens and Sarfagarh, the headquarters of Acham district. This country, which has still not been able to free itself from the compulsions of history may have nothing but tears, ashes and perpetual repentance left for itself if we don't take corrective actions soon.

It doesn't need to be said that the Maoist violence reached the height of barbarism in Achham, but even the adjectives simply cannot describe the turn the situation in the nation has taken. The actions of the Maoists, who have been declared terrorists, have given us further insight into their violent and destructive mindset. At the same time, it also reveals the government's inability and default military. This heart-wrenching incident has also shown how the lack of political vision and stubborn partisan interests of parties have taken this beautiful but ill-fated country closer to total ruin.

The Achham massacre is a repeat of legendary self-destruction of the Yadavs. This Himalayan nation that has been desperately searching for a bridge of faith, is becoming surrounded by ever-rising walls of corpses of her children, and is being crushed under their weight. The Maoists ideology probably rates the carnage in Achham as 'exemplary bravery and victory', but they will never be able to get to their goal of communism by stepping on heads made of bodies of the innocent security forces they have killed.

The Maoists have painted not just Achham with the blood of more than 125 innocent people (see figure, however, does not include the Maoists, even though they are also Nepalis), but also our history. And no amount of regret can make up for it. No philosophy, ideology or administrative logic can justify or absolve the Maoists' unforgivable crime. However, it is not possible to get to the roots of our self-destruction by simply cursing the Maoists. The blood of the security forces who attained martyrdom in Achham will also continue to curse our government and the political parties. Our security forces at the front fought valiantly until they shed their last drop of blood, but our political parties have always failed to overcome their selfishness, indifference and cowardice.

Those who have handed over the problem to the security forces instead of taking democracy to the grassroots along with broad social and economic programs to try and resolve the crisis must now ask themselves one question. How much is each one of them responsible for the blood that has been shed in this country in the past seven years? The battle was raging in Achham until Sunday morning. But the prime minister, ministers and leaders of different political parties could be seen going around attending formal meetings in Kathmandu, as if there was no place called Achham on the map of Nepal, or that he had no relation to those who fell. It might be too late to place to say that such ingratitude and irresponsibility only reflected our shamelessness.

What we cannot forget now is that is more dangerous than Achham's extensive material and human losses is the message from the incident. We did not get the message from Dula, Gorahi or Salleri. The Maoists are anarchists, destructive, and motivated by violence, there is no doubt about that. But we must not forget that it is some of our nation's failures and weaknesses that have fuelled the destruction and violence. The country should have been progressing peacefully, instead it is being overcome by fear and repugnance. And Nepal's smouldering society is being pushed into the pits of cruelty, barbarism, suffering—and unthinkable consequences.

The security forces' effective and concerted efforts may be one way to save the nation from disintegration and total destruction, but it cannot bring about the ultimate solution. For that we would need to take the road of talks, talks and talks. After all, democracy is a system that relies on co-operation, constructive debate and peaceful means to open the doors of social change. Our parliamentary and political representatives must rise above their habit of only listening and understanding what they want to, and, if it comes to that, even agree to a referendum on the constituent assembly to save the nation and find a peaceful end to Maoist violence.

The Maoists, if they truly believe in the people, should be ready to lay down their arms and give the people the power to decide what political system they want; they cannot be allowed to devise a political system based on the number of bodies that have fallen. We must stop the unnecessary killing and safeguard the nation for our future generations. No system is an end in itself, it is only a means to an end. And no system can be sustained unless the country and people are safe. Forgetting the country and the common people and only harping on about the purity of the system is like selling one's eyes and buying glasses to replace them.

—King Gyanendra in his message to the nation on the 51st Democracy Day, 19 February



"Giving the 41-horsepower man a hard time." Editorial, Rajdhani, 17 February

Out of hand
Editorial, Nepal Samachar, 18 February

...The Maoists don't have the people's support. Instead they are fighting their war on the basis of their military strength. The people will be the final winners, no force can win over them. But are the people today ready to come out on the side of the present government, the ruling and other parliamentary parties? We can easily conclude, they are not. This is one of the major reasons helping the Maoists push their agenda. And none other than the government, the ruling party and other parliamentary forces have given the people reason to take their present position...

...The country is currently going through a serious and very difficult situation. This is not the time for any one concerned about the Nepali people and about democracy to rally behind individual, group or party interests. Anything can happen here today if the situation is not managed properly. The Maoists are not as weak as the parliamentary forces might think they are, and the revisions are not going to any extent either. Nation has been also dark clouds of uncertainty, and problem. Ties between the ruling, opposition and other parliamentary parties right now would be detrimental. We need to show collective strength to tackle the situation, and if democratic forces cannot form a united front, it may not take long for the situation to get out of hands.

Extend the emergency
Editorial, Himalaya Times, 18 February

...People can interpret the state of emergency as it suits them, but what is clear here is that it is a constitutional compulsion. It is also clear that the emergency is associated with the mobilisation of the army. Similarly, there is also little disagreement that the emergency was imposed to disarm the Maoists and restore law and order in the country. So, if we want peace and security, there is no reason to suspect or doubt the purpose of having an emergency in force. It is impossible to end a six- or seven-year Maoist problem within three months. All political parties that believe in the parliamentary system have denounced the Maoist insurgency and are worried about its impact. Since we all agree that the problem needs to be ended, why can we not agree on the steps that must be taken to address the problems created by the insurgency? This is a vitally important question today.

The emergency must be directed against the Maoists, and it must not affect the daily lives of other people, or development work in the country. The entire country wants peace. Without peace no political or development activity can gather momentum, and that is why all must support every effort to make peace. It is wrong to be confused about the need for peace, and so, by extension, it is wrong to be in two minds about ratifying an extension of the emergency. Yes, the government needs to take seriously the reform proposals put forward by the opposition to the government, but it is simply not right to countenance opinions that could disrupt the peace. Several political party meetings have been held, as well as all-party meetings. Now it is time to come to a solid conclusion. It must be clarified what reforms are possible in the political, economic and social spheres and what are not. If necessary, there should be a referendum, and each side needs to be clear on what it believes are the possibilities or otherwise. We need understanding and coordination—only then can we take a major program to build that nation.

Doing that needs changes within the development complement each other. If development is neglected, that would expose those who back violence. We now need to implement a major program to build that nation. Doing that needs changes within the development complement each other. If development is neglected, that would expose those who back violence. We now need to implement a major program to build that nation. Doing that needs changes within the development complement each other. If development is neglected, that would expose those who back violence. We now need to implement a major program to build that nation.

...There are those that say let us first establish them, then we can take on the development task. If we are to wait for the development to begin after we take it back, it will take very long. We need to develop complement each other. If development is neglected, that would expose those who back violence. We now need to implement a major program to build that nation. Doing that needs changes within the development complement each other. If development is neglected, that would expose those who back violence. We now need to implement a major program to build that nation.

Young and single
Spacetime, 18 February

The age-old tradition of child marriage among the Balamis in Kapilvastu, Nawalpur, with some stiff opposition this year. It took all

been a failure of intelligence (because it was unable to account for the large number of Maoists who had amassed there) and there also seems to have been lack of coordination between the different security agencies. The prime minister has to immediately give the people details of the incident and ensure that they can feel safe. This country has to know just how serious the government is about ensuring law and order. It is Nepal's bad luck that its political leadership still lacks the commitment to take decisions and implement them. The Maoists are like the Taliban, on the road to running the country into another Afghanistan. Achham has strengthened their ambitions. If Dhuha does not have the clarity of vision and the courage to face the crisis, his continuing as prime minister is unjustified. The prime minister needs to give the nation answers right now.

Former Indian water resources secretary reviews Dipak Gyaawali's recent Water in Nepal in the Economic and Political Weekly. He expresses chagrin that a book "of this degree of intellectual distinction has emerged from Nepal, not India."

Kanchhi Balam, Akhbar's moral, threatened to commit suicide if he was not allowed to marry his son off on the auspicious day. Kanchhi only agreed to postpone the marriage when he had been determined on countered this with his own threat of suicide. It took some time and counter-threats in Saboti family to convince the would-be child bride's parents to agree to the postponement of the marriage. Other child brides and grooms followed suit, and barring two, all child marriages in Kapilvastu scheduled for this Sarawati Puj day were postponed.

Sixteen-year-old Ataram Balam and 15-year-old Radhika Balam are one of two underage couples whose marriage were held in a per their parents' wish. Ataram and Radhika are at least close to the legal age of marriage—we will work towards creating a public pressure to eliminate child marriage from our village from next year," says Balam Shrestha, president of the Janajigiti Youth Club that is leading the anti-child marriage campaign in Kapilvastu.

Chapin, a resident of Balami of Oshana PWD, migrated from Bhaktapur, and parents in this community have traditionally arranged their children's marriages at 15. The tradition also demands that the marriage be carried out on Sarawati Puj day, as soon as possible after the girl crosses seven.

Peace and development
Nimbar Acharya in Kanpur, 20 February

...There are those that say let us first establish them, then we can take on the development task. If we are to wait for the development to begin after we take it back, it will take very long. We need to develop complement each other. If development is neglected, that would expose those who back violence. We now need to implement a major program to build that nation. Doing that needs changes within the development complement each other. If development is neglected, that would expose those who back violence. We now need to implement a major program to build that nation.

The battle against terrorism could be prolonged and the country cannot wait for that to be over to tackle other problems, nor can we have an emergency for as long a period. The best way to address the problems is to do what we would do in a normal democratic society, which would help strengthen the democratic process. The country's democratic leadership should be strengthened democratically."



Photo by R. K. Sharma

the courage of fifth-grade Sabiti Balam and sixth-grade Akhbar Shrestha to defy the tradition that proclaims hundreds of underage children into unfair marriages every year. The parents of the two children had arranged for their marriages to take place on Sarawati Puj day, in keeping with the Balam's tradition in Oshana PWD. The two children submitted a written appeal to the VDC office in Oshana PWD, as well as the local Janajigiti Youth Club asking that their marriage be stopped. And, under the stewardship of the VDC office, the marriage of Sabiti and Akhbar has been postponed for at least five years.

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BOOK REVIEW

New ways of thinking

and planning. I cannot do justice to this ambitious undertaking through a summarising of the contents. I can only convey to the reader: read it. The book's Gyaawali's suspicion of gigantism, his doubts about the existing bureaucratic policies—contractor-nepotism (not always or necessarily points to corruption, but indicative of similarities in ways of thinking and convergence of interests), his criticisms of the present engineering-driven unidisciplinarity of approach to water-planning (or at best attempts at multi-disciplinarity with no real integration) and his plea for inter-disciplinary, his profound distrust of donor-driven "development", particularly valid in countries such as Nepal or Bangladesh but not unimportant even in India, and his preference for smaller, people-centred, co-operative, community-managed answers to local needs.

There are two views in Nepal regarding the country's endowment of water resources. The prevailing "Establishment", dominant view is that water to Nepal is like oil to the Gulf: a potential source of immense wealth through the sale (largely to India) of massive quantities of hydroelectric power. The author debunks this dream fairly effectively and shows what involved in converting the natural endowment into a "resource".

From early warning on these lines Gyaawali moved gradually away from big export-based projects towards a more emphasis for smaller people-centred and people-driven projects for the country's internal needs. It cannot be said that he has had great success in persuading large-scale projects in Nepal to accept his way of thinking, though his influence is undoubtedly growing. The debate is still on.

Finally, I must refer to a difference between Gyaawali and myself on the subject of the Mahadi/Tista. He has many criticisms to offer both on the processes leading to the signing and ratification of the Treaty and on its contents. I myself have disaffections with the Treaty—it could have been better in many ways. Nor am I enthusiastic about the Pancheshwar Project. However, whatever our views about these matters, we are concerned here with a Treaty formally entered into by two countries, and it seems clear that both signatories want the Pancheshwar Project. Unfortunately, the Treaty has got bogged down because of certain technicalities between the governments. Given that situation, we can treat it as a dead letter and rejoice in its presumed demise. Alternatively, we can take the view that any accord, however imperfect, is better than discord; that the failure of the Treaty will be fraught with serious consequences for the relationship between the two countries.

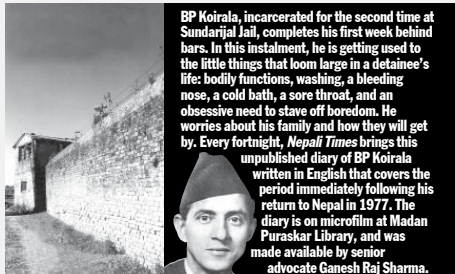
The Bihar Establishment, while tribute to the depth of the author's concerns and the quality of his thinking. This is a book that needs to be read very widely in India. ♦

(Ramaswamy R Iyer is a former Indian secretary of water resources. This review is excerpted from the Bombay-based *Economic and Political Weekly*, 24 February 2002.)

The long paper "Water in Nepal" is an impressive compendium covering geography, hydrology, engineering, economics, history (including the sociology, anthropology, politics, institutional factors and aspects, and so on, as they bear on water use, management, policy

Water in Nepal
Dipak Gyaawali, Himal Books, Kathmandu, Nepal, 2001, pp. xiv + 280, Rs 550

Back at Sundarjal >5 “A cold bath is physically and morally uplifting. Morally, because the operation involves a courageous decision and action.”



BP Koirala, incarcerated for the second time at Sundarjal Jail, completes his first week behind bars. In this instalment, he is getting used to the little things that loom large in a detainee's life: bodily functions, washing, a bleeding nose, a cold bath, a sore throat, and an obsessive need to stave off boredom. He worries about his family and how they will get by. Every fortnight, *Nepali Times* brings this unpublished diary of BP Koirala written in English that covers the period immediately following his return to Nepal in 1977. The diary is on microfilm at Madan Puraskar Library, and was made available by senior advocate Ganesh Raj Sharma.

7th January, 1977
Daily duties as usual. I pass deeply coloured urine. The quantity is normal but the colouration is unusually deep yellow. Perhaps when patient is in deep anxiety or high tension the bodily secretion becomes abnormally coloured. The stains in the area around the armpits in my kurta are also of high colour. It is a textbook symptom of anxiety. My bowels are not moving properly, and I don't have clear motions. There is a trace of dysentery. Again the text book symptoms of chronic colitis.

Today towards the afternoon I had bleeding from the right nostril. It is not regular bleeding, but when I blew traces of blood were found in my kerchief. Nothing serious because it may have been caused by excessive dryness which is also affecting the right side of my throat. But why only right nostril and right side of the throat is affected by dry weather? A fleeting anxiety about my throat.

At the afternoon tea, we discussed—GM and I—about my family's financial position. I told him that my constant worry in prison will be how they would meet the daily expenses and the financial responsibility of educating children, couldn't in haste tell Sushila to sell property and ornaments to meet the expenses of children's education. After all, Sushila and myself can't expect to live beyond 10 years. Munu's (Shashank Koirala) and Chetna's education will last five years.

Koshi Tappu Wildlife Park
24 Bedded Safari Tented Camp
Special Winter Offer
An opportunity to discover Koshi Tappu Wildlife Park during this winter. An excellent alternative to Ghorewa and Bardia for nature and wildlife lovers. Unlikely possibility to experience and view almost 400 species of birdlife and some of the most rare and endangered wild games on the most peaceful and relaxing setting in eastern Nepal.
Give yourself and your family a stimulating & meaningful break away from the maddening crowd of Kathmandu into the lap of pure nature.
Your visit will help to protect the habitat of all kinds of flora & fauna, as the camp is deeply involved in conservation & preservation together with local villagers. The local children can learn more from you about the importance of nature in their life. please visit the schools which are supported by the Camp and share knowledge with the teachers and children.
The camp with 12 deluxe safari tents with rustic but modern amenities including hot and cold showers, fully stocked bar and restaurant that serves both Nepali and Continental cuisine offered by trained Naturalist will ensure your visit will be memorable one!
Special offer to introduce you 'Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve'.
For reservation please contact your travel agent or directly at:
Nepal
Karnali, Kathmandu
Voice: 223488/ 248942, Fax: 240992
E-mail: sales@promotonepali.com

ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITION

♦ **Antique Yao Textiles** Exhibition and sale of Yao textiles from Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. 24 February, 2PM, Indigo Gallery.
♦ **Spring collection 2002** Watercolour paintings of flowers and botanical art by Neera J. Pradhan. Until 25 February, Park Gallery, Pulchowk, 10AM-6PM, except Saturdays, 523207

EVENTS

♦ **High-altitude first aid and rescue** Week-long workshop starting 25 February with practical and theoretical training by Jacques Beaume of the French Federation for First Aid and Rescue in Hautes Alpes. Free and open to all. The Alliance Française, Thapathali, 241163
♦ **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 music Wednesdays and Saturdays, 6.30PM onwards, hotel restaurant. Hotel Vajra, 271545

MUSIC

♦ **Live music** by Catch 22, Tuesday and Friday nights at the 40,000 ½ ft Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, Thamel, 414336

DRINK

♦ **Herb vodka, your cocktail recipe** at the Corner Bar, Radisson Hotel, 411818

FOOD

♦ **International Buffet Lunch** Choice of main courses, salads, dressings, soup, live cooking stations and desserts. The Garden Terrace, Soaltee Crown Plaza, 273999
♦ **Pastry discount** 25 percent off at the Radisson Pastry Shop everyday 7.30PM-9PM
♦ **Royal ceremonial** Six-20 course dinner from \$19 onwards, four-course lunch at \$13. Krishnapur Restaurant, Dwarika's Hotel, 479488
♦ **Saturday brunch** Poolside brunch, unlimited draft beer, children's activities and use of Club Oasis fitness centre. The Cafe, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, 491234
♦ **Sandwiches** Over the Rainbow American Diner has reopened. Fifth Avenue sandwiches, full meals at backpacker prices. Opposite Pilgrims Book House, Thamel, 42651
♦ **Perfect Symphony** Dark or white chocolate mousse with fresh coffee. The Piano Lounge, Hotel Yak & Yeti, 248999
♦ **Patan Museum Café** Mixed menu, garden seating. Lunch only, 11AM-2PM, 25 percent off with Summit Card, 526271
♦ **Singaporean and Malaysian food** Saturday, rice, soymlk dishes, curry puffs and more. Between Jawaharlal fire station and St Mary's School. Sing Ma, the Food Court. Foodcourt@wlink.com.np, 520004
♦ **Lunch, tea and dinner** European and American cuisine with fine wines. La'Soon Restaurant and Vintheque, Pulchowk, 535290
♦ **Authentic Thai food** Everyday at Yin Yang Restaurant, 425510
♦ **Tukche Thakali Kitchen** Buckwheat, barley, bean, and dried meat specialties. Also brunch with porridge and pancakes, all raw material from Tukche village. Darbar Marg, 225890
♦ **Barbecue lunch** with complimentary wine or beer for adults, soft drink for children. Saturdays Sundays at the Godavari Village Resort, Rs 650 per head, 560675

GETAWAYS

♦ **Muknath Darshan** Two nights/three days on B&B basis with Pokhara/Jomsom/Pokhara flights and airport, resort transfers. Indian nationals Rs 6,999 per head, expats \$250 per head. Jomsom Mountain Resort, salesjom@gmail.com.np or jmr@soi.wlink.com.np, 496110
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NEPALI WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

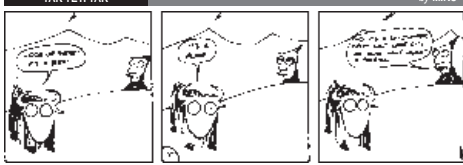


Another westerly wave advancing across north India will make Kathmandu skies overcast by Friday and bring drifting clouds over the weekend. Expect a dusting of snow at higher altitudes, and some drizzles, but nothing major. This will bring down the maximum temperature in the valley, and raise the minimum. There will be a brief window of sunshine next week (raising the maximum to 25 degrees) until the next front, presently over Iran, arrives. The prevailing haze over the Valley has its origins in the Ganga plains and is brought in by southwesterly winds which have also raised the minimum temperature.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
24-07	22-10	23-07	24-06	25-05

YAK YETI YAK



by MIKU

BOOKWORM

Women, War and Peace in South Asia Rita Manchanda, ed
Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2001
Rs 720
This volume challenges the centrality of men's experiences and theorisations of conflict in South Asia from Kashmir to Sri Lanka, Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts to tribal conflicts in Assam and Nagaland, and the Maoist insurgency in Nepal. Instead, it focuses on women's experiences as representing alternative and non-violent ways of negotiating the construction of conflictual identities, and on women's notions that privilege the notion of a "just" peace.

Gender, Peace and Conflict Inger Skjelsbek and Dan Smith, eds
Sage Publications, London, 2001
Rs 792
This volume focuses on the traditionally male domains of war and international relations, exploring the gender relationship and engaging with the many discourses and dichotomies that dominate and distort the issue. The case studies include examples from South America, South Asia and Europe, including the former Yugoslavia and focus on such issues as sexual violence in war, the role of women in military groups and peacekeeping operations, and the impact of a 'critical mass' of women in political decision making.

Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims, and the Hindu public in Colonial India Charu Gupta
Permanent Black, Delhi, 2001
Rs 720
Gupta shows how gendered notions of women's sexuality and Muslim debauchery were used to pull together a heterogeneous populace into a coherent Hindu community in colonial North India. She traces the deliberations of (largely male) publicists on how to make Hindu women 'pure', how to distance Hindus and Muslims, and what constitutes Hindu sacredness and purity as opposed to Islamic lust and perversion, and the moral and sexual worries of Hindu middle-class reformers.

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

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CITY



ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY

Friday night and the lights are low, and you're looking for a place to go. There's too much hassle in Thamel, dance floors are handkerchief-sized and the boys are horrific, most DJs in town just can't spin the kind of tunes that keep a large crowd going and often, so often, everything in this city seems dead, just too familiar. And then you notice a steady stream of vehicles heading north towards Baddow and turning right. To where else but the Rox Bar. This is where, every weekend, a rather eclectic crowd gathers. Budding young achievers nod shoulders with the already rich, royals dance a hair's breadth away from commoners, and there seems to be little distinction

between diplomats and college students. The radio commercial for the Rox Bar says you don't need to be a rock star say go there, and they're right. With no real restrictions—except a dress code and a bill that can hurt at the end of a long evening—why go anywhere else for hyperelectric dancing and people-watching? But what is the real attraction? Ask

any Rox regular. Most agree on the music. Others talk about the spaciousness. Still others say the staff doesn't give you attitude. "It's the soft and the most happening place, and I get to meet all my friends—and new people—there, which is great after a week of hard work," says Yalambar Khaingoli, a young entrepreneur. Of course, it's impossible to find any one unifying reason such as diversity of people would make the Rox their Friday evening home, but most people we spoke with who spend time there say this is the thing: it is easy to have fun at the Rox. You can be tired and just stop in for a quick drink and chat, but chances are, you'll be lacing up your dancing shoes soon enough, or at least tapping away in your chair either at the bar or one of the numerous cosy little alcoves the place is littered with, or catching the fresh air on the terrace outside.

Oddly enough, this isn't quite what the management of the Hyatt Regency had in mind when they initially started the Rox Restaurant and Bar. Following their international policy of having a trendsetting signature outlet on every property—the Grand Hyatt in Delhi has The Bicks—the Hyatt in Kathmandu

conceptualised a sophisticated bar that would cater to an exclusive clientele, in simple terms, the rich and the richer. But after two months of exclusion, they realised that though this strategy may work in other cities, in small, democratic Kathmandu, it just doesn't cut it. That, and the fact that a significant proportion of big spenders in this town are younger people.

"We had to move along with the market trend and the original concept changed, but there is still the air of sophistication," says Chauri Chad Ha Rital, public relations manager at the Hyatt. They were right. Soon, everyone was coming, as much for the funky blond wood and granite décor and three luxurious floors that invite spreading out, as for the totally mixed clientele. There came a time when people actually had to be turned away because the bar, the lounge and the restaurant were all packed with people knocking back the famous Caponichia and grooving to the tunes of the Red Sky Walkers, the Rox's weekend band. The music is the other major reason people can't get enough of the Rox—between the Red Sky Walkers and DJ Neel, you can hear Latin music, acid jazz, 70's disco and funk, grunge, as well as the latest hip-hop.

much of it live. Says Abhyasa Subba Weise, the vocalist with the Sky Walkers, "We are there to entertain people, and the crowd is varied. So we don't restrict ourselves to any particular type of music."

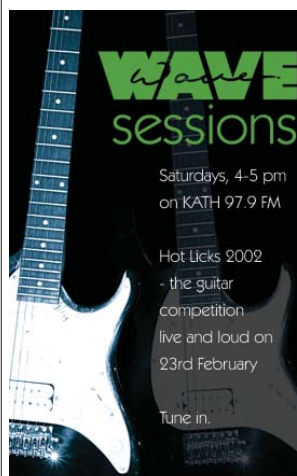
But all that popularity came at a price for the Rox. Along with the honest, fun-seeking crowd, there were also a few people who couldn't handle their alcohol, or simply couldn't countenance an ex-partner dancing with someone else, both of which led to belligerence a few weeks in a row. And so, the days of anything goes at the Rox came to an end, as all things too good to be true must. "Security has always been a high priority for us, and after all we are an international brand name and we cannot let that image down," says Rital. A dress code was introduced, and Kathmandu finally had its own version of the New York club rope—entrance was at the discretion of the management, and the management was strict.

That said, it is still a great place to go, and neither the emergency nor the rope have discouraged Kathmanduites who want to let it all hang out. Looks like the Rox is an addictive habit. ♦

Read about it in the
MARCH
issue of



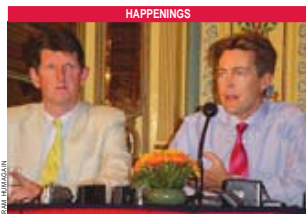
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MORE MONEY: Ben Bradshaw, British Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (right), and Ronald Nash, British Ambassador to Nepal, telling reporters that Britain will increase aid to Nepal about \$30 million annually. Wednesday, 20 February.



LEARNING THE ABC'S: Children praying to be good students at the Neel Saraswati temple in Lumbini, Sunday, 17 February.



COMMUNITY RADIO: Minister for Information and Communication, Jaya Prakash Prasad Gupta, at the inaugural session of the Community Radio in South Asia Conference. Also seen are Saneeya Hussain of Panos South Asia, William Crawley and David Page of the Institute for Development Studies.



Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Corporal punishment

Jare Fonda may claim that she discovered the after-office work-out, but we know it for a fact that it was actually the great Indian state-dynamic human yoga guru, Yogi Basyendranath, (cca 2,585 BC), who perfected the art of tying oneself into knots. This unique method of relaxing mind and body entails entwining one's left leg through one's right leg and pulling out the left leg to make a loop around one's neck until it is held tightly in position with the help of one's right arm, while one slips one's left arm through the gap between the legs to emerge in the vicinity of one's solar plexus to reach a particularly inaccessible itch on one's right shoulder blade. Little to the left, down a bit, some more to the right. Yessss.

That was just the warm-up. Now, take your right toe and, after disinfecting it with a wet wipe, stick it into your left ear lobe and while standing in the Tree Position take your right index finger and thumb and pinch your nostrils to see how long you can hold your breath before you for all intents and purposes, die. Then crouch like a tiger and, while pretending to be a hidden dragon, leap up into the air and try to touch the ceiling with your kundalini. Very good, now let's try that with your left toe and right ear lobe. Sorry, can't hear you. I see, you're stuck in the ceiling fan. OK, let's attempt this manoeuvre to get you down by twisting this little knob here on the wall to full intensity.

See what I mean? Our ancestors developed these simple but effective techniques to keep body and soul ship shape, and we have ignored them as we passed ourselves down from generation to generation to the post-Industrial Age. In these stressful times, it is important for each and every one of us to rediscover these simple ways

to keep our bodies nimble and our ear lobes beautiful. After all, as Confucius say: A good body is a devil's workshop. And who doesn't want to have Satan's gluteus maximus—especially when it is accompanied by that cute tail with a cursor arrow at the tip.

Time and tide waits for no man. So it is important for us to learn to improvise. Many of Sri Masyendranath's techniques are a bit, shall we say, outmoded and in fact may get us into trouble in this day and age. What if, god forbid, we are running late for work, and we cannot untuck ourselves from the Bow and Arrow Position (grab both your ankles firmly with both your hands while lying flat on your stomach, and pull your legs over your back like a scorpion so that your abdomen is curved in a convex shape, make it tighter and tighter until you hear a few ribs snap, or until you begin rolling across the floor like a rocking chair, whichever comes first. Children! Never try this trick without adult supervision. Never).

The problem with this position is that you cannot let go of your ankles without the danger of your abdomen suddenly snapping back into its equilibrium position with a loud bang that will rattle window-panes in a 3 km radius. The best thing to do in a situation like this is to call the bomb disposal squad which will untie you without harming any vital organs.

Since this is a national emergency, it may be much better for the next three months to stick to the time-tested Cobra and Peacock Position, which will not put any life and/or limbs in danger. Better still, try lying straight on your back, head and arms flung, eyes closed and playing dead. This is called the Cadaver Position. ♦



NEPALI SOCIETY

Arty Aarti

When Aarti Chataurt asks Nepali males to be guests on her discussion show Jagriti on Nepal Television, many quiver. There is something in the male psyche that cannot bear the thought of losing face on camera—especially when grilled by a woman. And it doesn't help that Aarti tackles sensitive issues from a woman's perspective.

Actually, Aarti is not one of your born-again feminists who puts men off. In fact, many of her guests leave the studio after a particularly intense session

relieved and very, very impressed with their discussion host. Lately, Jagriti has dealt not just with issues like menstruation and extramarital sex, which other journalists might never touch, but also larger questions of social justice and development. And everyone gets his or her say.

"I prioritise the issues on the feedback I get from my audience," an animated Aarti told us, her hands gesturing vigorously. "They always come up with bright suggestions." In real life, Aarti is even more impressive than on screen, she has a persuasive presence that forces you to listen to what she has to say. And if you are a man, well, many men would privately admit that they have a secret crush on her.

She makes it look all so easy, but Aarti had to overcome major obstacles in trying to convince her bosses at NTV about the selection of subject matter and also the panelists. "It is much easier convincing my audience about the issues," she says, throwing back her head with a hearty laugh.

Nepali men are supposed to be socially conservative, but Aarti has found it is surprisingly easy to change their attitudes if you put the argument in the right away and don't make them feel too insecure.

And she is even making progress with her bosses, all of whom happen to be men. "They are more willing to listen now," she admits, "earlier it

was a struggle to get the go-ahead on some of the more controversial issues I picked up."

For someone who is so easy and natural on camera, it comes as a surprise for us to hear that Aarti just stumbled into television. When the NTV advertised for a trainee producer, Aarti, a college student applied, thinking she could make use of her leisure time. She sailed through the training, and found that she liked it. And NTV liked her too. In fact they were so impressed with the dummy current affairs programme she made, that the station offered jobs on the spot to her entire team of trainees.

Behind the camera, Aarti channelled her passion into script, camera and visuals. But her love for literature never left her, motivating her to earn a Master's in Nepali literature. Two years went by, and along came Jagriti, conceived by NTV producer Deepa Gautam. Initially, she was reluctant to accept the offer to produce the fortnightly half-hour programme because she didn't think it had viewership potential. She did finally go ahead, and hosted ten episodes. Then there was a training stint in the Netherlands that allowed Aarti to broaden her horizons, and hone her craft. She came back fired up not just about television, but about a socially activist programme that would demystify attitudes among Nepali viewers about issues like gender and development. So Jagriti was revived. The rest, as they say, is history. ♦

Jagriti is broadcast every Tuesday at 9:30PM on NTV.



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