

Slavery and freedom in Nepal

1 - 7 March 2002



EXCLUSIV

No news

The law banning publication and broadcasting "interviews, write-ups, news, information and reading material" that would help the Maoists will be effective till mid-May, in parliament last week Pirme Ministr Sher Bahadur Deuba promised to issue necessary orders to lift restrictions on the press. Are we the only ones who see some contradiction here?



Angry Americans

US ambassador to Nepal, Mike Malinowski, is an old Nepal hand, having served here in the early 1990s. An even older Nenal hand is Peter Burleigh who was a Peace Corps volunteer near Nepalgunj in the 1960s. Both went west last week to tour Mangalsen and Shitalpati, scenes of Maoist massacres of security forces. Burleigh was shocked to see that the policemen had been mutilated after being killed. Malinowski was visibly moved while addressing a regional peacekeeping conference the next day in Kathmandu. He departed from his prepared text to recount his trip and said the Maoists are no different than the Shining Path, Abu Sayaf, Al Qaeda or the Khmer Rouge, (See also p 5)

Cashless cow

The government needs to divest from Royal Nepal Airlines, and quickly,

BINOD BHATTARAI

high-level committee to look into the ror at Royal Nepal Airlines has just submitted its report. There is bad news and worse news. The bad news is that the airline is losing Rs 200 million a year and is on the verge of collapse. Worse news the government has no more money to ball it out.

Royal Ngal Airlines has always been a barometer for the star of the nation, to it is no great surprise that a perfectly good airline has in the past 12 years been brought down to its knees through political interference, mismanagement and composition. That in a number is also the high-level committee's findings, and in that sense it is nothing new. But the report has sent as clear message to the government that it better divest, and fast.

"There has been just too much political interference, it has problems with ownership and there is widespread mismanagement," says Narayan Singh Pun, member of parliament and member of the committee. "Recognising it as a company and inviting private partners is the only way to change all that." (See interview, page 7).

Denn'l Niesde Aidine absent but on.

Royal Nepal Airlines has not had an audit since 1998, but you don't need an audit or to hear the stall warning poing off. Senior executives at the airlines tell you privately they have never seen it so bad-loses averaging Rs 500,000 a day, incredible tales of foor, political intervention, and corruption. Palms are greased every time the airline has hired jets, sent engines for overhauling, or appointed sales agents.

"Privatise RNAC?" asks one disgusted employee sarcastically, "this is already a private airline of politicians." The most glaring example of graft was the hiring of a General Sales Agent for Europe in 1995 under pressure from politicians which caused the airline losses worth nearly Rs 400 million.

These and other anomalies are emerging as auditors try to finish off with a backlog in book-keeping. Insiders tell us the official losses to the airlines due to politically-motivated decisions adds up to over Rs I billion. "And we are not even talking about kickbacks," one senior executive told us. The airline's losans and disputed liabilities add up to another Rs 2.6 billion. If the airline goes belly up, which is now

If the aimine goes perily up, which is now a distinct possibility if action is taken quickly, then these liabilities need to be picked up by the government. The tourism ministry which handles Royal Nepal Airlines knows if s got a hop topation in is handle, slown secretary Nagendra P Chrimite told us: "We have very few optonions left. We have a plan, we are serious about putting it into action." This ban, which is awaitine abiner.

I his plan, which is awaiting cabinet endorsement, is for the government to divest a part of its share to a strategic partner and overhaul management. But that will take at least a year.

The government needs to immediately inject Rs 2 billion to keep the airline flying. Not only does in not have that kind of money, but, given the level of mismanagement and corruption within the airline many fear the money could just disappear without result.

The high-level committee recommends that the government should give up one-third of its shares on an appropriate foreign airline, retain a portion, sell the rest to private tourism entrepreneurs, banks, staff and the general public. A government source told us: "We are now so frantic we may even agree to give more than one-third control to a strategic partner."

control to a strategic partner."

That would be a Sri Lankan Airlines type of solution: government sells 49 percent of firs share to a major international airline (Emirates in the case of Sri Lankan) and hands over full managerial control and autonomy, including personnel. The last part would be difficult for the government which has used Royal Nepal Airlines as an employment agency for party activists.

The cabiner may find it difficult to endose privations beause the airline has been a cash cow for political sluth funds. A decision to dives control would therefore be a test of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Dueba's commitment to most out corruption. Tourism minister Bal Bahadur KC kept a post-democracy tradition on an addirectors with cronics as soon as he became minister. The airline has had 17 CEOs and its directors have been shuffled 25 times since 1990.

There are silver linings: despite the huge liabilities the airline has assets worth up to Rs 7 billion with its two 757s, seven Twin Otters, equipment, real estate and buildings. With a proper management and less political meddling the airline could be

turned around relatively rapidly. The other sign of hope is that during his first term as prime minister, Deub had

airline's privatisation. He was toppled just days before the decision.

But not everyone in the airline is optimistic that even the divestment will be handled honestly. The reason, as one senior manager told us: "This airline is run by remote control from Singha Darbar."

actually come close to approving the



Have constitution, will tinker

Some say it will bring back political stability and peace. Others say there is no need. But is it really the constitution at fault here, or the politicians who have worked against its spirit?

The main opposition UML, in particular, has made changing

The main opposition UML, in particular, has made changing the statute its main agenda. It is specially concerned that elections will never be free or fair unless there are all-party interim governments to oversee them. It also says reforms would be a way to bring people back from the Maoist fold.

The UML threat is clear, it will not go along with another emergency extension in mid-May unless the government agrees to the reforms. Last week Machar Kumar Nepal actually waited until the very end to hear the government capitation of hear reformed in the stream of the set for set of the reform demand before standing up to vote with the ruling party. The centre-right PSP heart made is sposition official, but if favours tinkering. Sudbhavana wants changes to accommodate its citizenship demands.

The Nepali Congress also has a position on constitutional

changes, but party president Girija Prasad Koirala hasn't told anyone what it is. Prime Minister Deuba doesn't seem to have any strong opinions either way, but may have to go along with his president.

Meanwhile, sections of the Congress are already saying no to any changes. Most vociferous among them is former foreign minister Chakra Bastola. "Any attempt to change the Constitution for the purpose of sharing power is unacceptable, as that goes against the Westminster system where the majority rules," he says.

It fooks like this is what the ruling party may say when it comes to clause-by-clause bargaining with the UML in the days ahead. Adds Bastola: "If you say you want a national government to manage a crisis, there is a danger of that being a recipe for perpetual instability and crises."

But don't we have that already?



Make Success The

Peoples War In Peru

ANYBODY HOME?

Having got the emergency extended for another three months, the government seems to have gone back to sleep. There is sound of loud snoring emanating from Singha Durbar. Hello?

This is exactly the what-we-worry attitude of our post-1990 rulers that brought the country to its present crisis. And despite the wake-up call from Achham last week, the government still seems to be saving: "Ah well, the army is out there taking care of the problem, wake us up when they're done."

Someone has not it into Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuha's head that there can be no development without peace. And, being seemingly incapable of multitasking, he is pursuing the military option with single-minded zeal. It is true, this war has to be waged to restore peace. But, as we keep saying, the military cannot bring him victory on a platter. Security operations have to be accompanied by some signs of intelligent life inside Singha Durbar.

Many of Deuba's colleagues within his own party, members of the opposition, and independent political analysts are warning that unless development goes hand-in-hand with the counter-insurgency operation, this war will drag on for a long, long time. Peace and development are two sides of the same coin.

No one knows this better than the army. Its foot soldiers operate in villages where having the locals on your side is critical to battlefield success. And fearful villagers need some hope for the future, some indication that far away in Kathmandu is a government they elected that cares for their welfare, and is willing to do something about it. In vast swaths of the hinterland there is no army, no police, and for all practical purposes, no government. These areas are effectively under Maoist control. Unless the government shows some kind of a presence there, they are lost. We know it is difficult for Deuba to get his government's act together, but he could start with something meaningfully symbolic like cutting cabinet flab to make it lean and mean.

FIXING THE ROOF WHILE THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE

We are into the first week of the second phase of the emergency, and politicians are preoccupied with the debate on constitutional reforms. Those who favour tinkering with the constitution have locked horns with those who don't. It is not a very clear-cut polarisation, and

Those who favour reform say the 1990 statutes need urgent revision to ensure free and fair elections, adding teeth to the decentralisation act, ensuring citizenship for minorities, ironing out differences between the judiciary and the executive.

But aren't these things that simple laws can set right? Do we really need to tamper with the constitution? Let's say reforms are, in fact, needed. Is this the time to do it? Constitutional amendments are not trifling matters, they need a rational national debate, and public involvement. A state of national emergency is not an ideal time to foster such debate. In fact, some have likened it to repairing the roof while the house is on fire

Any discussion on the pros and cons of reforms cannot be unrestricted and unhindered at a time when the fundamental political rights of citizens have been suspended.

Our ribbon-cutting Kathmandu-centric politicians and bureaucrats may not realise it but this is a country at war. Negalis have never ever, in our entire history killed other Nepalis at such a gruesome rate as we have in the past two weeks.

The pro-reform lobby argues that constitutional reform is the bait that will bring the Maoists to mainstream politics. This would imply that constitutional reforms come out of the barrel of a gun.

The main opposition UML is keen on reforms, mainly because it says it wants an interim national government to oversee elections. The dissident faction in the Nepali Congress under its ambitious president, Giriia Prasad Koirala also wants the constitution changed. But since he doesn't go into specifics, this plan, like his argument for a "democratic alliance", smacks of personal ambition.

Constitutional reforms it seems, is too important to be left just to politicians who can't see beyond the tip of their noses.



No time for games

......

insurgents look like mercy-killers. The

time for moralising is now over. Even wars

have certain rules of engagement. Terrorists observe no such codes, and have no

hesitation in defiling corpses and setting

innocent people on fire. Not that Messrs Koirala, Nepal, Thapa

or Deuba are paragons of virtue, but to

compare them unfavourably with those

barracks, kill innocents by the hundred

ignorance, it reflects the complicity that the

Kathmandu cabal with a Panchayat-era past

sizeable section of the traditional elite has

of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990, and is

bent upon giving democracy a bad name.

This is the enemy within, subverting the

rule of law by shouting itself hoarse that

Take the most glaring recent example

Have any of the legions of incorrigible Koirala-knockers been able to prove in what

way his expulsion from Singha Darbar has

helped Nepal? Do we have less corruption,

democracy and more investment in poverty

alleviation under Deuba than what we had

under Koirala? Let me extend this logic a

whoever replaces Deuba will have a more

ministers than the one we have at present?

little further: what is the guarantee that

competent and incorruptible set of

more good governance, a higher level of

laws are not being observed.

who storm police posts, raze military

and burn bus passengers is not just

has with the enemies of democracy. A

not reconciled itself to the reality of

A section of Kathmandu's elite is waging a psy-war to sabotage the government's will to fight the insurgency.

pite spring, hopelessness hangs in he air like a shroud of blue crema ion smoke over the banks of the Bagmati. Isn't this the state the terrorists want us to be in? By giving into passive mourning, we end up capitulating unwit-tingly. So far, the terrorists have succeeded edingly well in undermining the political will to fight the worst menace facing this country since the demise of the Khukuri Dal in the 1950s.

The mayhem in Mangalsen and the ighter in Salvan last week revealed the deadly determination of the Maoists. The barbaric burning of innocent passengers on a night bus to Birgunj showed that for the Maobadi, the end justifies the means. And what exactly are these ends? Nothing less than subverting democracy. Worse, it may

be to undermine the very existence of this state

A challenge of this gnitude requires that the political class face it with a ense of purpose. This should be the time to shelve little differences that inevitably exist n every democratic polity. ome of us in the media had inrealistic expectations of the oyal Nepal Army. We scoffed at the doubts of more pe tive analysts. An army that had rtually no experience in ghting an insurgency was oing so in a terrain designed favour guerrillas.

Now that we know better. e are reconciled to the fact that is is a messy war. We have to prepared for the long haul. here is no magic wand any nore. When it comes to facing rebel group as ruthless and rafty as the Manhadi, the Royal epal Army is as vulnerable as much-maligned Nepal Police. This is a sobering ealisation that should prompt our political leadership to rethink its strategy to counter

A concerted effort to undermine the To channel scarce resources in the right direction, the state must begin by identify ing its real enemies. Poverty, unemploy ment, lack of governance, and corruptio are some of the fashionable causes that by an influential section of Nepali holier-than-thou analysts brandish about with reckless naiveté. Sure, these are socio in English. "Intelligentsia" lacks the economic diseases that need to be treated for the political health of the country. The oint is, how do you do that when you have a gun to your head, a knife at your coincidental. If it isn't a conspiracy, the back, and a bomb beneath your feet? capital's "opinion leaders" are morons By incessantly harping on the terminal incapable of seeing the harm they do to the diseases that afflict our state, we make the

> have been compiled between 321-296 BCE, lists four dangers to the state and declares, "... that which is of internal origin and internal abatement" is the most dangerous. Nepal's democracy, economics. society and nation are faced with exactly this danger, and it can mean the end of its independent identity. This is no time to prove one's intellectual prowess by picking holes in the "democratic alliance" that has been proposed by the ruling party's president. It is the classic TINA option of olitics—There Is No Alternative. Forces that believe in nationalism and democracy. have to come together and defend the gains

of the People's Movement of 1990.

Krishna Prasad Bhattarai is dead right: popular rule enshrined in the Constitution this is not the time to play power games. Constitutional amendments can wait. What needs to be done right away is collect our collective wits and face a ruthless enemy staring us in the face.

The last word must go to Sun Tzu. almost a contemporary of Kautilya: victory comes from cold-blooded tactics, not vagu warnings. If you want to win, first think your strategy out. No one is going to come mmediately to save Nepal from the Maobadi. After all, the world just watched while the Taleban had a free run of Afghanistan. By the time help arrivesassuming that it does-it is often too late The state must sort this mess out all by itself. The least the buddhijibis can do i stop being such a nuisance.

legitimacy of a democratically elected and constitutionally formed government is on. A psy-war to sabotage the government's will to fight the insurgency is being waged buddhijibis (This word has no exact equal menacing undertones inherent in the Nepali term.) The help they extend to the aurgents is too generous to be entirely

Kautilya's Arthashastra, believed to

Borderline war

he Maoists' Falgun Offensive las week, with its monstrous slaughter Nepal's Maoist war could spill over into India. of the security forces, has broader

security implications. It is no more a secret that the Maoist leadership is hiding in India. And despite official Indian condemnation of the Achham attack and an official statement in November pronouncing our Maoists terrorists, they do find safe haven across the border. In a sense, therefore, this is already a "cross-border" war. The most glaring indication that India has officially done nothing to apprehend the underground leadership was the "Siliguri plenum" after which a parade of leaders from Nepal travelled to north India for audiences with Comrade Prachanda

ΝΔΤΙΩΝ

It is also no secret that India's Maoist groups procure weapons for the Nepali rebels, provide them safe-houses in Indian territory and have trained them in the use of explosives and landmines. Indian Maoist groups also help their comrades in Nepal to get support among international revolutionaries

In an indirect way, the army is already fighting what can be called a cross-border war. What may happen now is that this war will be fought more openly. Even if the security forces are able to drive the Maoists out of the hills of Nepal, the guerrillas will simply head off to their hideouts in India. What this also means is that Nepal's security concerns would span the Indian plains where both the problem and solution may be in hiding. And this would have broad ramifications for the Maoist uprisings in India's Bihar. Iharkhand and Andhra Pradesh states, where our battle-hardened Maoists are now in a position to teach their Indian comrades a thing or two.

revolution anywhere

have to blame for it.

for employment. But it is

international market. Other

available in international

abour markets. They also

placed by developed countries

consider the restrictions

on free mobility of labour

against the spirit of

globalisation and level-

across national boundaries

aving field of the market-

based economy. For details

on the growing importance of

economy, migration paths,

the livelihood security of

tion and Remittances

Economy of Nepal.

and the role of remittances in

villages, readers can refer to our forthcoming book. The

New Lahures : Labour Migra-

Jagannath Adhikari

Kathmandu

non-farm income in the Nepali

It is clear that the security situation will not improve until the border is sealed. The Maoists will have a theoretical edge here, because Mao's communism and the internationalism that comes with the ideology, stimulate that a communist can fight for

taking Nepal. The Maoist leader also A future cross-border war will be gave an interview to the Revolutionary different from the one fought by the Worker four years ago in which he said armed wing of the Nepali Congress in the he was ready to take on the Indian Army 1960s when the then underground party At the time, this sounded like false had the direct and full, albeit secret, bravado. But was all this part of a grand support of the Indian establishment. Will plan to actually draw the Indians in?

Posters in support of the People's War in the corridors of the North Bengal University near Siliguri, India.

this lead to the "Bhutanisation" of The Maoists struck in Achham for a Nepal? It may, if it is the Nepali governreason. The district borders both the ment that will have to send out an SOS. mid- and far-western regions. They knew And if that happens, we all know who we that here they would have an edge over rhe security forces in terms of organisa-In an interview with the news agency tion. They are in familiar terrain, the AFP, Maoist leader Prachanda once said army base in Mangalsen was in a vulner-"If (India) did not support Nepal's fascist able location, and it would take time for

government, we would be ready to talk reinforcements to arrive with the Indian establishment "If this The security forces have been statement was correctly quoted, it is engaged in hot pursuit and in cordonclear in which direction Prachanda is and-destroy operations that have inflicted

LETTERS

heavy blows on the retreating Maoists. But we can expect the Maoists to have hidden most of their captured automatic weapons in secret caches, and they will be travelling light and fast, at night and in civvies, to disperse.

VERSITY OF WORTH BENGAL

If the Maoists are trying to develop Achham as a base as strong as Rukum or Rolpa, it would be a major challenge for the future, because Achham is just one district away from Nepal's western border with India Our Maoists are used to trekking nine nights at a stretch to travel from one part of the country to another, and it would take them no time at all to get to the Mahakali river and cross over

The Manists who were believed to be holed up in Rukum and Rolpa escaped from the army's security cordon (See "Down but

not out", #77) to attack Achham with the weapons captured from Dang and their battle cry was: "Avenge Kapurkot". It was in Kapurkot in early January that the Maoists suffered their most major defeat, a repeat of their rou in Salleri in

November. They hadly needed a high-profile victory.

If the Maoists are emerging into a "Strategic Balance" phase after Achham they may now be in the same situation as Peru's Sendero Luminoso, who said they were in Strategic Balance with the Peruvian security forces after establishng control over almost 60 percent of

the country's territory. In Peru, an infiltration breakthrough assisted by the CIA allowed the security forces to zero in on Comrade Gonzalo and six other members of the party high command. Our security forces here must also be hoping for a similar intelligence breakthrough as a

But the big difference with Peru is that, unlike us, it did not have an open border with a big neighbour-and one with its own Maoist insurgency—like India. There is also the question of how Nepalis would countenance help from outside intelligence agencies, and the presence here of foreign security sonnel. So far Nepalis have been killing each other in a domestic insurgency, the danger is that all this escalation will lead us into a crossborder war in which also Nepalis kill each other

Achham was a watershed in more way than one. The security forces lost a battle But this is going to be a long war. And, as they say in Nepali, "parajaya nai bijaya ko dhotak ho". A defeat can also be an early sign of victory.

(Puskar Gautam is a former Maois district commander for Okhaldhunga and left the movement three years ago.

SENDING MONEY HOME

Thanks to Hemlata Rai for tackling the important issue of Nepali migrant labour "Sending money home" (#81). Ms Rai quotes from our study that remittances worth Rs 30 billion flow into Nepal annually. She also reports that Himal Khabarpatrika had estimated annual remittances coming into Nepal as Rs 69 billion. As a matter of fact. our study had made both estimates. The first one did not include remittances coming from India as it was (is) difficult to estimate the number of Nepali workers working there. By making some rough estimates of the number of people working in India and the remittances they send to Nepal, we reached to the conclusion that, in total, remittances (from all foreign countries, but excluding the pension payments) could reach Rs. 69 billion. Considering the contribution of remittances to GDP, Nepal's participation in

foreign labour migration

seems to be far less compared to Sri Lanka, Bangla-desh and Pakistan. In this I can understand why it is globalised world, it is not a difficult to estimate the natter of shame to go abroad number of Nepalis working in India, but it should be fairly important to be competent in easy to look at the number of securing better jobs in the Nepalis working in the rest of the world. All we have to do is countries have formulated look at the number of embarnolicies that have helped their kation cards for departing people take opportunities Nepalis.

Sashi Bhandar Swargadari Khola, Pyuthan

OUT OF SLAUGHTER

they can read it.

"Coming out of slaughter" (#82). Something is rotten in the state of Nepal, and you put your finger right on the rot: our elected representatives. Why not televise the proceedings the House so we can see what a bunch of clowns they are. Getting elected doesn't give them the mandate to mishehave Rut more impor tantly, your editorial may have to be translated into Nepali so

hy emai



Reading CK Lal's "Six years later" (#82) I was struck by the possibility of Indian Gurkhas at our doorstep. If our domestic strife continues at this rate, this is a distinct possibility. and we know who we have to blame for that: maximum leader Prachanda. After all Indian Gurkhas outnumber ou own Gurkhas, General Hastings raised battalions of Gurkhas into the 1st Nausir battalion even before the Ango-Nepal War of 1814-16. nistory going to repeat itself?

by email once drove a taxi, and even if Rhunati Pratan | he did | don't understand why

NARAYAN GOPAL

Pemela Guruwacharya, wife o late singer Narayan Gopal, writes in your letters (#82) about CK Lal's "Let them eat cake" (#78) that she is "quite sure [that her singer husband] never even touched the steering wheel of a taxi. let alone any vehicle with four wheels." Your columnist CK Lal responded that he stood "by [his] memory" in declaring that Narayan Gopal was once

a taxi driver So who should the fans of the great singer believe? How about hiring a cultural historian to look into the matter? If it turns out that the late singer was indeed a taxi driver, fine. But if it turns out otherwise. then your columnist should apologise to Mrs Guruwacharva and to all Narayan Gonal fans.

Prashant Mahara

Whether or not Narayan Gopal

Mrs Pemela Guruwacharva thinks that driving a taxi is so beneath human dignity that she was "shattered and

Nanda Rahadur Rai

ACROSS THE BORDER Puskar Gautam in ("Red Terror" #80) takes pains to

side with the political mainstream, but hesitates to state the obvious about the Maoists: that India is fighting a nroxy war in Nenal in the guise of the Maoist movement. I am surprised that an ex-commander with such a fine understanding of "red terror" misses the point abou the logistical, weapons. training and other support th Maoists get from India, Our efforts are mistargeted. Nepal doesn't have internal enemies, our enemies have always been external, and the have always taken advantage Baudhha of the open international

boarder we unfortunately share

with India.

Bipin Adhikar

HEMLATA RAI

x years after allowing public M radio, Nepal's pioneering efforts in liberalising licensing regulations for independent broadcasters is losing steam. Nepal was one of the first

countries in South Asia to allow no nmental groups to broadcast on the FM band when Radio Sagarmatha 102.4 went on the air in 1996 in Kathmandu Valley. That opened up a flurry of new private commercial stations, but the original intention of allowing communities to set up their own local FM stations got sidelined in the rush to profit from

the new medium. Even so, the government has given out operating licenses to 25 FM stations all over Nepal—half of them outside the Valley. The Ministry of Information and Communication is sitting on another 25 applications, some of them since 1996. "The application are technically okay, but we are waiting to hear from the decisionmaking level." says Anun Nepal of th

Frequency Division of the ministry. Although they don't say it, officials have spread the explanati HERE AND THERE that the licenses are delayed because they don't want the new stations to fall into Maoist hands. However, local communities which have been waiting for their licenses say this is just an excuse to favour private licences for lucrative ommercial stations. No licenses ha been issued since the state of

mergency was declared in Novembe The existing FM broadcasters ave been divided into community, commercial or co-operative tations, depending on the type of numershin And this makes a marked difference to the content o he material broadcast. Community radios focus on locally relevant information and discussions, cooperative stations have a good nixture of entertainment and new while the commercial stations are almost entirely entertainment-based and cater to the younger generation

of music listeners. "The main problem with icensing is that government policie do not make any distinction between for-profit and non-profit broadcasters," says one applicant or a radio license. The legal and inancial obligations are similar, and

nong the ranks of the literate of

the world, there are two types of

ople: those who read books

nd those who don't. Never mind Serbs

and Croats, dog people and cat people or people who hate mobile tel-

ephones and those who glue their

Nokia to their ears, this is a truly

Take my father. As if to

rove that nurture, not nature,

etermines many of our key

opposite sides of this Iron Curtain of incomprehension. Not only does

attributes, he and I are on

the dear man not read regularly, he has

n appalling habit that turns my stomach

sane, loving and generous human being

picks up a work of fiction, he

ums immediately to the last

few pages and reads them. "I

vant to see how it's going to

the most normal thing in

the ending I don't

the world. "If I don't like

end," he explains as if it's

just to describe it. When this otherwise

broad gulf, rarely bridged.

ntially dangemus

all stations have to pay a government levy of 4 percent on net profits, and license fees apply to oth profit and non-profit stations.

"Insensitivity of the governmen officials is killing public service broadcasters, and this is against the spirit of the country's communica on policy," says Vinaya Kasajoo, a computer of community-based nedia in Nepal. Since the postdemocracy Communication Policy guided by the principle of ancing people's rights to information, Kasajoo argues that official policy should give more weight to grassroot initiatives to set p community radios. Community radios like the

Radio Lumbini in Butwal are mainly information-based, and have higher running costs and less advertisement revenue than similar commercial stations. Because they ater to listeners at the village level who do not have the purchasing power, community radios lack of advertisers and sponsors for their programmes. According to the ciation of Advertising Agencies Nepal (AAAN) the advertisement

Madanpokhara FM in Palpa and

Let a thousand community radios boom

Despite small steps taken in the past six years, radio in Nepal is still waiting for a giant leap.



ast fiscal year. The largest chunk of this went to private commercial stations The commercial station. Classic FM for instance earns four times more in revenue from advertise nents than Radio Sagarmatha with its public service orientation.

In almost every part of the vorld, public service broadcasters like the BBC or CBC in Canada are subsidised by the government. "It is ronical that in Nepal programming that is geared for independent information in the public sphere is axed by government," says Bharat Koirala, whose lobbying efforts in the early 1990s were crucial in getting the government policy on nsing public service FM station After its initially bold National

Communicator Policywhich amended the National Broadcasting other provisions in licensing Act in 1997, thus ending the monopoly of Radio Nepal over the airwaves, the government has lagged

has developed as an alternative largely because of the new policy, says Narhari Acharya who was hairman of the drafting committee of the National Communication Policy. "But the government has not been able to fully implement

the recommendations we made to omote community radio The Policy document has even recommended that Radio Nepal be emed by an independent board odelled after the BBC, and stop functioning as the propaganda arm of government. But that seems to ive been too radical a proposal, and that provision was subsequently dropped from the Act. However, there has been nothing to stop the government from implementing the

community stations. "The government must not see t as community broadcasters snatching control away from it,"

says Koirala "It must see this as a way to strengthen democracy and giving voice to the diversity and nlurality of Nepal."

A 1996 radio listenership survey in 1996 reported that there were 1.2 million radio sets in Nepal and an average of nearly four people listened to each set. This figure ha now gone up, but the increase has been mainly in new FM sets. Still, it is Radio Nepal, broadcasting in the short and medium wave AM bands that commands most of this

For the first time, though, the spreading network of FM stations is taking listeners away from Radio Nepal—especially from urban areas And this is hitting Radio Nepal's advertisement revenues. Already hurting because of a cutback in government subsidy, Radio Nepal has had to go commercial on

NATION

Nepal's FM radios have tion and Communication Minister Iava Prakash Prasad Gupta. olutionised the quality of

Most independent media analysts agree that private FM stations are not fulfilling their public service role by being overwhelmingly entertainment dominated. The Communication Policy identifies FM radio stations as mass media, but stops short of listing their social responsibilities. In the absence of a clear-cut guideline, radio stations for their part are confused about their own roles and responsibilities towards the public, "We clearly define FM radio stations as mass media and thics," said Prabhakar Adhikari, Joint Secretary at the Frequency Section at the Ministry of Information and Communication. But the ministry doesn't seem to be doing much to ensure that this

he government edict. Most FM broadcasters are used to circumventing the license stipulation that they cannot broadcast "news" by calling the programmes "flash" or "daily diary" "Unless the commercial hannels are made aware about their social responsibilities, an ncrease in the number of stations may not help in keeping the public better informed," says Gopal Guragain who has launched an initiative to share news and

turrent affairs between seven

community stations outside the

himself a former journalist, issued

directive banning independent

news and current affairs pro-

rrammes from non-government

broadcasters. It took a Supreme

Court directive recently to scrap

roadcasting and dramatically changed listening habits in the past six year. They have contributed in ncreasing people's access to information and media-in places where Kathmandu's major newspapers reached a day late people can now listen to reviews of the contents within hours of publication every morning. They nave contributed in making radio programmes interactive. Listeners are now the deciding factor in the kind of programmes to be aired People's demands are forcing even hardcore commercial stations to produce more relevant news and current affairs programmes. Producing independent news bulletins and devoting at least half an hour every morning to current affairs programme is the latest trend in FM radios. ♦

Emotional envov

The American envoy to Nepal didn't mince words or hide his feelings at the recent opening of the South Asia Peace Operation Seminar-Game. US Ambassador Michael E Malinowski, just back from an inspection tour of areas in western Nepal severely hit by Magist violence, addressed representatives from 32 countries in a choking voice: "These terrorists, under the guise

of Maoists, or the so-called "People's War", are fundamentally the same as terrorists elsewhere-be they members of the Shining Path, the Abu Sayyaf, the Khmer Rouge, or the al-Qaeda," he said.

A moist-eyed Malinowski also paid tribute to the dead. "In democracies," he said, "the death of even one police officer or one soldier is a community and national tragedy. I salute each and every police officer and soldier who has died at the hands of the Maoist terrorists. Each one is a hero, and each one deserves the status of a national martyr." The US envoy's heartfelt speech, coming in the wake of Colin Powell's flying visit, may be an indication that the US is keen to support Nepal's struggle against the Maoists.



1-7 MARCH 2002 NEPALI TIMES

Measure of relief

Finally, some relief for victims of Maoist violence. The cabinet decided Monday to set up a Prime Minister's Relief Fund to which it will allocate Rs 100 million—and it has asked the public to pitch in, too. To set an example, the prime minister and his cabinet are all donating a month's salary. Money donated to the fund will be tax-exempt and used to provide relief to the families of army and police personnel, political workers, civil servants and members of the general public killed in Manist attacks. It will also provide assistance to those injured or maimed in the vinlence. The cabinet has asked businesses, civil servants, industrialists, and other institutions to contribute to the fund which will be managed by a fund operation committee including Damodar Prasad Gautam, former Chief Secretary, Rabi Bhakta Shrestha, president of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) and the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Office.

The government has also decided to launch an austerity measure—except for diplomatic purposes, it will cut down on lunch and dinner receptions during the emergency.

Vacancies

Nepal's civil service is shortstaffed. A recent report submitted by the Ministry of General Administration to the State Affairs Parliamentary Committee says that Nepal's ministries need more than 11,000 extra civil servants. Until some time ago, there were 4,652 posts in the civil service lying vacant. Then, the following were added:

4.929 vacancies owing to transfers and promotions:

465 vacant posts due to compulsory retirement;

· 774 vacancies owing to retirements; · and 228 posts are vacant due to deaths.

The only training centre in

the results you need

Kathmandu where all IFLTS

trainers are also IELTS examiners.

They know how to help you get

The Health Ministry has the largest number of vacant posts-5,244. The parliamentary committee has sought an explanation as to why steps have not been taken to find more civil

IELTS

YOUR PASSPORT

TO THE WORLD

IELTS courses at the British Council

Our next course runs from

Registration is open from 4 until

11 March - 5 April 2002

Opening hours 8am - 5pm

8 March 2002

Barefoot radio

How big does a radio station need to be? Broadcast trainer and community radio supporter Raghu Mainali (right), thinks it needn't be bigger than a box. And he can prove it with his mobile FM radio station which he lugs around in a suitcase. Mainali set un Community Radio Sunnort Centre (CRSC) two years ago to "demystify" radio. Mainali maps

is happening. In January last year, Informa-



out "strategic" villages with cultural and linguistic distinctness where a small FM radio station can make real impact and gets the community fired up about the idea. CRSC has identified Humla and Namche Bazar as areas with huge potential for local FM stations. Communities there are now working on plans to set up their own radio with help from CRSC which helps with technical feasibility and other training. "By helping communities establish their own media we want to help them preserve cultural richness

and indigenous knowledge," says Mainali. CRSC also helps prospective radio station owners with lobbying in the labyrinths of the Kathmandu ministries with paper work for licensing as well as lining up donors for specific projects. So far, Mainali's group has already helped non-profit stations like Radio Lumbini, Radio Madanpokhara, Swargadwari FM in Dang and Himchuli FM.

Mainali told us: "Private commercial stations are mainly urban-centered. They ignore social issues which they think are not popular with listeners. Someone has to step in to fill the gap in content between commercial stations and state radio."

Another group, Communication Corner in Kathmandu is also working with community radio stations that are already on the air by networking with them for exchange of news, current affairs and other radio magazine programmes. The organisation works with seven community radio stations to which it sends a daily 15 minute news and current affairs programmes and is encouraging members of the network to exchange material with each other.

The original plan was to link the stations together through the internet, but the bandwidth within Nepal was too narrow. Communications Corner is presently doing it via phone lines and will upgrade to internet audio files as soon as the bandwidth improves. "What we are trying to do is to magnify the voices of small community stations," says the centre's Gopal Guragain. "By making them a part of a network, the whole is hinner than a sum of the parts." From his studio in Kopundole, Guragain beams a news package every morning which is heard simultaneously in Butwal, Hetauda, Pokhara, Itahari, Palpa and Kathmandu.

With help from the Media Development Fund in Prague and the Panos Institute South Asia Communications Corner has equipped members of its FM Radio Network with computerised digital audio equipment.

Besides news, a half-hour programme called Alopalo and Radio Ma Pustak and 15-minute KayaKairan are aired on member stations. The member stations pay for the daily KayaKairan, but get the two additional programmes for free on the understanding that they exchange their own productions with other members

What distinguishes community stations in Nepal as well as their socially-minded commercial counterparts is that they see their public service role as a priority, and not just the profit motive. "Of course, we need to make ends meet, but informing the public has much greater importance in a democracy, and as a

radio producer it gives you much greater satisfaction," says Guragain. ESTIVAL 200

12 ft march, NAVA SYNABLES School Favor Self Rosen Rt 1950

156 mark, 307 fr/he cast Storgi La Wileys, Politon, Rs. 1992-20th march, FESCH JAZZ

Patri Biscom Spore, Rt. PRG-22nd mark, ALL STARS SUPPER CLIRE

Sharge to Hotel, Rathmonds, Bs. 1,760°

SHANGRI-LA

AUSTRALIA - INDIA - NEPRI - DAF - DIC

Tel 410798 www.britishcouncil.org/nepal Better English, More opportunities

□ 1-- mm m 0 A 算 2 定 X 1 m 0 mm

A row too far

behind, and hasn't implemented

For drama, angst and insight, don't look to the behaviour of public personalities. Just turn to the bookshelves.

he has this infuriating habit of winking at you, or smiling smugly as if he's conveyed some nugget of wisdom that might just free you from that damaging habit of reading all those books.

I've long since learned not to spit, splutter or swear at him. He is my father after all and must be treated with all due respect. Besides, I love the guy. He has no other horrible flaws. But he illustrates for me—and has done since I first started recognising letters on a written page—the way that reading can divide society. I read therefore I am. It is inconceivable to be anywhere, with anyone, doing anything, and not have books sitting nearby—if only to read at the end of a long day before slipping into a few hours' sleep. I can't count the number of times I've read the worst, trashiest, most desultory airport fiction or worse, just because I'd finished my good books, or left them somewhere behind enemy lines. It doesn't matter. The only thing worse than having to read Jeffrey Archer or Jackie

Collins, is not having anything to read.

So it is with heavy heart that I confess something and then whinge about the columnist's stock-in-trade. I hate literary festivals, literary rows and literary gossip. It is a pointless waste of time and ink and grey cells in the brain. I don't care about a writer's personality or past life or penchant for snail salad or odd sexual practices. It doesn't matter. I read his or her books. I do not assess their life and times and pass moral judgement. Nor do I give a damn what a rticular writer thinks about an issue of the day, even if—like Arundhati Roy-

agree with them. Fiction writers should stick to fiction, poets to poetry. It's how I feel, even as I toy with novel writing in the growing knowledge that it may not be for me.

Thus the literary world's equivalent of a firestorm that raged in India recently over Sir Vidia Naipaul's outbursts at a recent government-sponsored literary festival are of no interest whatsoever. In fact I care so little that I'm writing about the matter this week. Er, yes, well I never promised utter consistency at all times. India's chatterati-which dearly loves a row that combines concerns about identity, their country's place in the world and quilt about speaking fluent English—leapt with glee on the Naipaul matter. "A grumpy old man," "full of malice" "crotchety and nasty" were the comments that best sum up the reaction of the nattering classes in Delhi.

And having briefly met Sir Vidia, I can confirm a certain truth in those oservations. He is a bit of an intellectual thug, and as far as I am concerned, that's his business. Some of his writing-for me-is imbued with rigour, clarity and brilliance; a lot of it is the frustrated ranting of an exile who doesn't like much about his origins. NO matter. I read him with eagerness and joy, even if I don't like what he writes, even if I know he can seem a grumpy old git some-times, even if I find his views on Islam suspiciously narrow. He is VS Naipaul, he writes books. I read them. That's the extent of our relationship.

In this content driven age of the Web and constant television, we spend far too much time on invented dramas and trivial rows. We look for anger, angst and insight in the behaviour of public personalities, even intensely private folk like authors. While just over our shoulders, on the groaning shelves of our libraries, lie everything we need to ponder the intense mystery of life, love, hate and joy.

Unless you insist on turning straight to that last chapter. Then there's no honeforyou Sorry Dad ♦

aring in much of the left-wing press these days, you get a feeling that the main opposition CPN-UML has completed its post-election cabinet line-up down to the

minister without portfolio.

But are Nepalis anywhere close to getting VILLAGE VOICE

where the union stands between amalgamation and infiltration. For now, at least, the comrades don't seem too bothered about such technicali-

carry out the transactions smoothly

without much of a fuss. Four years ago

they also formed a district federation of

milk cooperatives to safeguard farmers' interests. They did all this without

The result is there for all to see: ar

rea of Nepal that was chronically short

of food nearly half the year is now self-

Imported cross-bred lahure bhais

ost up to Rs 40,000 each. They are

from India and not used to the terrain

their own fodder in their bari, and the

so they are stall-fed. Farmers grow

sufficient.

after last month's merger between the two

largest mainstream leftist groups? The answer

would depend on, among other things, exactly

returned is who he says he is. But, surely, the celebrations can't go on forever. When a olitical player as proficient as Comrade Bam Dev Gautam decides to return home at the cost of relinguishing the position of general secretary of the CPN-ML he built and nurtured, you can't afford to swear by the Communist Manifesto.

Moreover, Gautam is nowhere near the deputy general secretary's post he once held in the UML which serves to reinforce suspicions that his words of contrition might be a red herring. Even after accounting for the fishiness of politics, other incongruities persist. From the way UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal embraced Gautam at the Rastriva Sabha Griha (see picture left), where the Lord of the eft and his workers had broken themselves from the UML's chains four years ago, it was easy to forget how the main opposition party ad once publicly castigated Gautam as the untry's most corrupt politician. Gautam's tirades against the UML's abandonment of the e, too, seemed to have been consigned to the dust hern of history

Much blood, sweat and tears have flown wn Nepal's rivers since irreconcilable differences over the ratification of the Mahakali Treaty and the language character-ising the extra-territorial ambitions of the Inited States and India forced Cautam & Co to walk out of the UML. Both camps nter acknowledged that the split deprived them of a majority in the 1999 general election. Since ML leaders maintain they ave returned to the UML keeping intact rhose differences, electoral calculations must

have spurred a partial conciliation. A greater catalyst, however, seems to be the success the Nepali Congress reaped by putting on a facade of unity before the election

be of politicians who could at least pretend they were friends. When Girija Prasad Koirala nominated Krishna Prasad Bhattarai as prime minister weeks before the first votes had been cast, not too many Nepalis were convinced that the eternally squabbling party elders had finally decided to engage in some healthy rivalry. But voters gave the Kangresis a majority any way, allowing them to foist on the country three prime ministers in as

To be sure, the ML's fate was sealed when it failed to win a single parliamentary seat in the last election. Amid a steady exodus of cadres to the Maoist camp, ML strategists were forced to face the facts. Although the ML was officially the third largest national party, state media accorded its leaders a place behind Narayan Man Bijukche on the news bulletins. For Gautam, repudiating the UML was relatively easy, especially with the help of such allies as the perennial dissident, CP Mainali However, when Mainali couldn't quit being the permanent leader of the opposition in the new party Cautam knew his moment of truth had come (How Mainali fares in his budding association with leaders like Rajeshwar Devkota and Dhundi Raj Shastri would be avidly

many years

watched in the days ahead.) To be fair, Gautam has never concealed his fervent ambition of becoming prime minister. When he became deputy premier in—and the de facto head of-Lokendra Bahadur Chand's government, a TV interviewer tossed a routine question: had he ever imagined he would reach such a high position? Apparently, Gauram felt insulted. From the very first time he walked into the visitors' gallery at the Rastriya Panchayat, Gautam told the interviewer, he knew he would become prime minister one day. Although Gautam refused to

divulge how, as a politician in hiding, he managed to get a visitor's pass only member of the partyless chamber were authorised to approve then, he made his point. Similar conviction must have led Gautam to assert in a recent magazine interview that he considered his return to the UML as a major step toward his ultimate destination

All these years outside parliament. Gautam had enough time to take a hard look at his former titular boss Chand It didn't take long for Gautam to realise that his voice would carry wider reverberations as a member of the main opposition party than it would as the general secretary of one having a single

member in the upper house. Nepal, for his part, felt he needed someone strong enough to check the aspira tions of colleagues like Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli. When Oli, who was denying knowledge of unity talks until very late in the process. realised he couldn't stop Gautam's ho ing, he planned his own welcome. The UML deputy leader organised a tea party for Gautan while Nepal was away on a study tour of the Westminster chambers. By the time the unification was officially announced. Pradir Nepal, who was entrusted by the UML to crown Gautam with the Most Corrupt title

ioined in a rendition of the Internationale. Even if the UML were to get a majority is the next election it would still have challenge to surmount. A major one is the fact that both Madhav Nepal and Gautam have served as deputy prime minister. Given the balance of power in the UML, that shouldn't complicate the election of the new prime minister. The nature of the coexistence between Nepal's authority and Gautam's ambition, he would influence how events unfold. Maybe Oli is the man we should really be keeping

1-7 MARCH 2002 NEPALLTIMES

BIZ NEWS

Face off

NEPALL ECONOMY

The Nepal Rastra Bank has begun to get tough with the management of Nepal Bank Limited (NBL), the second large bank after the Rastriya Banilya Bank that is to be turned around under the government's financial reform project. On 21 February, the NRB activated a provision in the new Central Bank Act #86 and wrote to the NBL asking why its directors should not be suspended having conducted bad banking. The NBL was asked to respond to the central bank within 15 days, as required by law. Should the Rastra Bank not be satisfied with the response it can take over the bank. The charges are obvious: a huge pile of bad loans, poor repayment rates and collection efforts, high operating losses and inability to present updated financial statements and hold Annual General Meetings on time.

The government owns roughly 41 percent of the NBL, the remainder is controlled by large private businesses and other shareholders. There were reports the NBL would suspend lending, which needs to be approved by the directors when it involves Rs10 million or more, saying it needs time to take stock of and respond to all the questions raised by the central bank. Analysts see the move as a veiled threat to the central bank in the hope there will be political intervention. Last year, when the Central Bank issued directives governing capital adequacy and other prudential banking measures, the NBL said that as it could not meet the requirements, it would stop deposits and lending. That threat forced the central bank to waive capital adequacy requirements. What will happen now is anyone's guess.

And, even before the new outside management has been authorised to take over the Nepal Bank, it has been changed. The lowest bidder, PriceWaterhouseCooper, was disqualified because of "inconsistencies" in its financial bid, which included conditional clauses for staffing costs. The central bank is now negotiating with the Irish ICC Bank, the next bidder on the shortlist. ICC's bid fee to mange the bank over two years was \$4.98 million, only slightly higher than PriceWaterhouseCooper's.

The World Bank is to provide \$25 million to finance the management contract, and implement other reforms at the central bank, including enhancing its supervision, research, accounting and management capacities. The British Department for International Development (DfID) will give \$10 million in grant assistance that is to be spent in accordance with the larger financial sector reform project

Kali Gandaki

The Kali Gandaki-A is on line. The 144 mW project began by supplying 48 megawatts of electricity to the central grid on 24 February, almost a year after the originally anticipated completion date, and a month after it began trial runs, Its two other 48 mW generators are waiting to begin generating power pending completion of transmission lines to Pokhara. Construction on Kali Gandaki-A began in 1996.

Close shave

Gillette, one of the world's leading makers of shaving products, has announced a new promo in Nepal which comes with special price cuts, and entry in a global draw that could make you richer by \$1 million. The company has introduced a shave gel in a tube priced at Rs 80, and a Rs 100 rebate on its up-market razor Sensor Excel. To enter the contest to win the million dollar prize, or a chance to watch the football World Cup 2002, you need to buy special promotional packs of Gillette's Mach 3, Sensor Excel, Series Gel, deodorants and after shaves, a company statement says.

Seesawing



On the state of the economy, you say tomayto, I say tomahto

not thought-out government policies.

planned for us by funding agencies.

and we've apparently never had the

interventions. We've never been able

Ve boast of producing, as a nation,

implement them. So, if the economy

has never rally been planned, who's to

The emergency has been extended

inaugurations and functions remain

numerous times everyday people ask one about the fate of lenal's economy. It has become the ational pastime today to lament the corry state of our economy and how it continuously reeling under all the hocks. The governor of the central bank has even gone on record to state hat disaster shall strike after precisely six months, so don't blame him when hings starts to go very badly wrong. This is a good time for soothsayers

and doomsday prophets and naysayers so please allow me, too, to make a few bservations on the Nepali psyche. We love to relentlessly criticise, but do not take action or contribute to positive Development is and has always been change. If we were complaining even in the days of the economic boom it is no aurorise that we are doing so now with energy to demand appropriate enewed vigour. At every public forum ou hear talk of the oversupply of to use funds committed by various oms, but does that stop anyone from agencies, because that involves work ouilding hotels? We talk about our wallets feeling the pinch of these hard times, but don't hesitate to throw the highest plans and reports per capita, but can't be bothered to truly avish parties. We talk about transpar ency and worry about graft, but on a personal level it is okay that so many of say that things are going to get worse? s have extravagant lifestyles o After all, what parameters can we use mallish incomes. This sort of to say that these are bad times! pandemic, socially-accepted schizo ohrenia is astonishing.

The Nepali economy has never

for another three months, security spending is on the rise, even as seen planned; it has always been left to overnment revenues are diminishing row on its own. The carpet, garment e to lower business incomes. Grat still thrives and honest taxpavers are and pashmina industries have been all ccidents. Even our much-touted asked to pay more taxes to encourage ourism boom had nothing to do with ven more dishonesty. We are waiting trategic promotion by the government for an economic bailout from friendly nations so we needn't rack our brains Even the lifeline of Nepal's to find ways to generate more revenue economy—repatriation from workers abroad, is driven by individual need, or reduce spending. Ceremonies,

the nation comes a low third. Who car believe the economy is a priority

The money flowing into Nepal from various sources shall continueuntil the mass exodus begins, as many believe it will. But being Nepalis, we love to lock our money into property and hate liquidating these unpr tive assets, so a mass exodus is likely a long way off. The migration of the underprivileged, especially from vestern Nepal, has always been a regular feature so no panic buttons need to be hit now. And finally, since no one has thought to embark upon contingency plans, we ought to assum that things are not really so bad.

regime remains, the Nepali economi cannot be hit the way other Asian economies are. Until India decides to devalue the Nepali Rupee, there shall be no major impact, and given the problems of export surge, India will avoid doing that. Further, when 70 percent of an economy depends on oreign aid and grants, it cannot g bust until these are stopped. So, the Beed feels, truly great turmoil in Nepal's economy is distant, if only because we have little control over it. Even if you disagree, at least this is reason to be uncharacteristically

So long as the fixed exchange

Readers can post their views at arthabeed@yahoo.com

"Tourism is key to Nepal's development, and civil aviation is key to tourism." That is not enough to run an international airline. So, either the govern-The management had become subservient to the minister and to ministry

ment should inject capital as needed or sell off part of its ownership.

And who is interfering?

Every time there is a change in government, the airline's chairman and board are changed. The effect trickled down, as every new chairman shuffled staff. This affected staff morale. The end result is weak

Did vour team see a way out?

The solution we have come up with is to reorganise the corporation under the Company Act. Let HMG keep a minimum percentage of shares, and sell the rest to financial institutions, tourism-related organisations and the general public. Let them run the show. We hope HMG takes a decision as soon as nossible

How much is the airline running in the red?

value, then you can say that the company is bankrupt. It has no assets because the value of its depreciated assets is zero. If you look at its market value, then things are not as had as we think. Total assets could be valued at around Rs 6-6.5 billion with its two Boeing 757, seven Twin Otters, ground equipment, spares and tools, and real estate and buildings. It also has intangible assets: flight operation permissions traffic rights and even goodwill. Its loans are in the range of Rs 3-3.5 billion. So it is not facing real losses. However, in the past six-seven years it has had operational losses every year, and it has been forced to dig into assets to pay bills. If it continues to lose money, its assets will be eroded, the positive net worth we see today will become negative, and the airline will collapse. The government needs to step in before that happens.

officials. That is the major problem RNAC faces. In the course of the study, I asked them why they did not resist orders that were not in the interest of the cornoration? I told them it was their fault because a minister is a political person and does not know what goes on in an airline. The only way to change that would be to take the professionals out of the sphere of influence of government and politicians.

How have RNAC staff reacted to your proposal? They agree on most issues. But there is corruption within the airline as

well, and during the course of the study top officials admitted that it was also a reason for the state the airline is in today. Even the directors say they are unable to control corruption within. We have mentioned that in our report. So, investment alone may not be the solution nanagement needs to be good, there has to be motivation, a work-plan All this is only possible through a professional approach.

You went to the rescue of Necon last year, and then opted out. What happened?

Left the army after 22 years to work in Nepal's civil aviation sector because I believe that tourism is key to our development, and aviation is critical to develop the tourism industry. Necon was having major financial problems, and my friends there wanted me to

So why did you leave?

They needed money immediately, which I put in. But for that, the airline would have been in a very bad situation. I stayed there for three or four months and went to the US to negotiate with Beechcraft to add two aircraft the fleet. I went to France and re-negotiated the lease rate with ATR. I was able to get it down from \$72,900 per aircraft per month to \$60,000. I also negotiated with the insurance companies and took some steps to raise the morale of the employees. But I am a politician now. and could not stay there forever. I left on my own account, but still have my investment there. I have not even taken a receipt.

armers in the villages of southern Lalitpur carry small jerricans of milk and walk down the winding trails. The fat content of the milk is measured, and the milk is poured into big cans, and loaded into the vans that supply Kathmandu. The farmers have a smoke and tea at the shop, chat about business and ther trek back to their homes If you are flying into Kathmandu

the villages of southern Lalitpur glide by below the wing five minutes before landing. Yet, until 15 years ago, these remotest parts of roadless Nepal. But thanks to two feisty farmers-Ram Prasad Banjara of Bhukhel and Bhin Prasad Gautam of Ghusel villageswho pioneered the dairy industry h in 1985, milk has transformed the area and generated income for some

The 20 Village Development Committees of southern Lalitour currently supply up to 18,000 litres of fresh milk to the Dairy Develop ment Corporation (DDC) and 6,500 litres to other private dairies in Kathmandu. The remaining 7,000 litres are consumed locally, or converted into khuwa. All this earns the villagers a stunning Rs 150

Before 1981, the villagers had n access to a market for fresh milk, and so they boiled all the milk down to khuwa and ghiu. The huge quantities of firewood this needed devastated the Mahabharat forests, contributing to the unprecedented flash floods and landslides of 1981.

manuse from the stalls recarles utrients into the farmers' vegetable ardens Some have built biogas But the mad from Tika Bhairah plants, so they don't need firewood changed everything. It was possible to anymore. Most farmers invest in new get fresh milk down to the city, and suffaloes with the money they save There are now over 4,000 buffaloes in husiness boomed so fast, the DDC set

Lalitpur's white gold up a chilling centre of 11,000 litre apacity to store milk. There is a lesson here in the hills f southern Lalitpur for the architects of Nepal's Tenth Fine-Very Plan-Nepali villagers can do very well There is no need to vithout central planning, thank you They can help themselves, and if the go to Uganda to Tenth Plan is to focus on agriculture development and poverty alleviation figure it out. Just go then it has to encourage farmers like those here with a very simple thing to southern Lalitpur Dairy farming is risky and omplex business. The buffaloes get sick, milk production falls, a small mistake could sour milk easily. Selling milk to dairies involves multiple insactions, and yet farmers in Lalitpur have managed it. There are thousands of milk producers and hundreds of porters organised under 49 active milk production cooperatives. Farmers andle this complex network, and

the area, and 1,000 new buffaloes are

In a sense this is a totally laisses owhere to be seen. There is no vestock development programme the villages, there are no soft loans or farmers, there is no governmen sterinarian service. The farmers here have decided there is no point vaiting for the government to deliver. They now rely completely

on the free market Development activities implemented by foreign-aided projects in the area may have played some role in developing southern Lalitpur's dair industry but they bayen't been as

The EU-funded milk cable car to oring fresh milk from outlying villages worked for a while hur stopped perating in early 2001. It left in a urch hundreds of farmers who had depended on the ropeway for access to

Foreign funded project come with a flurry of jargon-filled activities: rapid appraisals, needs assessment, skillstraining for income generation, communication and financial management There are periodic nectings to monitor progress and benefit sharing, and empower illagers, there are coordination tings and workshops, where midelines for sustainable develor re prepared. But as soon as the

foreign cash runs out, the activities ome to a halt. Farmers are left high and dry, with no visible change in

sands of farmers? Who raught

them the skills and techniques of milk

omplicated, but they present What was the catalyst in southern significant lessons for development practitioners. Like llam and some Lalitpur? How did the farmers organise? How did they form groups, other parts of Nepal, Lalitpur train themselves in accessing loans and husbanding buffaloes, coordinating their own bands. And this could among milk producers and milk represent the most effective model nsporters, managing to obtain for poverty reduction and rural quality fodder, securing finance, development in Nepal. There is no need to learn from Uganda, learn keeping records of transactions. punishing defaulters, receiving veterinary services, getting rid of animals after they ceased producing milk profitably? Who inspired

(Madhukar Upadhya worked as a watershed manager in southern Lalitour between

production and marketing? How did

The answers to these are

the leadership develop?

Nepali Times: What is actually the problem at RNAC? NS Pun: It has three major problems: too much political interference weaknesses in ownership, and management problems.

most recent assignment was to be on a acommit to decide on the future of Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation (RNAC).

Lt Col Narayan Singh Pun left the Royal Nepal Army to start his own helicopter business and join politics. Today, Karnali Helicopters is one of the foremost companies in Nepali aviation. Last year, Pun helped Necon Air out of a difficult patch. His most pecan assignment was the one accumultion

In what way is ownership weak?

To operate an international airline you need money, there has to be capital injection. That was far short than what should have been. Up to now HMG has invested only Rs 370 million, and that too not as equity.

Its assets need to be re-evaluated. If you are to go in terms of its book

You were junior minister of tourism once, just how bad is the political interference?



Slavery freedom

In 2000, what is now called the Kamaiya movement broke out in far-western Nepal and swiftly moved to the capital. Photographer Peter Lowe documented many of the protests, and the lives of kamaiya families, and this year, with Mandala Book Point and the Danish Association for International Cooperation, published a collection of these photographs in an excellently-produced large-format book. The book contains background information on the kamaivas, first-person testimonies, and an exhaustive timeline of the events, both in English and Nepali.

n 1990, when the new constitution was drafted in the for agricultural workers, and Nepal Chaudhary, a kamaiya in wake of the People's Move-Laxmipur VDC petitioned the ment, all kinds of slavery and serfdom were banned in the that he be paid the minimum kingdom. But no law against such practices accompanied the ban. wage for all the years he had worked for his landlord. The This wasn't anything new for the landlord refused, but granted him 100,000 kamaiya family memhis freedom and waived his debt. bers-95 percent of them Four days later, on 18 January, Tharu-in far-western Nepal After all, they were unaffected when Chandra Sumshere banned slavery in 1926, and Nepal's signing of the UN convention against slavery in 1956 made no difference to their lives either.

Most often, kamaiyas work to pay off loans, sometimes working for two, even three generations. to repay loans that often amount to no more than a few thousand rupees. In the mid-1980s. awareness about the plight of these virtual slaves began spreading, and the Backward Society Education, BASE, was formed to organise kamaiyas and other Tharu people in

pened until January 2000. The Kanchanpur District Development Committee, empowered by minimum wage of Rs 80 per day

the Kanchanpur DDC reached an agreement with local landlords that all kamaiyas with a saukidebt-of less than Rs 15,000 would be released, and 22 families were freed. That was all it needed. From March through August, kamaiyas all over Kanchanpur and neighbouring Kailali began filing petitions and in May, after the CDO of Kailali refused twice to egister a case against landlord and former minister in Geta VDC, Shiva Raj Pant, kamaiya activists began a sit-in in his office. That case, after being pushed back and forth between the District Labour Office, the VDC and the CDO office, was

local administration, demanding

the far-west. But nothing concrete hapaken to Kathmandu. Meanwhile in Kanchanpur, 48 kamaiyas filed separate petitions demanding freedom. One, Bahadur Rana, was the Local Governance Act, fixed a issued a freedom certificate from Parasan VDC











people protested government apathy, prompting three UMI. leaders in Kailali to free their kamaiyas. Close to 700 kamaiyas from five districts soon filed netitions with their CDOs demanding freedom from debt bondage, resettlement and vernment protection from their landlords. In Kanchanpur local government, NGOs, landlords and kamaiyas agreed on a formula to emancipate bonded labourers in the district. Meanwhile. kamaiyas from five districts staged

In May, in Dhangadi 10,000

mass protests in Kathmandu to

press the government to put an

end to the system.

SOCIETY

kamaiyas, appealed to them to cooperate with their former landlords and go back to work. Angry landlords began evicting kamaiyas from their houses. Some were beaten and asked to repay their sauki. Makeshift camps for displaced kamaiyas were erected overnight in five districts. The landlords—kisan, as they

In August, Minister for Land

Siddha Raj Ojha, announced that

bonded labour had been made

illegal and anyone practising it

was punishable by law. 16,000

kamaiyas attended a victory rally

but the government, unprepared

for the task of resettling 20,000

Reforms and Management,

are incongruously called—began to enlist high-level support. The chairman of Kailali DDC, Narawan Dutta Michea caid publicly that he disagreed with he rescinding of kamaiyas' debts to their landlords, and the newlyformed Forum for the Protection of Farmer's Rights filed a writ with the Supreme Court demanding compensation for the landlords in return for the debts of their freed kamaiyas In September, finally, the

n land allocation for displaced had erected. kamaiyas, by now living in 37 camps in Kanchannur and Kailali. The Ministry of Land Reform and Management said the government planned to provide at least one kattha of and for each family of freed kamaiyas, but NGOs demanded a minimum of 10 katthas (0.3 hectare) (Ten katthas of

katthas, 10-15 bighas legally. A month later, dissatisfied by the lack of progress, the Kamaiya Liberation Struggle Mobilisation Committee (KLSMC) and the Kamaiya Liberation Action Committee (KLAC) decided to launch a new agitation, and 7,000 kamaiyas from seven districts undertook a protest rally and sit-in in government offices in Dhangadi to demand 10 katthas for each family. At the end of 2000, a large group of kamaiyas and their supporters

blocked the highway in five

south-western districts

demanding land.

irrigated land is considered a

many landlords own 200-300

minimum landholding for a small family to have enough food, and In the new year, Kanchanpur and Kanchanpur districts. In the last year, a land registration committee formed under the Land Reform and Management Ministry distributed over 1,580 hectares of land to more than 11,000 kamaiya families. But most freed kamaiyas spent last monsoon without a roof over their heads. If things go according to plan, they might now be a little closer to having shelter. Just last week, a year after these developments, the Finance Ministry allocated Rs 88 million to the Ministry of Land Reform and Management to hand out roughly Rs 10,000 to each family of freed kamaiyas. They

kamaiyas from the huts they About 14 000 kamaiya families are now living in Bardiya, Dang, Banke, Kailali,

district officials decided to

and 5 katthas to families of

allocation throughout the far-

west was not progressing, and over 2,000 freed kamaiyas

occupied undesignated forest

land, criticising the government

for not moving fast enough. The

riot police cracked down in

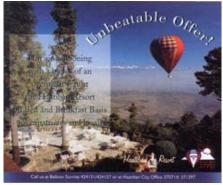
Bardiya, evicting 7,000 freed

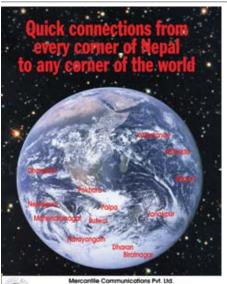
provide 10 katthas to kamaiya

families with over five members

they build a shelter, and the rest on the completion of their huts or buildings. ♦ For Nepali Times' coverage, see "Freedom," #2; "Free to suffer," #7: "Civil disobedience in the west," #27; and "After 10 years, ex-kamaiyas find strength in numbers," #45.

Kamaiya: Slavery and Freedom in Nepal. Peter Lowe, introduction and afterword by Tim Whyte, Nepali editor Vinaya Kasajoo. New social documentary: Mandala Book Point and MS Nepal, Kathmandu, 2001, Rs 700





GPO Box 876, Durbor Marg, Kathmandu, Nepal MERCANTILE Ph: 240920, Fax: +977-1-225407. os.com.np. UEL http://www.mos.com.np



Fully Assendited & ISO SOCT Certified

Horizon Regional Cancer Center at Buttersagead Hospital in a reader in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. Our internationally trained physicians rock as a team to diagnose, assess and treat this complex disease using the very latest technology and treatment protectly. In addition to our world-class medical services, tal offers an array of patient services designed to make your visit as pleasant as



stemationally Certified Laboratory Torsor Markey

Cytology (PAF Smort) Fine Numbe Aspiratio



Color Doppler Ultrase Section Medicine

Fiberoptic Embracopy

CT Sciencing

Radiation Therapy Interventional Radiology







BINOD BHATTARAI

on Tridevi Marg, Thamel, but few who walk by have an idea what lies above the deli and coffee shop. Behind the glass door on the second floor is a world far away from Thamel's bustle: a stat of the art workplace connected to every corner of the globe, a sound and dust-proof set-up of some sixty work stations hooked up to every possible means of communication The hive of intricately arranged cubicles are buzzing with activity but Om Bhattachan, manager of ServingMinds, which bills itself as more than just a call centre, says this is just the beginning. The almost uniformly young staff is undergoing training and dry runs before the centre starts function--24 hours a day, seven days a ing—24 nours a uay, week. And going by the response of their first client, who is stunned by he quality of service available in Nepal this could be a booming ndustry in the near future, and o that earns us hard foreign currency.

"We call this place a multimedi ontact centre," Bhattachan told us. 'We're something more than a call centre-we hope to be extensions of our clients' businesses." By xtensions he means providing to the US-based clients of ServingMinds, the telemarketing or ustomer care functions so imporrant to businesses overseas... nswering questions about products and their availability, or queries about credit card balances and payment mechanisms. In Europe nd more so in the US, these functions are either fully automated or performed by workers at a cost that is gradually becoming unaffordable Which is why today

more and more businesses are sourcing these jobs to countrie such as Nepal or India, where they can find fluent English-speakers. ServingMinds, which is

romoted by Mercantile Communi ations and its other Nepali joint enture partners, is now gearing up to take on its first overseas contract The company has just finalised a deal with Endless Gateways Inc. an Arizona-based firm, to begin marketing time-share apartments for developers in Arizona and other parts of the United States Here's how it will work. The roughly 100 Customer Service Officers (CSOs) at ServingMinds will make calls or respond to enquiries from prospec ive time-share customers, and ther pass on orders to concerned sales ffices in the United States—for a fee. That's just the most basic function ServingMinds performs-

Nepal calling

Nepal's IT revolution might just lie in customer service.

been exceeded," Soderberg told us. the centre is set up to work not just the phones, but also fax and email interactive voice responses, like the automated menus that some offices in Kathamandu already have, help lines based on SMS, co-browsing, whereby the CSO and the customer

can look at the same information at the same time, and video conferencing and, when the quality of Internet voice communication is satisfactory, even actually speaking to customers on Internet hotlines. And though the CSOs are well compensated and work in a pretty fancy environment, the US firm

ould have to pay a much higher wage to its onshore workers, nor to mention the benefits it would be required to hand out, such as medical insurance and retirement plans. It's just as easy to outsource the work, provided the company is assured it will be handled by rained, competent individuals. In the deal, this has become a new business venue for companies in Nepal that, with an initial investment in human resources and relatively common technology, can earn the country hard cash for quite

John Soderberg, president of Endless Gateways, was in Kathmandu last month to make sur everything was in order. He was in for a surprise. "I came here with a ertain notion of what I would be getting, but all my expectations have

"We're in business now." Besides hearing for himself that the CSOs spoke perfect English, Soderberg was also concerned that the officers handling Endless Gateways' business should have more than a passing knowledge of the history, cultures and lifestyles of Arizona, so they can conduct intelligent onversations with chatty custom all the better to enthuse them about nvesting in a time-share property or a home there. "Some even reminded me about things in Arizona I had forgotten," Soderberg laughs in disbelief. "They're ready to make live calls." Once the communications ystems are linked, the agents sitting

n cubicles in Thamel will begin hatting with potential buyers, telling them what's available and where. And, though they will be speaking with people 18,000 miles cross the world, neither side will really feel the distance, and Endless Gateways' customers will doubtless be glad to be talking to human beings about an important decision like purchasing property, rather than interacting with the limited, generic solutions offered by npersonal voice prompts. "It is that human contact which we think makes all the difference," says Soderberg. "I think the opportuni ties for getting US businesses linked

un with Nonal are endless."

ServingMinds is not the first usiness of this kind in Nepal, and chances are, it won't be the last Raghu Shah, managing director of Sigma Computers set up Nepal's first call centre, Himalayan l'elecommerce, about two years ago "We're in the business of keeping educated Nepalis in Nepal, by providing them opportunities to explore the possibilities IT offers, Shah told us

planned with a \$3 million inves

ment, goes to full capacity, it will have 200 work-desks and about

800 people handling them in shifts

excluding support staff. It doesn't

take long to set something like this

up. "We already have the infrastruc

ture needed to perform all customer

care services western companies may

want to outsource," says Sanjib Raj Bhandari, CEO of Serving Minds.

Nepal has graduates with perfect

English, who either already have or

can be taught inter-personal and

technology is neither obscure no

terribly expensive, and Nepal's burgeoning IT industry could help

communication skills. The

firms such as ServingMinds themselves, or with partners, offer

other back-end customer care

rvices. For instance, when in

that his firm needed software to

they are signed. Within a week, Mercantile had it all worked out.

Says Soderberg: "It would have

taken longer and cost many times

more back home. The quality of the

vork is comparable to, if not better

than, that done by US companies.

Kathmandu Soderbern also realised

track the management of contracts as

Sigma and Mercantile are also exploring the possibilities of offering such services domestically Himalayan Telecommerce, for example, also runs a directory and information service. Ask Me. which has caught on fast with people tired of trying to call 197, Nepal Telecommunications Corporation's directory assistance and finding that often, operators simply don't answer the phone. let alone provide

a telephone number. At ServingMinds, meanwhile, there is a fully operational customer service help-line for Fair & Lovely, Nepal Lever's popular skin lightening cream. Intrigued at how CSOs would handle Nepali clients, we called in. "I have oily skin and want to know if the cream will suit me?" our caller asked. After basic name and address formalities, we were told the cream was made recisely for people with oily skin. es," our caller got tough, "but doesn't the cream result in a flaky whiteness." In response, we got a simplified lesson on vitamins and skin

cover the costs of keeping the centre

running, and so his company, for

one, will concentrate on the ernational contracts.

are, and more usage information. It would seem there is a loca market for telephone customer service, though unfortunately the few businesses that have begun ustomer services and telemarketing—remember the unsolicited calls asking you to apply for a credit card-don't pay the type of money needed to train agents. and provide and maintain quality Raj Bhandari says that locally generated business doesn't even

No meeting of minds

NEW YORK - Asmaan Ahmad, a 26-year-old American graduate student of Kashmiri descent, learned again last week why finding a political settlement for Kashmir is so difficult. Ahmad, who studies international law and conflict resolution at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, had planned to come to Kathmandu for a meeting last week of Indian, Pakistani and Kashmiri academics, artists and human rights advocates to discuss peaceful political initiatives to end the Kashmir crisis. The South Asian Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR), which was organising the meeting, informed him that



WORI D

hotel reservations in Kathmandu had been cancelled. SAFHR had heen told it needed government permission to meet, and participants from India were asked to produce documents not usually required to board flights to Nepal. "Evidently, democratic governments are fearful of democratic

processes, especially when it comes to efforts of civil society to empower itself and reassert itself in nonmilitarist conflict management and peace building in Kashmir," wrote SAFHR's Rita Manchanda, adding that this was the second time the meeting had to be postponed in recent months under pressure

For Ahmad, a spokesman in the United States for a nonviolent Kashmiri independence movement, the meeting was doubly important as he has been denied an Indian visa since June 2001, a month after he joined the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, an organisation that has not been accused of atrocities or significant Pakistani backing. Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, has promised to "go off the beaten path" to find neace in Kashmir, Ahmad said this is exactly what Kashmiris planning a new political process for the territory want to do. Their proposals would have been discussed with like minded Indians and Pakistanis in Kathmandu, (The New York Times)

Waning fundamentalism?

NEW DELHI - The right-wing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). which heads the 27-party ruling coalition in India, has suffered a massive setback in elections to the legislatures of four Indian states, including the country's largest state Uttar Pradesh, and Punjab. The defeat signals the BJP's ideological and political decline, and the severe erosion of the appeal of its ethnic-religious Hindu-nationalist platform. It could also presage trouble for its faction-torn and fraction-prone coalition in the central government headed by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. Until last fortnight's elections, the BJP was in office in three of the four states, including Uttaranchal, where it ruled on its own, and Manipur, where it made an abortive bid last year to cobble together a government with the help of defectors. The party's vote has eroded by an estimated seven nercent or more



In UP and Uttaranchal they tried every trick, including promising concessions to various segments of the electorate, and splitting lowcaste Hindu votes. The BJP also played two "trump cards": the ultra-nationalist, anti-Pakistan "terrorism" gambit. and the temple card, a promise to build a temple in Ayodhya where the BJP and its associ ates nine years ago destroyed a 16th century mosque, claiming it was built on the site of an older Rama temple. More important was the failure of the

terrorism plank, a major policy instrument for Vajpayee's government after 9/11 and the 13 December attacks on India's parliament. A draconian new law called the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) was formulated, allowing preven tive detention of people without trial, on mere suspicion of their terrorist activities or supposed links. POTO could not go through the last session of parliament, but the government re promulgated it. In the past, a similar law has been used, especially against religious minorities, to detain 70,000 people. POTO is the BJP's way of underscoring its nationalism, but this sectarian Hindu platform always had limited appeal, which is already diminishing.

The current round of state elections was, for the BJP's allies, a referendum on Vajpayee's leadership. This does not spell immediate trouble for his government, but could if the ruling alliance could soon run into a crisis, as it frequently does, due to economic reasons, regional devolution of power, new financial scandals or the religion-politics issue. (IPS)

Another headscarf row

PENANG - Reports that Malaysia may accept a Muslim girl banned from attending school in Singapore for wearing the tudung or Islamic headscarf, is irking Singaporeans who feel the issue should be resolved domestically. Malaysia's Deputy Education Minister Hon Choon Kim said a few weeks ago that his ministry would consider the application of a Singaporean girl, Nurul Nasihah, to study in mainly Muslim Malaysia. Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong has said that race and religious relations should be decided by Šingaporeans. He said some people had gone to Malaysia "to raise funds and... are getting Malaysians involved in our politics. I

think that is not wise." Singapore. which has a Muslim minority has barred Muslim girls from wearing the tudung in school, saving this is aimed at promoting unity and introducing what one official called "the whole idea of integration at a very, very young age." Last week the Straits Times newspaper reported that Goh had urged Singaporean Muslims to be "cautious" in pushing tudung wearing in school, given the environment after the 11 September attacks in the United States and the arrests of suspected terrorists in Singapore, Four primary schoolgirls, including Nurul, defied the ruling last month, sparking a

debate that drew flak from domestic critics as well as also those in Malaysia, including the opposition Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, other Islamic groups and mainstream Malaysian newspaper columnists. Within Singapore, opposition noliticians such as JR Jevaretnam questioned the "inconsistency" in the country's rules, which allow Sikh boys to wear the turban to school, and Dr Chee Soon Juan of the opposition Singapore Democratic Party, who said "racial harmony cannot be preserved by coercing citizens to conform to a certain dress code." Mohammad Maidin Packer, senior parliamentary secretary for home affairs. responded that the respected Islamic leader Mufti Syed Isa Semait had already "resolved" the issue, saying education was more important than the headscarf. (IPS)

Ending debt?

WASHINGTON - The United States is pushing proposals to ensure that half of all capital transfers to developing countries take the form of grants, severely restricting lending by agencies like the World Bank and its soft-loan arm, the International Development Association (IDA). Loans, Washington argues, have saddled poor countries with debt while failing to improve health, education, sanitation and other nublic services. Under its plan, countries would be given grants on condition that they improve areas like health, sanitation, and education. Failure to meet benchmarks would result in a funding freeze. Last week US Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill lashed out at Europe for not backing Washington's proposal and said that by lending to poor countries, the World Bank had merely driven them "into a ditch." European officials say the proposal overlooks past achievements and could undermine the existing system of international development institutions and programmes. They also argue that the United States has failed to increase its own level of aid to 0.7 percent of GDP, a goal to which wealthy nations, such as Norway and Sweden, have long been committed. US aid to poor countries has sunk over the past 15 years to about 0.1 percent of GDP, the lowest level among industrialised countries. The World Bank says rich countries must more than double current levels of giving and find an additional \$60 billion per year up to 2015 to meet the socalled UN Millennium Development Goals, which include halving poverty rates. "There aren't sufficient financial resources for develop ment," said Hilde Frafiord Johnson, Norway's aid minister, "We need to see more delivery (on the part of rich nations) on the 0.7 percent point. Third World countries are delivering, but we are not." Despite the exchange, observers say both sides could move closer before or at next month's International Conference on Financing for Development, in Monterrey, Mexico, The Europeans have said that they could



WASHINGTON- The Pentagon is developing plans to provide news items—possibly even false ones—to foreign media organisations as part of a new effort to influence public sentiment and policy makers in both friendly and unfriendly countries, military officials said. The plans, which have not received final approval from the Bush administration, have stirred opposition among some Pentagon officials who say they might undermine the credibility of information openly distributed by the Defense Department's public affairs officers. The military has long engaged in information warfare against hostile nations-for instance, by dropping leaflets and broadcasting messages into Afghanistan when it was still under Taleban rule. But it recently created the Office of Strate gic Influence (OSI), which is proposing to broaden that mission into allied nations in the Middle East, Asia and even Western Europe. The office would assume a role traditionally led by civilian agencies, mainly the State Department. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, while broadly supportive of the new office, has not approved its specific proposals and has asked the Pentagon's top lawyer to review them.

1 - 7 MARCH 2002 NEPALLTIMES

Even many senior Pentagon officials and Congressional military aides say they know almost nothing about the OSI's purpose and plans. The new office has begun circulating classified proposals calling for aggressive campaigns that use foreign media, the Internet, and covert operations. One of its proposals calls for planting news items with foreign media organisations through outside concerns that might not have obvious ties to the Pentagon, officials familiar with the proposal said. Another involves sending journalists, civic leaders and foreign leaders e-mails promoting American views or attacking unfriendly governments. Asked if such e-mail would be identified as coming from the American military, a senior Pentagon official said "the return address will probably be a dot-com, not a dot-mil," the military's Internet designation.

But several senior Pentagon officials say the OSI's mission might be too broad, possibly even illegal. They are disturbed that a single office could be authorised to use not only covert operations like computer network attacks, psychological activities and deception, but also the instruments and staff of the military's globe-spanning public affairs apparatus. Mingling the more surreptitious activities with the work of traditional public affairs would undermine the Pentagon's credibility with the media, the public and governments around the world, critics argue. Also, they say, disinformation planted in foreign media organisations like Reuters or AFP could end up published or broadcast by American news organisations. The Pentagon and the Central Intelligence Agency are barred by law from propaganda activities in the United States.

Critics of the new office also argue that governments allied with the US are likely to object strongly to any attempts by the American military to influence media within their horders. In the 1980's, Army "psy-op" units, as they are known, broadcast radio and television programs into Nicaragua to undermine the Sandinista government. In the 1990's, they tried to encourage public support for American peacekeeping missions in the Balkans. "The OSI still thinks the way to go is start a Defense Department Voice of America," a senior military official said, "When I get their briefings, it's scary."



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

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





ELD WORKSHOPS

5. 5 March Memorial Letter Winning 12 11 Min. Conflict Management 22 Mar. Developing Project Projectals UM of Physentation Skills & Paties Speaking 1. Mor. Ediphone Stalls. Handling Impairies A.

Complainte 13. Mar Nepstation Staff & Conflan Reviewers

Subject Control of Section 2015 Descendent of Windows (Sp. No. 1941)

Registered in the U.K. as a sample of 1.8 930

Announcement



Primary Teacher Training Programme

Rija Banga ji Seesal Hogoliga with Kathmasalii sociality and Book Stock College of Education in New York in some shore can provide tacks (carafication providing in May 2001) Selection of and datas will extit basel.

Matini, cambidator with a 1502 degree on a BA are percentage apply. The strongth of the programme the entire of secretary between them and place of a Se teaching and learning process.

Foreis are distributed (Mondays through Lindays) from to let Palmans no IS 168 March 2002, from 953, a = ta 2 (4) San

Maco Bungata School Est Bor 700 Pica (Medical Topio 17: SCIPTS STROMS CARD The Second

Maoists stoking ethnic flames Pradip Nepal, UML MP in

Sudheer Sharma and Sri Bhakta Khanal in HIMAL Khabarpatrika, 13-27 February

First they made the mistake of taking the path of armed struggle. Now the Maoists have made an even bigger mistake by stoking the flames of ethnic and communal conflict. After being dormant for years, the Khumbuwan Morcha has got the support of the Maoists, and in the past months has unleashed a campaign of murder, violence, and looting mainly in the eastern districts of Khotang, Bhojpur

Under the mantle of Manism and the Prachanda Path the group is killing non-Kirantis and is forcing thousands to flee. Even moderate Kirantis who believe in communal. harmony have been targeted. Though these activities are against its avowed policies, the Maoists have remained silent. If the Maoist leadership continues to look the other way, it is clear that this separatist and communal group will not only jeopardise Nepal's traditional racial and ethnic harmony, but ultimately also threaten the Manists themselves

The Kirant Rastriya Morcha (KRM) was formed after the Maoists got the Khumbuwan and Limbuwan Morcha to unite, and soon after the violent attacks started. The KRM's latest attack was the brutal murder on 16, January in Chisapani of school principal and educator. Harka Rai Rai, This murder has not just raised the level of tension and fear in Khotang, but also created bad blood between the KRM and the Maoists. A local Maoist leader, Bikram, told the residents of Chisanani three weeks after Rai's murder that the KRM hadn't cleared the assassi. nation with the Maoists. Locals say the Maoists used to only attack after several warnings, whereas the

KRM carries out its torture, murder and robberies without giving any prior warning.

Khure Rai's murder, the Royal Nepal Army conducted a search operation in which it killed an armed Khurnbuwan activist, Rajaln Rai, alias Mandela. Apparently in retaliation, the KRM attacked the Chinesemade 250 kW Bhojpur hydroelectric power station with axes and destroyed the power house. Some 1,300 households in Bhoipur Bazar and surrounding areas are still without electricity.

The KRM used the ceasefire period last year to increase its violent attacks against political activists. In September 2001 in the town of Pawai in Solukhumbu, it hacked to death with khukuris two pro-Congress activists Dhaneshwar Rai and Bhuban Rai and injured some 14 others. The Maoists said nothing.

Along the southern Mahabharat belt of Khotang, the KRM is now busy forcing ethnic Kirants to join the movement and driving out non-Kirants. Many have fled to Udaipur, Biratnagar or to Kathmandu. Anyone who stays, or doesn't pay extortion money is either killed or badly beaten. A school principal in Lekhkharka, Rajan Rai, had the bones in his legs crushed by stones. Others are simply kidnapped and released after ransom money is paid. The attacks have an "anti-habunhad" tint. A statue of RP Knirala was toppled for being a symbol of bahunbad.

The origins of the Khumbuwan are tied with the emergence after 1990 of various separatist and ethnic groups. It was set up by Gopal Khambu 10 years ago, and had as its primary aim the setting up of an independent Khumbuwan nation. The group began its "radical action" by setting off an explosion at a Sanskrit school in Dingla.

Rack then, the Manists used to describe the Khumhuwan activists as destructive and thoughtless There was no love lost between the two groups until as recently as June 2001, mainly because the Maoists did not allow the Khumbuwan to keep their own militia. After the royal massacre, the two groups appear to have found a symbiotic relationship.

The Maoists now see benefits in allying with the ethnic group, and have got the Khumbuwan and the Limbuwan to unite into the KRM. The Maoists thought they had convinced the KRM leadership to convert their demand for "independence" into "autonomy". But after getting the Maoists' support, the KRM is now running the organisation as it wants and is openly advocating "independence" again. The Limbuwan leadership is in comparison less militant and is not carrying out the kind of threats and murders that the

The KRM is the only eithnic-based Maoist-affiliated group that has been allowed by the Maoists to set up its own millita and carry out its own attacks on targets of its choice. There is no doubt that this is an alliance of convenience for both the Maoists and the KRM. The Maoists need a higher profile in the eastern hills, while the KRM needs to lean on the Maoists to magnify its strength. KRM leaders Gopal Khambu and Bhakta Raj Kandangba were both invited to attend the Maoist national conference in Rolna last year and both have been included in the 37-member National Peoples' Council headed by

An anti-corruption commission should begin work by focusing its attention on the Nepali Congress.

—Nepali Congress President Girija Prasad Koirala Deshantar, 24 February



Girija Prasad Koirala: "Deuba ji, don't worry, we fully support you." Rope: National Democratic Alliance

Deshantar Saptahik, 24 February

Black clouds over nationalism

THIS PAGE CONTAINS MATERIAL SELECTED FROM THE NEPALL PRESS

Rajdhani, 25 February who were those Indians? We can 21-45-07-27 say they were Indian Maoists. But ..A month ago [an Indian] now could 100 South Indian newspaper wrote a pro-Maoist Maoists enter Nepal with arms? Or could they be non-Maoist fighters? editorial. It said that the Maoists re not against religion, they are no It is justified for Nepali citizens to against modernisation, or democaise such questions racy, or progress and, so, they wer not terrorists. Instead, they had Nepal have a resemblance to past taken to rebellion in the name of episodes in history). At one point social change and in opposition to the policy the government has set out against them. The editorial, India instigated a protest in Gangtok, Sikkim, and similar ritten from Delhi, does not reflec incidents also took place in Dhaka. Nepali society and the problems Bangladesh before 1971. that Nepalis and the Nepali pation are facing because of the Maoists. and we don't see too many How can we assume that the

editorial in the well-known

newspaper was written without

did it write a 100 percent false

editorial? This is a matter for

understands media very well? Why

The same newspaper wrote

nother editorial last week. The

editorial decries the policy of the

overnment against the Maoists,

and raises concern about the efforts

by the US Secretary of State [Colin

Powell to support Nepal. It tries t

onvey the message that India

should take matters in hand and

teach Nepal a lesson... How can

published days before parliament

was to approve the extension of

Another Indian newspaper had

still another serious news item. It

been looted from two military

barracks. The weapons entered

Nepal from two routes: From

arlahi-Sindhuli in the east and

Banke to Dailekh in the west. Why

did the weapons enter Nepal? How

could India's border police allow

them to enter Nepal, when at the

same time they create so much

trouble for those headed to India

through the so-called "secured"

border? Are we to believe that it is

mere coincidence that hundreds of

passed through border security and

people carrying these weapons

that a newspaper actually had

information of the route these

...This is not all. On 16

attacked, villagers there saw more than a hundred Indians involved in

the battle. The Indians bought tea

at local tea shops and used to chat in English. They had curly hair and

were from South India. People who

think this information is concocted

and unbelievable can go to Accham

and investigate for themselves.

Many people from Accham go to

familiar with local Indian languages

work in large Indian cities like

Bombay and Madras, and are

February when Accham was

people took?

said that some modern weapons had

the emergency, did not have a

hidden message?

one assume that the editorial,

information in a country that

political solutions anywhere You are forced to not believe what is under your nose, what you see with our own eyes. Is what the Maoists are doing in the national interest? Then why are they continuing the bloodshed? Why are they replacing Nepal's mountains with mounds of orpses? Why are those who say the multiparty system in Nepal must be uprooted "to save the nation" hesitant to speak out about Indian activities? Why are they taking out rallies to weaken the nation's politics and the government? Why are the intelligentsia, the so-called nationalists, who read the English editorials. silent? Why have they been unable

and the features of people from

different parts of the country. So

these people tea who say they are

..(Many things happening ir

n history, to further its interests,

.The situation is very serious

Indians. And if that is the case.

to respond? There may be many questions, and we may not get answers now. But we must look for answers, every Nepali must look for

After the warning. the attack

Prakash Iwala, Chal Phal 24 February

Exactly two hours after parliament voted to extend the emergency by an overwhelming majority on 21 February, the Maoists launched a najor offensive in Salvan district. The district headquarters was aved, but the Shitalpati police post was captured. The Maoists cilled 32 policemen and took 62 rifles. An inspection team including Home Minister Khum Bahadur Khadka reached Salvan on 23

February, and spoke with repre-

sentatives of political parties and curity persons at the district headquarters Khalanga. The sight that greeted our eam in Shitalpati was sad and desolate. Srinagar bazar was in a tate of terror. Security personne were demoralised and the locals. unhanny Descriptions obtained from residents say that about 2,000 armed Maoists attacked the police post from three sides around 11PM on 21 February, They fired LMG machine guns from the hills to the south, the river to the west, and the bazar east of the post. They used SLRs. 0.303s and explosives Deputy Superintendent of Police Suresh KC, who heads the Salyan police, said there were 72 policemen at the post when the attack took place. Thirty-four were killed and six seriously injured. One died while undergoing treatment. The

Maoists looted 62 of the 72.303 rifles and two shotguns at the post. The Maoists didn't suffer rious damage. Local residents say that they saw eight or nine Maoists being carried away in baskets, but

couldn't tell whether they were dead or only injured. In a 23 isn't hard to believe those who sold February Radio Nepal news bulletin, the Defence Ministry said three Maoists were killed that day. Said a policeman who survived the attack: "They attacked at 11PM. We fought for half-an-hour. Each round of fire from us was met with 15-20 rounds. They used bombs, as well as big and small weapons. Our weapons would jam up after eight or ten rounds of fire." The government needs to seriously look into this. Police officer Ajay Bhattarai says the possibility of an attack was discussed a week before it happened, and that the Maoists used long range rifles, .303s, and SI.Rs.

In many instances, the government might not get any prior information about possible attacks. Even when it does, in some instances, it doesn't care. It had to bear serious losses at Shitalpati because it didn't take note of information it had received earlie about an attack. Local residents say there was an indication that Maoists were preparing to attack the police post, but that no one paid attention to the increasing movement of people in the jungles and the mass collection of kerosene and other rations. A policeman who died in the attack had that very day told his colleagues that the Maoists would attack any day now, and that he was unsure about whether he and his colleagues would live or die Evewitnesses say the officers

present were killed ruthlessly even after surrendering. The other policemen were released after being beaten, and warned not to continue in their line of work. The Maoists also left behind propaganda. After capturing the post, they set fire to the building and left after shouting slogans in the bazar. Today, there is no police post, to the dismay of the locals. The Maoists should ask themselves why the people are sad when the Maoists succeed, why the people don't support them but instead feel terrorised?

The team visiting the area also learnt that the Manists had planned to attack the district headquarters. the district police and administration offices, and the army barracks based in nearby areas, but that the security forces already there and reinforcements that flew in from Nepalgunj at 2AM on night visior helicopters were able to prevent them Says Rudranath Basval. Salvan's chief district officer: "We had expected an attack on the 22nd or 23nd but they attacked on the 21". Since they attacked everywhere at once, and had laid mines on the road to Shitalpati, reinforcements couldn't be sent in. They continue to threaten us But we must be strong-minded " Basyal affirms that there is proper coordination between th various groups of security forces in his district.

The Nepali Congress repreentative says the government ignored Salvan, and the UML representative says it failed to act despite having prior information. It appears that the damage caused by the Maoists in this attack is the most serious so far-that they destroyed the telephone repeater tower at Salyan Kapurkot, and that too during the emergency, is something they will have to bear the consequences of. They may have achieved some degree of success, but were unable to capture the headquarters.

NEPALITERATURE

SEEKING REPRESENTATION: Kishore Pahadi

upposedly, our Members of Parliament represent us. We vote for them (or have our votes looted by their party cadres), so they stand for us. we are told them. tand for us, we are told. However, one need only look at the general dysfunction in parliament house, then at the comparatively greater dynamism of the rest of the country, to know that those in parliament do not represent the Nepali people. For instance, my own MP is a Bahun man who—as a friend pointed out—habitually commits the schizophrenia of speaking in support of globalisation at donor meetings; singing communist songs (with fists raised!) before the masses; writing articles in scrappy, downright bitchy language; and behaving extremely charming in person. This man does not stand for me, I promise. But of course he does: he represents me in parliament. He is my voice, it seems.

The story below, by Kishore Pahadi, expresses exactly this dilemma. What can you do when your representative does not represent you? You can write a story and offer a representation of your own. Pahadi does so with a light, humorous touch that saves a weighty issue from bearing down too heavily on the reader. His story comes from his short story collection Sarvagya ra Sex.

Discovered the kind of chans that the country was in

REPRESENTATION AND REPRESENTATIVES There are three types of people in our country. One type:

Ravishankar Karanjit Name Birth date November 25, 1947 Rirthnlace Raitadi District Master of Arts (Political Science)

- Endeavored from student days to turn the Panchayat into
- Nearly killed by police in the demonstrations of 1979.
- Was only imprisoned. Rumors once spread through the land that he had beer
- assassinated in iail. Suffered harsh torture from the government while in jail.
- Released in 1986.
- Joined the party after release. Actively involved in the 1989 democracy movement
- After bullets, jail and torture, the dawn of democracy.
- The constitution The general elections.
- Elected to Member of Parliament After becoming MP, also became a Minister.

- After becoming a Minister, got muddled about how to
- Attempted to determine what kind of program would raise the country above the second-to-last realm before hell.
- · Day after day, exchanges thoughts with people considered

There are three types of people in our country. One type is like Ravishankar Karaniit, and the other type:

Name Pritam Singh Thapa November 25, 1947 Jhapa District Intermediate of Arts

- Dropped out of college and these days engages in politics. Engages in politics, meaning he keeps a keen interest in political
- Is eager to engage in slandering others.

fare)

- Dresses in foreign suits and ties, but places a great emphasis on the need to buy homespun clothes.
- Voices great opposition to the rate of inflation in the country. Complains that even after so many months of democracy there
- have been no changes.
- Comments on the increase of anarchy. Worries that only those who are tied to the powerful are awarded
- Also worries about his own lack of qualifications.

ΔVΔILΔBLE NORLDWIDE

JARDCOPY Nepali Times is now available on PEPC Worldwide vending machines at major airports and

Receive 40 pages of the latest editions of Nepali Times and selected material from Himal South Asian and Himal Khabarpatrika in 150 cm

x 70 cm format on high-quality paper printed while you watch content on the monitor. Price: US\$ 2.50, all major credit cards

REPC

No matter what kind of comments he passes, no matter who he slanders, no matter what kind of suit and tie he wears, makes sure to stop by Gurung's shop to down some liquor every evening.

There are three types of people in our country. One type is like Ravishankar Karanjit, the other type is like Pritam Singh Thapa, and the other type:

Mahila Tamang Birth date November 25, 1947 Birthplace A village in Nepal Education

- Smokes a tamakhu-pipe after waking up in the morning.
- Eats cooked flour and pickles
- Goes to herd the cows
- Bathes in the river. Collects dung.
 - Doesn't know how to argue-why am I the only one to collect
- Knows—to eat gooseberries, one must climb trees. Doesn't know-if you apply cow dung on the wound on your foot,
- you risk tetanus. Doesn't know Ravishankar Karanjit
- Doesn't know Pritam Singh Thapa either. Doesn't know what Ravishankar Karanjit does.
- Doesn't know what Pritam Singh Thapa does either.

There are altogether three types of people in our country. All three were born on the same day-November 25, 1947. Yet how different they all are. Which of these three types am I? I'm seeking the answer to this question. There are so many Tamang women in the country: perhaps I too am a Tamang woman. I've been looking for my representa tion since ten past nine last night. My wife says-"The month is up tomorrow. I want to give birth to your representative."

VACANCY PROGRAMME MANAGERS

Panos Institute South Asia, a not-for-profit regional information and communications organisation based in Kathmandu, Nepal, with a country office in New Delhi India, invites applications for Programme Managers to manage its public health and media training programmes. Women are particularly encouraged to apply

The Media Centre Manager will be responsible for setting up a state-of-the-art media training facility in Kathmandu and managing this centre to conduct issues-oriented, media-related training programmes for South Asian print and broadcast journalists. The Centre will promote the use of the facility by media houses as well as other organisations. The successful applicant will have intimate knowledge about the latest tools employed by the media and by communicators and have professional experience in the use of these media tools.. She/he will have a good university degree, a background in media/communications training and/or media-related computer applications, excellent communication skills, and proven ability to independently implement and manage projects. Marketing and fund-raising skills will be considered an added advantage. The job is based in Kathmandu.

The Public Health Manager will be responsible for strategising, implementing and managing Panos South Asia's Public Health programme in the region. The job is based in New Delhi, but might require extended stays in Kathmandu. The job includes conceptualising project ideas drawing up proposals, obtaining funding, implementing and evaluating programmes, and preparing project reports. The successful candidate will have a sound knowledge of public health issues and proven ability to independently implement and manage communication-based public health initiatives She/he will have a good university degree a background in public health and excellent verbal and written communication skills

The nosts offer attractive salary packages, including relocation costs where necessary. Applications, which must include a contact email address or telephone number to psa@panos.org.np

or sent by post to:

The Director Panne South Asia GPO Box 13651 Kathmandu, Nepal

Applications must be received by noon on March 29,2002. Only shortlisted candidates will be informed of interview dates.



(Effective from 16 Feb. 2002 / 4 Falgun 2058)

Sector			New Fare			
KTM	-	Bhadrapur	NPR	Rs.	2500/-(On	e-way
KTM	-	Biratnagar	"	Rs.	2180/-	,,
KTM	-	Pokhara	"	Rs.	1480/-	99
KTM	-	Bhairahawa	"	Rs.	1600/-	99
KTM	-	Nepalgunj	"	Rs.	2700/-	99
KTM	-	Janakpur	"	Rs	1385/-	99
KTM	-	Simara	"	Rs.	970/-	"

Note: For roundtrip, fare will be double that of each sector. The following Discounts are applicable on the fare given above

- Student discount 25%.
- Senior citizens (above 65 years old) discount 50%.
- Children (below 12 Years old) discount 50%. Infant (below 23 months old) discount 90%.
- Foreigners with residential visa have to pay 50% extra.

Cargo fare per kg, for each sector is 1.5% of the above mentioned fare. Extra cost for Excess baggage is 2% of the above mentioned fare. (Exclusive of service charge, insurance and Mal Saman Dastoor.)

NECON AIR Nepal's No. 1 Private Airline

#Reservation 480566, Fax: (++977 1)471679 # New Road 242507/243447 # Thamel 258664/262514 # Airport 474933# Bhairahawa (071)22798/21244/21885 # Nepalguni (081)20307/23274/21586 # Bhadranur (023)21350/21013 # Biratnagar (021) 30177/30178/30178/23838 # Janakpur (041)21900/21491 # Pokhara (061) 25311/23120/21617 # Simara (051) 30470 30471 20977

* Archaeology and Restoration Exhibition, video documentaries, slide shows, conferences 1-3 March. Organised by the Alliance Française, the Department of Archaeology and Sanday Kentro Associates. Free entry and open to all. Alliance Francaise, Thapathali.

EVENTS

* Asman Spring Mela Annual charity fundraiser of the Association of St Mary's Alumnae Society, this year to benefit the girl child. Games, stalls and food. Also, door and raffle prizes including air tickets to Amsterdam, packages at hotels in Nepal and Philips products. 2 March, 10AM-6.30PM, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. Entry Rs 25.

Nepali classical dance and folk music at Hotel Vajra. Dances of Hindu and Buddhist gods Tuesdays and Fridays, 7PM onwards, the Great Pagoda Hall. Ticket and tea Rs 400. Nepali folk tunes Wednesdays and Saturdays, 6.30PM onwards, hotel restaurant. Hotel

Live music by Catch 22, Tuesday and Friday nights at the 40,000 ½ ft Bar, Rum Doodle

 Classic teas Thirty teas including all Dilmah Tea's herbals, greens, blacks and Oolongs Also Ilam, Darjeeling, Makaibari and more. The Coffee Shop, Hotel de l'Annapurna. . Games, clove vodka at The Comer Bar everyday, live music at the Splash Bar & Grill Fridays Radisson Hotel 411818

. Charcoalz Buffet with grilled delicacies from around the world, glass of lager, live music and strawberries with cream. Non-vegetarians Rs 595 and vegetarians Rs 495, tax included, Poolside, Hotel Yak & Yeti, 248999

Singaporean and Malaysian food Satay, rice, soymilk dishes, curry puffs and more. Between Jawalakhel fire station and St Mary's School. Sing Ma, the Food Court. Foodcourt@wlink.com.np. 520004

* Steak weekends at the Olive Garden Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, and strawberries and cream everyday, Radisson Hotel, 411818

Oriental lunchtime Special lunch menu, Rs 350 per

head everyday 12 noon-3PM, China Garden, Hotel Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 273999 Italian passion Pasta and pizza from woodfired ovens.

all-you-can-eat salads and desserts, and complimentary entrance to the Rox Bar at Rs 950 plus tax per head. Rox Restaurant, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 491234

Variable chef's specials Lunch for office-goers 12 noon-3PM, Dwarika's Hotel. 479488.

* Sandwiches Over the Rainbow American Diner has reopened. Fifth Avenue sandwiches, full meals at

backpacker prices. Opposite Pilgrims Book House. Thamel. Patan Museum Café Mixed menu, garden seating. Lunch only, 11AM—2PM. 25 percent off with Summit Card. 526271

 Lunch, tea and dinner European and American cuisine with fine wines. La'Soon Restau rant and Vinotheque, 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.

. Barbecue lunch with complementary wine or beer for adults, soft drink for children Saturdays at the Godavari Village Resort, Rs 650 per head. 560675

Rhododendron Getaway at the Horseshoe Resort in Mude, three hours from Kathmandu. Two days of rhododendron walks in forests, package tours at \$30 per day, all meals and sauna included. Email resort@horshoe.wlink.com.np

Destination Bardia All-inclusive package to Jungle Base Camp, Royal Bardia National Park, with four days and three nights, one-way Kathmandu/Bardia flight, \$195 per head. Email: junglebasecamp@yahoo.com or ring Going Places Travels, 251400. www.geocities.com/junglebasecamp

 Muktinath 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@mail.com.np or jmr@soi.wlink.com.np. 496110 * Taste the difference Cosy Nepali-style house on an organic farm in Gamcha, south of

Thimi. Up to Rs 1,200 per person per night including meals, aaa@wlink.com.np. * Heritage Package Two-night package with six-course Nepali dinner, massage, breakfast, \$155 per couple, Dwarika's Hotel. 479488

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

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL



That was the wettest winter we have had in the nast eight years. Last week's rains helped clear the skies and

aised afternoon temperatures, brought the snowline down to 3,000 m. All trekking passes have up to a metre of snow. For the coming week, the satellite picture taken on Wednesday at noon shows mainly clear skies, and an approaching frontal wave from the west is expected to be deflected northwards by the high pressure over north India. Winds will come from the southwest, bringing in the Gangetic haze over Nepal, Expect light high clouds over















On Top of the World: Five Women Explorers in Tibet Lurce Miller

In the late 1800s, when women were still bound by strict Victorian morals and cumbersome clothing and Tibet was the ultimate in exploration, some women claimed the adventurous life. Nina Mazuchelli, Isabella Bird Bishon, Alexandra David-Neel, Fanny Bullock Workman and Annie Taylor all perormed remarkable feats and their pioneering spirit continues to be an inspiration even today

> Imperial Gurkhas: Britain and the Gurkhas Tony Gould Granta Books, London, 1999

This volume tells of a military reality more remarkable than the myth through unforgettable tales of conflict, all with a sensitivity to the racial and political undertones of a unique military relationship. Gould shows how successive Nepali rulers were cajoled into supplying troops to the Raj and how the



Rs 995

Nepal: Tharu and Tarai Neighbours Harald O Skar, ed. Bibliotheca Himalayica, Kathmandu, 1999

This volume deals first with national and minority issues of inclusion and exclusion: labour practices such as kamaiya, the role of NGOs, citizenship, migration and cultural dynamics within groups. It then addresses local issues with reference to the impact of outside influence on local identities: Tharu self-definition, being modernising matwalis, the concept of becoming Rana, and changes in marriage and other cultural customs.

For a Pagan Song: Travels in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan Jonny Bealby Arrow Books, London, 1999

Rs 445 nny Bealby follows the footsteps of his two literary heroes, Peachey Carnehan and Daniel Dravot from The Man Who Would Be King, travelling across remote parts of India and Pakistan and into war-torn fghanistan. Picturing himself by a roaring fire, listening to the songs of a pagan chief, Bealby set out to

discover the ancient tribes of Kafirstan, and in the meantime discovered himself. Courtesy Mandala Book Point, Kantipath, 227711, mandala@ccsl.com.np

Semi-furnished spacious house in quiet residential area near UN complex suitable for a foreign family. Contact 521024.

Reflexology! The therapist applies alternating pressure to the feet. It reduces stress, promotes relaxation and good health. Email buddhasfeet@vahoo.com or ring 410735

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

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

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

For insertions ring NT Marketing at 543333-36.

BBC on FM 102.4

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



Radio Sagarmatha

P.O. Box 6958, Bakhundole, Lalitpur, Nepal Tel: ++977-1-545680, 545681 Fax: ++ 977-1- 530227 E-mail: radio@radiosagarmatha.org www.radiosagarmatha.org

ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY r Shuddh Raunivar had just

finished a long day at his Tole near Indrachowk on Bhanu Jayanti, 12 July 1999. As he left the building, his gaze fell upon three children huddled together on the sidewalk, fast asleep. A few seconds later, a fourth child joined the trio, A sudden impluse made Dr Rauniyar doctor ask the child whether he'd had dinner. He hadn't, so the good doctor nipped over to a nearby shop and bought him an egg and some bread. But the child desperately wanted daal, bhat, and tarkari.

Now here was a problemwhere could one find a full Nepali meal at 10PM? As it turned out. the child, who did little other than roam the streets of old Kathmandu all day, knew a place tucked away

in a hidden alley where a certain aama sold plates full of rice and all the other essentials for just Rs 5. "When I went home that night, I just couldn't sleep. The thought of these young children going to bed hungry haunted me, and there were so many of them. I thought that something had to be done," says Dr Raunivar. The next day, he fed five other hungry street children. The day after that there were 12, and so on, until soon the Children's Food Programme—Nepal was born.
For the first few months only Dr

Rauniyar was contributing to the programme, but slowly he found more ways to raise money, and enlisted more volunteers. Free meak were served at 9AM and 7PM. The word spread, and shortly over a hundred street children, or those whose parents were alive, but going through



KING AND CROWN PRINCE: King Gyanendra and Crown Prince Paras pose for a photograph on Education Day, 24 Feburary with award-winning

hard times, started lining up for the

two free meals everyday Dr Rauniyar was happy, but realised that only feeding the body was not enough. So, he and his team decided they would use a carrot and stick approach that would also nurture the children's minds. They arranged informal education classes in the mornings, and told the children that attendance was compulsory if they wanted the free morning meal. This worked, but not as well as they'd hoped—the number of street children attending the morning bhojan dwindled to about 50. Still, the classes are going on. Everyday, Ambika Bista, a teacher at Bagh Bhairay Secondary School in Macchegaun, Champadevi, gives the kids an hour-long lesson at the Bal Sewa Kendra in Dhoka Tole. "These are children with an uncertain future. We may not be able to provide them with the wellrounded education that schoolgoing children get, but at least they become literate, they have a little more knowledge," she says. The morning meal requires attendance

stomach can dig right in. The going has been hard and long for the Children's Food Programme, but it has been a success. When the mobile food distribution programme was begun Dr Rauniyar tells of how he wrote to all the major hotels in the capital, asking them to sponsor neal packets at Rs 5,000 per day. There was not one postive response. "Except for one hotel, no one had the manners to even reply



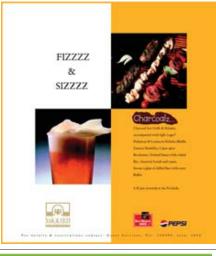
to my mail, and even they didn't agree. Just think of how much food s to waste in these places. It would've been nothing for them to sponsor a day's meals." And so the ooard came up with a clever idea—

why not ask more privileged

individuals who have something to celebrate, to spend Rs 1,000 to sponsor one meal. This found more penrous patrons and today the team runs the mobile food programme that distributes 400 packages of food every weekend.

In addition, the board of the Children's Food Programme also runs the Village School-College Students Scholarship Programme

To support either of these initia tives, ring 274473.







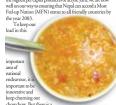


Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixi

Oodles of noodles

bennen perceptive among you will have realised by now that Noyell has long lest articular the status of Section of the status of Section of Sec



real danger that we will be overcome with smugness and fratism (an unintended side-effect of the monosodium glutamate in your Miaa-Miao Teriyaki-flavoured Instant Noodle pack). If we are not careful we may actually be overslaken in the manufacture and export of noodles by countries that want to get ahead through unfair trade practics like illegally dumping dumplings on unsuspecting developing countries.

That is why it is important for us to be eternally watchful so that we do not have a noodle glut, and this important export does not go the way of once-prosperous

sectors like carpet, pashmina, garment, yarchagomba, and tiger bones. We must therefore, come up with a National Noodle Policy prepared by a high-level Instant Noodle Task Force to ensure that a new brand hits the shops every two days or so. There is a slight chance that we may run out of brand names, but this is a risk we have to take in order to keep our market

Na any ramen aficionado will tell you, the noodle is a flexible food and there are endless permutations and combinations of what you can do with the stuff. That is why we in the business are confident that we will never un out of new noodle to spring on the nation. There is no hard and-fast rule that noodle branks have to carry manes that sound like South Padici-fands, like "Bon Bona", "Min Min" or "Wai Wai". They can take the names of nfaces that bave records how in the nows. like

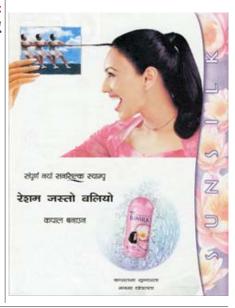
"Tora Bora" Noodle Crispies. Designed to be eaten Nepali-style like poleko makai bhatmas. No need to cook, and especially useful during times of acute water crisis.

"Hoste-Hainse" Noodles. Gamished with pulversied yarchagomba larvae in plastic sachet. May have powerful aphrodisiac side-effects, or your money back. One helping gives you a fulfilled feeling.

"Ram-Ram" Ramen. Absorbent granulated seasoning comes in edible styrofoam cup, completely biodegradable in 2,000 years (the cup, I mean, not the ramen, which is non-biodegradable).

Glow Job Phosphorescent Noodles. Since they glow in the dark, you do not need nightvision equipment to eat it. Ideal nutritious fast food while in hot pursuit of baddies.

"Poodle" Noodle. Your dogs will also love it. Formerly marketed under the brand name "Bow-wow Chow Chow".



Main News Page 1 Pelpourd Page 2 Capital Page 3 National Page 4 Variety Page 5-8 Neighbours Page 9 International Page 10 Illustress Page 11 Sports Page

The Himalayan

las: 26-28°C Mile: 5-7°C centes Nov. 23, 2001 Suspent N

12 pages - 6 color R

Thanks to all our advertisers, readers, subscribers and well-wishers!

100 Days



100 Days

Most widely circulated and read English daily newspaper in Nepal, from Kakarbhitta in the East to Mahendranagar in the West

A pat on the back to everyone at The Himalayan Times for making us what we are today

A Great Newspaper