potato /po'teitau This spud's for you. 8-9

EXCLUSE

Can't say goodbye The fur is flying once more on the divestment row over Nepal

the divestment row over Nepal Indosuez.

The French company Crédit

Agricole Indosuez, which owns half the shares, wants to sell off to a consortium of 24 Negal to a consortium of 24

Crédit Agricole has given the NRB two options: sell to the Nepali consortium, or permit transfer of shares to a nonbanking offshore subsidiary. "All we want is a decision," Marc Dumetz of Indosuez told us. "We are not interested in looking for other buyers."



The Nepal Rastra Bank says it can't decide because the divestment is in the courts. The Chaudhary Group has sued Credit Agricole for not honouring an earlier MoU, and charges the bank with attempting to prejudge the dispute and exert diplomatic pressure. Indosuce similatians the contract has none expiried."

Last month, the Supreme
Court refused to issue an
interim order to block the sale of
shares and ordered the Lalitpur
Appellate Court to deal with the
lification as a priority.

RINOD RHATTARA

ooner or later political turmoil had to impact industrial production, and it now finally has. We are making less of everything from

We are making less of everything from needles to noodles. Official neglect and indifference is forcing factories to close down and lay off workers. The five-day Maoist strike next month may be the final blow for many. There has been no mass-closure yet, but

There has been no mass-closure yet, but industrialists say may factories in tant it towns are working only three or four days a week and cutting back on production. Overall manufacturing has declined by between 30-50 percent, depending on the commondry. Beer and achools, alteady his hard by the Massies dry drive last year, are still stagmant. Even the production of mistant models and worthpaste down. Growth in the past six months is estimated to be about 10 percent negative.

"There is a net decline in almost every sector," says Yubaraj Khatiwoda, an conomist at the Research Division at Nepal Rastra Bank who keeps track of economic performance. "Even if we had peace today, it would take another six months for the quickest turnaround."

But this hinges on the assumption that there will be a spurt in export demand resulting from, say, new concessions for Nepali garments in the US market. It could take much longer for new investment decisions.

With no silver lining, basiness in deep gloom. Most Neal indestrainties were telled to areas fiel up they don't want to discuss the slump anymore. Those that of, repera m cuncamily similar usoy irrespective of the commodity they munifacture. Our market territories are getting out of reach, psymenss are becoming a big problem, banking the commodity of the commodity of the commodities of the

Factories that earlier thought protecting production by re-scheduling shifts would help them tide over the emergency are now

SLO-MO

Factories are closing, workers are being laid off.



Garment exports are down by a third
 Carpets are at a quarter of normal levels
 Pashmina has fallen by 80 %

Food and beverages are down 30-50 %
Liquor sales are down by 60 %
Textiles are flat and could slip further

beginning to railse there is no point producing unless you can self. Production at a rice mill in Birguni has been slabed by 75 percent because it has become almost impossible to send foodgrains to rement mountain districts—the major markets. The situation is also frastrating for maryin government. One economist told us he dreads looking at the new statistic that arrive on his desk every month. The numbers are all tumbling. "The best-see seemals for manifecturing "The best-see seemals for manifecturing"

this year is zero growth, "the government conomist told us." It means we can write left offeven the little employment that was being generated until last year." Industry employs about 300,000 people and once layoffs accelerate, contract workers will be the first to be hit.

Last year manufacturing contributed Rs 38.7 billion to Nepal's GDP, when the economy was relatively buoyant and exports were bullish. Today, even though the trade treaty with India has been renewed it is unlikely there will be a major increase in exports. This is because the five products (zinc oxide, copper wire, steel pipes acrylic yam and vanaspatighiu) that now face quantitative restrictions for duty-free access used to account for almost 40 percent of exports to India. "We don't know who to blame anymore," a producer and exporter of toiletries told us. "Even now, no one is seriously considering a holding-on strategy either at the shop-floor or in policy circles.

Recession in domestic demand, resulting from factors like low agricultural growth and the security situation, has hit the entire chain from manufacturers to distributors to retailers. Purchasing power has fallen, buyers are

from manufacturers to distributors to retailers. Purchasing power has fallen, buyers are spending cautiously, so traders and retailers don't have money to hold stocks, which translates into a slump in factory sales. The problem is more severe in markets feeding the hinterland, where restrictions on movement have sapped demand.

Supplies are unpredictable because of security checks along the major highways. In some districts, security forces, in an attempt to cut off Maoist food supplies, have even blocked transport of food products.

"Security is better than being killed by Maoists but the measures taken by governent are killing industry," says an alcohol producer. Shops shut down early and alcohol dispensation has come to almost a complete halt. "Suddenly our industry has become unviable." Fronomist Shanker Sharue has a hird's

Economist Shankar sharma has a butd seve view of the conomy from his perch above the prime minister's annex in Singha aborta. He says the external situation is already showing signs of improvement and, assuming our domestic problems are resolved in six months, we can look forward to 5-6 percent economic growth. "But," he adds, "these predictions depend on peace."

"We have as much authority as a court of law"

Deput New Science of the 25 G. Do you think the government was right a good below to be for the following the second on export quotes and value addition?

No 80.5% What an avoid you want to be for or evidence properly you see the form of the form

Q. Do you support the five-day strike called by the

Bhairab Prasad Lamsal, chairman of the newly-formed Judicial Commission to probe the ill-gotten wealth of public officials, speaks about his new job.

What are your commission's terms of reference, will you just investigate or will you also prosecute wrong-doers?

Our main task is to establish facts. We will find out the facts and submit the report to

Our main task is to establish tacts. We will find out the tacts and submit the report to the government with recommendations. The concerned individual bould be responsible for explaining how the property was amassed. For those who cannot present evidence commensurate to their property, we will mention in the report how the property may have been earned.

But from the royal announcement we gather that your mandate is only to investigate, not make recommendationsÖ

These not received all the papers. Some technical issues on what is to be investigated and what type of report is to be submitted remain to be finalised, so I cannot discuss all the details. But legally, the commission is empowered to investigate and make recommendations. The law under which we have been appointed has many provisions relating to that. We can accept evidence, question witnesses. This commission has as much authority as a court of law.

Editorial 41-2=39

You also headed the commission to investigate the Dasarath Stadium accident. What difference do you find between that probe and your present job? That was a specific investigation of a specific trapic event. The scope of this task is much greater. I had presented my indings objectively then and was also implemented many of my recommendations. The security system of the stadium today is based on the recommendations we made, including measures on improving the safety

features on the exit gates.





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41-2=39

rime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has hatched a cunning plan. Since everyone was giving him a hard time about his jumbo cabinet, he's got two ministers embroiled in corruption scandals to resign. Great way to kill two birds with one stone: downsize cabinet and come out smelling like roses

The Minister of Forest and Soil Conservation Gopal Man Shrestha and his deputy minister, Surendra Hamal, both resigned last week over a complicated scam involving timber and forests. So what else is new, you might say, we know it's a jungle out there.

The ruling party and the main opposition have both made corruption control their main platform. The trouble was that the proposed Anti-Corruption Bill had teeth and could come back to bite them. So, after letting it languish in parliament for over a year, both parties have quietly let the bill lapse. As a fig leaf, we now have a high-level judicial commission to investigate the ill-gotten wealth of public officials.

For as long as anyhody can remember. Negal's forests have been the source of boundless riches for plunder-minded politicians. There was a patriotic Panchayat-era slogan that went: Hariyo Ban Nepalko Dhan "Green forests are Nepal's wealth"). Unfortunately, many politicians took that to mean "Nepal's forests are our greenbacks". Whenever someone needed to be bought off, political patronage was needed, a referendum bankrolled, or local warlords swaved, public officials went for our forests. The sal jungles of the char kose jhari didn't stand a chance, and after decades of onslaught they are

One of the last tracts of forest in Chitwan which is not a part of the national park, but is a vital jungle corridor to the Mahabharat Hills has been decimated in the past three months because a corrupt District Forest Officer (DFO) has looked the other way. In the past six months in Kanchanpur alone, local political activists estimate that Rs 220 million of timber has been pnached and smuraled into India

The resignation of timber dealers Messrs Shrestha, Hamal & Co, therefore, is just the tip of the iceberg. Despite their sanctimonious statements professing innocence, there is no doubt that both were up to their ears in it. Both pots are black, it's just a question of which one Let us try to summarise it for you. The deputy minister had not official

sanction to approve the lucrative transfers of DFOs. It is common knowledge that DFOs don't get transferred to juicy tarai districts that still have some forests left (like Morang, Banke or Kanchanpur) without having to deposit a sack of cash at the minister's doorsten This had been going on for a while, and everyone got his cut and everyone was happy. But the junior minister slyly re-transferred cronies that the senior minister had himself just transferred a few months previously.

Are you following us so far? Now, here is where the plot thickens. When it looked like Shrestha would expose his erstwile protégé, Hamal, he (Hamal) decided to pour turpentine on troubled waters. He went public with an alleged bribe of Rs 200,000 paid on behalf of a Nepalguni turpentine tycoon who was expanding his resin empire in the pine forests of the wild west by the Banke MP. Mangal Tharu. who owed him a favour for financing his (Banke MP's) campaign two

MP Tharu claims he even took down the serial numbers of the bank notes handed over to Minister Shrestha. Why he would do that we don't know, since this would implicate him as well. But it is clear that the senior minister was using his portfolio to carry on a roaring business. The junior minister, who has just built himself a sky-scraper in Libang within full view of the Maoists across the valley, was feeling constricted by a boss who was dinning into his own effort to nut together a nest egg. Besides, the junior minister has the patronage of the allpowerful Home Minister, Khum Bahadur Khadka, the political alpha-male of the

present government. It is whispered that Shrestha and Hamal refused to obey Deuba and resigned only after Khum Bahadur gave the nod. These shenanigans show that even at a time of national crisis, the preoccupation of just about everyone in this government is to stash cash in their political war-chests. And the stench is getting overpowering. There is a labour minister who owns a manpower export company, another is busy doling out slots in the electro-magnetic spectrum, there are fat contracts coming up in Melamchi, juicy real-estate tied up with

impending privatisation. The obscenity is that all this is happen ing during a month when 300 Nepalis died fighting each other. And still we wonder why there is no development, and what drives the Manists to revolution?

What is the obstacle: structural statis, operational dysfunction. or operational disorientation? All of the above. cabinet colleagues abjectly failed to set

standards of exemplary behaviour in the

heady days of democratic euphoria in 1990.

It was in such a political climate—fear

of a free-for-all counterweighted by an equal

fear of the concentration of power in the

hands of any one organ of the state—that

the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal

document of compromise between the king.

the Left Front and the Nepali Congress, the

cautiousness of a generation too frightened

to rewrite the basic equation of power. By

sovereignty shifted from the crown to the

the promulgation of the constitution,

people, but the onus of enforcing it

1990 was drafted. Apart from being a

constitution is also a monument to the

t has been just twelve years, a fleeting moment in the time-scale of the history of a nation. But our dreams have already turned into the nostalgia for an imagined past. Either our expectations were unrealistic or our disappointment is premature. We are being too impatient in dismissing the gains of the Peoples' Movement of 1990 so soon. The tree of democracy can't bear fruit unless it is given time to strike roots in the hostile soil of entrenched authoritarianism.

The allegation that the tree began to rot from the day it was replanted in the country is not entirely baseless. Whether it was the agriculture minister trying to hide the stink of a fertiliser deal behind a cloud of expensive cologne or the commerce minister dripping the sweetness of sugar deals, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai's

emained with the king. Written with the intention of ensuring stability, it is not at all surprising that the present constitution has not succeeded in facilitating fundamental changes in Nepali society. Whether the issue of citizenship or the question of national languages, the constitution has singularly failed to resolve long-standing disputes that could have nelped form a new solidarity in the country. Instead, the polity is beset with a structural statis-nothing seems to change in the country except the all-too-frequent change in the names of occupants of ministerial quarters at Harihar Bhavan. Had the Communist Party of Nepal

(UML) championed the cause of

normal times, people

onstitutional amendments in

marginalised by the present

set-up would have eagerly

cadly these aren't

normal times The

country is in the

nsurgency.

survival of the

ened. Parties centred on a towering rallied behind them. But promise of performing better in the uture, can't retain their democratic grip of a vicious When the very

tation of a failing state. It is caused by unhealthy competition between different actors of the state for spheres of influence. Over the last decade, the palace, the executive, the constitutional bodies, the legislature, the judiciary, the media have emerged as competing centres of power perennially engaged in enlarging

The unintended consequence of these pulls and counter pulls is that they have weakened institutions. It is an irony of our times that we have a powerful legislature, an independent judiciary, a strong executive and even an influential Fourth Estate, but the result is a soft state too weak to enforce its will. This is a classic paradox of the whole being a lot less than the sum of its parts.

The spread of the Maoist insurgence prompted well-meaning donors to offer the mantra of Good Governance as a failsafe treatment of all ailments afflicting the nation. Sadly, it is another instance of the medicine being even more danger ous than the disease. The Good Govern ance template has been designed to check the authoritative tendencies of allpowerful governments in former Soviet Block countries. It is ill suited to nation states in the making where state building and democracy building have to

progress together. begin from the bottom. That is what the moment is to establish authority. synthesise institutions, and strengthen

state is at stake, the immediate task is to save it from disintegrating. In any case, the changes being mooted by Comrade Madhav Nepal & Co emit a reactionary ring—the concept of an all-party government is not consonant with the principles of the parliamentary system

Their other proposals for constitutional amendment seem even weirder Cutting down the number of parliamentary constituencies can't possibly improve peoples representation in the formulation o national policies. Putting a cap on the number of ministers is best left to the common sense of the prime minister. Once in a while, we do end up having highly insecure individuals at Baluwatar, but that should not prompt us to further reduce the authority of the prime minister.

Discussing structural defects in the constitution is not taboo just because there is a state of emergency in the country. In fact the debate can take place even more expostly since there is no immediate need to introduce amendments. The same however, can't be said about the severe operational dysfunction of almost all the political parties.

Political parties are the building blocks of a parliamentary system of democracy Since any edifice is only as strong as its weakest component, all political parties in the country-not just the ruling one and the main opposition-need to be strengthpersonality who dispenses patronage to her family and friends can wreak havoc with any constitution. As a corollary, those parties that reward their cadres for contributions made in the past rather than offering incentives to individuals who hold the

Then there is the institutional disoriendonors and civil society (mainly NGOs)

The moral of the story: change has to democracy is all about. The challenge for political parties. Constitutional amend· Why can't the army repeat its rout of the Khampas?

It was easier for us to chase the Khampas because they lived in camps, and we used to encircle them at night. Even so, after the Achham attacks, we blocked their escape routes and pursued them and were able to get at least 70 rebels. Guerrillas don't move around in one big group, but break into smaller bands the moment there is opposition and they just melt away. This is why we need to cut their supply lines if we want to solve the nmblem soon

The war will also become more difficult if they manage to get public sympathy and local support. The military action must therefore be accompanied by development programs. Should a situation arise where locals support the Maoists then it would be pointless to keep on fighting. We have to be careful about that. So far, the majority of the people are with the security forces. Most of the support for the Maoists stems from fear

Does the army have enough troops?

If an armed group is revolting against the government and is killing and looting people then there is no choice but to try and disarm such a force. That now is the army's responsibility, and I think it is capable of doing that. The question is of time. How long will it take? We have a 50.000-strong security force facing armed guerrillas who number about 4,000. Both are spread thinly over Nepal's 56,000 sq miles and difficult terrain. The Maoists come together for their attacks and

disperse. The recent government decision to mobilise the army, armed police and the police as one force is a good one as it doubles our numbers. There now has to be one plan for the three forces: the army taking on the most risky assignments and others doing the rest. There also has to be full support of all political parties. Once that happens there is no doubt about a victory, it is only a question of

· How important is the open horder with India?

There is another aspect of this war: we don't have a separate body of troops for border control. We never really developed forces to protect the frontiers, large infrastructures, industry, etc as in other countries. This has increased the complexity of the problem. Security is not something you can build overnight, it has to be nurtured, like raising a child. There are issues of training, intelligence gathering and organisation building. which if neglected, can lead to a situation

like the one we are now facing today Sometimes foreign forces back insurgencies. In such situations, the foreign source of support needs to be tackled. What is our situation, are foreigners involved? That is something for concerned authorities to find out.

 How good is our intelligence? We do suffer from poor intelligence. Just look at the Maoist attacks in Kapurkot, Ratmate, Salleri, Dang and Accham. In all the attacks, many Maoists had gathered but we had no prior warning

And logistics?

We definitely need to improve reaction capacity, we also need air support for block and pursuit operations. If, for example we need to chase up to 2,000 fleeing rebels, we need to be quicker. Present transport helicopters may not be adequate, and we may also need air-assault canability. This would beloenhance the mobility of the troops, and allow air support where needed

What are the lessons from other insurgencies?

We can take many lessons from other incurren cies. The most important one is that killing more people within the country is always counterproductive. The objective should never be to kill as many people as possible. In Malaya, there were about 4,000 people

of Chinese origin engaged in terrorist activity in the 1950s. The British focussed on severing their supply lines. The Chinese civilians upported the rebels, who received supplies from the sea. Arresting civilian supporters and blockading the seas cut off rebel supplies. Three regular army divisions of 20,000 each, including Gurkhas, were engaged in the operation. It took two years after the supply lines were cut off to defeat the rebels. In Sri Lanka and Penn the conflicts were put down after intelligence breakthroughs led to the arrest of rebel leaders

What should happen now? The best thing to happen now would be for the Maoists to lay down their weapons and come to talks. Winning the "hearts and minds" of the people is of vital important. One side is getting local support by using force, the government needs to first tackle that force and protect the people. The

government also must understand what uels the insurgency—it may be poverty exploitation and corruption

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But it is almost impossible to do development without securing the rebel controlled areas, and having a security sence there because the rebels will come back the moment troops pull out. We must redouble our development efforts where we can. Where insurvencies have been handled in this manner, they have been resolved.

How long do we need the emergency?

We can't set deadlines for ending a conflict like this. You cannot win a war by pressuring the army and asking "what have you done in six months?"

If the emergency has made the lives of ordinary citizens difficult, then it could be lifted, but taking care that security forces are given the authority to continue their campaign. This campaign cannot be stopped in the middle with the job halfdone. That would affect the morale of the army. We need to find a solution, and for that we first need political stability.

(Gen Satchit S Rana, 70, retired in 1991 as Chief of Army Staff of the Royal Nepal Army)

CASHLESS COW

lapses on the army side.

I was really disappointed to read your front-page article "Cashless cow" (#83) on Royal Nepal Airlines. I've always flown Royal Nepal whenever I visit my family in Nepal. Whatever happens to the airline. I hone the nolicy of discriminatory tariffs for Nepalis and non-Nepalis is

abolished. No other airline

· Why is it so difficult to bring

the Maoists back to talk?

form of a civil war.

This is a difficult and professionall

challenging time for the Royal Nepal

Army. We are now forced to kill fellow

Nepalis, and this could soon take the

some time now been asking political

Maoists terrorists, impose a state of

emergency. But there were delays. The

can take time. Unlike a regular army,

guerrillas are now more entrenched, and

resolving such a problem is not easy and

terrorists do not fight from a single fixed

supply lines open, the war could stretch.

There are some lessons from the debacle

tactical situations, and the reaction of the

local commander is crucial. The army and

police had different camps, some distance

apart. There was a dominating hillock

above the military position where the

Maoists are said to have gathered for the

attack. The army position seems to have

been weak, and it was vulnerable because

there was only a small platoon defending

Whatever the reasons, we now know

the army suffered a defeat. This does not

usually happen unless the enemy has

heavy artillery, air support, etc, which

was not the case. So there may have been

it. There may also have been some

at Mangalsen. In any battle there are

position. If they continue to keep their

· What went wrong in

Mangalsen?

complacency.

parties to build a consensus, declare the

We had anticipated this, and had for



an industry for consultants. politicians, bureaucracy and bribes, Nepalis will keep losing self-confidence. Around the world, foreign aid is a big business, and poverty persists. A lot of money leaks away from Europe to Kathmandu, a lot more leaks on the way from the capital to rural Nepal. There should be no difference between the giver and the taker aid should not create dependency and destroy self-esteem. Leopold H"glinger

NO GAIN

has such a policy. Being a Nepali with a British passport we have to pay substantially more than our fellow passen-

I fully agree with Pitamber Sharma ("No pain, no gain #81) As long as foreign aid is

Nussdorf Austria

Girija Prasad Koirala is showing signs of senility in Pushkar Bhusal's "Kindergarten consultations" (#81). He

LETTERS

should just retire and let others get on with the fight against terrorism. Let a younger generation of leaders define what they want the country to look like for themselves. He says he has to speak out because "democracv is at stake". Yes, democracy is at stake, but mainly herause he isn't helning with his endless infighting. It is time all Nepalis inside and outside, regardless of our political affiliations, support the government of Nepal in its fight against terrorism, and bring peace in Nepal once again Bhaskar Tripathy

MAHILA TAMANG Kishore Pahadi's nortraval of

our representatives in Manjushree Thapa's Nepaliterature ("Seeking representation", #83) is spot on, However I feel the Mahila Tamangs can do much better if they are given proper education and opportunity. They are mostly nominated rather than elected merely to serve the purpose of the Local Government Act's mandate. Quota systems in the name of any equity are rather defective unless they are planned systematically. Okay one can say that introducing the reservation system for women is a positive step towards gender equity. It could have been more effective if it was tied up with the educational programs for women representatives. Government could have provided training packages for newly appointed women representatives I do not think this needs a million dollars complex strategic plan vith international experts. Maybe the Mahila Tamangs

prepare for their tests. Poonam Rai

IΔK Daniel Lak's opinion that writers are just writers and one should leave them alone runs sharply in contrast to his opinion "that reading can divide society" ("A row too far".

have failed us because they

never out a chance even to

#83). In fact writers of repute, ourveyors to society like VS Naipaul, are "peoples' men They indeed can divide society. Since the public at arge gets touched, influence and agitated by a writer's voice, he has a moral duty to keen his nersonal hias out of his work. Naipaul, a self proclaimed unrepentant 'snob" who calls all the postcolonial world "half-made societies" the people of the his native Trinidad "drum beating brutes" and solves he problems of Islamic world by labelling all the Muslims' "rage at their own incompetence, a delayed ecognition of backwardness" is a genius both at letters and pompousness. I venture that along with Sir /idia's art a dose of nomnos ity might have influenced the so-called firestorm in India.

For the rest of the reading public the extent of relationship with the authors extend urther than finishing a book. The only thing worse than naving to read Jeffrey Archer or Jackie Collins" is to be so stupid as to get nothing of

value from fiction.

Sagar Rija Mankato, Minnesota

Thumbs-up to Daniel Lak for saying "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 particula writer thinks about an issue of the day.

Let's not stop at writers.

Vinita Lamsa Californi

GRAFT TAX

All of us Nepalis here in Sydney fully endorse Kunda Divit's prescription of a graft tax in Under My Hat ("The taxman cometh", #81). Excellent thinking and plan ning. You should send a signed copy of the column to the head of the government too, just in case they don't (o can't?) read the papers

Ashish Man Singl Sydne

When pro-choice becomes



RAMYATA LIMBU

bortion in Nepal is equated with infanticide and punishable by law—even it the pregnancy is a threat to the woman's life or is the result of rape. The result: six women die every day from unsafe abortions Those who are caught can be punished with life sentences.

If the political parties keep their promises, Nepali women will be granted conditional abortion rights in the running 2 parliamentary session, Last October the Lower House took an historic step by voting to partially legalise abortion, but the Upper House said the Bill needed amendments, dismissing a historic chance for steps that could finally see the end of a leading killer of women here. The proposal, which is part of a larger Bill on women's rights, was presented in the House as a finance bill in the last session, which means that this time around it does not need to go through the Upper House if that work.

the Lower House gives the go ahead. If this happens, abortion will be made legal if a woman requests it in the first 12 weeks o pregnancy, or within 18 weeks in ases of rape or incest, and when a woman's life or health is in langer or the foetus is impaired

However, even if the Bill is nassed, women's access to safe abortion services will still be threatened. Non governmental agencies which play a vital role ir elping safeguard and improve the health of Nepali women, may find their hands are tied. Two years ago, US President George W Bush reinstated the 1984 Mexico City Policy (also called the Global Gag Rule) that prevents non-governmental organisations that are funded by the US vernment from campaigning for abortion reform a year after receiving funds, or providing abortion-related services, includ ing counselling and referrals, even if the NGOs use other funds for

But several Nepali organisaions have publicly defied Bush. One of these is the Family Planning Association of Nepal (FPAN), the largest family planning NGO in the country which has received US government funds for nearly 27 years.

"My own government wants FPAN to help decriminalise abortion and make it safer," FPAN director general Dr Nirma K Bista complained to the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee last July. "But the US government says 'No'." Urging the committee to overturn the ruling, Bista explained that if FPAN accepted its terms, "I would be prevented from speaking in my own country .. bout a healthcare crisis I know first-hand."

Nepal has the fourth highest naternal death rate in the world 39 women in 100,000 of reproductive age die from pregnancy-related complications each year as compared to seven in Even if abortion is conditionally legalised soon, the US Gag Rule will continue to make it hard for Nepali women to seek abortion-related information and medical care.

rejected strings-attached US

funding, is part of a network of NGOs formed at the request of

the Ministry of Health to advise

the government on measures to

save women from needless death

estimate that 50 per cent of these women die from unsafe abortions. A recent hospital study in Kathmandu found that 20-60 per cent of all women admitted to obstetric and gynaecological wards suffered from critical post-abortion complications requiring blood transfusions and lengthy hospital stays—a crippling drain on the country's limited health resources and a financial burden on women and their families

"Decriminalising and egalising abortion will definitely help reduce Nepal's high maternal mortality and morbidy rates," explains Bista. FPAN's principled decision has cost it approximately \$250,000 in US funds and forced a cutback in services such as free contraceptive provision at its

This is why, even if the Bill

s passed, Bush's dictate will continue to hinder its implementation. "The Global Gag Rule will [continue to] have a chilling effect as it will discourage NGOs receiving US funds from assisting the Ministry of Health in Safe Motherhood activities, such as public education and advocacy on the oposed abortion law," says Anand Tamang, director of the Centre for Research on Environment Health and Population Activities (CREHPA).

The centre, which also

and disability due to unsafe abortion. Surveys by CREHPA and others show that the majority of people from all sections of society and 74 per cent of lawmakers are in favour of legalising abortion. "Once it ecomes law," says Dr Laxmi Raj Pathak, director of the government's Family Health Division, "the government's duty... includes making post abortion care accessible to as many women as possible." Already, providing emergency health care, particularly in remote mountainous regions. remains a problem. "Liberalising the abortion law is only the first step," warns rights campaigner

Dr Aruna Uprety, noting that

just 15 per cent of the popula-

tion has access to hospitals.

For many women's rights activists, while the issue is at core about women's health, it also has serious social implications, Dr Durga Pokharel, chairperson of the newly formed National Women's Commission Dr. Durga Pokharel supports conditional legalisation of abortion. In her personal view. legalising abortion helps save lives, and also the social position of thousands of women

across the country. In the case



of pregnancy resulting from rape or incest, particularly among single young women, she says "The present law further victimises unprotected women and at the same time our lopsided definition of character—one for women, another fo men-makes it impossible for a woman to live in this society if she abides by the law and decides to keep her foetus.

Better-off urban women can

afford to pay Rs 7,000 to Rs 10.000 for an illegal—but relatively safe—abortion in the early stages of pregnancy at a private Kathmandu clinic. . Bimala, a domestic help, had he pregnancy from her employer's son terminated in the seventh month at a private maternity hospital in the capital. Her employer paid Rs 30,000. Women like Rimala are lucky Young and poor rural women an forced into the hands of quacks whose dangerous treatments inserting sticks, shards of glass or cow dung into the vagina-

no-choice



can perforate organs and cause haemorrhaging, gangrene and Those lucky to escape with

their lives risk harsh prison sentences. A 1997 nationwide prison survey found nearly 100 women, one in five female prisoners, incarcerated for abortion A study by the LIS. based Centre for Reproductive Law and Policy (CRLP) and Kathmandu's Forum for Women Law and Development (FWLD) found that many such jailed women had no legal representation. An FWLD study report, scheduled to be made public later this month, is damming about the unbending attitude of the court judges all over Nepal on women facing charges of infanticide and abortion. A study covering the period from 1979-1999 found that 68 percent of women facing these charges were convicted. though in 75 percent of the cases, the judges used their discretionary power to reduce punishment on

the grounds that the infanticide and abortion was done to avoid 'social stigma".

Even if a woman miscarriescommon occurrence in Nepal pecause of women's poor health and inadequate antenatal careshe may suffer the same fate. During her fifth month of oregnancy, while she was working in the fields to support her four children, 30-year-old Kumari went into premature labour. Village elders accused her of killing her child and reported her to the police. She was charged with infanticide and sentenced to 20 years imprisonment. Kumari did not undergo a medical examination. She did not have a lawyer nor was she informed about her right to legal representation. When she pleaded with the judge that she had not killed her baby, he said: "If you didn't, who did?" "Most women are poor illiterate, and have no idea of the

law," says Sapana Pradhan Malla,

FWI D coordinator. The new FWLD shows that 60 percent of women in jail on charges of infanticide and abortion neve went to school. One young woman sentenced under Nepal' abortion law. 16-year-old Min Min Lama, is now free. Sentenced for 20 years at the age of 13 for terminating a pregnancy after she was raped by a relative, the teenager was released in 1999. thanks to a national and international campaign. She now works with FPAN

If our political leaders are to be believed, the Bill is close to

their heart, and many have mad sweeping promises in public. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has put getting the Bill assed on his eight-point to-do st. Tara Nath Ranabhat, sneak of the Lower House, assured a delegation of women's rights activists at the start of the current session of parliament. which began on 10 February, tha the Bill will be discussed and passed "within two weeks" Rajendra Kharel, Minister fo Women and Social Welfare, as well as leader of the main opposition UML Madhav Kuma Nepal promised the full support of their respective parties during last week's International Wom en's Day celebrations, "While is s too soon to declare victory. cautions CRLP staff attorney Melissa Upreti, "It [the impend ng vote] is indeed an historic vent, given that gender-based discriminatory provisions depriv ng women of even their most asic rights have existed in formal law in Nepal for almost 150

(With additional reporting

Nepal's Thaksins

Promises aside, Nepali lawmakers, particularly those in the Ministry of Information and Communication seem keen to keep a tight rein on media. A year ago Minister Jaya Prakash Prasad Gupta tried to stop private sector FM radio from putting out independently reported news items. This week his deputy, Minister of State for Information and Communication Hari Narayan Chaudhary declared that "abducting journalists should be allowed if the government finds it necessary." Chaudhary, while addressing the Gorkhapatra Sansthan on its anniversary said the government "abducted" the editor of Sanghu Gopal
Budathoki as he had "crossed the limits" of professional decency. Budathoki is under arrest on charges of undermining the will of the security personnel fighting the Maoist insurgency through write-ups in his weekly. Chaudhary alleged that Sanghu mixed "news" with "views" and wrote pieces that demoralised the police and soldiers

Subash update

Subash Gurung may eventually be cleared of any terrorist connections but it does not look like his case will be dismissed soon. Gurung, who was arrested while trying to board a flight in the US with knives and a stun gun on 3 November remains in Federal detention with court appearances in Chicago coming up. He is charged with the post 9/11 offence of attempting to board an aircraft with a dangerous weapon. Gurung could face up to ten years in prison if convicted. His inability or unwillingness to communicate adequately with anyone, say reports from Chicago, has become the major issue in the case. Following a series of appearances in January, the judge ordered a competency evaluation of Gurung and in February he was examined by a court-appointed psychiatrist. At the status hearing on 25 February, subsequent to the examination, he was ruled incompetent to be tried. While the judge could choose to send him for treatment to render him competent for trial, he has ordered that Gurung be further evaluated and anothe status hearing is scheduled for 25 March. His well-wishers can only hope he will receive some effective treatment and ultimately be sent back Nepal.

Highest race

The Annapurna Mandala Trail, the world's highest stage race, is underway. Thirty-two runners, including ten top Nepali athletes, took off from Besisahar in Lamiung on 13 March. The race, which covers 320 km over eight days, will take the marathoners across rice paddy fields at 800 m and go up to a height of 5,400 m through the Thorong Pass, before they run down to Dhampus, near Pokhara "To run around the Annanumas with only a backnack and local hospitality to rely on is, in short, the definition of the Annapurna Mandala Trail," says organiser and well-known French trail runner Bruno Poirier. Thirty sirdars and Shernas from Mandala Trekking are providing the runners technical backup. Internationally recognised as one of the most demanding races in the world, the third edition of the Annapurna Mandala Trail covers an impressive 27,000 m of combined altitude difference. What's more, competitors have signed a Racer Solidarity Assistance Chart which means they have to assist any endangered fellow racer. The slightest lapse means instant elimination. That's the way to go.



15 - 21 MARCH 2002 NEPALI TIMES

Fatal avalanches

A trek to Annapurna Base Camp may be among the most spectacular, but it's also one of the most dangerous. A year after a couple of Australian trekkers died in an avalanche last spring, three German trekkers bound for ABC died in an avalanche on the morning of 3 March. German nationals Bernhard Peter, Christof Wopperer, and Verena Beutlhauser had stopped to take pictures when they were swep away when an avalanche and strong winds suddenly hit their group at Bagar, a day's trek from ABC. Their guide, Madan Lopchan, still missing, is presumed dead. Says group leader Manfred Hartl, who survived the tragedy along with another German trekker, "We were covered by snow when an avalanche suddenly hit us. After about five minutes. Barbara Fehm and I were able to get up. We checked on the other members. But they were dead." A few spots in the area, especially near Deurali, are exposed to avalanches coming off the flanks of Hiunchuli and Annapurna South, which funnel accumulated snow and huge blocks of ice down to the trail.

Fanning the Unforgettable Fire...

news that the United States is examining a nuclear weapons policy that identifies seven countries that might expect to be "nuked" if the situation demanded it.

The list even includes friends and trading partners Russia and China, as well as George Bush's "axis of evil"—Iran, Iraq and North Korea. Syria and Libya round off the litany of potential future Hiroshimas, Shall we deem this sheer madness or mere prudence in a post-11 September age? Perhaps it's the work of unreconstructed cold war dinosaurs, once again in charge at Jurassic Park and all the more horrifying if that indeed is the case.

Consider, for a moment, the implications. The United States is the wealthiest, most influential and mightiest society that has ever existed. Its culture and economic system dominate much of the planet. The conventional military technology at the beck and call of the president can project massive, unstoppable force across

continents with extreme precision. Other countries either cower or bury their objections amid hopes of trade benefits or aid largesse later on. Only terrorists dare to take on America directly. Never mind that anyone mad and fanatical enough to kill himself for a cause is hardly likely to worry about being the target of an atomic bomb.

The Bush administration is not only resurrecting nuclear destruction as a defence option, it wants to refine such weapons for use against non-nuclear enemies. A classified report obtained by the Los Angeles Times says this new nuclear strategy and weaponry might be used in three circumstances: to reply to a strike against America by nuclear chemical or biological weapons; to destroy a target impregnable to conventional attack, or in surprising military circumstances. In other

...against America's demon of the month.



bolstered when Washington reacted with fury to Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests Sanctions, condemna

tion and diplomatic pressure had little impact ir Delhi or Islamabad but a principle was being enacted. The fact that Washington allowed Israe to build, develop and test nuclear weapons was disquieting but little could be done about such an important pillar of

American domestic politics. In 1991, South Africa said it had voluntarily dismantled its nuclear weapons programme—to date, the only state to do so. American pressure was very much an influence.

Now, where's the case to be made to India or Pakistan or any other country that wants to add flashy, new nukes to its arsenal of weapons. Non-proliferation has gone out the window as an American doctrine, or at least the moral argument for it. Why should the Indians listen to a country that's busy drawing up plans to do what Delhi says it won't do—strike first

with nuclear weapons, or use them against a non-nuclear nation. Why shouldn't India now disregard its policy of "no first use" Similarly, why shouldn't Pakistan—vastly outgunned and overwhelmed by Indian conventional forces-go on a bomb building spree, copying the Americans in producing battlefield nuclear warheads, longer range missiles dirty bombs even, explosive devices that spread radioactive material from a conventional blast without the need for a fission explosion.

As for Iraq, North Korea and other inhabitants of the axis of evil, will they really stop developing weapons of mass destruction, given the threat to turn them into the world's next targets for nuclear weapons? I think not. Mad regimes lead by the likes of Saddam Hussein and Kim Jong II thrive on being Washington's demon of the month. Both have shown that they care little for their own citizens, and much for the fear and hatred that their abhorrent behaviour inspires in western capitals. Replacing Osama Bin Laden on George W Bush's hate list is akin to a celebrity sports endorsement in the eyes of such reprehensible characters.

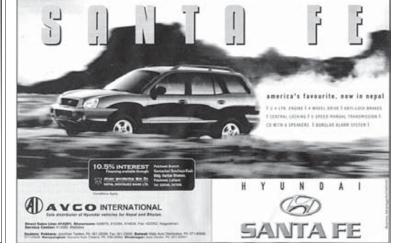
Captain Robert Lewis, co-pilot of the US Air Force B-29 that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, wrote in his logbook on 6 August, 1945. It was a simple sentence, one that resonates through history. "Oh my god, what have we done?" The unforgettable fire was unleashed upon the world and the current American government is now fanning the flames.



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accepted.





hose who expected the country's first legislative session sitting under a state of emergency to go into hibernation after the ratification roll call are fighting off their own sleep. The political atmosphere has been so electrified by clandestine pacts and

public commitments flying left, right and centre that even a momentary loss of concentration could leave you far behind on current affairs. The main opposition CPN-UML's eight-point constitution-amendment proposal has animated discussions both in terms of sound and substance With key comrades still jumping off their seats to cordon off the rostrum and firing off incendiary threats, we may rest assured that democracy is alive and kicking (How that ward chairman from Tapleiung who

sauntered into the opposition

pin provided reaffirmation during ese parlous times that parliamen still remains in the public domain.) The UML could be so definite about the articles it wants changed primarily because of the critical support it bestowed on a document drafted by a panel that included two of its senior leaders. In raising some

> On the question of amending the constitution, the UML is firmly against outsiders stepping on the toes of honourable legislators even if they happened to head or serve on the panel that drew up the draft. The newly reunified party is in such resounding unanimity on this matter that the tone of its deliberations has shot up several decibels. You might argue that raw ideology is at play here since all the noncommunist representatives that were on the drafting panel are almost uniformly arrayed against an amendment But here's the basic flaw in that contention: none of

security is probably under investiga-

tion. But he and his illusory lapel

questions and answering others, the

party has given us a refresher course in

civics at a time when our civil rights

stand suspended

them is an MP On the face of it, the UML has good reason to be outraged by the outpouring in favour of the status quo. How could the emergency stand in the way of amending the basic law when it hasn't stopped some people from demanding a constituent assembly? Moreover, the comrades and fellow travellers in the other

people on their side (Nepali Times/nepalnews.com weekly Internet poll #24). You have to delve deeper, however, to fathom the finer points. Given the composition of parliament today, an amendment represents a clear and present danger, while a constituent assembly is merely something in the realm of possibility. The case could be made that the assembly plea, therefore, enjoys greater free speech protection than the

That brings us to the crown

of the debate. Do we need the

palace's approval to alter a

document that stands on the

1990? The constitution was

promulgated when the palace

technically still wielded supreme

powers. Once it became the basic

law of the land, the people gained

the right to exercise sovereignty

through parliament. And Article

44 of the constitution describes

parliament as consisting of His

Majesty and the two chambers

Congress may get the two-thirds

The UML and the Nepali

Announcement

Primary Teacher Training Programme

Bato Hanga h School, together with Kath Manth Linker-

say and Dank Struck of age of Latitation in New York

announces a one year primary teacher certification

programme, to be annelied in May 2002. Selection of

Minage enclidates with a 1002 degree, or a 114 arc

encomaged to apply. The diguidated the programme

hes in the clase weave between theory and practice in

Fernis are beine distributed) Mondays thrench Fridays)

from 9,000 and to 2,000 pion, and deadline ter submission.

Cantillate will be entitles of

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of the four is 2nd of April

Rato Bangala School

tripartite compromise of April

amendment proposal, although these are not normal times. As for the majority of Nepalis in the poll who believe the constitution needs "tinkering", you have to acknowledge that the term cover everything between deleting the "let the people proliferate" phrase from the national anthem to a of the amendment entreaty? surgical overhaul of everything To be sure, the Bhadra 12, except the four unchangeable

2052 Supreme Court decision reinstating parliament went against the UML and our comrades have been waiting through split and synthesis fo their chance to spell out the prime minister's prerogatives in the constitution. But it's important to remember that the court verdict went in favour of the Nepali Congress (specifically, the current prime minister), RPP and Sadbhayana Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba may have made some commitments in parliament before putting the emergency order to a vote. But let's not overlook the context. Nepali Congress president Girija Prasad Koirala gave a speech so saturated with the UML's agenda that it forced Deuba's aides to redraft his address. Give the most circumspect of politicians a two hour parliamentary recess to rework a major policy speech and

The UML has drawn endless charges of opportunism for demanding an all-party election government and a national vernment during difficult times But aren't we being a little unfair here? The comrades may be genuinely worried about the sanctity of the ballot and convinced of the need for a wider political base for managing crises. Re-reading Madan Bhandari's statement on his party's critical support for the constitution, you ognise how far Nepali commu nists have travelled from the realm of rhetoric to the realism of politics. The UML could enrich the debate by describing where it stands on its 12-year-old reserva tions. The party retains the right, however, to dissociate itself from a statement Bhandari had made as the spokesman of what was then the CPN-MI.

Despite, MPs' clandestine pacts and public commitments there are other players who can influence constitutional change, including the people.

> parties have 61.9 percent of the majority by whipping their MPs and the people may feel constrained to observe the silence mandated by the emergency. But we have to take cognisance of precedent. The ill-fated citizenship amendment bill has shown how the palace and the Supreme Court can step in to give the people a voice repressed in the

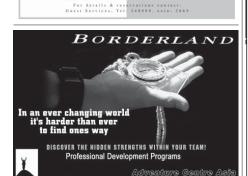
> > The national consensus on amending the constitution remains, at best, a notion. The Nepali Congress is divided along the lines of camp lovalty, the Rastriya Prajatantra Party wants elections based on proportional representation and Nepal Sadbhavana Party has a list of its own geographically concentrated grievances. How are we to reconcile these different versions

vo chambers

count how many slips he is apt to



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Mystery release

NEPALI ECONOMY

BIZ NEWS

Tulsi Ram Agarwal, a Biratnagar businessman, returned home last week after spending 40 days in captivity. Agarwal was abducted when out on his morning walk in his Biratnagar neigh bourhood. Government and Agarwal himself have divulged few details on the businessman's ordeal. Days before his release opposition MPs had charged Home Minister Khum Bahadur Khadka with protecting the alleged kidnapper, Umesh Giri, a resident of Biratnagar. Agarwal was held in India and some newspapers have said he was released upon payment of IRs10 million. Family sources have denied the reports.

Fertiliser policy

The government adopted a new policy on 28 February, which it says will help make sure there is enough fertiliser when the farmers need it most. The new policy requires government to assess and make public the quantity of all fertiliser stocks in the country six months before the cropping season. The government began privatising fertiliser imports and distribution in late 1997, but in the absence of effective regulation there have been shortages in supply even after the private sector joined the business. In 2000-01 the private sector imported 60 percent and the government-run Agricultural Implements Corporation, 40 percent of the total fertiliser used. Under the new policy all fertiliser importers have to be registered at the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives. The government is to make public international fertiliser prices and will require wholesalers to publicise the selling rates to ensure local fair pricing. The government will also require all fertiliser importers to maintain 20 percent stocks at all times to ensure availability.

Towards a cleaner Valley

There are to be no new brick kilns in the Valley. The government, concurring with the decision of the new Industrial Promotion Board, has decided not to permit any more traditional kilns in Kathmandu Valley until entrepreneurs come up with a less-polluting way to produce bricks. The board has also decided that kilns already operating in the Valley will have to install pollution control equipment within 18 months. The government has also decided that kilns operating without registration will be immediately shut down. The law allows the government to slap fines of up to Rs 500,000 on errant kiln owners or even order the closing of the factories. The government decision comes after the Lalitpur branch of the Small and Cottage Industries department refused last year to renew permits of 43 traditional brick-makers. Also recently, 16 kilns in Bhaktapur were penalised for operating without licenses.

Tourist count

Tourism numbers continue to tumble. Statistics compiled by the Nepal Tourism Board show that total arrivals in January and February were down by almost 47 percent, a continuation of last year's trend. Last month's total arrivals were down by almost 46 percent. Indian arrivals were low last year and continue to be so. A more worrying trend is the drop in third country tourists: the numbers dropped by 54 percent in January and 47 percent in February. Indian arrivals in January were down 24 percent, and in February had slumped by 41 percent.

Union Finance shares

Union Finance has begun distribution of the 240,000 shares it offered to the public late last month. Two of the four applicants who had applied to purchase 3,000 shares each are to receive 120 shares (par value Rs 100). Those seeking to purchase 50 shares are to get 10 each. The company received 22,819 valid applications

Words come easily

the player-in business, people who

practice graft always have an edge

Not surprisingly, this makes foreign

or even serious domestic investors

think twice about getting involved.

There are other eyewashes, too

such as the recent VDIS with its

threats of impounding property

At heart, graft isn't about politics or economics.

he Beed had a fit of the vapours last week on hearing what the prime minister said The investigations on wealth, he auggested, can begin with him. Bur then these words have always come easily to silver-tongued politicians, especially prime ministers who very so often want to convince an eternally susceptible public that they are serious about eradicating corruption in Nepal.

Graft, like culture isn't a statio ntity. It, too, changes and evolves. Look at our own country. The advent of multiparty democracy centralised graft and expanded its purview evond the elite group it was restricted to in the panchavat days. Since one of our sources of national oride is the frequent display of our ability to amass wealth and show it off in

creative ways, we need to honour graft—it is the quickest way to wealth. Consider, for example, a civil servant always complaining o having to pay high tuition fees for children-in the United States, A bureaucrat like this is often known to get healthcare at the better entres in neighbouring countries throw lavish family parties, drink only the best scotch and maintain a lifestyle that always embraces the latest, best, biggest. He will also manage to do all this on the meagre salary he is supposed to earn. But because some of these things start to seem like necessities when you see them around quite often, he can manage to persuade you that it is

simply necessary for him to practice the art and craft of graft.

No one minces words or feels the slightest bit uncomfortable pointing fingers at the politicians and bureaucracy who have institutionalised graft. But here's the thing: surely they aren't the only ones responsible for perpetuating corruption and making it accent able. Who gives them money and fancy gifts? Who pays a lot every month for buildings or vehicles

owned by the family of politicians

their deficit financing? The givers,

to this Beed, are as responsible as

To ever try and wean us as a

need to also tackle the givers.

there is any is short-term and

short-lived. The public sector,

including the government, is the

wooing these buyers has always

community encourages graft the

greedier they make the takers. And

there is no semblance of a level

playing field, no matter how serious

and bureaucrats? Who bridges

the takers

Thank heaven that is over The current head of the anti graft commission, the Commission for the Abuse of Authority, has brought the institution some credibility. Now he needs

to be given more powers and the authority to bite The CIAA has been round for some time, i ust needed investigation Instead a new indicial commission has been set up. Is investigating graft and property an area of expertise of the judiciary Sure, its involvement add:

some credibility to the process, but such investigations are a specialised discipline in themselves, and around the world anti-graft campaigns nvolve people, accountants, auditors, even fraud experts.

nation from this awful habit, we The heart of the problem is that tackling graft can never be Business in Nepal is dominated by brought down to politics or rading, and the vision involved, if economics. It's about morals. As long as we remain addicted to short cuts, we don't have a chance in hell of even touching largest consumer in the country and the graft culture. Alternatively we could teach our children been easy. The more the business better, maybe even run adult education classes.

> Readers can post their views at arthabeed@vahoo.com

"How does private investment impact on social development?"





dhartha Rana recently took over as Chairman of the Soaltee Group from his father. He received the Global Leader For Tomorrow 2001 Award at the World Economic Forum last year in Davos. He attended the WEF meeting in New York last month, and spoke to Nepali Times about the Forum, and its message for countries like Nepa

Nepali Times: Why New York?

Siddhartha Rana: One of the unique features of this year's annual meeting is that it was held in New York instead of Dayos for the first time in over 30 years. This was largely a show of support and resilience post-11 September. Although it was planned for Davos, the forum chose to move the venue along with making changes to the agenda.

Arenít these meetings getting a bit elitist, and unabashedly proalobalisation?

Partly true. But the original reason for the annual WEF meeting is still valid. The rapid growth of the global communications, information technology and international business in the second half of the 20th century increased the need for a common platform where various sections of society are brought together to consider and advance the key issues on the global agenda. The WEF is that platform.

And in the course of three decades, the Forum has grown from a small European economic conference into a unique, member-based institution comprised of the foremost 1,000 corporations in the world The Annual Meeting in Dayos has become the premier meeting of world leaders in business, government and civil society to address the issues and challenges confronting humanity.

But how does a meeting like this address the genuine concerns of those disenfranchised by economic globalisation?

I think there is now a realisation that the events shaping the world and influences on society today require a paradigm shift in the way that we address the issue of globalisation. There needs to be a radical formula that affects change for equity and a more even improvement of living standards around the world

And how is the WEF going to do that? Among the things discussed were ways of attracting capital inflows in

a risk-averse environment: basically dealing with restoring investor confidence and avoiding the herd mentality. This is something that has some practicality in Nepal's present investment climate. An economic and development crisis is a factor in conflict, but the conflict and instability in turn prevents new investment. It is a catch-22 situation. We were trying to re-think the role of the IMF and the World Bank, even a radical redesign in their way of functioning. After Argentina, there are questions about their role.

And there is also the question about why developing countries must

borrow and service their debt when past borrowings have either been returned to the donor through intermediaries, or corruption and bad governance meant that the money was never spent on development And when states fail, where can the international community step in to rebuild them and restore domestic order?

How about issues like migration?

There is a recognition of the need to define citizenship in an era of migration, dealing with international demographic issues. There is recognition that these things are all interlinked. People are migrating because of failed development, instability and lack of investment. So how do you link the global social investment market so that private nvestment makes an impact on social development projects around the

How much has the 11 September attack been instrumental in changing thinking in these areas?

The very fact that the WEF meeting took place in New York was proof that the roots of the global crisis are recognised. CEOs need to become statesmen and leaders beyond just business. We need to bridge religious divides internationally, within regions and in countries. We have to create a deeper dialogue among faiths and the search for common values. Then there is the more immediate need to address the problem of terrorism and international laws to tackle them

Was the need to bridge the gap between and within nations also

Yes, we looked at the digital divide, how technology can be used to support development, and especially a look at the education and health gap. A more immediate issue was the need to break patents so the sick n poor countries can afford cheaper generic versions of drugs. Then there was the issue of philanthropy and how it can be made more effective globally: the need to bridge the gap of inequalities where everyone has a role and a responsibility

/pə'tertəu/



From the Andes to the Himalaya, the lowly spud is king of the table.

In places like Nepal and Bhutan, the big promoters of potatoes in the 18th entury were monastic groups. Robert Rhoades, n anthropologist and former Peace Corp volunteer to Nepal, believes neself fed a less onerous

hat potatoes made keeping time-consuming task, as a result of which people in monastic communities had more time to devote to arts and craft. The influence of potatoes on the eating public ere goes even further. The

development of the spud in this country might be said to have paralleled that of the Nepali nation state. The first recorded reference to potatoes in Nepal is, after all, in 1793. (See box) Given that tatoes only reached the Old World from their birthplace in the Andes in the 17th century, many Nepalis probably had their first taste of the tuber and nationhood about the same time. Coincidence We think not. A decade after Colonel Kirkpatrick wrote of the notato in Nepal, in 1803 another British traveller, Francis Buchanan

Other potato researchers will

tell you that more than anything

into the Himalaya, had a massive

else, the introduction of the potato

impact on the population growth in

the region. "Like in Europe," says

Dr. Aleiandro Camino, a Pennian

in mountain regions like Manang and Khumbu But make no mistake. Here in Nepal we have a real reverence for Hamilton wrote thus in An the potato. So, you say, do denizens Account of the Kingdom of Nepal of lands that can't do without their and of the Territories Annexed to daily meat-and-potato fix. But this this Dominion by the House of Gorkha: "In the hilly parts of the is different. Plain boiled spuds can be delicious, it is true, as are fries, country (Solanum tuberosum) has but it takes a particularly obsessive been introduced, and grows evil genius to do things as diverse to tolerably; but it does not thrive so the potato as we do here_the well as at Patna, owing probably to delicate reek of aloo tama or that a want of care ' Originally cultivated in Peru gem of gustatory inspiration along to achar, the complex flavours

watering yet? People in Palpa are proud of their *aloo chykauni*, plains Nepalis enjoy *aloo bhujiya* with roti, those iving in the highlands salivate over aloo bhat and aloo daal. Sometimes even better on a cold, dark winter's day is plain usineko aloo, boiled potatoes with marcha—chillies unded with salt and garlic.

aloo masyaora or the beautifully

simple aloo dum. Your mouths

Nepalis tend not to wax too

eloquent on the beauties of the

spud, but catch them on a sunny

carbohydrate a la potato, and they

can put up a decent show. Unfortu-

nately, their imagination and tuber

related vocabulary runs out after

they meditate on the powdery,

delectable taste of potatoes grown

winter afternoon, well-fed on

In the realm of the soud Nepal might well be tops—the French have been trying for centuries to do something innovative with the tuber king and have managed one decent item, a potato souffle made with milk and a nice Gravere Food writer and philosopher MFK Fisher writes in The Gastronomi cal Me that the first time she ate one of these, it was like a revelation (Although what is French about French Fries, we never quite figured out.) Potatoes had until then always seemed underdressed Nepal's achievement

academic with the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), "the root crop produced a population explosion." The introduction of potatoes to the highlands allowed communities to move higher, and also stay through the winter in their high-altitude homes. This, in a way, is exactly why the

potatoes in Nepal as early as

1960) to motivate Nepali farmer

in the mid-hills and high hills of

Nepal to store standard potato

seeds in rustic stores at 6,000 ft.

"It meant that Nepali farmers

wouldn't have to rely on potato

India," says Risal "The culture

among Nepali farmers has always

been to use the good produce for

their own consumption and store

increases the probability of a bad

crop." Degenerative seeds from

India and Nepal's not-so-strict

quarantine rules also affected

Nepal's potato vield. The project

did was build rustic stores across

Morang, Sunsari and Panchthar in

the country, in Ilam, Letang in

the east. Dolakha in the centre.

Kaski and Surkhet in the western

and middle west development

regions, and taught farmers to

store quality seeds to ensure a next

these attempts have borne fruit that

is visible till today

generation of fine potatoes. Most of

The Potato Research Program

currently recommends six varieties

of spuds for Nepal. That may

the okay ones for seed. This

seeds entering from neighbouring

Potato Research Program was set up in 1991, to increase the production of potato to feed a rapidly growing population. It produces clean seeds through tissue culture, educates farmers to improve traditional seed practice, and is even experimenting with growing potatoes from the seeds of the flower and not the tuber, as is traditionally done. Every year, the centre distributes 200,000 disease-free seeds germinated in its laboratory. "This may be peanuts considering the demand. But these are good quality seeds and it's the initial first step to flush out the use of degenerated seeds," says Khatri.

After rice, maize and wheat, potato production in Nepal is fourth in terms of area coverage. In terms of productivity, however, the miracle tuber is first in terms of production per unit area. But we have some catching up to do— Nepal could grow 125 tons per

seem like nothing compared with the 4,000-odd strains that the hectare, it manages less than a Peru-based International Potato tenth of that. Centre classified there, but then Things have changed beyond the potato is intertwined with the belief in the last 20 years. "Until 15 very origins of Peru. Legend has it years ago, there were some Nepalis that when the first Inca ruler Manco Capác and his wife who had never eaten potatoes, but on the whole, now, much of Nepal has some sort of potato diet. It's one of the few crops that can be grown the year round," says Bhairab

Mama Ocllo emerged from Lake Tititica to found the Inca empire, the first thing the god Wirachocha taught them was to plants potato fields. and the temperate climate of the Risal, a communica-Andes, the potato found its way to tions expert. In the Europe via the Spanish conquista-1980s Risal was dors in the 17th century. Research involved in a Swi is divided over whether it was the Portuguese or the Spanish who first introduced the potato to India shortly thereafter. Today, India is one of the world's largest producers of potato, after China, "The British in India grew the potato in their kitchen gardens in summer hill stations like Shimla and Darjeeling It probably arrived in Ilam via Darieeling and to western Nepal via Shimla and Naintal through seasonal migrants," says Bhim Bahadur Khatri, a horticulturist wirh the Potato Research Program at the National Agriculture Research Centre (NARC) in Khumaltar. "Potatoes in the Valley probably arrived via Patna."

> Potato harvest in Peru (left), and a vegetable vendor in Kathmandu this week with different types of potatoes.

Aloo ko achar

Ingredients ½ pound potatoes 1/2 cup sesame seeds 1/2 teaspoon fenugreek seeds

1/2 teaspoon chook or 1 teaspoon mango powder

pan without using any grease until they start to pop, then grind them in a blender. Mix potatoes, sesame powder, salt and chilli powder. Squeeze the lemons into this mixture. turmeric. Add to the notato mixture with a very small quantity of water

Time required: 15-50 minutes

Sukhe aloo

1 onion



1/2 teaspoon turmeric 1/2 teaspoon salt ½ teaspoon chilli powder 2 tablesnoon mustard oil

Juice from 2 lemons or

Roll the notatoes. Peel and cut each into eight pieces. Roast sesame seeds lightly in a Heat the mustard oil in a small pan and fry fenugreek seeds until they blacken, then fry the

1 pound potatoes 3 tablespoons butter



1/4 teaspoon cumin seed

Wash, peel and quarter potatoes. Heat butter and brown onion. Add cumin, turmeric coriander, and potatoes. Mix well and fry for ten minutes on low heat, stirring frequently Cook till potatoes are done, adding salt and chilli 10 minutes before they are cooked

Time required: 35-40 minutes Serves: Two-four persons

Aloo Raita

2 cups yoghurt

1/4 cun tomatoes sliced 1/2 cup teaspoon cumin seeds (dry fry and powder)

pinch of black pepper

pinch of chilli pepper 1 tablespoon chopped coriander leaves

Boil potatoes, peel and cut into fine pieces. Mix with tomatoes. Beat yoghurt smooth, add cumin powder, salt and pepper, Fold into tomatoes and potatoes, Garnish with chilli powder and coriander leaves

Time required: Five minutes

From The Joys of Nepalese Cooking

Nepaul, that our most es-

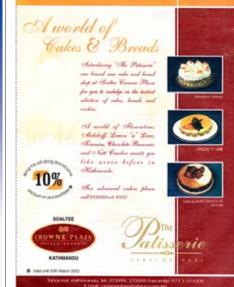
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teemed kitchen vegetables did not only grow there in much higher perfection than in Bengal, but that the propaga tion of them was annually continued from their own seed whereas the short duration of our cold season admits but of a scanty and degenerate produce not to be depended upon. My disappointment. therefore, was very great on finding the fact otherwise, and on being assured that they could not raise even potatoe without procuring every year from Patna fresh roots for sowing: I think it extremely probable, however, that their failure in this respect has been occasioned solely by want of attention or skill, having no doubt, for my own part, that with proper management, there are few of our hortulan productions whether fruit, flower, or herb, which might not be successfully reared, and abundantly multiplied, either in the valley of Nepaul itself, or in one or other of the numerous situations adjacent to it. The only kitchen vegetables we met with here were cabbages and peas, both of which were of the worst kind. cannot raise it, any more than the potatoe, without renewing

> Colonel Kirkpatrick in An Account of the Kingdom or Nepaul, A Mission to that Country in the Year 1793.

the seed annually.







dense Some are round smooth

grooved and tender. Some have a

inside. There is an infinite variety,

black skin, and others are white

wide range of tastes! And the

its side like the face of an

yellow potato—that poem— delicate, fine, with tiny holes in

RAMYATA LIMBII

dán Felipe Mejía, Peruvian

poet and philosopher,

array of potatoes in the world thus

There are enormous sandy

potatoes with delicate hues and

noble shape. Some are oval and

describes some of the vast

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Spreading Liberalism

LONDON - Leaders from Liberal parties in 70 countries will meet this year in Budanest from 21-23 March, says Lord Alderdice, deputy president of Liberal International, the global wing of the British Liberal Democrat party. The annual conference, focusing this year on good governance, has been increasing in significance in recent years because of growing membership and a growing political profile. "Only a democratic, open society can produce wealth and assure even distribution of it." said Lord Alderdice. The success of Liberal parties in several countries gives new strength to the Liberal movement, Liberal parties are in government in Canada, Belgium, Denmark, Taiwan and Senegal. In the EU, Liberal Pat Cox is president of the European Parliament and Liberal Romano Prodi heads the European Commission In the second half of this year Denmark takes presidency of the European Council. There is no sharp definition, however, of what constitutes a Liberal party. "We share common values of freedom, justice and democracy," said Lord Navnit Dholakia, president of the Liberal Democrats in Britain. True Liberalism means "not just Liberal ideas but a Liberal heart," added Lord Alderdice, Jan Weijers, secretary-general of Liberal International, said the conference was important because "freedom, democracy and human rights are not by-products of economic development, they are essential preconditions for economic development "This year Helen Suzman, the Liberal member from South Africa, will be given The 2002 Liberal International Prize for Freedom for her lifelong fight against apartheid in South Africa. (IPS)

NGOs practice self-help

PARIS - In the last fortnight, international humanitarian aid has been besieged by allegations ranging from forced sexual relations to imposing a business model on helping the poor. Sylvie Brunel, a leading French humanitarian activist, announced her resignation last Thursday as president of the French humanitarian organisation Action Contre La Faim (Action against hunger, ACF), She accused aid organisations of squandering most of the money they collect from donations in lavish administrative and representation expenses. Brunel says NGOs have become a business, in which criteria of profitability, high salaries and travel and representation allowances for their administrators in Europe and North America are more important than real assistance to people on the field

Brunel's criticism of the way NGOs work comes a week after a report by the UNHCR and Save the Children Fund, unveiled that 67 activists from 40 humanitarian aid organisations might have been blackmailing teenagers in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia, offering food in exchange for sexual relations. Earlier reports revealed racketin practices by a criminal ring acting within the UNHCR in Kenya. Rony Brauman, former president of Nobel Peace Prize winner Medecins sans Frontieres, believes sexual abuses of victims of wars and famines are possible. "Similar cases took place in Cambodia during the 1980s, and more recently, in Somalia and in Bosnia," Brauman said, However, Brauman pointed out that it was not fair to discredit all the good work being done by genuine humanitarians, including soldiers, international officials and volunteer workers. (IPS)

How to save old cities

SANTIAGO - The historic district of the Chilean port city of Valparaíso, an aspirant for the status of UNESCO Heritage of Humanity site, could recover the neighbourhood life it once had, thanks to an incentive plan for the purchase of old buildings. The government has launched the Heritage Rehabilitation Subsidy which grants \$6,000 towards the purchase of houses built prior to 1959 located in the historic area of this city on Chile's Pacific coast. Valparaíso, 120 km west of Santiago with a population of 280,000, is famed for its labyrinthine passages, steep stairways and 15 inclined elevators that carry residents up the city's steep slopes and are on the list of 100 endangered monuments in the world. The financial incentive is aimed at salvaging real estate in the original central neighbourhood and some hillside districts part of the potential Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This is the second time that an application for designating Valparaíso a Cultural Heritage of Humanity site has been sent to LINESCO in Paris. Chile's Education Minister Mariana Avlwin, in presenting the UNESCO nomination form in January said it was done in response to citizens' demands and was proof of commitment to preserve the city. Valparaíso was the main Pacific port for centuries, until the Panama Canal was built to unite the Old and Nev Worlds. The city sits on the coast of a broad bay charted in 1536 by



activity, has been the lack of a municinal policy to preserve and restore the older structures, complain citizens' groups. Demolitions continue and new buildings are being constructed, including a supermarket inside the historic district's boundaries, near the main church, which dates to 1842. But the house purchase subsidy, which intends to turn the port city into the country's cultural centre, is seen as a positive step that could help rehabilitate the older areas of the city and prevent the loss of buildings of architectural significance. Chile already has a presence on the UNESCO Cultural Heritage list, with 14 churches on Chiloé Island, in the extreme south, and with the National Rapa Nui Park, on Easter Island. (IPS)

Unended recessional



Tomorrow's disorder might be vesterday's colonial order.

imbabwe's crists has the countries unsettling feeling of déjav
The reason is clear: it is, imbabwe's crisis has incited an unsettling feeling of déja vu. thankfully, no longer fashionable to decry colonialism's evils in assigning blame for every national misfortune The imperial statues are toppled, citie and streets renamed, the vestiges of foreign rule either abandoned or adapted. With the sole exception of Zimbabwe, no leading politician in any post-imperial country has made notable speech in recent years attacking colonialism. That great staple of political rhetoric appears to have been buried across the developing world.

Internationally, colonialism is even more passé. Ónce, the votaries of one kind of new international order or another decried the evils of imperialism (sometimes, but not always, refixed with a "neo-") in justifying demands for a more just dispensation That theme has died out in diplomatic discourse. Yet followers of world affairs would be unwise to consign colonial-ism to the proverbial dustbin of

Residual problems from the end of the earlier era of colonisation, usually the result of untidy exits by the colonial power, remain dangerously stalemated Fast Timor, 199 remains fresh in memory, and difficulties linger. But at least closure seems in sight, unlike other messy

legacies of European colonialism: the western Sahara, Cyprus, and Palestine. Fuses lit in the colonial era could reignite as they have done to everyone? surprise, between Ethiopia and Éritrea. where war broke out over a colonial border that Italy's occupiers failed to define precisely. In Zimbabwe, colonial land ownership patterns that gave most of the viable farmland to white settlers are at least one root of th

country's current crisis.

Colonialism's indirect results Iso matter. The intellectual history of colonialism is littered with many a wilful cause of recent conflict. One is careless anthropology: Belgium's classification of Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda and Burundi, which reified a distinction that had not existed before, still haunts Africa's Great Lakes region. A related problem arises from sociology: how much bloodshed, for instance, do we owe to the British invention of "martial races" in India? One can never overlook the old colonial administrative habit of "divide and rule, xemplified, again, by British polic in South Asia after 1857, which led almost inexorably to the tragedy of Partition. Such distinctions weren't merely pernicious; they were often characterised by an unequal distribu-

tion of the resources of the state withi

a colonial society. Belgian colonialists

favoured Tutsis, leading to Hutu

Boundaries drawn in colonial times, even if unchanged after independence, still create problems especially in Africa. Where colonial constructions force disparate peoples together by the arbitrariness of a

rejection of them as alien interlopers Sinhalese resentment of Tamil privileges in colonial-era Sri Lanka prompted the discriminatory policies after independence that fuelled the

A "mixed" colonial history within

one modern state is also a potential

source of danger. When a state has

Tamil revolt

more than one colonial past, its future trophying state systems. is vulnerable. Ethnicity or language We will not create a better world hardly seem to be a factor in the n the 21st century by forgetting wha secessions (one recognised, the other not) of Eritrea from Ethiopia and the happened in the 19th and much of the 20th Our responses to the dangers "Republic of Somaliland" from emerging from the legacies of the past needn't be rooted in the past. There is Somalia. Rather, it was different a greater need than ever before for colonial experiences (Italian rule in Eritrea, British rule in Somaliland) innovative, forward-looking apthat set them off, at least in their own proaches to global governance. As we self-perceptions, from the rest of their embark upon the still-new millenethnic compatriots. A similar case can nium, it seems ironically clear that be made about the former Yugoslavia, tomorrow's possible disorder might where lands that existed under Austro be due, in no small part, to yesterday's Hungarian rule for 800 years were colonial order. I have no wish to give joined to lands that spent almost as politicians in post-colonial countries long under Ottoman suzerainty. The whose leadership has been found war that erupted in 1991 in no small wanting any reason to find excuses in measure pitted those parts that had the past for their own failures. But to been ruled by the German-speaking understand possible future source empires against those that avoided of conflict, the best crystal ball may be a rear-view mirror. ♦ (Project such colonisation.

> (Shashi Thamor is a senior LIN official and the author, most recently, of the novel Riot. These are his personal views.)

becomes elusive. Older tribal and clan

lovalties in Africa were manufed by the

boundaries drawn, in distant cities like

Berlin for colonially-created states

whose post-independence leaders

needed to invent new traditions and

national identities. The result was the

myths, as artificial as the countries

cannot command genuine patriotic

allegiance from their citizenry

colonialism is another source of

conflict. The collapse of effective

and Somalia-could unleash a

torrent of alarming possibilities

Underdevelopment in pos

The uneven development of infra-

structure as a result of priorities

colonial societies itself causes conflict

skewed to benefit colonialists can lead

to unevenly distributed resources.

which can increase social fissures.

Underdevelopment in many countrie

of the South, which are faring poorly in their struggle to remain viable in a

globalising world, creates conditions of

desperate poverty, ecological collapse

populations beyond the control of

and rootless, unemployed

in a welter of conflict

central governments-manifested in

recent years in Sierra Leone, Liberia

because "weak states," particularly in

Africa, seem vulnerable to collapsing

they mythologise, which all-too-often

manufacture of unconvincing political

UN-set target. The NGOs reserved their strongest condemnation for Germany, and other member states such as Greece, Spain, Austria and Italy that give well below the EU average. These countries would prefer the EU to reiterate its call for a "sizable increase" in aid rather than commit to specific timetables and argue that more attention should be given to how the aid is spent, rather than the amount of aid. The ompromise is also opposed by the four EU members that already give

commit itself to an increase in development aid, a senior US official said Tuesday. "Monterrey is not going to be a pledging session," said Alan P Larson, undersecretary of state for economic, business, and agricultural affairs. The official said Bush would be going "for the political task of forging consensus and commitment around approaches", and to drum up support for the US position on develop ment. Washington, a key player in development aid, has already proposed that half of all development loans be converted to grants. It argues that previous loans by international institutions, like the World Bank, failed to improve health, education, sanitation and other services for the poor in the developing world. The US suggests that those grants be tied to concrete results in improving education, health, water and sanitation. If developing countries fail to succeed in fighting poverty, no more money would be disbursed. Other industrialised nations have declined to back the proposal saying it overlooks past achievements in the fight against poverty and may dent the existing international development system and institutions. • (IPS)

Thaksingate

MARWAAN MACAN-MARKAR BANGKOK - Thailand's independent

media have been shedding their political differences to challenge the government's latest measures at silencing its critics in the press and or the airwayes Since last Thursday newspapers across the ideological spectrum have given blanket front page coverage to stunning revelations about efforts by an anti-money laundering government agency to investigate the finances of prominent ioumalists who have been critical of the Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. The English-language Th Nation newspaper faces the brunt of these investigations by the Anti-Money Laundering Office (AMLO), an arm of the government that has powers to look into seven types of violations. The violations are prostitution, drug trafficking, public fraud, banking fraud, state corruption extortion and tax evasion. Headlines like "Savage! Gestano

Government," "Disgraceful govern

Review. Thaksin was portraved in

poor light in the article, which talked

about relations between him and the

condemned the government and came

out in support of the journalists, but

regional human rights lobby Forum

anguage media," adds Sunai. "They

aw it as an issue of nationalism of

oreigners versus Thais, not as

What prompted a different

response this time are three distinct

actors: the modus operandi of the

Thaksin government to intimidate its

critics, the fact that journalists under

urveillance were all Thais, and the

Brother tactics According to

mplications that arise due to such Big

Kulachada Chaipipat of the South-east

Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA), the

because if Thai journalists don't

crosses swords with the prime

government's latest action "hits home

oppose it now, any one of them who

nedia suppression."

Thai monarchy "Some sections

there were others who backed

Thaksin," says Sunai Phasuk,

Asia. "Most who backed the

government were in the Thai

researcher at the Bangkok-based

ment" and "Dictatorship is possible, moustache or no moustache" appeared in three Thai-language newspapers. Media is questioning the government's unwarranted use of the AMLO to go into the bank accounts of 14 iournal ists from The Nation and two other media groups. By early this week, close to 800 journalists had signed a petition calling on parliament to nvestigate the latest efforts by the ruling party, CCC, to intimidate media Says Chayamno Limpattamapanee, secretary general of the Thai Journalists Association (TTA), "Even normally conservative newspapers are joining this effort." The last such display of unity among the local media was in the early 1990s,

which helped check the dictatorial acts of the military regime at the time and nave the way for a following the country's bloody oup in 1992. Just run weeks ann Thai media was divided on the debate raging after the Thaksin government decided o revoke the visas of two oreign correspondnts for an article in the Far Eastern Economic

> The Thai prime minister's crackdown on media has rekindled memories of a not-sodistant authoritarianism.

minister can be subject to such "unfair abuse". The Nation, in a front-page commentary Friday, likened the use of the AMLO to intimidate journalists to media suppression in the Philippines under the late Ferdinand Marcos. In Thursday editorial the Rangkok Post stated, "The latest assault on press freedoms, by digging into the wholly private matters of media companies and journalists, is frighteningly reminiscent of those too recent dark ages of military and civilian dictator ship (in Thailand)," Prime Minister Thaksin has responded to the revelations in a predictable manner denving that he ordered the investiga tion. "I can reassure you that I don" know anything about this," But that has hardly convinced his detractors

"Only the foolish and the gullible

Laundering Office is acting on its own

could believe the Anti-Money

initiative," the Bangkok Post editorial

Thaksin's government has a recore of forcing the independent media to submit to its whims since it came to ower in January last year, despite the Thai constitution's guarantee of rights like freedom of expression. Only this month, the country's defence department forced the cancellation of a political programme on radio. The government agency that regulates proadcasting forced a cable television operator to suspend a talk show that is ften critical of the government. Prior to that, the Thaksin government stopped the distribution in Thailand f two international news magazines, attempted to secure favourable coverage in the local media by applying economic pressure and backroom deals and got critical voices in a television station removed • (IPS)

'Nein' to Afghanistan?

BERLIN - With Germans deeply ambivalent over their country's military involvement in Afghanistan, the deaths of two German soldiers in Kabul has led to renewed soul-search ing. The deaths took place just as the Afghan government and the UN indicated a desire to extend the role of the international neacekeening force in Kahul. Two German soldiers and three Danes were killed this week during a munitions defusing operation in Kabul. They were the first casualties from either country in a week that also saw nine US servicemen lose their lives in the latest offensive against al-Oaeda in eastern Afghanistan. The incident has shocked the German public and brought to the fore the risks of military involvement just days after UN secretary-general Kofi Annan, on a visit to Berlin, had called for international forces to stay in Afghanistan beyond June, the originally agreed six month term for the peacekeeping force. Afghan president Hamid

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Karzai arrived in Berlin on 13 March to convince the international security force to expand its mandate to cover cities and get NATO troops to stay

beyond the six month period originally agreed at the Bonn

meeting in December when Afghanistan's interim government was appointed. This will require approval from the German parliament which last November approved the current contingent of 3,900 troops after a knife-edge vote.

The mood in Germany has sobered considerably since. with pacifist Green party members, who form the junior partner in the ruling coalition with chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's Social Democrats, particularly opposed to any greater involvement. Schroeder emphasised that the soldiers did not die "in combat" but while carrying out a mission "with neaceful intentions" "What hannened had nothing to do with military conflict," he added. The deaths came on the heels of accusations that the defence ministry was withhold ing information that the elite German force KSK, numbering about 100, had been secretly operational in eastern Afghani stan's combat zone despite previous government assurances that German troops would not be involved directly in conflict to root out al-Qaeda supporters holed up in caves. A defence ministry announcement this week says Germany is willing to take over "tactical leadership" of part of the UN peacekeeping force in Afghanistan with Turkev likely to hold overall leadership of the force when Britain gives up its command in April. Germany had been mooted to take over command after the British leave in April but Schroeder said Germany's peacekeeping commitments in the Balkans did not allow it to take on these duties. Matters have also not heen helped by Washington's desire to extend the war against terrorism to Iraq, causing more consternation in Germany. In recent weeks discussion programmes on German television have featured sharp criticism of US foreign policy from both sides of the German political

Keeping India going

will likely rise in the year ahead. Some 20 percent of India's expenditure already goes to defence, up 12 percent from fiscal year 2000/2001, and there is a risk the government's budget deficits may hit unmanageable levels, threatening the hard-won growth of the last decade. India's expenditure on defence was rising even before 11 September—in fiscal 2001/2002, the government budgeted \$15.2 billion for defence, up 12 percent from the previous year. India's government must make hard choices to maintain its reputation for economic reform

India's market -friendly reforms in the early 1990s put the economy on a higher growth trajectory. Average real GDP growth hit 6 percent over the las decade, compared with under 4 percent average annual growth in previous decades. Inflation remained in single digits and despite mushrooming fiscal deficits, economic growth became more stable. The global technology boom helped-India's own "new economy" had a big impact on its export structure high-tech exports surged from 16 percent growth in 1995-96 to 53.5 percent in 2000-01. But as elsewhere, high-tech was no magic bullet, old-fashioned infrastructure bottlenecks lingered, cramping private sector expansion

Though reform bolstered economic growth by improving productivity in the non-agricultural economy, the living standards of the poor didn't improve much. Over 65 percent of Indian workers earn their livelihood on the land, but as the economy adjusted to the reforms, the capital available for government investment in agriculture fell, and it remained as dependent as ever on erratic monsoon rains

and production became even more volatile. This should perhaps have been expected in the government's rush to modernise; unexpected was the government's increasing reliance on dubious fiscal strategies. Fiscal deficits have been growing at unsustainable levels-domestic indebtedness was 36.8 percent of GDP in the fiscal 2000/2001, compared to 25.7 percent in 1997-98. The combined fiscal deficit of central and state governments now exceeds 10 percents of GDP, a key risk in the eyes of interna tional rating agencies. Both Standard and Poor and Moody's downgraded India's sovereign creditworthiness by revising the outlook on long-term foreign-currency debt from stable to negative, and from positive to stable respectively.

Trimming the deficit is the government's biggest challenge, yet it consistently fails even to make cuts promised in past budgets, and has been unable to speed up privatisation (which would add to government revenue), partly due to barriers thrown up by India's bureaucracy. These problems are not made in Delhi exclusively. India's central government has mostly managed to hit its deficit

Increased defence spending and dubious fiscal policies could undermine a decade of increased growth.

targets in recent years, but state finances have deteriorated greatly, draining overall government finance. This isn't due to declining revenues, but sharp increases in expenditure (such as wages, subsidies, interest payments and defence spending), which don't boost growth the way government capital expenditur can. This growing fiscal deficit has created a higher monetarised deficit, inciting greater inflationary pressures. For a while, the government turned to an improved local bond market, which helped reduce borrowing from the central bank. But state incursions into capital markets are crowding out the private sector's ability to borrow.

India must cut government expenditures on consumption and speed up privatisation. But fiscal prudence will be hard, with the non-agricultural sectors of the economy declining and external trade and the balance of payments weakening due to the global economic slowdown. The downward spiral in economic activity means banks are flush with liquidity, supporting a rally in the domestic bond market, as the slump in domestic demand drags down demand for bank credit. During an economic downtum, domestic banks find government bonds a safe place to park their money, making it easier for the government to finance its

India's reform agenda was all about reorienting the government's role in the nomy: improving efficiency by minimising unnecessary state intervention thus freeing the private sector to raise long-term economic growth. That agenda remains unfinished, and India now needs to do more than just consolidate its decade of reform. The lax monetary policy environment of recent years has prorelatively efficient in supporting growth, but greater fiscal discipline is needed to increase private investment. Faster liberalisation, is essential for India to achieve the growth rates-7-8 percent-that can improve the lives of its poor. Only growth on that scale can provide the government the money it needs to increase spending on education and health as it increases defence spending Only investments in human capital can sustain the long-term growth India

(Sushanta Mallick is research fellow in International Economics, Royal Institute of International Affairs London)

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Money trouble

BRUSSELS - The UN Financing for Development conference that begins 18 March in the northern Mexican city of Monterrey, is already running into trouble. Radical activists say the event will be a "farce" because its final document, allegedly imposed by the United States, prescribes "more economic neo-liberalism". They also fear European leaders may go without any concrete promises to raise aid levels. And in the meantime, the US and Europe can't agree on the size of aid or the Bush administration's proposal to turn loans into grants linked to performance.

The Spanish Presidency of the EU has proposed a compromise for its member states that says all countries which haven't reached the UN target of devoting 0.7 percent of their GDP to development aid, should individually undertake to increase the level over the next four years. within the limits set by their budgetary constraints. NGOs expect EU leaders will only deliver a "strongly worded, light on substance statement" at their meeting in Barcelona this weekend. Spanish Foreign Affairs Minister, Josep Piqué, pointed out that that the EU and its member states are still by far the biggest donor, giving more than 50 percent of global development aid. The European Commission proposes that EU countries that allocate less than the EU average, 0.33 percent of their GDP to official development assistance should reach this percentage by 2006 as an interim step to reaching the 0.7 percent

0.7 percent or more of their budgets for development (Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden and Luxembourg), because it is too weak.

The United States for its part has announced that it will not



The government says it has imposed the emergency to control the Maoist terrorists. But has the emergency been directed to that end? The Maoists say they don't abide by this constitution. They say they want to reject the present parliamentary system and existing laws and have even announced a parallel government. The existing laws and constitution don't affect them, and because they don't accept the state, the emergency will not affect them either. The emergency is instead affecting those who accept the constitution, such as political parties, civil society, social organisations and people at large. The civil liberties given by the constitution have been curtailed only for those who believe in and work under the present statute, not the Maoists. So if the desired effects don't reach the targeted group, why should we allow our rights to be curtailed?

Nowhere has an armed conflict such as this been esolved by other than political means. After 18 years of an ethnic liberation movement Sri Lanka now has a ceasefire. Ours is also a class struggle, so it is unlikely the problem can be resolved by only mobilising the army. The constitution allows an emergency to be imposed for

a maximum of one year. What are we going to do if the problem is not resolved even in this time frame? There is no provision to extend the emergency thereafter. The army says it could take time to come to a resolution and that political efforts should also be underway. So how can [government] shut the doors to a political solution and say that the emergency and the involvement of the army will solve the problem. We need to re-open the political doors and go to talks with an alternative proposal. There is no reason to endorse something that has no justification and will only restrict the rights of the people. Likewise, the country's revenue has also been hit by the emergency, and we'll see those effects next year.

The government was unable to present an alternative proposal during talks with the Maoists. It only said let's work under this constitution and also form an interim government. Where is the provision to form an interim government under this constitution? The Maoists are a force outside this constitution and they would not have revolted if they wanted to remain under it. Refore the talks we had advised the government to come up with an alternative proposal and also asked the Maoists to be realistic. They made a mistake in walking away from the talks, which is why they are now cornered. ... In the third round of talks, the Maoists came with only the demand for a constituent assembly, and they were wrong to simply make a proposal and walk away from talks. They have not been able to justify their actions until now. They should have consulted other political parties. The government should also have been flexible. ... A constituent assembly is the ultimate form the power of the people can take in a multiparty system...even King Tribhuvan had announced one, though it was not implemented

There are two lines of thought in the country concerning how the Maoist problem should be resolved. One wants to maintain the status quo and more stringent laws. This is the old way of thinking. It's been proven that an army cannot protect democracy. The other group wants to make improvements to the system that exists, ... We say the constitution should be amended. It says that sovereignty rests with the people, but it also says that constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy cannot be changed. Why can't the sovereign people change that? Likewise, you say four castes and 36 ethnicities, and then impose a Hindu state. We are not against constitutional amendments, but they can't be a means to solve the Maoist problem. Which clause in the Constitution can provide that? There is talk of an election government but will the Maoists be part of that? This is why we ask whether amendments can help resolve

...Many times negotiations have failed in the world, but the process has not stopped there If we want peaceful resolution [government] has to find alternatives and go back to talks. The Maoists have been asked to come to talks after giving up their arms. This is what someone who doesn't understand politics says. Why should the Maoists give up their bargaining power before coming to the table? Even a snake does not remain a snake if you defang it and

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

There can be no development without security and no security without development.

-Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba while inaugurating the secretariat of the National Security Council, on 11 March.



Faster, faster, faster. There shouldn't be any delay.

विश्वविद्यालयाः Gorakhapatra, 11 March

Recruitment drive 28 March - 15 April, Himal Khabarpatrika

At a time when the anti-Maoist war is in full swing and the Royal Nepal Army, the Armed Police and Nepal Police all need new recruits, the demand for young Nepali boys in foreign armies is also growing. After recruiting hundreds of Nepali youngsters in Ilam and Gaighat over the past six months, officers from the Indian Army are busy measuring the chests of hundreds more Nepalis in Dharan.

To be eligible for the Indian Army they need to be between 16-22 years old, at least 157 cm tall, eighing 50 kg, with a 77 cm chest They also need to have finished at least class eight.



Col Saradiit Singh of the Indian Army says in fluent Nepali: "We will be taking 250 from the eastern zones Mechi, Kosi, Sagarmatha and Janakpur. We'll first shortlist 500, and pick 250 from that group in Darjeeling. Currently our intake is 1,000 recruits from Nepal and they are mostly from the Rai, Limbu, Famang, Magar, Chhetri, Sherpa and Newar communities."

There is stiff competition to ge into the Indian Army, and roughly 75,000 youngsters apply every year. With tensions high on the India-Pakistan border, it looks like the level of recruitment will increase this year. The Gorkhali troops in the Indian Army who were the best acclimatised for the highaltitude battles in Kargil last year Thirteen Nepalis lost their lives in that conflict

The Indian Army currently has seven regiments and 42 battalions, with a total of 50,000 Gorkha troops.

No revolutionaries

Prakash Jwala, Chalphal, 10 March

· Kajol Khatoom, an innocent eight-year-old lost her life when Manists set fire to a Kathmandu-Birguni bound bus she was travelling in. Four other passengers died

 Hem Bahadur Rai was injured in a bomb explosion while he was clearing away garbage. He died in

 The Maoists killed security personnel in Sitalpati, Salyan by shooting them in the back; there was a river of blood.

 Man Bahadur Tamang, a former national taekwondo practitioner, was killed by Maoists near his home in Numerkot: they backed off his hands and feet

 Forest fires started by the Maoists in Accham have destroyed government and private property. Two innocent children from

Bhakatpur were injured while playing with Maoist explosives. The Maoists have kept thousands of villagers of Salma VDC in Jajarkot under strict surveillance, restricting free movement.

• The Maoists killed Taranath

Yogi of Dang district while he was in mourning for his father. These incidents, which have

taken place in the last couple of weeks clearly reflect the true character of the Maoists and the path they have adopted. The Maoists, who say they are fighting to free the common man, are killing farmers, labourers and children. Setting alight a bus and burning people alive, putting bombs in the hands of wage earners, making children the target of explosives, hanging teachers and slashing the throats of people who don't agree with their ideology is not revolutionary. Their actions have forced the public to regard

them as terrorists. No one has the

license to do whatever they like in

the name of revolution and change

The Maoists have snatched

away the life of Kajol, who was accompanying her uncle home to celebrate Eid. What have the Kajols of this world done that they are being indiscriminately killed? Kajols die in Kalikot, yet others are niured in Bhaktapur, Children ave to be wary of tool bombs, they have to witness their teachers being taken from the classroom and hacked to death. What effect does this have on their psychology? The Chitwan Rhandara incident raintee the Magists movement in the same way as when they set fire to a ouse of people in Harjung, Rolpa a couple of years ago. When one considers the barbarity they have committed from Hariung to Bhandara, they have outdone Hitler's atrocities.

The Maoists say they are fighting for the working class, but t is labourers and farmers who are falling prev to their violence. Their behaviour contradicts what Mao said. They kill people like Nim Lal Rokka, Hari Singh Nepali, Shobha Ram Basnet Balram Sankota Dal Ram Khadka, Chin Bahadur Rokka whom they see as class enemies They kill people like Hem Bahadus Rai, placing bombs in garbage drums No minister feudal exploiter or high-ranking officer will ever place his hand in a drum. Do you call people who place explosives near public taps, roads, and in drums anything but terrorists? Have they begun to overshadow the al-Oaeda and the Taleban? Maybe the Taleban can learn a lesson from the Maoists? Is this how the people's rule will be established? By killing innocents? Is this the communist principle? What Marx, Lenin and Mao taught? This is what Idi Amin and

bin Laden have taught. The Maoists talk about ternational humanitarian law But they kill people who have surrendered to them. In Dailekh and Salyan, the public witnessed them killing soldiers in cold blood They've also killed civilians. They kill unarmed political workers who challenge their ideology. Challenging political beliefs with armed violence is not common political practice.

Recently, Maoists have year work experience requirement. restricted the movement of villagers in Salma, Jajarkot. They've been doing the same ir places like Rukum and Rolpa for quite some time. They throw people out of the villages, the districts, and even the country. Thousands of villagers have been forced to live as refugees in the district headquarters and the capital. People caught between the Maoists and the security forces have been forced to leave the ountry. The government has declared an emergency. The Manists, on their part, have

declared their own emergency in certain areas. So people have to suffer curfews and security checks mposed by both the sides.

The extreme left thinking that the Maoists have espoused has led to the country's present situation. The Maoist revolution, in its latter phase, has degenerated into violence, terrorism, and anarchy. As a result, its political character is eroding and instead, it is being defined by its terrorist thinking style, and behaviour. Will the Maoists be able to fulfil their dream this way?

Minister's manoeuvres

Dristi, 12 March

The argument between Minister for Forests and Soil Conservation Gonalman Shrestha and State Minister Surendra Hamal regard ing the transfer of civil servants has taught other corrupt ministers a few lessons in how to designate their people without internal fighting. Home Minister and Minister for Local Development Khum Bahadur Khadka has already started practising what he learnt.

Minister Khadka known for

appointing his own people in government organisations and offices, has added three more workers to the Decentralisatio Implementation and Inspection Committee The three Congress lovalists recruited are Dambar Bahadur Bhandari from Dang, Dr Balram Gautam from Rupandehi, and Dinanathprasad Chaurasiya from Parsa. Among them Bhandari is said to be Khum Bahadur's man Dr Gautam was put forward by state minister in the Ministry fo Local Development, Dooryodhan Singh Chaudhary, and Chaurasiya by assistant minister Ajava Kumar Chaurasiya Evidently, the new nominations were put forth after an agreement was reached betwee the minister, state minister, and the assistant minister. Bhandari has been taken in as the accounts specialist, Dr Gautam as the revenue specialist, and Chaurasiya as the administration specialist.

Clause 41 sub-clause 6 of the Self-Governance Act 2055 says that people appointed to the Decentralisation Implementation and Inspection Committee must have ten years of work experience in the same sector. But none of those appointed vesterday fulfil the criteria of the Act. Dr Gautam's qualification is that he is a former mayor of Bhairahawa, Bhandari is a school teacher and Chaurasiva's qualification is that he a relative of the assistant minister. How could these people be appointed when the Act prevents their nomination? Udayaraj Soti, Secretary of the Local Development Ministry claims that the three fulfil the ten-

In between all of this, Minister Khum Bahadur Khadka is also to be investigated by the Commission for the Investigation of the Abuse of Authority. A source at the Department of Roads says the CIAA has already gathered enough papers proving Khadka's role in the corruption in the construction of the Rapti river bridge sometime ago. Just last week, the CIAA interrogated director general of the NCCN Ramagya Chaturvedi, and former director general of the Roads Department Anand Khanal.

CUI TURE NEPALITERATURE

On Life in a Fishbowl: **Dhruba Chandra Gautam**



time in a city bigger than (metropolitan!) Kathmandu knows that life in Nenal can sometimes feel like life in a fishbowl. Small events stir great passions; minor achievements take on grand proportions: and unexcentional people gain the kind of stature that should be reserved for world-class celebrities or geniuses. It is easy, in small towns like Nepal's, to become insular and self-absorbed, and to forget that the rest of the world is marching ahead at a

In the story translated below, writer Dhruba Chandra Gautam captures, with wit and dexterity, the nature of

a small-town society where even the most unremarkable occurrence snawns tall tales, avid nossin and widespread rumour-mongering. Gautam is an important modern writer of Nepal, a prolific creator of experimental, open-ended fiction. This story is more linear than most of his work. It is originally found in the collection Gautamka Pratinidhi Kathaharu

HEM SUBBA ATE PAAN

Hem Subba was new in town. But when the short man walked down the paved road clacking his heels, many of the town's shopkeepers bent low to offer him their namaskar. He too was well-bred, and made sure to please everyone by returning their greetings. In fact the reason he didn't ride a car was that a car hindered him from making direct contact with the people

Hem Subba became renowned overnight through the town. Tales about his personality spread in out-of-the-way corners. His short profile covered the entire urban landmass. Word spread of the politeness of his speech, and praises were sung about the courtesy of his manners. His liberalism was immense. Much talk was generated on the matter of his ways and habits. Hem Subba doesn't ride a car. Hem Subba wears thick eyeglasses. Hem Subba never touches money with his hands. Hem Subba doesn't wear a watch. Hem Subba doesn't drink liquor or smoke cigarettes. Hem Subba doesn't have a wife.

Leaving aside his habit of wearing evenlasses for a moment; for each of his ways, there were alternative ways: Hem Subba doesn't ride a car; he's rich enough to ride a .leen

> He doesn't touch money with his hands; his pockets are filled with coins

Hem Subba doesn't wear a watch: he carries a gold chain watch instead. Hem Subba doesn't drink liquor; beer does the trick for

him. He satisfies his cravings for cigarettes by smoking cigars instead

Hem Subba doesn't have a wife (she died in a delivery case): there are pictures of four or five young women in his

Meaning, though there was some measure of renunciation in his ways, it was not possible to view him as extraordinary or strange. Do people become extraordinary merely because they are talked about? Hem Subba was an ordinary, healthy man. But for his slight stammer, his words were pleasant to hear. But it is true that one or two of his habits were odd. For instance. Hem Subba never ate paan.

Now page was all the rage in the town. Everyone's mouth was stained red. Hem Subba sometimes deigned to chew betel nuts, but he never ate paan. Betel nuts alone, however, do not add to the beauty of one's mouth.

There was a rich merchant in the town, who was very amicable about eating and feeding others paan. He saw that Hem Subba was breaking the town's tradition: the culture was

On the day of the spring festival of colours, the merchant arranged large rolls of paan on a stainless steel plate, and made a request: "Hajoor, you must try this today." Hem Subba was inflamed: "Don't you know that I never eat

paan? I don't want to look like I've rubbed blood on my mouth by eating paan. Paan causes cancer, return that plate at once!"

Hem Subba put on some red abhir powder, and chewed some cloves and cardamoms, but he did not eat any paan. The merchant got guite worried: was the town's culture doomed to erode, then?

He made a second attempt. He invited Hem Subba to his daughter's wedding. Hem Subba came. The merchant placed cloves and cardamoms on a silver plate, then decorated it with vellow rolls of paan. He said, "Hajoor, on the occasion of my daughter's wedding, some special paan,"

This time Hem Subba spoke calmly, "Sahuii, paan does not suit my health, thank you, I'll have the cloves and carda-

The merchant offered him the cloves and cardamoms Then the time came for Hem Subba's daughter's wedding Hem Subba looked very worried: what was he to do, how was he to proceed? Marrying off a daughter is as difficult as fighting the Mahabharat wars. One must consider one's own good name, as well as the good names of the town's important

people by inviting them all. Massive preparations got on way.

Two days before the wedding, the merchant appeared and asked, "Hajoor, might I be of any service?"

"There's nothing particular for you to do, Sahuji, though it's natural, of course, that I be worried." Hem Subba said.

"No need to worry, Hajoor," said the merchant. "We are always there for you. How could the marriage of your four daughters diminish your resplendent wealth? And even if your wealth were diminished, it would be replenished by the gods if they so pleased."

For a while there was talk of other matters related to the wedding. After this, the merchant slowly took out a plate, this time of gold. Well, maybe it was just gold-plated, or maybe it was really gold. The merchant had also brought along some naan. He arranged a few rolls on the plate. These were silver coated paans giving off the fragrance of roses.

The merchant said, "Eat these, hajoor, you must enjoy yourself at the time of your daughter's wedding. Your daughter s my daughter too, after all."

The merchant had snoken extremely warmly in a way that touched the heart. Hem Subba hesitated, "But Sahuji, perhaps this will cause some harm?

"No, hajoor, it will cause no harm at all. I've fed paan to some very important people, and it's never harmed anyone. Paan increases blood, it digests food. Just try eating one, this This time. Hem Subba pulled the plate towards himself. He

put one paan in his mouth, and experiencing its taste and the bleasure of its juices, he said, "Sahuji, I never knew in all my days that paan could be so juicy!"

The merchant smiled and said. "There was just this one

flaw in your ways, haioor. In all other respects, you were a diamond, an absolute diamond,"

"So when will you feed me paan next, Sahuji?"

"I'll attend to it at once, hajoor," the merchant said, placing his hand in his pocket.

This time Hem Subba took a double helping, and put it in his mouth, looking very pleased. He ordered the merchant never to come to his house without bringing some paan. Then he strode towards the jeep that the merchant had prepared for him to go shopping for his daughter's wedding.

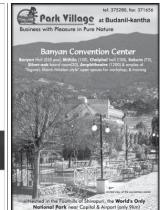




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EVHIRITION

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- The Tharu Kitchen at Jungle Base Camp Lodge, Bardiva, Traditional Tharu dishes and
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- head Jomsom Mountain Resort, salesiom@mail.com.np. or imr@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 nights including a six-course Nepali dinner, massage, breakfast \$155 per couple, Dwarika's Hotel. 479488

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



This picture taken at noon on Wednesday shows a northwesterly cloud front sweeping across northern India and Nepal. The strong high pressure zone prevailing over the Tibetan Plateau is sucking in cold dry air into Nepal. The Tibetan high is also getting stronger due to replenishment of cold air masses from the polar regions. This will push the front into Nepal over the weekend, but this is a moistureless system and won't bring much rain. The northwesterly will ensure crisp and fresh afternoon breeze over Kathmandu Valley into next week keeping the







hy NGAMINDRA DAHAI

in min ...













Party Building in Nepal: Organization, Leadership and People Krishna Hachhethu Mandala Book Point, Kathmandu, 2002

A comparative study of the Nepali Congress and CPN-UML. The author traces the parties' numerou transformations: from movement or underground entities to open competitive parties, from cadre-based to mass-based parties; from a small group of people sharing common interests to heterogeneous organisations; and from ideology-oriented organisations to power-seeking parties.

> Hernetology in Nepal Dr Tei Kumar Shrestha Bimala Shrestha, Kathmandu, 2001

Re 1 200 A field guide to the amphibians and reptiles of trans-Himalayan Asia. Nepal's diverse variety of newts, frogs, snakes, lizards, crocodiles and turtles are described and illustrated with photographs and drawings. The author also focuses on the importance, of terraria, vivaria and nature parks for the conservation of declining herpetofauna, and describes the role of amphibians and reptiles in myth.

Spy on the Roof of the World Sydney Wignall Penguin Rooks India New Delhi 2002

The author's 1950s climbing expedition to the Himalaya turned out to be a life-threatening adventure that involved the Chinese and Indian governments at the highest level. Betrayed by one of the many spies operating on Nepal's border with Tiber, his group was captured by the People's Liberation Army. Their subsequent escape over the Himalaya in mid-winter is one of mountaineering's great epics.

> French Lover Taslima Nasrin, trans. Sreciata Guha Penguin Books India, New Delhi, 2002 Rs 400

When Nilanjana, a young Bengali girl from Kolkata, moves to Paris after marrying a restaurant owner, it is like living in a gilded cage. She has a passionate, sexually liberating affair with a handsome Frenchman. The relationship ends, and the road to Nilanjana's self-discovery begins when she realises that even he cares primarily for himself. Nasrin portrays the workings of a woman's mind as she comes to terms with her identity in a hostile world.



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

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ANDREW NASH

the morning of 10 March, four rhinos were sedated in the Royal Chitwan National Park and loaded on to trucks to make a long iourney across the tarai No. this wasn't the work of poachers, but conservation officials and NGO workers beginning the annual rhino translocation programme. Established in 1986, the programme will translocate ten rhinos to Royal Bardiya National Park this week in an attempt to help control the rhino population in Chitwan and establish a viable rhino population in Bardiya

Nepal's rhino population, which now numbers 612, is finally making a comeback after decades of habitat destruction and hunting decimated its numbers to just 100 in 1966. According to the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conser-

vation (DNPWC), Nepal's rhino population is now growing at an mpressive 3.88 percent annually. The programme is so successful, in fact. that right now there is as much of a good thing as Chitwan can take-529 at last count two years ago. With the there they are transferred to an new arrivals in Bardiya, the rhino population there will total nearly 100, which is considered the threshold for a viable population group. The rhinos one-horned creatures begin their 15need to be translocated not just hour trip across the tarai Dr Shanta Jnawali of the King because too many of them in Chitwan would be bad news for other species,

many population pools as possible within the habitat of animal, to reduce chances of their being killed by disease or conflict with humans The programme works on a scale that seems to beg heavy dockyard equipment Sedation darts are shot at

sense dicrates that there should be as

but also because conse

individual rhinos, which are then driven by a team of 40 elephants into open grassland. Once asleep each animal is measured and loader onto a tractor-pulled sled with the help of three dozen labourers. From enclosed wooden pen, where they ar given an antidote. Finally, the cage is loaded onto a truck and the enormou

Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC), who coordinated this year's rhino translocation, says the long-term prospects for the species' survival re "very good", providing that conservation remains a high priority in the long term. "As long as you have the natural resource base, the translocation while the international rhino population will have a bright donors provide the \$4,000 it costs to

Nepali rhinos return from the brink of extinction. transport a single rhino from Chitwan | | protect the country's rhino popula

The 2,200 kg migrant

Nepali environmentalists and to Bardiya. country's rhino efforts are among 1950, sixteen years later that economic benefits for the country says Dr Chandra Gurung of the spread poaching that existed throughout South Asia before ecotourism emerging as a major cash World War II—in 1938, for

industry in the Chitwan area. "Conservation has been a major success for Nepal " says Dr Gurung The environmental work is carried out by Nepalis and the country is eaning the economic rewards The organisation of a pro-

nternational observers say the

the best of their kind. The pro-

gramme shows that conservation

efforts such as this also have

WWF Nepal Program, with

gramme such as this involves as much logistical manoeuvring as the actual translocation itself, and the fact that the rhinos are getting from Chitwan to Bardiya is a cause for celebration. The Nepal rhino translocation programme is considered a model of cooperati among government agencies, NGOs and international donors. This year's program, for instance, is a joint initiative of the DNPWC and KMTNC with financial support from World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The DNPWC and KMTNC oversee the

echnical aspects of the animal

of Burma, was also being encroached

upon due to hastening economic

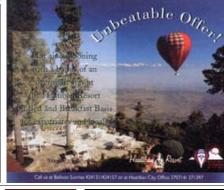
Although Nepal's estimated rhino population stood at 800 in number was down to about 100, and there were serious doubts abou how much longer the rhino would be around in Nepal. The wideexample, a hunting expedition in Nepal killed 38 rhinos — threatened rhinos as well as other species Meanwhile, the natural habitat of the rhino which at one time was activists are also looking into othe found in the stretch of land from conservation programs that could the Hindu Kush to the mountains

development, and in Nepal in the 1950s, the eradication of malaria, which caused the plains population It became obvious fairly soon that something had to be done, and in 1957 Nepal passed its first rhino protection law. By 1973, the government was worried enough about the threat to Nepal's wildlife to create the country's first national park in Chitwan and pass stiff antinoaching laws. Today more than 18 percent of the country's land is under state protection. Antipoaching efforts have also helped to Nepal isn't enough." ♦

tion—there have been 137 poaching rrests since the mid-1990s. Unfortunately, after the emergence was declared last November, the army troops that patrol the Chitwan National Park have reduced their strength there to seven posts. (See also "Nepal's national parks are endangered," #77.) But, says Dr Gurung, "So far, even the Maoist problem hasn't affected our ability o work with animals or bring ourists into the park " Now that the rhinos are back on rack, conservation officials and

help rhinos and other threatened species to thrive in larger areas. Meingma Narbu Sherpa, a director of Endangered Species for WWF-US, says that more work needs to be done to protect natural habitats that straddle international boundaries. The WWF is working to develop a niological corridor between Assan and Bhutan, and proposals have been made to create the "Tarai Arc" ncompassing 50,000 square kilometres in Nepal and northern India. As animal populations reach apacity in enclosed areas, argues Sherna, that it is important to open up larger areas of land so they can read out, "We feel that success in









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Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Much ado about nothing much

which further ado, let us use this period of relative calm before the onset of the annual typhoon season to get right down to some literary analysis of the works of William ("Bill") Shakespeare. As some of you may be knowing (or pretending not to know, as the case may be) Mr Shakespeare actually travelled overland to Nepal during his hippie days as a budding bard, and many of his now-famous lines are strongly influenced by this poetic nation of ours. (National flower: rhododendron, national animal: cow, national credo: "Never do unto others what you do to yourself".)

When he got face-to-face with Nepal's great versifiers,
Bill realised just how much harder he needed to work to polish his iambic pentameter, inject re subtlety to his symbolism, and be less lumsy with his morphology and syntax. But, inspired by some of our great poet laureates, Bill learnt fast and honed his craft going on to become rich and famous, and he inventor of such vibrant words as: ounds", "forsooth", and "bung-hole" (this ast word was later shamelessly plagiarised by to terrorists going by the nom de guerre avis and Butthead").

Bill Shakespeare's works carry many references to the sights and sounds and, yes, the smells of Kathmandu Valley. Take this verse that he penned after an exhilarating hot-air balloon ride over our fair city, and later used in Macbeth:

Fair is foul and foul is fair Hover through the fog and filthy air.

Being a great dog lover, Shakespeare was especially touched by the number of canines he saw in and around Kathmandu. Sometimes, he even mistook the she-

Aroint thee, O, Spartan dog, I do beseech you.

Black ram tupping with your white ewe.

Or take this vivid description of the garbage dump at Krishna Galli, which the troubadour got to know intimately since he passed it every day on his way to his rented flat at Chakupat:

There's hell, there's darkness.

There's sulphrous pit, burning, scalding, Stench, Consumption!

Forsooth, fire burn and cauldron bubble

In the poison'd entrails throw

Fillet of a fenny snake,

Eye of newt, and toe of frog,

Wool of bat, and tongue of dog, Adder's fork, and blind-worm's sting,

Lizard's leg, and howlet's wing

Ditch deliver'd by a drab.

Having been a keen student of politics, Bill often erupted spontaneously into poetry after reading the Nepali morning papers:

Fetch that minister hither.

Thou rogue, thou rascal,

Thou art a hellish villain, hell hath no end Thou burst thine ass in thy back o'er the dirt

What profane wretch art thou?

And to that dauntless temper of his mind, alack, For supporting robber, shall we now

Contaminate our fingers with base bribes

And sell the mighty space of our large honours for so much trash

Shakespeare was also impressed with the languid pace of life in Nepal, and wrote a tribute to the Nepali habit of never doing today what can be done

Tomorrow, and tomorrow and tomorrow

Creeps in this petty pace from day to day To the last syllable of recorded time

And all our yesterdays have lighted fools.

And then again, he was impressed by how we can fall asleep at the drop of a

hat despite the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune:

To sleep, perchance to dream, there's the rub

O sleep, o gentle sleep, Nature's soft nurse how I have frighted thee

That thou no more wilt no more weigh my eye-lids down Prithee, let me snore, sirrah.

For, otherwise, I will knock you over the mazzard. Zounds! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of bung-hole?

And despite the restrictions on his personal freedom imposed by a state of

emergency, Old Bill managed to say: Alarum'd by this sentinel,

Be not offended

I speak not as in absolute fear of you I think our country sinks beneath the yoke

It weeps, it bleeds

And each new day a gash is added to her wounds.



