



SACRED VALLEY
The Ultimate Computer 10

EXCLUSIVE

Free editor

There are growing demands from domestic and international human rights groups for the release of detained journalists, including Shyam Shrestha, editor of *Majjorjan*, who was taken in at Kathmandu airport last Saturday. More than 70 journalists have been arrested since November, 28 remain in detention and have not been produced in court. Amnesty International said this week, "It is clear there is a grave law and order threat to the country, however in such a climate human rights must be protected with extra vigilance and army and police action must keep to international human rights standards." (See also p5)



New NIBL

Nepal Rastra Bank has cleared the sale of Nepal Indosuez Bank Limited to a consortium of Nepali buyers. The new company will have the same acronym, NIBL, but will stand for Nepal Investment Bank Limited. The clearance of the sale of Credit Agricole stock came after rival bankers played out their dispute in the media last week. This week the NRB issued its 10th Directive on prudential banking and ownership, then sacked the board of Lumini Bank. (See also p7)

PACMAN

The parliament's anti-corruption Public Accounts Committee is back in action after a reshuffle of its UML members. There seems to be no shortage of irregularities for PAC to probe: bank defaulters, inflated costs in road projects, digging into forest ministry files and looking at the satellite licensing row at Space Time Network.

HARI ROKA IN NEW DELHI

We can choose our friends, but we can't choose our neighbours. Nepal and India are stuck with each other, so we might as well learn to get along.

This week, the Chaudhary government in New Delhi is festooned with Nepali double-triangles flapping alongside the Indian tricolour. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's visit to India offers another opportunity to mend fences, show common sense and take bilateral ties to a new level of accommodation and understanding.

But the question on everyone's mind is: why Calcutta? The West Bengal capital is neither a cybercity nor a Sai Baba centre. New Delhi appears to be hesitant about the central government taking the lead in any future mediation on the Maoist problem, and is passing the buck to the Marxists in West Bengal.

After all, Calcutta has been the training and ideological base for Nepali Maoists. West Bengal also has experience in dealing with and crushing the Naxalites, and the comrades in 'Workers' Building may have a few pointers for Deuba. It was Siliguri where Maoist leaders gave audiences to a procession of Nepali leftists during the ceasefire in October, so it is not inconceivable that a secret face-to-face meeting is on the cards over the weekend.

Deuba's India visit comes at a time of unparalleled crisis in Nepal. There is an emerging consensus among Nepal's political parties, so it is not surprising that the public that in India is not a part of the solution to the Maoist problem, then it is a part of the problem. And if the two neighbours aren't careful, Nepal's problem may soon become India's too.

The precedent for Indian involvement in Nepal's domestic politics was set way back with the overthrow of the Rana regime and King Tribhuvan's triumphant return to Nepal from Delhi in 1950. When King Mahendra dissolved parliament and banned political parties ten years later, the Nepali Congress

Why Kolkata?

What does Calcutta have besides the Victoria Memorial? Lots of Marxists.

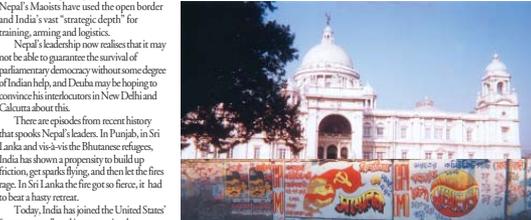


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE VIKRAM SARABHAI CENTRE FOR SPACE SCIENCE

launched its armed insurrection from Indian soil. It is not surprising therefore that Nepal's Maoists have used the open border and India's vast 'strategic depth' for training, arming and logistics. Nepal's leadership now realises that it may not be able to guarantee the survival of parliamentary democracy without some degree of Indian help, and Deuba may be hoping to convince his interlocutors in New Delhi and Calcutta about this.

There are episodes from recent history that spooks Nepal's leaders. In Punjab, in Sri Lanka and vis-a-vis the Bhutanese refugees, India has shown a propensity to build up fiction, get sparks flying, and then let the fires rage. In Sri Lanka the fire got so fierce, it had to beat a hasty retreat. Today, India has joined the United States' 'war on terror', and it cannot give the impression of ignoring this new brand of terrorism in its own backyard in the Himalaya. So, Sher Bahadur Deuba will be trying to convince the Indian leadership that curbing Maoist activities on Indian soil is in its own long-term interest. He will also try to assuage the angry Indians about the western military hardware the Royal Nepal Army urgently requires for its counter-insurgency operations. The Indian response to this may be a cool "yes", but New Delhi will draw the line at more intensive foreign military involvement in training and supplying the Royal Nepal Army. At the same time, India may use the opportunity to push forward its own mediation role, or even propose unilateral political or military action to end the insurgency. The Maoists are in the mood to use their

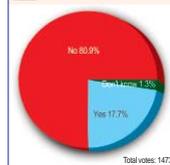
Editorial p2
Open border, closed minds

new-found stature, gained from having blooded the army in Mangalore, to wrest political concessions. Deuba was deeply insulted by the Maoists' betrayal in November, but is under pressure to smoke the peace pipe again. The military campaign is also racing against time: it needs to register dramatic victories before the monsoon sets in. If the Indians do put forward a mediation proposal, Deuba will have to think hard about the repercussions back home. Greater Indian involvement in resolving the crisis either through mediation or military means will increase Indian influence in Kathmandu. Which may be what New Delhi has always wanted, but there will be a backlash within Nepal and fuel further public mistrust of Indian intentions.

(Last Roka is an independent leftist analyst and a research fellow at the Jawahar Nehru University in New Delhi)

Times nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Pk# P.28
Q. Do you support the five-day strike called by the Maoists?



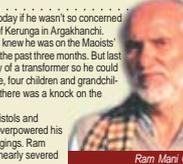
Weekly Internet Pk# 127. To vote go to www.nepalnews.com
Q. Is it a good idea for Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba to visit India?

The murderous middle-ground

The Maoist insurgency has now been reduced to a body count. But behind every death is the loss of a loved one, a loss to society, and a family tragedy.

SAGAR PANDIT IN DHANG

Ram Mani Gyawali would have been alive today if he wasn't so concerned about the electrification of his home village of Kerunga in Dangharachi. Ram Mani had been threatened many times, knew he was on the Maoists' hit-list and had been living in Kathmandu for the past three months. But last week he had to go Butwal to take delivery of a transformer so he could fit it in Kerunga. The family, including his wife, four children and grandchildren were sitting down for the night when there was a knock on the door. "Ram Dal," someone called. He was overpowered by Maoists with pistols and khukuris. There was a quick "trial". Others overpowered his wife and son upstairs, and looted their belongings. Ram Mani's body was found later, his head was nearly severed



from his body, and there were signs of torture: long half-inch deep khukuri gashes all over his body. "The body was completely mutilated, he had been hit and slashed," Ram Mani's younger brother Laxman says. "He was killed because he loved his village and wanted to improve it." Laxman, his wife Sita who was also beaten up, and Ram Mani's family are in Kathmandu's cremation site at Aryaghat this week for the 13-day mourning period. Ram Mani was targeted because he was honest, plain-speaking and a popular VDC chairman. Last year, the Maoists had asked for a Rs 200,000 "donation". The brothers not only refused to pay, but also held a press conference to say why they were not giving in to extortion.

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Whenever a new Nepal leader travels to India to pay his mandatory homage to the Delhi Darbar, the main question at hand is always: what is he selling off this time? It is no different this week. Even before Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba left on Wednesday for Delhi, parliamentarians were vociferously demanding that the veil of secrecy over the visit be lifted. This is understandable, because historically our leaders haven't brought back much from India. It is other than not, they end up giving something away. Usually a never.

The level of Indian aid for infrastructure and other projects in Nepal is now the lowest it has ever been. And Deuba's present visit comes at a time of unprecedented national crisis. The Nepali state has never been this feeble, hence the suspicion in Kathmandu that Delhi will use its weakness to exact secret deals.

Our distrust of Big Brother is nothing new, and it pre-dates the independence of the Republic of India. The unified Nepal nation was a young and xenophobic entity, and we didn't trust the British East India Company in Calcutta. In fact the two belligerents collided and went to war in 1814.

With the Ranas, Nepal turned anglophile and in doing so, antagonised the native Indian public. Generations later, there is still residual historical memory among north Indians of Nepali soldiers coming to the rescue of the British in Lucknow in 1857, and of the involvement of Gurkha soldiers under General Dwyer in the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

After independence, the love-hate relationship between us got more acute. And every new episode—from the 1950 treaty through the Kosi agreement, the blunder of Rajiv Gandhi's



STATE OF THE STATE

The sigh of the tarai

It is getting increasingly difficult to tell the difference between the president of the Nepal Congress Party Prasad Koirala and UML Secretary General Madhav Nepal. At every public platform these days they are sporting the same script: that a constitutional amendment rushed through the present session of the parliament will magically solve all the country's problems. They are like itinerant salesmen that tarai intellectuals hat Saturday, Koirala and Nepal were once again doing their dirt insisting that the amendments they propose in the constitution will somehow address all the concerns of tarai people in addition to solving the Maoist problem. It was difficult to find how the cry of the tarai can be reconciled with the desire of the two main political parties to share power at the centre. The question of resolving the issue of citizenship of Nepalis of tarai origin was the

The manufactured consent of mainstream Nepali monoculture must be replaced with an inclusive pluralism.

that concerned the audience. But, sadly, even though both leaders represent tarai constituencies, they failed to realize the magnitude and gravity of the citizenship crisis. Like other pahari balhuns they couldn't control the urge to give a lesson or two to the eminent audience on the importance of being a Nepali first, and then a madhisi. Predictably, no one was even amused, let alone inspired. People of the tarai, especially those who live in Kathmandu and endured the insanity of the Hritkosh Roshan episode, know only too well what it means to be a lesser Nepali in a country obsessed with the Panchayati-raj system of militant Nepalism. In fact the term itself is ethnocentric and inimical to democracy and pluralism. The history of Nepali mainstream cultural hegemony dates back to the Rana oligarchy when the values of the ruling class were forced upon the entire population. Minorities were either patronised

OPEN BORDER, CLOSED MINDS

blockade of our border, to Tanakpur and Laxmapur, the Hritkosh Roshan riots and the torturous talks to renew the trade treaty—confirmed Nepalis' worst fears about India's "grand design". In the messy post-democracy period, it didn't help that our knee-jerk politicians milked latent anti-Indian sentiment for all it was worth at election time. One ex-prime minister (who shall remain nameless) even tried to assure Indian leaders during a visit to Delhi—after being elected on a vigorous anti-Indian platform—not to take his rabble-rousing speeches seriously because "aap samajhe hain, elections mein kya kya karna padta hai". Keeping relations tense and primed to be chronically at breaking point doesn't do the people of either of our countries any good. It is time we realised that the futures of Nepal and India are intertwined. The Nepali people and this country's governments must show pragmatism and look for ways we can take advantage of India's vastness, rather than working ourselves up into an insecure frenzy about it. Indian leaders and business leaders, for their part, must realize that a prosperous and stable Nepal of 24 million potential consumers is in its own national interest. Petty-mindedness does not befit a nation of India's stature. Destabilising Nepal, and keeping it poor by hassling it on trade will help neither country. It is hard to remember any time in the modern history of our nations when relations were actually cordial and

constructive. The nearest we got to such a state was probably during the premiership of I.K. Guliani when the doctrine that went by his name took shape. The 1936 trade treaty dramatically boosted bilateral trade. Unfortunately, we never took full advantage of the treaty to put our own house in order by identifying products for a manufacturing and industrial base. The renewal of the treaty last month was two steps forward and three steps back, and signified, finally, the demise of the Guliani Doctrine. But our business elite must realise that greater value addition on exports is actually in our own long-term interests, not India's. The list of festering problems with India is long: embankments along the border, Kalapani, Pancheswor, the cancellation of PIA overflights which penalises Nepal for the inability of India and Pakistan to get along, restrictions on Nepal's exports, delays in getting the Birgunj dry port going, and the state-instigated propaganda about ISI activities which has helped decimate Indian tourism to Nepal. The latest thorn is the widespread perception in Nepal that the Maoists receive support from across the border. To be sure, the Indian foreign minister did hastily declare the Maoists "terrorists" in November. But Delhi hasn't moved much beyond that. The Indian government may not be supporting the Maoists, but it is not doing much to curb their activities on its soil either. The lesson from all this is that bilateral relations between Nepal and India need to be addressed at the highest political level. We can no longer leave it to the babus on both sides. We can no longer try to solve the problems piecemeal as when they crop up. As long as there is no political understanding between India and Nepal, there will always be some crisis or other threatening ties.

ANALYSIS

With barely ten days to go before his threatened five-day 'Nepal shutdown', Maoist leader Prachanda's statement saying his group is willing to announce a unilateral ceasefire, cancel the bandhs and resume the negotiations begun in November. His colleague Baburam Bhattarai sent out a fax on 3 March addressed to "Dear Foreign Tourists" saying they will not be harmed, but that they should avoid travelling to Nepal during the 2-6 April shutdown.

Then comes news that top Nepali Congress leadership has secretly met a Maoist central committee member. Even though we cannot say for sure what all this overtures mean, we can try to predict what the Maoist strategy is, based on these developments. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba still feels prominently betrayed by the Maoists for breaking off talks and attacking the army in November. He is no mook to do that, but even he seems to be under pressure to hold out a tenuous olive branch. This he may do in the state that gave birth to the Naxalite movement, and when Indian Maoists were ruthlessly crushed by India's Gandhi. Our own Maoists may be out of touch with international reality, but they have no qualms about using objective domestic conditions to suit their needs. Even while the Prachanda statement was being fed to media, the Maoists ambushed an army truck at Kerabari on the Mugling-Narayanghar highway and at Sangahosh on the Chautara road, killing 10 policemen and soldiers. These attacks may have larger significance, as they occurred on main highways and relatively close to the capital. It is possible that the rebel leadership thinks the army has lost its nerve. The Maoist doctrine of "surround and strangulate" would be oversight to take those two attacks as only build-up for the forthcoming bandhs. The Maoists go by the book, and may be trying to force a unilateral declared game plan of inciting a simultaneous mass uprising and insurgency. But these very actions point also to a certain defensiveness. The Royal Nepal Army and the Armed Police, after initial



PHOTOS BY

The Maoists are under pressure to strike a better balance between their armed struggle and legitimate political protest.

defeats, have made dramatic raids recently on rebel training camps and hideouts—an indication of better intelligence and strike capability. All this could be contributing to widening the internal fissures within the Maoist leadership. If the surprise attacks on the military barracks in Dang and Salleri signified the beginning of the internal disaffection, then the recent overtures for unilateral ceasefire could signal its end. The Maoists may still think they are offering the war, otherwise there is no rationale for winning a unilateral ceasefire now. It could also be that the earlier opponent of the ceasefire, war strategist Comrade Buda, is out of action for one reason or other. Even if they will never admit it publicly, the Maoists have a credibility and image problem. Their political hold is slipping, there is anarchy in the ranks, and they have

been damaged by the perception that the leadership depends on support from India. The same international factors that forced the Tamils to go to sea for peace in Sri Lanka may be pushing the Maoists to negotiate. Prachanda and Baburam are now branded terrorists à la bin Laden. Some of the more brutal murders of prominent social activists and teachers in recent months have tarnished their revolutionary image and eroded popular support. The comrades now need to try and restore their political credentials. This could be why the Maoists are being forced by public opinion to resort to more democratic means of protest such as bandhs and dialogue. And to get there, they will even hold hands with their arch enemy, Gijira Koirala. In this game of power, the end justifies any means and no alliance is unacceptable to either side.

The Maoists had anticipated that the army would be deployed against them, but they had not expected that the government would also declare a state of emergency. This complicated their plans to gain propaganda mileage to discredit the army. They now have two choices if they want to reclaim their standing as a political force and also get the government to withdraw the army: continue fighting or talk. There is a discernible trend in the Maoists' overtures for talks—they have done it either before or after every major attack. But the Kathmandu intelligentsia is still talking around the policy of using the "expansions" (India in this case) to achieve the goals of the "people's war", then that could prove detrimental to the country. Particularly if they think that drawing India in is in their long-term interests. ♦

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

LETTERS

GOOD REPORTING
The article, ("Lull in Lamjung," #84) by Hemlata Rai #84, a rare realistic scenario of how the insurgency is affecting ordinary people in the countryside. Thanks to her and to you for such excellent field reporting at a time of emergency.
Budhshree Rai Hong Kong

SRI LANKA'S LESSON
After reading your editorial ("Learning from Sri Lanka and Afghanistan," #84) I am sure (sad) thought is that it is reminiscent of what happened in Sri Lanka twice with the Maoist JVP. There were genuine grievances of people that the JVP articulated. But the way in which they did it, and their unwillingness to negotiate, made them a terrible force. They used terror—for instance killing over a hundred government bus drivers just because they broke the JVP "curfew" days. The JVP were not prepared to negotiate: they wanted complete state power. So they were destroyed (at a terrible human cost) by the state, which used terrorist means as well. Today we live in a free society. If the JVP had won, I doubt it. A pure military solution was possible in Sri Lanka, perhaps because the rich-poor divide is less acute and the country is much more compact. Nepal is much larger and the terrain much more difficult, the state cannot concentrate its forces sufficiently for such a direct military solution. Perhaps Nepal is also a dual track military and political solution.
J de Silva Colombo

CK Lal
I am writing to thank you for bringing us CK Lal, who weeks after week amazes us with the breadth and depth of his knowledge. His analytical skill and courage to give understanding of a wide range of subjects is

unique. Thank you Nepal Times and Himlal Khabarpatrika for introducing this bilingual writer to a large Nepali and foreign readership.
Nick Sharma by email

A more useful way than CK Lal's concept of concentricity ("Fatal attraction," #84) to describe the organisation of the Maoist outfit is that of the network. In a network, small, mobile, self-contained cells operate independently to inflict maximum damage on the opposition. You neutralise a cell at Terlatham in east Nepal and they come back with a devastating rejoinder in the western part of the country. In a network, you know not where the next blow is going to come from. To rephrase an ancient metaphor, the Maoist centre is everywhere and nowhere. The government's counterinsurgency strategy must incorporate the concept of network and launch a multi-front offensive that aims to deliver not only a crushing blow to the Maoists but also social and economic justice to the rest of the population. Salutations to CK Lal for his courage in articulating his thoughts boldly in the face of obvious Maoist threats.
Kanden Theba Phakhola, Tapjung

RHINOS
Nice piece on rhino translocation by Andrew Nash ("The

2100 kg migrant," #85). Rhino conservation is a success story, but this is threatened by a surge in poaching. If this rate of poaching persists it could wipe out Nepal's achievements in saving the rhino from extinction.
M Devkota Austria

SHAKESPEARE
Who does Kunda Dixit think he is, Sir Richard Burton? He has written a book about nothing much? (#85) has convinced me that our country is a Shakespearean tragedy in the making. I liked the last poignant bit: "Each new day, a gash is added to the population. Salutations to CK Lal for his courage in articulating his thoughts boldly in the face of obvious Maoist threats."
Rina Subba by email

I was enthralled to read Mr D's "Much ado about nothing much". I hope that once the current "tempest" passes, we will be able to say "All's Well That Ends Well" and

move on and make Nepal great and peaceful again. "Measure by Measure." However, currently, "Something is rotten in the state of Nepal," so what do we do? "As you like it," Mr. D, you can either say "Something wicked this way comes" and satirise the situation or every man improve it by saying that this is a state where every man must play a part."
Bhaskar Tripathy by email

Cecile Balgos Mexico City

Thanks to Kunda Dixit's bardic bonanza we now know not only the hitherto unknown fact that Will Shakespeare actually travelled overland to Nepal to hone his literary skills, but also the reason behind so many 'whores and tramps' passing through the country.
Saradhanchandra Sharma Bagn Bazar

by PUSKAR GAUTAM

A tale of two hospitals

To take health care to the people, take it away from the government.

HEMLATA RAI IN LANJUNG is the Lanjung Hospital is, by Nepali standards, sophisticated for such a rural setting. But even more surprising is that this 25-bed hospital is managed mostly by the community it serves. While the rhetoric of 'community-participation' has become a development cliché in Nepal, this hospital is anything but. Here is a hospital for the locals, by the locals and of the locals.

This new concept of community hospitals in Lanjung and Dhulikhel might be the beginning of a quiet revolution in health care in rural Nepal. Organisations involved in these two hospitals are beginning similar projects in Bukum, Dhading, Kavre and Sindhupalchok. "Delivering health care is easier than it looks—so long as decisions are allowed to be made by local people and the facilities are being built," says Dr Ram Kantha Makaju, director of Dhulikhel Hospital. The trick is to take the locals into confidence, and let them run it.

Even so, the larger public health picture in Nepal is pretty disastrous. There is an average only one doctor for every 20,000 people. In remote areas—where trained health practitioners rarely work for this time is down to one doctor—10,000.

A 2000 World Bank Study shows that public sector spending on health care, including donor expenditure, is a mere \$3.10 per person per year—far less than the \$12 per person provided in basic health care packages. The result, the report says, is inadequate hospitals, doctors and service delivery. One high-ranking official in the Department of Health Services told us there is a new problem: "Political instability and interference are destroying the health sector in Nepal. Political patronage make the



Lanjung Hospital's maternity ward, still under construction.

government employees unaccountable and irresponsible, making the delivery impossible."

The only way to keep health care out of reach of politicians in Kathmandu and to make it affordable is to mobilise local resources to set up and run rural hospitals. So, in 1991, the new National Health Policy was formulated to decentralise health care systems and make them more regionally grounded. Finally, there was a chance that the slogan "Health for all" would not just provide lip service to basic health care packages. The result, the report says, is inadequate hospitals, doctors and service delivery. One high-ranking official in the Department of Health Services told us there is a new problem: "Political instability and interference are destroying the health sector in Nepal. Political patronage make the

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Dhulikhel Hospital plans to expand to 130 beds in two years.

Since it is a government health institution, the Lanjung Hospital is entitled to receive Rs 1.5 million and three health personnel including a doctor, and the community itself plans to start a kitchen to raise money for an endowment fund. The maternity and children's wards are under construction, and the general ward is already operational. Soon, the administrators hope to double the hospital's capacity to 50.

"We are here to serve the people and share the burden of health services with the government. Our policy is to complement and improve what is already there rather than funding new infrastructure," says Dr Tirtha Thapa, executive director of HDCS.

In five years the HDCS will bow out and the Lanjung Integrated Community Health Centre will be fully responsible for the hospital. This model holds hope for people at the village and district level, and the HDCS has received requests to help revitalize existing health facilities in six other districts. A year from now, the organisation hopes to begin work on the Charjahari Hospital in Rukum. The Dhulikhel Hospital in

Kavre is a little different—it was started by local residents in 1996. Twenty-four Dhulikhel families donated 2.2 hectares of land, and the hospital itself was set up with support from the Dhulikhel Municipality, a consortium of European donors called Nepal Made, and the Dhulikhel Health Service Association. Locals contributed Rs 6 million, matched by a municipality grant, to create an endowment fund. Since the Dhulikhel Hospital is a non-government initiative, it does not receive government grants, although it is given customs breaks on the import of equipment. It wouldn't work in a less prosperous district either—it is far too expensive—but the Dhulikhel Hospital is successful enough that it runs four satellite hospitals in Kavre, Dhading and Sindhupalchok.

To be sure, neither of these hospitals is entirely problem-free. For one, both rely on assistance from international donors, which doesn't make them completely self-sustaining. Dhulikhel Hospital is lucky because it has a high proportion of local staff and does not encourage foreign doctors or health workers to stay for long. This puts it in a position to develop the human resources it

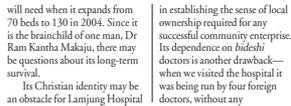
Nepali doctors. Sharad Onta of the Public Health Concern Trust (PHCT) warns of other problems. "Handing over the management to local institutions and communities without preparations, without training to enhance their skills, might mean a bigger public health disaster."

This is a potential pitfall when local communities are not consulted right at the start. But Onta's concerns "are not forcing them to take over the management of sub health posts, but we will allow them to when they feel they are ready for the responsibility," counters Dr DB Chantyal, director general of the Department of Health Services.

An analysis of the health sector done by the department in 1999 showed that equitable access to healthcare remained elusive for most Nepalis. The main obstacles were management of public health facilities and institutions, inadequate compliance with existing guidelines, a near absence of quality of care practices, and poorly defined roles and responsibilities for health authorities.

Chantyal says the Lanjung and Dhulikhel models offer new hope. He says, "We hope to involve local communities in management and encourage them to monitor care."

Washing and praying for a sick child in Lanjung Hospital.



from p1

"Accidental Maoists"



"He was the type that didn't tolerate any nonsense," Laxman says of his brother who was even jailed during the panchayat for telling King Birendra that the system was corrupt and unrepresentative. Ram Mani was killed, but there are hundreds of others who are caught between threats from the Maoists and the counter-insurgency campaign of the security forces.

According to the tally of the human rights organisation INSEC, over 500 of the 1,700 people killed since 23 November were non-combatants. The line between who is a Maoist and who is not gets blurred when ordinary villagers are forced to join the rebel force.

Urmila Oli of Parandhara VDC in Dang is an inmate at the military camp in Ghorahi. She was the appointed head of the 'people's government' in her village by the Maoists after her husband Bin Bahadur Oli joined the rebels about two years ago. "I am

not a Maoist, they made me one," she told us before breaking down. Seeing his mother sobbing, Urmila's two-year-old son started crying as well as the other 'accidental Maoists' in Ghorahi. Jan Bahadur Puri, 16, took part in the battle of Kapurkot in December and was forced by the Maoists to be a porter, ferrying fallen rebels out in a doko. "With them I had to walk long distances without food or rest," says Puri. "I was in school when they came and took me in."

Many of those in detention told us they were enlisted as militia after trying to use a musket for seven days. Puri's camp mate, 17-year-old Khadga Bahadur Buda of Raha, has a different story. He signed up because he had to fulfil a family duty. "They came and told my father to send a family member to join the militia," says Buda. "They would have killed him otherwise."

Detained editors

Shyam Shrestha, editor of the monthly magazine *Mulyakan*, is the latest to join the lengthening list of persons detained by the security forces. Shrestha, who was on his way to Delhi to attend a conference last Saturday, was picked up at the Tribhuvan International Airport along with two human rights activists. The editor of the left-leaning paper was detained nearly three weeks after Gopal Budathoki, editor/publisher of the vernacular weekly *Sanghu* was detained by security forces. The whereabouts of all four are still unknown. In a special editorial this week, *Sanghu* criticised the government for wrongly accusing Budathoki of being a Maoist supporter and of printing news that undermines the efforts of security forces. In the case of Budathoki's abduction, says the editorial, the security forces have undermined the law instead of maintaining it. *Mulyakan* sources have criticised the government for targeting Shrestha, who has distanced himself from the armed "People's War" and was instrumental in organising the three rounds of talks between the government and the Maoists last year.

Problematic poster

A classic case of good intentions gone bad: an award-winning poster designed for the Family Planning Association of Nepal and published in a major daily on the occasion of International Women's Day has come in for criticism. A number of women rang the paper to complain that the poster, which depicts a woman as an egg-laying hen, is offensive and slights the dignity of women. Poster designer Babaram Jana doesn't agree. "The poster title 'Am I a man's wife or a rooster's hen?' speaks for itself," he says. "A woman is not a baby-making machine that she has to suffer through the birth of dozens of babies just to ensure the continuity of the family line. In my capacity as a man, I was presenting before society the suffering of a mother and seeking a response. I was supporting women, offering sympathy towards the suffering they endure in childbirth." The poster's sub-title reads, "A husband plays a major role in ensuring the reproductive health of his wife." FPAN says the poster draws society's attention to women's reproductive health. "Individuals may interpret the poster differently, but in no way, does it debase women," says one FPAN official. OK, but what about good taste?



"Visit Nepal," Baburam tells tourists

Baburam Bhattarai, in a letter addressed "Dear Foreign Tourists" says his Maoist party has nothing against the tourism industry or tourists visiting Nepal. "Foreign tourists are most welcome in the country and will be so in the future as well," he writes, and goes on to invite tourists to visit Maoist "base areas." He also bashes globalisation and Nepal's "hereditary autocracy", warning tourists not to patronise airlines and hotels owned by them. Baburam says "honoured guests from neighbouring India" need not be unduly perturbed about visiting.

But western embassies in Kathmandu feel this is the first time the Maoists have made a direct threat against tourists, by telling them to stay away during the five-day bandh next week, and travel advisories are being updated. Baburam ends his letter by saying: "In view of the five-day long Nepal bandh (ie. general shutdown) from April 2 to April 6, 2002, and the subsequent surcharged atmosphere in the aftermath, the foreign tourists are well advised to skip the tour itinerary if any, for the said period. We deeply regret the inconveniences likely to cause to you all." If you say so, comrade.

Gains for women

The year 2002 has begun well for Nepali women. First, the formation of a National Women Commission was announced on International Women's Day, 8 March. Nearly a week later, the House passed the much-debated Women's Bill with an overwhelming majority. And this week, leaders of major political parties signed a declaration committing themselves to developing political leadership among women. Well and good, says Sabana Pradhan, leader of the Women's Pressure Group and Standing Committee member of the CPN (UML). But the senior politician cautions against being too optimistic—she says the Bill still falls to recognise women as independent individuals, rather than simply a man's daughter or wife. Also, there is no point in reserving seats for women in politics, says Pradhan, whether it's 33 or 40 percent. "It stands in their stead. She also stressed the need for women to be represented in any process to amend the constitution."

Tengboche just did it

Good news on the tourism front. The Tengboche Development Project in the Everest region, has just won the TO DDO 2001 award, announced on the occasion of the 36th International Tourism Exchange in Berlin. Rather than just serving as a picturesque backdrop for tourists, the Tengboche Monastery, the spiritual centre of Sherpa culture, has played a proactive role in promoting sustainable tourism. The 1995 Tengboche Development Plan, initiated by the Tengboche Monastery (right) and Nepal-based architect and town planner Michael Schmitz, has actively promoted the monastery (at 4,000 m) and the habitat of the Sherpa people. The monastery is trying to attract 30,000 visitors annually, so the surrounding villages benefit, and has built the necessary tourism infrastructure such as toilets, drinking water facilities, hydropower-generated electricity, and a telephone connection. An eco-centre built in spring 2000 teaches visitors about Sherpa culture and sells locally-made souvenirs. The income generated here is used to train monks to spread the message in their communities of environmental protection and conservation.



The Tengboche Rinpoché

HERE AND THERE

Hunting along the Mahendra Highway between Narayanghar and Nigadis, I wondered about the wisdom of my journey. Once darkness fell, the trees and towns lined a road empty of all lights. And I don't believe in ghosts.

Not even a cigarette glowed at roadside tea stalls as the real pitch dark of late night took hold. Petrol pumps at roundabouts were illuminated right. We drove on, intent on arriving alive and laughing at our fears. For just when we were afraid of normally long drive on a South Asian road at night is a series of narrow escapes and horrific encounters, not with armed men or bandits but with night buses and trucks driven by drunken maniacs.

In this, the once crowded major road leading along a 100 km stretch of regional road terrorism. But no, we weren't afraid of our fellow drivers. On the odd occasion when a set of glowing headlights popped out of the misty gloom and sliced through the late, apparently, other drivers left the scene. High beams were dipped almost from the moment we hit into view, a far cry from the usual practice of blinding the oncoming traffic out of sheer idiot glee. We slowed down as we approached each other, flicked right turn indicators on and even honked horns as we moved past each other. The fear would have been the jeep jolted into fresh darkness, alone again, or we hoped.

I suppose we were worried about Maoists or nervous members of the security forces. But not, I was sure. There was one army checkpoint past Narayanghar and the few soldiers were no more to us than a second glance. No police gates were manned and the place where I have always got the most rigorous third degree, the Armed Police Force camp just before Kolaapur, had turned its lights off. The sandbagged sentry posts were empty, no gun barrels pointed at us

Afraid of the dark

Fear stalks Nepal's dark and deserted highways at night.

as we juddered by at a blazing 90 km/h. It was 11PM, Nepal Standard Time. Not that that night was a significant deviation from the mood of the day. Even driving along a main highway in this country is pretty depressing. From just past Thakot to Bharatpur to Bawal, the government has seen fit to turn the roadside into something resembling a war zone. Buildings demolished, roadsides have all been levelled, smashed, even set on fire. Families squat in piles of rubble and cook over open flames. They sleep under shelters made from plastic and fabric. In the ruins of their own homes. Now I know what encroaching on public land, or someone's private property, is a bad thing. It is not to be encouraged. Yet I did the official who gives the order to smash all those peoples' homes, shops and

business wonder about the timing of the thing? Conventional wisdom in times of national crisis is that people—not combatants, civilians, potential victims of violence, building recruits to revolution—encouragement, tolerance, perhaps even aid and civitas. They don't need their lives devastated. I dare say more than a few people signed Maoist membership cards sometime after they watched their homes demolished. In Nepal, at the end of the journey, we drove through streets that are usually grid locked with traffic, vehicles, human and animal. It was cold and the orange glow from the streetlights illuminated little. Shadowy figures at the edge of the pools of light turned out to be policemen, sticks tucked under their arms as they watched us drive by. A desk clerk jerked awake as we walked into our hotel. Apparently, we weren't expected as there is a "curfew" along the Mahendra Highway. No traffic after 9PM or some such rule. If that's true, no one enforces it. Perhaps they don't have to. Fear patrols the countryside. The next morning dawned with the usual cacophony of border town life. Creaking cycle rickshaws headed out from the frontier. Businesses rain shutters and sweaters swept. At a cloud of dust, the next day began. And it will start all over again in Kathmandu. This time, the checkpoints functioned and we wrote our vehicle details at least 12 times. The Armed Police checked our curner gear and asked tough questions in a disbelieving manner. It will be for more like a state of emergency. Not that there was any confirmed in that. Fear doesn't sleep in the daytime. It just lurks out of sight, ♦

by DANIEL LAK

SACRED VALLEY

Spiritual tourists are flocking to Nepal. And they aren't all old dharma bums.

ALEXANDRA ALTER

In the eighth century, the Indian Buddhist saint Padmasambhava uttered the following prophecy predicting the spread of Buddhism to the west: "When the iron birds flies and horse run on wheels, the Tibetan people will be scattered across the face of the earth, and the dharmas will come to the land of the red mud." True to his words, Buddhism has become increasingly popular in Western countries over the last few decades, due in large part to the Tibetan diaspora, which has made it easier to study Buddhism teachings and practices widely available.

Yet, accurate as his insight was, Padmasambhava's prediction was incomplete. Not only has Buddhism taken root in the west, a growing number of Westerners are also journeying east to study Buddhism. With its diverse religious landscape, Nepal has long attracted spiritual sojourners enchanted by its unique blend of Buddhism, Hinduism, tantra, animism and shamanism. And in recent decades, increasing numbers of visitors have come not just to observe the varieties of religious experience here, but also to learn something about these spiritual practices.

Mainstream tourism in Nepal may be experiencing a drought, but foreigners intent on studying Buddhism are still coming in surprisingly healthy numbers. The Tashi Lama Guest House in Buddha told us that it usually houses all the students in Kathmandu on the Naropa program. This spring the program was cancelled, but this hasn't affected business, he says. With 40 rooms full of others with whom you want to get deeper into Buddhism, he's got nearly 100 percent occupancy. Other guest houses in Buddha also say that though Thandi might be fating badly, they're doing quite all right. At a time when hotels around town are either closing or laying off staff on a daily basis due to a scarcity of travellers, the idea of a temple hall crammed with enthusiastic westerners seems slightly incongruous. But go to Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche's famous Saturday



western students.

One of the Shredra program's marks of distinction is the authentic Buddhist education it offers, which hasn't been available to western lay practitioners in the past. The course of study, taught by erudite Tibetan Buddhist scholars, emphasizes intermingling Buddhist teachings rather than seeing regarding them as abstract philosophy. "We don't want to be like a western scholastic institution, where you often find a very dry approach to Buddhist philosophy," says Kevin McMillin, administrator of the Shredra program. "Our classes are taught by learned khempas (scholars and religious teachers, often heads of monasteries) who have studied with great masters and have some realisations themselves. This adds to the richness of the material."

Chokyi Nyima's Shredra program, which is unique in offering an authentic Buddhist education to lay practitioners, is but one of the numerous programs of Buddhist study available to westerners in Nepal. A less traditional atmosphere is provided by the Naropa program for Buddhist Studies, which, as it enters its seventeenth year, is the oldest program of its kind. "Naropa's expertise is translating Buddhist traditions into a western context," explains Clarke Warren, a Buddhist scholar and program director of Naropa. "Unless they've had a few years of practice, it's difficult for western students to appreciate the traditional shredra style." Naropa also bases its program at Buddha, but unlike the Shredra it is not affiliated with a particular monastery. Rather, it is a branch of Naropa University, a non-sectarian Buddhist institution founded by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche in the United States in 1974. Chogyam Trungpa, a Tibetan master from the Kham region, studied at Oxford University and, steeped in western traditions himself, taught essential Buddhism in a way easy for the western mind to grasp. Rinpoche discouraged his students from becoming overly intrigued with Tibetan rituals because adopting such colourful practices might give rise to what he famously termed "spiritual materialism."

Honoring Chogyam Trungpa's



Students at the Shredra program run by the Ka-Nying Shredra Ling monastery in Buddha (left and above).

Studying Buddhism in Nepal

- Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre, 221875 <http://dharmaoutdoors.com/hbmc>
- Rangjung Yeshe Institute for Buddhist Studies, 483575 <http://www.dzshinpo.com>
- Kopan Monastery, 481268 <http://www.kopanmonastery.com>
- Gaden Yiga Chozen Centre, Pokhara. pokharacenter@yahoo.com
- Naropa University <http://www.naropa.edu/studyabroad/nepal/program.html>

minimalist and somewhat austere prescriptions for spiritual practice, Naropa encourages its students to "do away with any fancy and fascination with regard to Buddhism." According to Warren, who has lived in Nepal for eight years and been a Buddhist practitioner for over 30 years, studying Buddhism in Nepal allows students to "see what is universal and essential about Buddhism and what is dependent on its cultural environment. The Tibetan Buddhist tradition is fascinating for the monks who practice them, they are

grounding them in reality." The Naropa program was cancelled this spring after two students were evacuated from their field study locations in Suku Khumbu last November because of Maoist activity in the region. One gets the sense, however, that Naropa's long history with Nepal won't be permanently interrupted by the country's current problems—students are already applying for the program in autumn this year. While the Shredra and Naropa programs epitomise respectively the classical and westernised ap-

proaches to Buddhist practice, for those seeking something in between, a blend of traditional and western teaching styles is available at the Kopan Monastery and the Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre. Founded by Lama Yeshe in 1970 at the request of his western students, Kopan offers meditation courses throughout the year. Their month-long November course is usually the biggest draw, and had 180 international participants last year.

The courses at Kopan are taught by Ani Karin, a western nun who articulates the Lam-tim teachings, or the stages on the path to enlightenment, in a unique and highly accessible manner. Equally adept at distilling difficult concepts into clear English is Ani Silana, an Italian nun who runs the three-day meditation courses at the HBMC.

Both she and Ani Karin espouse Buddhist principles clearly and precisely to encapsulate the flavour of the teachings as well as compensate for unavoidable cultural differences.

Lama Yeshe wanted westerners explaining Buddhist meditation to other westerners, Silana explained. "I may just have an intellectual understanding of the teachings without the actual realisation, but because of my background maybe some people can relate to Buddhism more easily when I explain it."

Rather than providing a temporary retreat from reality, the meditation courses at Kopan and the HBMC help westerners to establish an enduring practice when they leave Nepal. "People say it's easier to practice in the east, but I think it's more essential to practice

in the west—to look at the mind when it's bombarded by stress and other factors," Silana said.

Though some may dismiss Buddhism's widespread popularity already in recent decades as a passing trend, western Buddhism is 1970 at the request of his western students, Kopan offers meditation courses throughout the year. Their month-long November course is usually the biggest draw, and had 180 international participants last year. The courses at Kopan are taught by Ani Karin, a western nun who articulates the Lam-tim teachings, or the stages on the path to enlightenment, in a unique and highly accessible manner. Equally adept at distilling difficult concepts into clear English is Ani Silana, an Italian nun who runs the three-day meditation courses at the HBMC. Both she and Ani Karin espouse Buddhist principles clearly and precisely to encapsulate the flavour of the teachings as well as compensate for unavoidable cultural differences. Lama Yeshe wanted westerners explaining Buddhist meditation to other westerners, Silana explained. "I may just have an intellectual understanding of the teachings without the actual realisation, but because of my background maybe some people can relate to Buddhism more easily when I explain it." Rather than providing a temporary retreat from reality, the meditation courses at Kopan and the HBMC help westerners to establish an enduring practice when they leave Nepal. "People say it's easier to practice in the east, but I think it's more essential to practice

to its own cultural context. But will Himalayan Buddhism lose its attraction for westerners once their own traditions aren't placed? Warren believes that any attempt to divorce Buddhism from its origins will prove futile. "There needs to be a balance. On the one hand, westerners are developing their own approaches, but they're also dependent on the sources of Buddhism." Sightseeing may be a



down, even trekking and adventure tourism may be hitting twice about Nepal, but for Kathmandu Valley, its monasteries and lamas, it looks like few things will deter the seekers of truth, not now, not in five years' time.

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The Ultimate Computer

The personal computer on my desk is hundreds of times as fast, and has thousands of times as much memory as the mainframe computer that served my entire university when I was a student. Such advances in the processing speed and storage capacity of computers are expected to continue until the laws of physics impose certain limits. After all, we cannot shrink atoms or increase the speed of light.

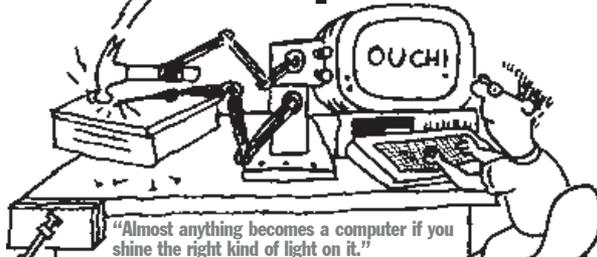
Now, imagine a computer technology that eventually approaches these limits. Imagine further that every star in every galaxy in the observable universe could somehow be fashioned into computers of this "ultimate" type. That would be a lot of very fast computers. Or if they were connected together we could think of them as a single, massively parallel computer: call it the "Universe Computer."

Admittedly, there are tasks—word processing, for example—at which this imaginary computer would be no more useful than any one of its constituent computers operating independently. But for large, repetitive trial-and-error tasks, such as code breaking, the speed and power of this integrated "Universe Computer" would be vastly superior to anything we

could ever hope to build, right? Hold that thought. Quantum theory—the branch of physics that deals with elementary particles and the microscopic properties of matter—has provided some of our deepest insights into nature, and describes some startlingly counter-intuitive phenomena. For example, it implies that elementary particles, rather than being located at one position at a time, travel on several trajectories simultaneously.

No one disputes that quantum phenomena, if they could be harnessed, would revolutionize information processing, enabling ways of computing that no existing computer—even in principle, would be capable of duplicating. Among the tasks for which quantum computing would be ideally suited are "algorithmic searches." Put simply, algorithmic searches are what computer programmers use as a last resort when looking for a mathematical needle in a haystack: they make the computer try every possible answer in turn until it finds the right one.

Obviously, the resources required for such searches are proportional to the number of possible answers: common sense tells us that trying a thousand possibilities requires a thousand



times as many operations as trying one. Trying a million possibilities requires a million times as many operations. But our ordinary common sense does not apply in fundamental physics. In 1996, the computer scientist Lov Grover discovered a quantum algorithm—a way to program a quantum computer—that could try out a million possibilities in only a thousand times the time needed to try one, and a million possibilities in only a million times the time of one, and so on, without limit.

What would happen inside a quantum computer when it performs an algorithmic search? The unsettling truth is that most physicists are perplexed and embarrassed by this question. Many explain away quantum phenomena with waffle words, or worse, they simply eschew explanation altogether. True, quantum phenomena cannot be observed directly. But we can deduce their existence and attributes by measuring their effects on things that are directly observable. We have never observed live dinosaurs, either, but we know they existed—

and quite a lot about how they worked—from fossil records. Grover's algorithm is one. Other known quantum algorithms will easily be able to crack the most widely used secure cryptographic systems of today. Coincidentally, cryptographic systems which themselves use quantum computation are already commonplace in laboratories, heralding the development of communication that is both perfectly secure—even against quantum attacks—and immune to future advances in mathematics or technology.

Quantum cryptography happens to be relatively easy to implement. Unfortunately, we have no computers powerful enough to run any other useful quantum algorithm, building powerful quantum computers is a major scientific and technological challenge for the coming decades. But theoretical physicists already know how many different types of components are required to make a quantum computer, and how complicated these components must be. The astonishing answer is that virtually any interaction between two information-carrying entities, including atoms or elementary particles, will do. As the physicist Seth Lloyd commented, "almost anything becomes a computer if you shine the right

kind of light on it." It has long been assumed that a single type of machine, given time and memory, could simulate the behaviour of any other state of matter. It turns out that existing computers, or even the imaginary "Universe Computer," are not the ones. But a general-purpose quantum computer would be. In quantum physics, this "computational universality" is part of the essence of all matter—and thus of the comprehensibility of nature. No other branch of physics involves such wide-ranging interaction between theory, experiment, technology, and philosophy. No other field of scientific research holds more promising implications for our understanding of the universe. ♦

(David Deutsch is visiting professor of physics and a founder member of the Centre for Quantum Computation at the Clarendon Laboratory, Oxford University, and author of *The Fabric of Reality*.)

War paint



Some Pakistanis decorate cars and shops with images of their "Islamic Bomb", but many fear an all-out battle with India.

Modern science exemplifies the dialectic of good and evil and then, perhaps, represents evil as clearly as the research, design and production of nuclear weapons of mass destruction. In the bomb lies the spirit that could negate all.

The failure of the West to inaugurate a process of nuclear disarmament has led states elsewhere to acquire plutonium and manufacture their own bombs. Nowhere is the process more frightening than in South Asia. Neither India nor Pakistan can afford this weaponry. Both countries would benefit enormously if the billions spent on nuclear armaments were used to build schools, hospitals and provide clean water in the villages. Rationality, alas, is the first victim when these two countries quarrel. A few years ago, during the military skirmishes in the snow deserts of Kargil, nuclear threats were exchanged by both countries in 15 separate occasions. The recent war in Afghanistan has further destabilised the region. On 13 December last year, armed Muslim fundamentalists

attacked the Indian parliament, hoping to provoke a conflict between India and Pakistan. They hate the country's leader, General Musharraf, for betraying the Muslim cause and siding with Washington. And they hate the Hindu fundamentalist party that came close to inciting a war.

The Indians argued that if the US could bomb a country and change its government while searching for the terrorists who hid the bin Laden on the Pentagon, why shouldn't India be able to do the same? The logic is impeccable, but the outcome could be a catastrophe of massive proportions. Pakistan's rulers responded with a nuclear threat: if their country's sovereignty was ever challenged they would use nuclear weapons.

A few years ago, when the military shifted rapidly to reverse gear. On 12 January the General made a landmark speech. Pervez Musharraf offered India a war pact—a declaration of South Asia, closure of the jihadi training camps in Pakistan and a total transformation of Indo-Pak relations. While hard-line fundamentalist newspapers attacked him, the country remained calm. Not a bird whistled, not a dog barked. So much for the view that ordinary Pakistanis are obsessed with the "Islamic bomb".

There is, however, a vocal minority for whom the bomb makes up for the lack of anything else. It's a substitute for lost pride, basic amenities, a ruined economy and a fractured culture. The Koran plus a nuclear missile equals a strong Muslim state. The fact that Pakistan is the only Muslim state to possess these weapons becomes, for some, a substitute for all. Our bomb, boast the nuclear nationalists, will defend Islam against its enemies. And so they parade ballistic missiles and display the potent emblem on bus and truck sides. As the Muslims realise it could lead to disaster and they look upwards and mutter: "Everything is in the hands of Allah. He will decide." The primitive belief in predestination could wreck the entire subcontinent if the weapons ever fall into the wrong hands.

Advocates of a short sharp war against Pakistan are largely confined to the well-off urban middle-classes in India. The poor do not favour conflict. They know the damage it would create inside India, with its 200 million Muslims. Even among the middle class the desire for a war would fade if they were concerned. For unlike Osama's gang, these are armchair fundamentalists who are unlikely to feel the pinch unless the war goes nuclear. Plutonium is a great leveler.

New Delhi sees itself a potential world power. It argues a seat on the Security Council. It claims that if small European countries bordering the Mediterranean can possess nuclear weapons, then why not India? The simplest response here would be to extend nuclear disarmament, but the West is unlikely to oblige. The nuclear war in South Asia will continue. ♦

(Tariq Ali is a columnist. The Clash of Fundamentalists: Crusades, Jihad and Modernity will be published by Verso in April.)

Keeping their word

For the first time, the world is within striking distance of ending global poverty. Perhaps. After all, the poor seem to be everywhere—and are increasing in numbers due to global recession, population growth, and economic mismanagement from Argentina to Zimbabwe. Yet, I think to my chagrin, if the world—especially the US and other rich countries—shift a small amount of their military spending to meeting the needs of the world's poorest, our generation could free humanity from poverty's iron grip.

I am not speaking of ending poverty, the nearly insurmountable fact that some members of society are worse off than others, though that varies slightly by country. I am speaking of the gap-wrenching, life-threatening poverty of living on less than \$1 per day. The world today has in its power to eliminate those extreme conditions. The world's richest countries have committed their economic assets for generations, carried forward by the flowering of science and technology. And yet poor countries seem to be falling ever farther behind, the truth is more alarming. Large parts of the so-called developing world, especially in Asia, have made incredible strides away from absolute poverty. China is the most striking success, with hundreds of millions enjoying higher living standards in the past twenty years, including better health, nutrition, and sanitation. India achieved notable successes more recently, though much remains to be accomplished.

The poorest of the poor in sub-Saharan Africa and in remote areas of Latin America and Central Asia have not benefited. At least a billion people, perhaps nearly twice that, live with hunger, disease and impoverishment. In many of these countries, there has been regression, not progress, in the past twenty years. Disease has swept Africa, with the AIDS pandemic and the resurgence of malaria and tuberculosis. Hunger afflicts hundreds of millions, as world weather patterns seem to become more erratic, with more dangerous droughts and floods. Millions die each year of poverty, for lack of access to better health care, nutrition, and other essential needs. The extreme poverty of the bottom billion is shocking, morally intolerable, and dangerous—wasting billions of dollars in health care and education.

Rich countries could help the poorest of the poor by providing just a tiny fraction of their yearly national income—or, indeed, of their military spending—to overcome the crises of hunger, education, or disease. That aid, combined with

Rich countries have made many promises. Monterey is the time to make good on them.

the market-based economic growth, could end extreme poverty. Rich countries are committed to working with the poorest countries to meet these objectives. But with many promises, America and other donor countries have so far failed to live up to their pledges. At the UN's Millennium Summit in September 2000, world leaders issued a declaration calling for action now, so extreme poverty can be dramatically reduced by 2015. They even pledged to mobilise financial assistance.

Within the broad Millennium Declaration is a set of specific targets, and explicit, detailed commitments for reducing poverty, disease, hunger, illiteracy, and environmental degradation. For example, rich and poor countries together have committed to reducing infant mortality rates by two-thirds by 2015, compared with 1990 levels. For dozens of countries that target is not being met, because too little money is invested in health. Many studies, including those I did for the WHO, show that for a modest annual investment of perhaps as little as \$100 billion per year in aid from rich countries—the Millennium Declaration goal can be achieved. That may seem like a lot of money, but not in comparison with the \$25 trillion income each year earned by rich countries, or the roughly \$500 billion spent annually on their military.

Much of that money in the US and other rich countries with resentment, feeling that they don't keep their commitments to help less fortunate countries. The rich world can redeem itself and promote its interests in global peace and prosperity by providing that the Millennium Development Goals are not empty words. The key test of those commitments will be a this week's UN Conference in Monterey, Mexico on Finance for Development. The conference's bottom line: where is the money to fight poverty and disease? Will the rich world promises with actions? ♦ (Paper Syndicate)

(Jeffrey D Sachs is professor of economics and director of the Center for International Development, Harvard University.)

Rewarding cooperation

TOKYO - Pakistan is still reaping the economic and diplomatic dividends of siding with the United States and its crackdown on religious extremism. Tokyo has eased Islamabad's debt burden and lifted economic sanctions in place after Pakistan and India conducted nuclear tests. Japan will collaborate closely with Pakistan in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Koizumi said last Thursday. Senior officials of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party assured Musharraf that Tokyo "would not hesitate to cooperate" to help Pakistan's stable development. Musharraf also thanked the Japanese government for its investment in Pakistan, and called upon Japanese entrepreneurs to consider investment in the gas pipeline from Turkmenistan. (IPS)

Follow the money

WASHINGTON - The US will contribute \$5 billion each year that its administration will contribute \$5 billion over the next three budget years to help developing countries, the single largest aid increase in US history. The United States has been under fire as Washington's level of donations has fallen over the last 15 years to about 0.1 percent of GDP, the lowest level of all industrialised countries. But Bush had one caveat: assistance would be directly linked to private investment and the policy reforms needed to stimulate it. Some activists assailed the announcement. Sameer Dossani, programme coordinator with Globalisation Challenge Initiative, said, "It sounds like a new way to subsidise US companies working in the developing world." Much of the money, he predicted, would slip into infrastructure projects. (IPS)

If the US nukes China

BEIJING - After expressing his "deep shock" at Washington's contingency plans to use nuclear weapons against China in an emergency situation, Beijing has called on the army to be ready for military struggle. President Jiang Zemin, chairman of the powerful Central Military Commission, urged China's armed forces last week to make "solid preparations" for combat and "follow closely the latest developments of military strength in the world." The Los Angeles Times reports that a Pentagon scenario envisaging a US nuclear strike against Beijing was the case of war between China and Taiwan. The countries in the Pentagon's other scenarios included Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Russia and Syria. (IPS)

Back to Afghanistan

PESHAWAR - After a sluggish start early this month, last week the UNCR's first repatriation centre at Fakhriabad in Khyber, 36 km south of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, registered as many as 350 vehicles carrying 9,000 Afghans in a single day. Since then, the number of returning crossings the Torikham border post has been increasing day by day. The UNCR plans to repatriate 400,000 refugees this year, with six more centres around the country. Each returning family gets \$100 as transportation expenses, an assistance package of 150 kg of wheat, five kg of soap, plastic sheeting, bedding, quilts and a kitchen set. The majority of those going back are Uzbekis, Tajiks, Hazaras and Turkmenis. Pakistanis remain reluctant to return fearing hostility from other ethnic groups. Meanwhile in many places in Afghanistan, particularly in the north, thousands of displaced people live in camps in sub-optimal conditions after they fled drought conditions elsewhere. Aid agencies are encouraging them to return to their homes, to make it easier to deliver assistance. (IPS)

BACK TO THE FUTURE

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Congress changes

Deshantar, 17 March

- Following are excerpts of the report prepared by the Nepal Congress committee on constitutional amendment that included Mahanta Thaku, treasurer of the party, and Central Working Committee members Ajum Narsingh KC, Krishna Sitaula, Laxman Ghimire and KB Gurung.
- Issue citizenship certificates based on the electoral rolls used during the 1979-1980 referendum.
- All executive functions, except those specifically left to the discretion of the king, should be carried out by the Council of Ministers.
- To be a main opposition MP, the member's party should have won at least 10 percent of the 205 seats of the Lower House.
- Membership of the National Defence Council should include the prime minister, the ministers of defence, home affairs, finance, the Foreign Minister, Chief of Army Staff, Inspector General of Police, and head of the intelligence department. The secretary of defence should be its member secretary.
- The prime minister's position should be strengthened by guaranteeing the prime minister's right to dissolve parliament [Article 53 (4)].
- There should be a permanent committee with members from both houses of parliament to formulate national policy.
- The Finance Bill and related procedures should be simplified.
- The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court should be appointed upon the recommendation of the Constitutional Council after extensive public hearings.
- Responsibility should be delegated to the elected district, village and municipal authorities to make them pro-development and responsible.
- Maximum participation of women, dalits and people from disadvantaged groups should be ensured in local level institutions.
- One head and two commissioners each should be appointed at the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority and the Election Commission. For the Public Service Commission one chief and up to eight members should be appointed after public hearings.
- All appointments to government posts and services should be done only on the recommendation of the Public Service Commission.
- The king should not appoint the Attorney General.
- The office-holder should change with a change in government.
- There should be a system to investigate the heads of constitutional bodies through a committee of the Lower House and base actions, including impeachment, should be recommended to the concerned agencies for action.
- Heads of constitutional bodies too should, by law, be subject to anti-corruption investigations.
- The sitting prime minister should be required to form an all-party election government within seven days of the declaration of general elections to the House of Representatives.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

The country is currently facing four basic problems. First, there's a lack of values and morality, second, a lack of good governance, third, that of social justice and equality, and fourth, that of empowerment

— Kamal Thapa, spokesman, Rastriya Prajatantra Party in Baudhar, 20 March



"Daughter was hoping she could also have her share of the family property."
Cartoonist: Ramesh Bista

Drunk flying

Rajdhani, 18 March

The Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation has begun its investigation of Captain Kundan Giri, who is accused of flying under the influence of alcohol. The investigation was begun after BS Gahon, a passenger aboard RNACA's 757 flying in from Hong Kong to Kathmandu on 1 November 2001, sent the corporation emails last week accusing Giri of drinking hard liquor on duty and misbehaving. The investigation was discussed last Thursday by the corporation's department heads.

Captain DMS Rajbhandari, head of the corporate department, said Giri would be asked for an explanation. The investigation will be conducted under the supervision of the head of operations, MD Lama.

After the flight that after he had had goodbyes to his family at Hong Kong's international airport and was awaiting his flight to Nepal, where he had planned a vacation, he saw a man drinking hard liquor in the airport restaurant. The man goes on to say, "At first I didn't realise that the person in uniform drinking was a pilot. Then, as we were boarding the plane, we saw the person enter the cockpit swaying and shouting in his native language. My wife got afraid and when we asked the cabin attendant, we found out that his name was Kundan Giri and that he was a prominent pilot with RNAC. The attendant said Giri would not be flying the plane." The man further says, "Even then, we were very scared, and when we arrived in Kathmandu the captain was still walking around drunk and shouting. We were flown on many domestic flights and replaced airlines, and after that incident we did not want to return home on RNAC. We made up our minds to never fly RNAC."

That particular flight had over one hundred passengers including the director general of the Civil Aviation Authority Medani Sharma, Capt N'Shrestha, Capt Shukra Rana, and Capt Santosh Sharma. A Nepali passenger aboard the flight also said that Capt Giri probably was under the influence of alcohol. Under the rules of the International Civil Aviation Authority, a pilot cannot fly for six hours after

consuming alcohol or other intoxicants. The concerned country's civil aviation authority has the right to take action against the offender and even ground him if need be.

Capt Giri claims there is no truth to the email. He told *Rajdhani*, "I too have received that email. It tarnishes not just my image, but that of the entire corporation. If I am guilty there should be strict action, otherwise whoever made this up should be brought to trial." According to Giri, certain department heads and pilots of the RNAC, appointed under pressure from the Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation Balbhadra KC, are conspiring against him, sources at RNAC say that Giri was appointed assistant director of the corporation a year ago on the recommendation of Home Minister Khim Bahadur Khadka and former Foreign Minister Chakra Prasad Bhatta.

Starting anew

Himal Khatiwada, 14-28 March

Hundreds of women from the Badhi community, a community traditionally engaged in the sex trade in some mid-west and mid-hill districts of Nepal, are looking for alternative work. Led by Safedhi, an NGO that works with the community, and the Central Badhi Women's Samawaya Committee, more than 200 women from the Banke, Bardia, Kailali, Chitwan and Dang have signed a paper renouncing the sex trade.

The signature campaign continues. "When your commanders told you the arms dealer had cheated them of huge sums of money, they were in fact funneling it away to their own bank accounts."

When your commanders told you the arms dealer had cheated them of huge sums of money, they were in fact funneling it away to their own bank accounts. When your commanders told you the arms dealer had cheated them of huge sums of money, they were in fact funneling it away to their own bank accounts. When your commanders told you the arms dealer had cheated them of huge sums of money, they were in fact funneling it away to their own bank accounts.

During the last decade, Badhi women have begun leaving the sex trade due to growing social awareness as well as the AIDS scare. They have gotten organised and asked the state for assistance that will help them lead better lives. Their demands include the provision of employment opportunities depending on their abilities, skills-training to ensure alternative employment, and credit schemes. They have also asked for reservations in the public and private sectors, free higher education, and citizenship for children born to women in the sex trade. Recently, 100 Badhi girl students from Dang held a crisis procession to stir up public support for their demands.

The Badhi Women's

Samawaya Committee has set up branches around Banke, Bardia, Dang, Kailali, and Sukhet, but women involved in the campaign have been affected by the emergency. Due to security problems it has become difficult to travel through the villages. Shagani Nepal, the coordinator of the committee, says the group's main focus is to encourage women to marry after they receive skill-training. Depending on their abilities, the committee also tries to organise jobs for women in NGOs, private industry, and government offices.

Badhi women are discriminated against socially and legally. Their children don't get birth certificates—statistics show that there are at least 300 unregistered Badhi children. Government officials say they cannot issue the certificates without the father's name. As a result, over 60 percent of Badhi youth don't possess citizenship certificates either. The country's economic status is also pathetic. According to a survey of 232 Badhi families conducted by Action Aid two years ago, only two families have more than one room, and we found four families own their own house, and five families own one-five kathas. One hundred and twelve families have less than a katha, and 109 families own no land.

Message to rebels

Nepal Jagaran, 18 March

An appeal from the Maoist forces

Maoist workers who are ready to die! Please know the following about your leaders!

When your commanders told you the arms dealer had cheated them of huge sums of money, they were in fact funneling it away to their own bank accounts.

When your commanders told you the arms dealer had cheated them of huge sums of money, they were in fact funneling it away to their own bank accounts.

When your commanders told you the arms dealer had cheated them of huge sums of money, they were in fact funneling it away to their own bank accounts.

To surrender

- Hang your weapon on your left shoulder with the barrel pointing downward.
- Remove the magazine from your weapon.
- Raise both hands up when approaching the security forces.
- The person in front should hold this pamphlet on his right hand.
- Come in groups of less than five persons.
- The security forces will negotiate jobs for you hot food. They guarantee you will live.

Enough apologies

Nepal Samacharpatra, 18 March

Letter to the editor from Shivendra Anandgar

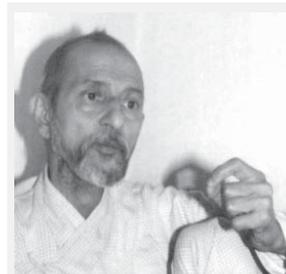
The news item titled "Fenced bandhs and strikes bad for the Maoists" published in the Nepal Samacharpatra of last Monday (11 March) is a good example of "Maoists call for bandhs from 2-6 April." Wasn't this more of an advertisement for the bandh?

When even those of who live in the capital were not aware that a five-day bandh had been called by the Maoists, how would people living in other areas know about it? Yet, because of this we, everyone will know about it a month in advance. This will create panic among the people

even before the fact, will it not? Sure, we would have later, but this article served more as an advertisement calling for the bandh. Placing a bomb in a garbage container in Mirtapur, Chitwan, targeting civilians and touching a bus carrying commuters at 4AM on the first day of the nationwide bandh on 21-22 February have all only shown that the Maoists are nothing more than terrorists. Dr Baburam Bhattarai said they had made a mistake, asked for forgiveness and said that such acts would not happen again. But on 3 March, a day before they again called for a closure of educational establishments across the country on 4-5 March, another bomb went off in a remote village school in Sankhuwasabha district and killed a student. Is Dr Baburam again going to ask for forgiveness?

Have people's lives become so cheap that Maoists can just kill anyone and ask for forgiveness? Legal action might still be taken when a stray dog dies but human beings are not that cheap. If the Maoists who commit these crimes are punished by the Maoists themselves, then perhaps the people will be a little happier. Have they been able to take action against corrupt leaders or corrupt government officials in the districts? Which ideology of Mao are they trying to implement by hurting innocent people? What are they trying to do by like the Nepali army? Isn't this more like taking a hungry tiger? Let there be no more bandhs. If it is absolutely necessary to have them, then why not restrict their duration? This might be beneficial to both the Maoists and the people.

But critics have dubbed it Museum Chitra and wonder where the government will get the material



Nepali Times continues serialising BP Koirala's English diary written from inside his prison cell in 1977. One more day of homesickness, loneliness and boredom at Sundarijal during which the highlights are: freshly laundered clothes and a visitor bringing a cake. BP is also concerned about the financial state of his family.

Back at Sundarijal >7

The psychological price of public appreciation

Tuesday, 11 January 1977

No news, no newspaper, no contact from outside, no medicines, no doctors. We get food and other articles from home, but no news, not even small bits of paper with the list of articles sent to us by our people. Total segregation. GM (Ganesh Man Singh) has a theory. He feels that since this condition can't be continued, the entire arrangement of our detention in Sundarijal is impromptu, suggesting that the king has a need to discuss things with us before final decision is taken about us. The strict isolation imposed on us is also indicative of the same policy. The army people in charge of us tell us that everything is improving. The news support to GM's theory.

Pant the camp commander (Major) says that he has instructions that all the rules of detention from the previous time will apply on this occasion also. He thought that we could write monthly letters and would be allowed to interview close (as defined by them on the previous occasion) relations on the second of each month according to Nepal calendar hoping that he is correct I wrote letters to Sushila and Prakash.

Today is 28th of Paus. Tomorrow I hand over the letter to the people, and by the next week letters will be cleared by censor—if communication through letters would be permitted as per previous practice Major thinks that Rosa may not be allowed to interview me, she being not close enough in relationship with

me according to their definition. She will have a secure special permission as she had done before. GM thinks that either interview will not take place at all or the king would see us before the second of Magh. GM is being consistent in this prognosis—his theory. I am not sure of anything so far as the palace is concerned. As a matter of fact the Major has been inducing me to write monthly letters.

In the evening Pradip, GM's son brought some delicious cakes from Café de Park. Rosa sent my clothes after washing them. Indadvertently perhaps, the slip with the list of clothes sent was left in the bundle. The sight of Rosa's characteristic handwriting gave me some joy.

I have written a sentimental letter to Sushila. She thought that the letter would pass through various hands and the scrutiny of many people now fills me with some embarrassment. Expression of sentiments is considered to be privilege of an actor who is paid to express them in public. What is good and what is proper? To bottle up your feelings may be proper, but is it good (beneficial)? What maybe mainly is not necessarily good psychologically. You have perhaps to pay a heavy price in psychological terms to earn appreciation from the public. I have written to Prakash about how to manage household and education finance by disposing of the Biranagar property and the ornaments of Sushila and Manu. This letter is also embarrassing



"First Arts"

Does France need another museum with ethnological artefacts and non-European arts?

Paris - French museums have organised a war of words over the contents of a new exhibition centre to house what he called "first art" or relics belonging to non-European pre-colonial societies. Sources at the Museum of African and Oceanic Arts have expressed fears that they will be expected to give up at least two-thirds of their collections to the new museum, and curators at the Museum of Anthropology have gone so far as to protest against what they call "the destruction" of their venerable house. The Museum of Anthropology spends only 12,000 Euros a year on the purchase of new pieces. At the same time, the state has allocated 20 million Euros to buy material for the new museum. Stéphane Martin, director of the new Museum of First Arts, says the criticism is unjust and unfounded. He says the new museum will display the material in a modern and unusual way aimed at attracting audiences. Martin rejects the accusation that the Museum of First Arts will expose the pieces out of their cultural context. "For example, we will show a mask from Alaska, from the Kwakwaka people, donated by the Louvre many years ago,"

store in the new building. The French Museum of Anthropology, which was founded in 1937, says it plans to continue displaying the pieces it has in its custody but is willing to organise the exhibits so they do not clash with the theme of the new museum. Critics are questioning the need for a new museum, saying the existing ones fulfil the needs. Pierre Delannoy, a journalist who has researched on the subject, says that this article served more as an advertisement calling for the bandh. Placing a bomb in a garbage container in Mirtapur, Chitwan, targeting civilians and touching a bus carrying commuters at 4AM on the first day of the nationwide bandh on 21-22 February have all only shown that the Maoists are nothing more than terrorists. Dr Baburam Bhattarai said they had made a mistake, asked for forgiveness and said that such acts would not happen again. But on 3 March, a day before they again called for a closure of educational establishments across the country on 4-5 March, another bomb went off in a remote village school in Sankhuwasabha district and killed a student. Is Dr Baburam again going to ask for forgiveness? Have people's lives become so cheap that Maoists can just kill anyone and ask for forgiveness? Legal action might still be taken when a stray dog dies but human beings are not that cheap. If the Maoists who commit these crimes are punished by the Maoists themselves, then perhaps the people will be a little happier. Have they been able to take action against corrupt leaders or corrupt government officials in the districts? Which ideology of Mao are they trying to implement by hurting innocent people? What are they trying to do by like the Nepali army? Isn't this more like taking a hungry tiger? Let there be no more bandhs. If it is absolutely necessary to have them, then why not restrict their duration? This might be beneficial to both the Maoists and the people.

Martin adds, "When you open the mask, you will see an oil film, shot in 1914 by the great photographer Edward Curtis, and that shows natives, clothed in bear skins, dancing in preparation for the chase of the whale." Martin adds, "Wonderful! Such things the knee-jerk ethnologists at the museum do not do."

The "knee-jerk ethnologists" even accuse the new museum of "illegal trafficking" of pre-colonial materials. In 1999, in a letter to Prime Minister Lord Jospin, Andre Langayer, director of the laboratory of biological anthropology, complained that the new museum had triggered "a frenetic purchasing of so-called primitive art, provoking the intensification of the pillage of anthropological sites in Africa, America and Asia."

The government has suggested transforming the Museum of Anthropology into a Museum of Natural History, which critics are outraged. "Ethnologists in France are a very small elite, about to become extinct." Asking the Museum of Anthropology to forget exotic things and occupy itself with nature is like asking for a permanent ban on genetics," Pierre Delannoy wrote. ♦ 0757

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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITION

- ◆ **The Wild Tribes of Ethiopia** American photographer Robert Studzinski. Park Gallery, Pulchowk, until 31 March. 10AM-6PM, except Saturdays. 522307
- ◆ **Lives and Work of Nepalese Children** Exhibition of the work of Nepali child photographers. 28 March-13 April, Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal. 220735
- ◆ **Prints by Noriko Saito**, Japan. On show at the Siddharth Art Gallery, Baber Mahal. Revisited. 18-31 March, 11AM-6PM except Saturdays.

EVENTS

- ◆ **Shakespeare in the Valley** Rato Bangala School presents A Midsummer Night's Dream. 28, 29 and 31 March, Russian Cultural Centre, 5.15PM. 534318, 542045
- ◆ **Festival of War** based on episodes from the Mahabharata. Annual drama production of Studio 7. 19/20/21/26/27/28 April and 2/4/5 May at The Nagas Theatre, Hotel Vajra. 271545
- ◆ **The Warring Shakhs: A Paradigm for Gupta Conquests** Presentation with slides by Professor Katherine Anne Harper, Loyola Marymount University, LA. 25 March, 4PM. Royal Nepal Academy, Kamaladi. Royal Nepal Academy and the South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University.
- ◆ **Francophone Party** for French speakers. Songs and a play. Rs 500, members and students Rs 350 only, both with wine and cheese. 22 March, 6PM, Alliance Française, Thapathali. 241163
- ◆ **Peace rally** Show your commitment to a peaceful Nepal. Start from Patan Mangal Bazar, in front of Krishna Mandir. Walk from Mangal Bazar - Lagankhel - Kumaripat - Jawalakhel, ending in front of Lalitpur Municipality. 22 March, 3.45PM-5PM

MUSIC

- ◆ **Sounds of Spring** Everything from rock, classical, jazz, funk, fusion, blues, Latin jazz, big band, R&B, Nepali folk, salsa, and contemporary Nepali music. Rs 1,500 per head including drinker, 20 March 6PM, Hotel Soaltes Crown Plaza. 278989
- ◆ **Kathmandu Jazz Festival** Don Burrows and the festival all-stars backed by Cadenza, with a five-course meal. 22 March, Shangri-La Shambala Garden Cafe, Kathmandu. Tickets Rs 1,980 at Upstairs Jazz Bar, Shangri-La Hotel and Gokarna Forest Golf Resort.

FOOD

- ◆ **Holi Hangama** Special Holi sekewa and fusion music. Rs 555 per person, Rs1,010 per couple. 28 March, Dwarika's Hotel. 479488
- ◆ **Tempting Treat** Special menu with a wide variety of fresh trout dishes. Until 31 March, Alfresco, Hotel Soaltes Crown Plaza. 273999
- ◆ **The Best of Ghar-E-Kabab** Celebrating 20 years: 50 percent off F&B during lunch, dinner 20 percent off, two tables pay the price of one. 20 days ago. Until 4 March, Hotel de l'Annapurna. 227711
- ◆ **The new Roadhouse Cafe** Completely redesigned with separate bar seating and coffee bar. Original Mediterranean specialties and wood-fired pizzas. The Roadhouse Cafe, Thamel.
- ◆ **Taste of Beijing** Roast duck and other Chinese meat, fish and vegetarian delicacies. Beijing Roast Duck Restaurant, Birendra International Convention Centre. 468589
- ◆ **Newari Bhoj** Traditional snacks, drinks and meals. outdoors or indoor, in a restaurant designed by Bhaktapur artisans. Lapina Restaurant. Lazimpat. 413874
- ◆ **Taste of Beijing** Roast duck and other Chinese meat, fish and vegetarian delicacies. Beijing Roast Duck Restaurant, Birendra International Convention Centre. 468589
- ◆ **Newari Bhoj** Traditional snacks, drinks and meals. outdoors or indoor, in a restaurant designed by Bhaktapur artisans. Lapina Restaurant. Lazimpat. 413874



- ◆ **Charcoal** Grilled delicacies from around the world, glass of lager, live music, strawberries with cream. Non-vegetarians Rs 955 and vegetarians Rs 495, tax included. Postcode, Yak & Yeti. 246999
- ◆ **Singaporean and Malaysian food** Satay, rice, soyamish dishes, curry puffs and more. Near St Mary's School. Sing Ma, the Food Court. Foodcourt@wink.com.np. 520044
- ◆ **Variable chef special lunches** Especially for office goers at special rates. 12-3PM. Dwarika's Hotel. 479488
- ◆ **Lunch, tea and dinner** European and American cuisine with fine wines. La'Soon Restaurant and Vlnotheca, Pulchowk. 535290
- ◆ **Barbecue lunch** with complementary wine or beer for adults, soft drink for children. Saturdays at the Godavari Village Resort, Rs 650 per head. 560675

GETAWAYS

- ◆ **Stress busters** Day at the spa with meditation session, talk on stress management, and have a poolside meal at the Terrace. Rs 1,200 per head. The Club At The Valley. 491234
- ◆ **Gateway to Thailand** One-way flight Kathmandu to Bangkok, \$210 including insurance charges. Going Places Travel, Kathmandu. 61-23402, 251400
- ◆ **March Madness** Special daily rate with set meals, luxury 'on stilts' cottage and pickup, \$10 a day. Park activities extra. Jungle Base Camp Lodge, Bardia National Park. 61-31691, 251400
- ◆ **Want a break?** Short break and special offers at Dwarika's Hotel. 479488
- ◆ **Rhododendron Getaway** at the Horshoe Resort in Mude, three hours from Kathmandu. Two days of rhododendron walks in forests, package tours at \$30 per day, all meals and sauna included. Email resort@horshoe.wink.com.np
- ◆ **Lakuri Bhanjyang Getaway** Breath-taking views of Kathmandu Valley 15 km! 45 minutes from B&B Hospital. Adventure Tented Camp and Country Kitchen, Lubhi, Lalitpur. Weekdays ring 418922, 9810 26637.

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

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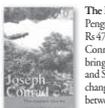


BOOKWORM

Mother Sister Daughter: Nepal's Press on Women
Sanchika Samuha, Kathmandu, 2002
Rs.325
This collection of newspaper articles from English-language newspapers and translated from Nepali-language newspapers focus on how society sanctions inequality and cultural control, on women's health, discrimination and violence. It also focuses on stories of women empowering themselves, and on first-person accounts and opinion pieces on gender issues.

Dangerous Wives and Sacred Sisters: Social and Symbolic Roles of High-Caste Women in Nepal Lynn Bennett
Mandala Book Point and Columbia University Press, Kathmandu, 1983/2002
Rs 800
Bennett, a developmental anthropologist, examines the social construction of gender among Bahun and Chhetri Hindus in rural Nepal. Through a detailed examination of the social, mythical and ritual structures that shape the interaction between men and women, this study reveals the symbolic roles of women's power and the complex social institutions, norms and beliefs that seek to contain that power and direct it to perpetuate the patrilineal group.

The Eastern Stories Joseph Conrad, ed. Ran Kah Choon
Penguin Books India, New Delhi, 2000
Rs.472
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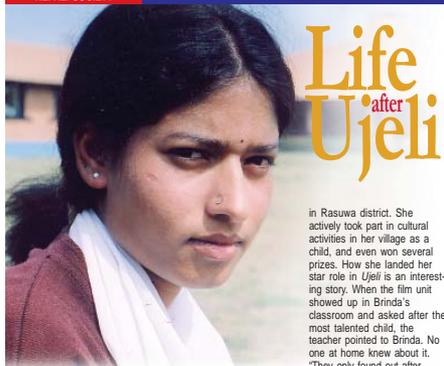
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ARTS

NEPALI SOCIETY



Life after Ujeli

When Dipendra Gauchan cast Brinda Adhikari in the award-winning docu-drama *Ujeli* nine years ago, the eight-year-old girl had no idea what was awaiting her. *Ujeli* was broadcast on more than 20 television channels all over the world, and with it, Brinda also became well-known. Today, she is preparing to take her School Leaving Certificate exams and wants to study science if she does well. But life after *Ujeli* wasn't easy. Rasuwa's tradition of society wasn't willing to rest easy about the fact that such a young girl had played the role of a married woman. The people in our village didn't understand then that this was a film, a story, and I was really hassled," she says. A local newspaper took up Brinda's cause in 1996 and a group of people petitioned the SOS Hermann School to provide her free education. Although the school only took in orphans under six years, Brinda's was an exception and the school consented. The school expected a lot from Brinda, but the trauma of her early fame, and the often unfriendly attention of her village had left its mark on the young girl, and she turned inward, shunning the leadership role the school would have liked her to take. Says Shankarprasad Poudel, principal of the SOS Hermann School, "Perhaps due to the psychological impact of the whole episode, she only adjusted two or three years later. But now she takes part in the different school activities, even plays and other theatrical productions. We are convinced that she has outstanding talent, and if she gets the opportunity she can do very well." Brinda is the youngest daughter of Chintamani Adhikari, a farmer from Betni in Rasuwa district. She actively took part in cultural activities in her village as a child, and even won several prizes. How she landed her star role in *Ujeli* is an interesting story. When the film unit showed up in Brinda's classroom and asked after the most talented child, the teacher pointed to Brinda. No one at home knew about it. "They only found out after almost half the shooting was complete. But no one said anything, they all liked it," smiles Brinda. She has fond memories of the time, despite the difficulties that followed. Today Brinda lives in the SOS Children's Village, only going home over Dasain. And she still loves to act. She also wants to learn dance, but hasn't had the chance. Always up for a good story, Brinda loves reading Nepali and English novels, as well as watching Nepali and Hindi films, and the news and other world events on television. The school is willing to help fund acting lessons for Brinda if she decides she wants them, and can handle the pressure. "She is national property, and everyone should support her. We too will help her," says principal Poudel. Today when Brinda goes back home with respect a lot cry from her earlier jibes. ◆



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NEPALI WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

This satellite image of the subcontinent taken on Wednesday morning shows a band of clouds stretching across from the Arabian Sea to the Pamirs which is a part of a low pressure circulation over Iran. The front is moving in a north-easterly direction and is expected to bring overcast skies and a hazy outlook over central Nepal over the weekend. The system lacks moisture however, and will not bring more than drizzles. A recurrence of contact between cold winds from the Tibetan plateau with warm moisture-laden convection over the southern Himalaya which caused Sunday afternoon's hailstorm is not expected to recur till midweek.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fr	Sa	Su	Ma	Tu
27-10	26-11	27-10	28-11	27-10

Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Dry days are here again

After gooseberry wine, the most overrated liquid in the world is probably water. Cosmologists tell us that life on other planets is impossible unless water is present. However, I know from personal experience in my own tole that semi-intelligent life can flourish, despite not a drop of water having flowed out of our taps since the reign of King Anusavarma. This is proof that we don't really need water at all to keep body and soul together. We can carry on in this trajectory through our current incarnation, as well as future cycles of life and re-birth, with no water at all. We don't need any H₂O, thank you. So very kind of you, sir.

Generations of Kathmandulays have grown up in total absence of water, and our bodies have evolved gradually through a process of natural selection to adapt to this waterless world. The trick is to replace water with other vital liquids wherever possible, and recycle every drop. There are households in our neighbourhood, for instance, that have completely done away with washing. To clean solid Y-froons that they have been wearing every day since the commencement of the current state of national emergency, they use a process called 'dry cleaning', which means spreading said undergarment on an ironing board and sprinkling liberal amounts scented talcum powder on it. Voilè! Undies look and smell as good as new.

Brushing teeth is a very water-intensive exercise. But many of us have totally obviated the need for water and toothpaste after discovering that one can brush one's teeth with great efficacy if one gargles with a bottle of beer ("Probably the Best Mouthwash in the World.") and then using the ensuing froth to vigorously brush all nooks and crannies within our oral cavities. Whiter, healthier teeth, no plaque, no need for water, and a great way to start a new day.

There must have been a huge shortage of water in ancient Egypt, because we know from historical parchment records that Cleopatra bathed in asses' milk. The historical records don't tell us what Mark Antony thought of this practice, or the fact that she was joined her in the tub to do asinine things, but it did save Egypt a lot of water since we are told that Cleopatra was in the habit of bathing quite often.

Now, we are acquainted with quite a lot of asses in our own little neighbourhood, but none of them are presently lactating. This rules out bathing in asses' milk for us for the time being, but where there is a will there is a way. Those desperately in need of a bath can join the entire city at the Dasarath Stadium Swimming Pool which has recently been converted into a giant communal bathtub where the entire Valley comes to take a dip and clean the black soot that gathers in the gap between their toes. All we have to do is enforce a mandatory bath at the Dasarath Stadium for politicians and bureaucrats so they can wash their greasy palms and ensure a squeaky clean administration.

In an effort to conserve water, the Kathmandu Metropolitan City has banned sprinkling in public and private places. Studies have shown that an average city dweller spits several dozen times an hour. All added up, this represents a grievous loss of moisture from the body and could lead to serious dehydration. Now that we are aware of this, all we have to do is to swallow copious quantities of saliva during the day to quench our thirst. In this way we no longer need to buy mineral water Thirst-Pee (Registered Trademark, Patent Pending).

Water also used to be needed for irrigation, but not any more. Many of us have perfected innovative ways to keep our gardens moist. Dogs are trained to look at the rose bush and point of deduction as the pettinens of their domain, which they then approach at regular intervals during the day, lift their hind leg, and turn on the sprinkler. For more water-intensive plants like the Delphinium belladonna, you can employ the services of the 200 elephants. Gajara, which will not only irrigate your garden, but also replenish the flowerbeds with valuable phosphorus and nitrogen-rich nutrients.

At this rate of water conservation, it is highly probable that we will not need the Melanchi project at all, and can use the 24 km tunnel to run a high-speed train to connect Sundarjal with Tarkeghyang so that the people of Upper Helambu can commute to and from Dasarath Stadium to clean their toes on a daily basis. ♦

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