



"Nepal has been pushed back 50 years."

From Narayan Prasad, DDC Chairman of Okhaldhunga

EXCLUSIVE

India cracks down

Indian intelligence this week arrested eight wounded Maoists undergoing treatment in two private clinics in Lucknow. Two are said to be brigade and platoon commanders, and one woman Maoist. Operatives are tracking down their supporters, news reports said.

Most Wanted

The government has released recent pictures of Nepal's most wanted men and one woman. Highlights: Chairman Prachanda and a clean-shaven Baburam sporting a pistol. (See p5)



Ministers immune

It is becoming clearer why we'll never be able to control corruption. Nobody really wants to. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba promised a clean government, but is under pressure from his cabinet to water down the anti-graft agenda. This week's draft anti-corruption bill is a classic example—it says the corruption watchdog can't probe policy decisions taken by ministers.

Future imperfect

BINOD BHATTARAI

Despite the fashionable cynicism in the capital, Nepal had made dramatic progress in the past two decades. Child mortality has been halved in 20 years, gonorrhea which was endemic is nearly gone, and 80 percent of the population has safe drinking water.

All this was made possible because elected village and district officials were becoming increasingly accountable, and some central policy was working. But the advances of the past 20 years are now threatened by systematic attacks by Maoist rebels against development projects, elected bodies and infrastructure. (See also: Rampage p88).

The destruction has a snowball effect. Attacks on hydropower plants, for instance, don't just deprive villages of electricity—it disrupts the cold chain for vaccination programmes. Women, children and the poorest bear the brunt of the impact.

Children and women suffer the most in an interview. "When a water supply system is blown up, it is again women who have to fetch it from somewhere up the hill," McNab has proposed that should be declared "zones of peace", but no one seems to be listening.

It is clear that Nepal's progress in child

health and literacy is going to take a beating if the attacks continue at this pace.

"Our development has been pushed back 50 years," says Prem Narayan Premi, DDC chairman of Okhaldhunga. "The devastation in Rumbaj and the villages around it will make you want to weep." Two weeks ago, Maoists wrecked Rumbaj's brand new water supply system, cutting the intake pipes and threatened to cut off the links of anyone who tried to repair the Rs 18 million project which had taken ten years to build.

In the past two weeks, 25 VDC buildings in Lamjung have been destroyed. "I don't know how and when we'll rebuild them," says MP Hari Bhakta Adhikary. In Lamjung's Dhusevi village, the building was not just the VDC office, but also housed a health post and post office. Some locals pleaded with the Maoists to spare the building. They were told: "Our orders are to destroy them, we don't care what happens."

It is hard to understand why the Maoist leadership has methodically targeted water supply and VDC buildings, since it affects ordinary people. Even in remote Humla district, 27 VDC buildings have been destroyed, only Simkot remains. Water supply

lines have been cut. Last week, Humla's dynamic DDC Chairman, Jivan Shahi had his home burnt to cinders, his property and livestock looted. In a phone interview from Simkot on Wednesday, Shahi told us: "I don't care what happens to me, but the Maoists are really hitting the poorest of the poor. It is now wholesale plunder and vandalism on an unprecedented scale."

In Kathmandu there appears to be little interest to gauge the implication of this nationwide pillage. No government agency is even keeping a tally of the destruction. Only at the National Planning Commission did we get a hint of concern: officials admitted the normal planning cycle now needs to be totally revised. "We are considering a shorter emergency plan to rebuild and rehabilitate," Jagdish Chandra Pokhrel of the NPC told us. "We are already looking at 2-3 years of reconstruction before we can get back to regular development."

In the donor community, there is a feeling of despondency and frustration. "The pace, fear and terror has effected the overall development climate," says Peter Rhode, director of the

German aid group, GTZ.

"Our partners are vanishing. VDCs are decreasing and local officials are fleeing either because they have been threatened or for fear of violence." It's not just that future progress has been stymied, but Nepal's development parameters will soon start regressing. For instance, the child mortality rate which had come down to 100 per 1,000 live births from nearly double that figure 20 years ago could start rising again. Immunisation rates could go down again from 90 percent to 70.

"This year we can only do about 60 percent of what we would have," says Sanjay Adhikary of UNDP. He heads a project that does social mobilisation in many of the hotspots of the midwest. "Work is challenging, but development must go on."

But it is not only the Maoists causing problems. "It appears that both sides are using food as weapon," says Douglas Courts, representative, World Food Program. "All that is happening in the most food insecure areas." This has the poor hardest. ♦

Nation p3
Water is life

"India is merging with Sikkim, not the other way round..."

Nepali Times: Sikkim is more developed than other north-eastern Indian states, and has always been a point of comparison for Nepal. What makes Sikkim special?

Pawan Chaming: We are made up of three groups—Bhutias, Lepchas, and Nepalis. That is why we call Sikkim our home and India our country. Until the home isn't secure, the country won't be. As much as we are concerned about the sovereignty and integrity of India, we are more concerned about keeping our home secure, and that won't just happen by ensuring national military security. We need social and economic security, education.

Sikkim, once an independent monarchy, is now part of India. What place does it have in the larger scheme of things?

We haven't lost out by becoming part of the Indian Union, we've gained. While preserving our tradition, language, culture, religion, our identity, we are also forging another identity. We need to play a role on the national stage. People talk about emotional integration, but now we're seeing more reverse integration. India is learning much from Sikkim, India is merging with Sikkim, not the other way round.

But how much can the Sikkimese interact with India today, keeping their self-esteem intact?



Pawan Chaming, chief minister of Sikkim, has three overriding concerns: security, sustainable development, and maintaining Sikkimese identity. Nepali Times spoke with him in Gangtokh last week about his vision of a peaceful and integrated Sikkim.

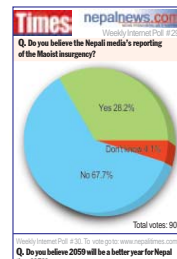
They are living with pride and self-esteem even today. I am proud that I am chief minister of India's 22nd state. These are positive things and we need to move head in a positive manner. It's only been 27 years, but it is unthinkable that anyone should say we are backward. We can live, progress and compete in the national arena.

What challenges does Sikkim face?

The biggest are natural. Our terrain is 100 percent mountainous or hilly, which makes agriculture difficult—only 11 percent is cultivable land. We can't produce what we need. Ours is a consumer culture and we're affected by the outside national and international market. Still, there are possibilities: if we can't be self-sufficient in foodgrains, we must be in vegetables. There are possibilities in tourism.

Another problem is that even today, 27 years down the line, Sikkimese are only alert to their rights in democracy, not their responsibilities. The government must do everything. To some extent, we in government are to blame for this. Political challenges are always there, but right-thinking people are on our side. We have no real social problems, which is why we are peaceful. As for external problems, so far we've faced no challenges on that front.

Go to p7



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FECKLESS PLURALISM

It should be now clear from the examples of countries like Pakistan and Nepal that "democratic transition" does not necessarily denote a transition to democracy. When the political class fails to address popular grievances that led to the downfall of authoritarianism, when pluralism cannot dislodge an entrenched patronage structure, the dangers of democratic reversal are real. Thirteen years after the People's Movement we see this clearly in Nepal.

Transitional countries do not have any cast-iron guarantees that political evolution will be progressive and linear. Democracy-in-transit is often fragile and flicker. Thomas Carothers, in his piece "The End of the Transition Paradigm" in the *Journal of Democracy* (13.1, 2002) analyses the phenomenon of "democratic deficit". The theory that democracy restored was democracy gained had become conventional wisdom after the falls of dictatorships in Asia and the former East Bloc in the late 1980s. Carothers argues that just because a people have shaken off dictatorial rule, there is no guarantee that they will go on to full-blown democracy.

This is not new to us in Nepal, of course. We have lived through the stench of democracy in decay for the past six years. We have tried to the situation by saying that these are teething problems. We have told ourselves it took the Europeans two hundred years to perfect the system, and how can we make it work in a decade? We said we tried dictatorship, and that didn't work either.

So we concluded that despite its messy transition, the answer to malfunctioning democracy was more democracy, not less. What we hadn't bargained for was the fecklessness of our politicians. A more selfish, self-absorbed and visionless bunch of leaders would be hard to find even in countries where the democratic transition is messier than ours. In his *Journal of Democracy* piece, Carothers reserves special respect for Nepal as one of the countries afflicted with a syndrome he calls "feckless pluralism".

These are states with political freedom and elections, but where democracy hasn't taken root, there is chronic instability, and little political participation beyond voting. Carothers cites countries like Argentina and Nepal as being examples of countries with feckless pluralism where "the political competition is between deeply entrenched parties that essentially operate on patronage networks and seem never to renovate themselves..."

Countries with feckless pluralism, writes Carothers, achieve their own "dys-functional equilibrium" where rival elite groups compete for the spoils of power. And he cautions against having too high expectations of elections as generators of democratic change. Carothers goes on: "Nepal is a telling example... since 1990 (it) has held many multiparty elections and experienced frequent alternation of power. Yet, the Nepalese public remains highly disaffected from the political system and has little real sense of democratic accountability."

Well put. But while many here would agree with Carothers' observation concerning national politics, he does overlook the genuine evolution of a culture of democracy in Nepal at the grassroots since 1990. One of the major accomplishments of the past 13 years has been the gradual devolution of decision-making to accountable locally-elected leaders. This has started to unleash a wave of development throughout the land: in community forestry, health care, and lately in education.

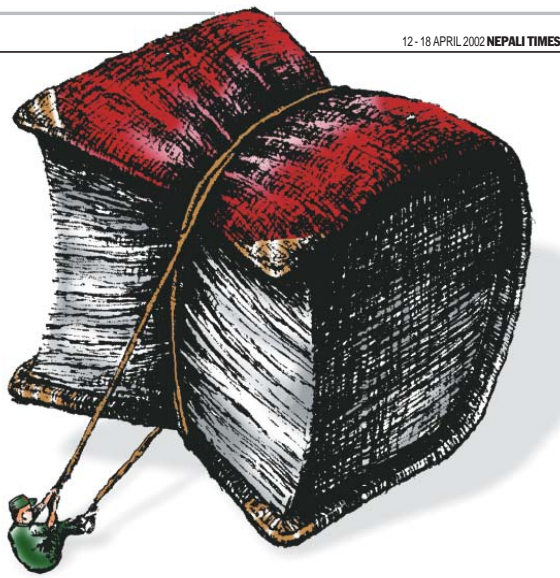
It is not surprising, therefore, that the architects of a proletarian revolution want to destroy this foundation. Here we see a guarantee that our democracy would not be shallow, be bottom-up, and strike roots deep in the polity. Our adolescent democracy is taking a double whammy: from national leaders who lack accountability, and from armed revolutionaries who want to put its fragile roots. With such an alliance, our democracy doesn't stand a chance. Unless, of course, the people speak out. They should. We don't have much time to set things right.

2059

If you thought 2058 was a bad year, wait for 2059. According to the royal astrologer, Mangal Raj Joshi, the omens don't look good. The very first month into the new year, the bad planets will be arrayed on our side of the solar system—an alignment that will not happen for the next 100 years. Just after sunset in the first week of May, we will see Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, Mars and Saturn all in a huddle in the western sky. What are these planets up to? What do they portend for Nepal and the world?

Mr Joshi probably needs to make these dire warnings to keep his job, but our suggestion in the new year would be to believe in astrology rather than astrology. For once, we must get down to building our own future. Our future is not fated, it is not pre-ordained. Destiny is what we make of it. Our future is shaped by the decisions and actions we take today. Let's stop blaming the stars.

However, there seem to be other shining lights besides planets to guide us in the new year. The 2059 official calendar of the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninists) has an interesting line-up of portraits to adorn each month of the forthcoming year. Our comrades seem to be in a time warp. We may be in 2059 BS, but their dreams are still stuck somewhere in 1957 AD. If these be our role models, then maybe we really need divine intervention.



STATE OF THE STATE

by CK LAL



Fatalism, capitalism and altruism

The sad paradox of the caste system is that the haves don't have to give, and the have-nots don't have much to give.

Males of the species of higher-caste Hindus are called *dwij*—the twice-born ones. The second-birth ceremony is actually a rite of passage that commemorates the coming-of-age when a *dwij* becomes eligible to wear the consecrated thread. At an elaborate *brahmadhanu* (peacocks) ceremony, the sacred *Gauri* Mantra is whispered into the ear of a *brahman*—literally, the young one—by the family priest or a respected elder. Once this commemoration is complete, a *dwij* is entitled to receive something for nothing and he learns to become a beggar for life. In fact the ritual of giving is an integral part of the *brahmadhanu* ceremony and the *brahman* is made to do so disguised as a mendicant.

The *brahmadhanu* ceremony is symbolic of the veneration of culture of begging rampant in Hindu society. A *dwij* boy grows up with the belief that if his destiny to prosper and prosper, but they had to please the poor in order to justify their control over the state. Thus, Chandra Sumsher established a high school and a college and released slaves, but Sumsher set up a hospital, and Juddha Sumsher patronised schools under the Valley. Governments that came to power after 1951 applied to build a welfare state. But the post-Berlin Wall period has seen a withering away of the socialist dream. In the new paradigm of politics, the people's representatives reign, but it is the market that really rules.

So, most schools that have opened after the mid-eighties are business enterprises selling education. Instead of hospitals, we have private health care on an industrial scale. Engineering, technical and medical schools have suddenly materialised out of thin air, but these are actually ill-disguised factories churning out profits for the

right hand is giving". But all we have are remnants of the monumental vanity of our ancestors shouting for attention from the tops of now-crumbling temples.

Sadly, even our enlightened Hindu rich have failed to learn from the philanthropic traditions of other societies. Rather than charitable hospitals, free primary-funded schools, or endowment-run old-age homes, we have trusts that dispense prizes and all sundry. Those instituting prizes often do so in the hope that some of the luminosity of the winners will rub off on them. It is a naked attempt to pay glory and immortality on the cheap—the prize-giver belittles the achiever by showering cash on him.

All this didn't matter much as long as the ruler (and later the state) took care of the disadvantaged, though admittedly in a very small way. The rulers were venerated as protectors and providers, but they had to please the poor in order to justify their control over the state. Thus, Chandra Sumsher established a high school and a college and released slaves, but Sumsher set up a hospital, and Juddha Sumsher patronised schools under the Valley. Governments that came to power after 1951 applied to build a welfare state. But the post-Berlin Wall period has seen a withering away of the socialist dream. In the new paradigm of politics, the people's representatives reign, but it is the market that really rules.

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promoters. Welfare doesn't figure in their calculations.

Meanwhile, the poor, the children, the disadvantaged, the physically or mentally challenged, the aged, and the sick—all "non-economic persons" in the parlance of the free market—have been left for fend for themselves. It's depressing but true: the rich in Nepal pay lower taxes (maximum 40 percent) than in France (maximum 60 percent), live better (more servants than family members) than those with equivalent gross income in Japan (almost no servants), and contribute less (almost nothing) towards social welfare than their counterparts anywhere else in the world. So it isn't all surprising that most Nepalis believe their welfare is in the benevolent hands of Lord Pashupatin.

But even in this darkness, a lamp of hope has been burning bright for some time at Jorpati. Established by the late Khagendra Basmnet, the Nepal Disabled Society Hospital is run on the traditional pattern of doing good rather than following the modern trends of cost recovery and profit maximisation. Kanak Mani Dixit has set up a home for his dream of establishing a spinal injury rehabilitation centre within its welcome premises.

This week, the inauguration of the Nepal Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre showed once again that Nepal society is not completely bereft of a culture of philanthropy. The tradition began by the Sah brothers of Janakpur—Ram Swaroop and Ram Sagar—the Shahu of Nepalguni, the late Dayabir Singh Kansakar and his Proprietary team in Kathmandu may not be behaving, but it's there. What Nepal needs is socialism, but if that's too much to ask, capitalism with a human face may have to do. ♦

TION

ANALYSIS

■ Here are signs that the "People's War" is turning to terrorism. Why else would eight-year-old Kaji Khanan have to be alive in a box? What could be the logic reason to target drinking water lines, making thousands of children sick? Where they shooting at long-distance? Even after the 2-6 April bandh had been lifted? Why stop an ambulance bringing a patient from Charkot to Kathmandu? Why mutilate a dead body and hang it on a public utility? These are the signs of terrorism. There may be a revolutionary rationale some of these acts. For the others, we try to understand the Maoists and People's War in a different context. It is clear that local-level caste either endorsed or defied party orders. In one town local Maoists were quoted as saying "We don't care who Prachanda is, or called off the bandh. Close your shops or till them."

The destruction of water-supply systems, utilising training centres, forest range stations could also indicate disaffection in the s, and blatant defiance for direct orders (the political leadership). Attacking current offices and local infrastructure is a sign even the Great Helmsman never imagined. Mao said, "Don't do anything to increase the people's hardship, even if it doesn't even take needle and thread them." The revolution may be slipping out of the leadership's grip, and if so, this should seriously worry the top comrades. These signs of untrustworthiness in the ranks are an unwelcome, but in a sense an inevitable offshoot of armed struggle.

Because all the recent violent acts took place days after the Maoist general strike, it was natural to conclude that they were preparing for the impending "final" battle. If the sabotage of infrastructure was indeed a coordinated attack timed for the new-up to happen on the day of the Maoist general strike, then it gives a glimpse of the Maoist battle plan during the rescheduled bandh later this month.

Alongside the escalation of violence and terror, there are also traces of a shift in Maoist allegiances. One of the most dramatic transformations is the new pro-Indian and anti-monarchy stance. In a recent interview in the party mouthpiece *Pravasi* Maoists even expressed thanks to mainstream Indian newspapers for calling him and his followers "progressive rebels". The entire 10-page interview does not mention "Indian expansionism" even once. Quite a feat for someone whose trademark line was "Indian expansionism", and who even dared the Indian army to stop on Nepal soil, in which case, he once said, his fighters would take on India's might.

Suddenly, India is not the Maoists' "main enemy" anymore. Where all the threats against Indian movies and the ban on Indian vehicles operating in Nepal? It can be a coincidence, but the largest infrastructure Maoists have attacked and destroyed so far happens to be the Jharkhand Hydropower Project. Considering that water resources and power are the only areas in which India really cares about Nepal, that attack is not without significance.

Chinks in the Maoist armour

Only an immediate ceasefire and resumption of peace talks may now save the Maoists from self-destructing.



A Maoist bridge bomb on the Bishnumati on 29 March injured 26 people, including two children.

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The perception that India is supporting

the Maoists has now become so prevalent in the media and among the Nepali public, that it is taken as a given. People are saying the Maoist leaders are in India, we even know the street address for their safe houses, so how come Indian intelligence hasn't nabbed them? The reason Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba was unable to come back from India with a couple of Maoist leaders under his arms is seen by many as an indication that the Indian security apparatus is mysteriously soft on our comrades. The first sign of movement is the joint meeting of security this week in Patna.

Many who suggested such a link used to be dismissed as conspiracy theorists—until now. Today the theory has a certain respectability. It is indeed true that certain sections of Indian intelligence are backing the Maoists, though the leadership feel it can use India to catapult itself to power? Or have the comrades called off their India-bashing because they need refuge in India now that the royal Nepal Army has turned on the

beat? Prachanda's sudden affection for India could be his ruse of giving hospitality.

The Buddha said reality was an "illusion". To the Maoists, everything except power is an illusion. The trend justifies any alliance, it allows extreme promiscuity. So, the Maoists swing from smooching a feudal monarch to getting into bed with someone they have been calling "expansionist running dogs" all their lives. They can even deviate from declared political ideals and justify that in the name of the revolution. Revolution is a mad dog, it's right. Anything goes as long as it brings them closer to absolute power. We'll know that one day the Maoists will say that all this—this sudden copping up to erstwhile villain-in-chief Girdhari Prasad Koirala, the seeming appreciation with arch-enemy India, the falling out with a monarch with which the Maoists themselves admit they were negotiating for the spoils—was all a strategic compromise made in the course of a revolution.

All revolutions suffer such contractions.

LETTERS

NAKED

In the fable of the Emperor's New Clothes, it is enough for a mere boy to cry out that the emperor was indeed naked. The ensuing public laughter brought the emperor to his senses. In Nepal, the rudeness of our politicians is not exposed even when the commander-in-chief tells them they have no clothes on. ("Who brought the nation to its present condition?," #87). Instead of coming to their senses, our politicians pull all the stops in muzzling this criticism.

And they go about strutting in all their corrupt glory, declaring anti-democratic all those who point fingers at their corruption. The only political force serious enough about the corruption have been the so-called "terrorists". In these difficult times, it is natural for the army leadership to worry about the political leadership. After all, it is they who are on the frontline, putting their lives on the line. And all this killing turns out to support a corrupt and inefficient political leadership, the army indeed has

reasons to worry. There is no credible evidence that the politicians in power are taking the sort of hard steps in punishing the corrupt and improving governance—steps that are necessary even if the army kills the last of the Maoists. Asking the army to remain apolitical makes sense only when the political leadership is sufficiently efficient and free from corruption.

Kabindra Pradhan
Buwali

I think Prajwal S Rana is absolutely right, and most Nepals agree with him. It is the political parties that are responsible for the present state of the country. The Maoists are just taking advantage of this. Now the Maoists are preventing our brothers and sisters from taking their exams and destroying the country's healthy growth. Are these Maoists going to rule a Nepal that is completely destroyed? Many Nepalis sympathised with the Maoists at first, but they have turned out to be even more corrupt and corrupt than the political parties. The Maoist leadership

and their children are safe now. But wait. One day the relatives of the victims of Maoist murders are going to chase them and take their revenge. So comrades, remember, your payback time will come soon.

Sanjay Giri
GK

BAUBARAM
A fitting reply by Paul Bacon ("Reply to Baburam," #87) to Baburam Bhattacharya's tax to foreign tourists. I want to add one extra point. Baburam says the Nepal people are "materially poor but spiritually rich" but what is he? Is he "materially rich but spiritually poor"? To top it all, he claims to represent us. What he and his politically-charged murderers are doing, however, is turning Nepalis into "materially poor as well as spiritually poor" people.

Shalaya Rana
Jawalakhi

CK LAL
We enjoy the depth of CK Lal's columns. But in his "Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full" (#88) there was absolutely no need to get personal and mention that the chief wears a bright red tika even in uniform and "indulges in extended religious ceremonies". These are entirely personal matters. There is no rule in the army that prohibits its wearing a tika in uniform. Let's not get personal here. This kind of gutter journalism was unexpected from a columnist of CK Lal's maturity.

Dr Amit KC
Bishalnagar

CK Lal's "More of the same in Montenegro" (#87) was very insightful. Many prominent economists of the country including Dr Devendra Raj Pandey, Mahesh Banskota and Pitambar Sharma have

cautioned against too much dependence on foreign aid. The result of 40 years of foreign aid in the country is really dismal. While donors have become increasingly powerful, the country has not gained much. Inefficiency and corruption apart, foreign aid has aided foreign consultants more than the Nepal people. Indeed, in Nepal foreign aid is "of the foreigner, by the foreigner for the foreigner".

Mike Sharma,
by email

FAIRLY LOVELY
This is in response to Joyce Silverstein's letter (#87). Why is she trying to impose her "western" sensibilities on us? Would she complain in the same vein for advertisements for hair colour or tanning lotions? The virtues of fairer skin are not just imagined. "Skin lightening" products are popular even in countries where people are generally considered "fair". I, personally, find nothing wrong in such ads as long as they do not make

false claims and are not harmful to use. Moreover, it is ads like this which make Kunda Dixit's "humour" more affordable to readers like Joyce.

Sunita Singh
by email

HATS OFF
To my wonder, it seems utter nonsense that Kunda Dixit wears different hats every time and it is puzzling how many hats he owns. It seems to me that he owns a powerhouse or a factory of hats. What is the meaning behind wearing a different hat always. Can you please clarify this nonsense act?

B Bastakoti
by email

CORRECTION
In Back to Sundarjal-9 (#88) the reference to "king" in BP Koirala's diary is not King Birendra and not to Mahendra as erroneously cited in the explanatory notes and parenthesis. — Editor

by PUSKAR GAUTAM



These are natural when ideology is rigid, and no dissent is allowed. But even by these standards, Nepal Maoists seem to be masters of inconsistency. There was the confusion with ideology when they unnecessarily appended the "Prachanda Path" to their ideology (a clever way to use the bilingual word "path" and also show a subliminal link with Mao).

Anything was justifiable in the name of the Prachanda Path. Their adoption of terrorist tactics may be in the belief and hope that final victory is within striking distance. The internal analysis of the leadership could be that the revolution is gaining its own momentum, and that they have to ride the wave to remain in control. But the spreading anarchy in the ranks could be because the grassroots leaders are not represented in the party's central command. This has confused the cadre about overall war strategy and management approaches, the larger game plan, and even, in some cases, has given rise to the suspicion that the leadership has sold out to the reactionaries.

Darg ended the political process in the Maoist mindset and dragged the party towards militarisation. But that milestone event trapped the Maoists and forced them to stay further left. They are now close to grating into full-fledged terrorism. The military leadership must fear a major military assault, which will have decisive forces, the revolution by all-out attacks on Maoists.

The ground reality could be one or more of the above possibilities, or permutations thereof. But what we are seeing are chinks in the Maoist monolith: the internal tensions between nationalists and non-nationalists, political forces versus pro-military forces, the leaders and the followers, those for the Prachanda cult and those against it. The terrorist tactics of the past month show that vertical fissures have appeared in the party structure. Only an immediate ceasefire, or peace talks, can save the Maoists from self-destructing. ♦

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

Water for life

Eighty percent of rural Nepalis now have safe drinking water, and child mortality has gone down by a third.

for other activities, such as taking their goods to the market, or studying. It means people can make the next step to building—and using—toilets, which in turn means better hygiene and health, more productive Nepalis.

As grants dry up and the emphasis internationally shifts to making communities manage their drinking water systems, Nepal too has in recent years tried to use the greater decision-making powers of women and ensuring that systems are locally sustainable with the primary concerns of sanitation and hygiene.

Water planners say we must understand that water supply is a right. Once that is taken as a given, water becomes an agent of social change. The numbers show that this approach holds water and in 1997, the international Water Collaborative Council recognised Nepal's drinking water campaign as one of the best in the world.

Nepal's model works like this: a community must first demand a water supply system, it must identify a perennial water source. Then, a local committee is appointed to maintain the system. Finally, villagers set down to decide—often by age group—where to place, contribute labour, and find funds for construction. After this they're on their own. What keeps the project going is the involvement of community right from the start, giving villagers a sense of ownership as well as an understanding of how the system works. The other reason Nepal's experiment with community-managed



PHOTO BY N. K. SHRESTHA

drinking water has been so successful is that the technology needed was simplified and adapted to local conditions, and so could be built and maintained with locally-produced spare parts.

Namaste Lal Shrestha of UNICEF says, "Now the communities do not need foreign trained technicians like us, they can do just fine by themselves." Village folk now also know that they don't need to depend on Kathmandu for money or experts, and it is this local involvement that has also de-politicised rural drinking water supply.

However, policymakers and community leaders now tell us that the next step is to get the government back in—with a few changes in attitude.

The government needs to realise fast that supplying good quality drinking water makes economic sense," says Umesh Pandey, member secretary of Nepal Water for People (NWPAP).

"Access to plenty of water reduces diarrhoea by 20 percent, maintaining the quality of water for drinking purposes reduces it by another 15 percent and washing hands properly and at right time can reduce it by an

life

A 2001 study by the research group New Era on the fourth phase of the Joint Development Bank-funded Water Supply and Sanitation Sub-Project shows that the average time to fetch one vessel of water came down from an hour to ten minutes after the project was implemented. The major beneficiaries were women, and when water supply improves more and more women attend informal education classes and participate in savings and credit schemes. They spend more time on caring for their children and preparing food, and they even sleep better. There is more time to take produce to market, children (especially girls) have more time to study.

Biman Kumar Paudyal, an environmental engineer with the Department of Water Supply and Sewerage who has worked with grassroots communities for two decades, says there is an even more remarkable change: "In areas that have community-managed drinking water supply systems, not only has the health and hygiene of women improved, they have also become significantly better leaders."

UNICEF and some 25 other national and international organisations working in rural drinking water caution that the next big push should be in sanitation and hygiene, especially latrines. The New Era survey showed that areas with new water supply saw a two-thirds drop in incidence of diarrhoea. These improvements can be achieved by better hygiene.

Hans D Spruijt, who heads UNICEF's Water and Environmental Sanitation section, has calculated it all: "Access to plenty of water reduces diarrhoea by 20 percent, maintaining the quality of water for drinking purposes reduces it by another 15 percent and washing hands properly and at right time can reduce it by an



Maoinis target rural water supply

In the coming monsoon season, the biggest problem won't be implementing new water and sanitation projects. It will be the insurgency. "More people will fall ill this monsoon season," UNICEF's Hans Spruijt predicts. Because of the conflict and the state of emergency, most organisations working on drinking water projects have been forced to reduce their programmes by half.

Hari Ram Koirala, deputy director general of the Department of Water Supply and Sewerage (DWSS) is keeping his fingers crossed that community-managed systems will be spared by the insurgents. "Our grassroots-level workers have not been harassed by the Maoists so far, even in very sensitive districts like Rukum and Rolpa," he said. But he is still nervous, wondering whether the attacks on the DWSS' local partners, such as village and district development committees, and of late on large-scale drinking water projects, could be portents of bad times ahead.

In the past month, the Maoists have attacked water supply in Okhaldhunga, Dolekh and a dozen other districts. In Humla, metal pipes laid down at enormous cost for rural water supply have been uprooted by Maoists. "This is a disaster," says Jivan Shahi, chairman of the Humla DDC. "More children will die."

main obstacles. One in four simply said that they didn't have toilets because they weren't in the habit of using them. The women-centred approach was also part of the problem. Initially we didn't realise the significance of mobilising and motivating men, who control the resources of families," NEWAH's Pandey told us. Even if we women understood the need for proper toilets, the men in their households decide it is not their priority.

Although the approach remains women-focused, there is reason to believe that when it comes to men, men make the call. UNICEF's statistics show that while 80 percent of households in Nepal have access to safe drinking water, only 30 percent have proper toilets. Over half the households with no toilets are in the hills.

UNICEF that they couldn't afford them, but the agency maintains that people's attitudes and habits are the

TADO turns TADA

The Terrorism and Disruptive Activities Bill passed by parliament last week with an overwhelming majority will make terrorism a crime punishable with life imprisonment. The bill, which replaces the Terrorism and Disruptive Activities Ordinance, issued when the state of emergency was declared last November, authorises security forces to make arrests without warrants, and use force or firepower if confronted with resistance. In addition to life imprisonment, it allows the seizure of property belonging to perpetrators, conspirators and supporters in cases involving loss of life caused by terrorist and disruptive activities. The bill also proposes a special court to deal with cases related to charges of terrorism. While supporters of the bill, which will be in force for two years once it officially becomes an Act, say it will help bring the insurgency under control and Maoists behind bars, anti-bill activists say it will affect people's liberty more than aid in the crackdown on the Maoists.

Nepal's most wanted

Finally, there are faces to go with the most "revolutionary" names in Nepal today. Last week on its fortnightly television program the Royal Nepal Army premiered the most recent pictures of the Maoist leadership. Nearly two dozen pictures, including those of a garlanded Prachanda and a whiskered Baburam Bhattarai, were shown on NTV. Viewers were also encouraged to report to the authorities any glimpse they caught of the "anti-nationals". Also on the RNA's most-wanted list is Nanda Kishore Pun, head of the Maoist militia in the western region. Pun, aka Pasang, led major Maoist offensives in the west, including in Dang and Surkhet. Newspaper reports say that the photographs were seized from Agabai Yadav and Khop Bahadur Kandel who were killed in clashes between security forces and the Maoists in Saptari and Gorakha, respectively.



From left to right: Baburam Bhattarai, Nanda Kishore Pun (Pasang), Deb Gurung, Mohan Baidya (Kiran), Rekha Sharma

From two days to an hour

Local villagers, with help from an ex-Gurkha welfare fund, have successfully completed a 25 km stretch of road from Jiri to Piri in Ramechhap, cutting down travelling time from two days to about one hour. The road opens up a hitherto remote area of east-central Nepal and will eventually join a road from the tarai in Okhaldhunga. The inauguration of the road last month saw seven welcome arches along the stretch through Jiri, Betali, Thosha, and Sivapala. The road was formally inaugurated by the director of the British Gurkha Welfare Fund, Peter Sarland. "All we need now is a bridge at Khimi," says Captain Tek Bahadur Limbu of the Fund.

Lifestyle diseases

Health experts say more people in the world die of non-communicable diseases today than ever before and by 2020, 73 percent of the world's deaths will be from such illnesses. Nepal is no exception. Studies at the Bir Hospital indicate that the leading cause of death is coronary heart disease, followed by lung disease. Brought on by lack of exercise, poor nutrition, smoking and mental pressure, such illnesses are the result of a rapidly changing lifestyle. The death rate in South Asia as a whole from coronary heart disease is four times higher than that in western countries. Living a more restrained life, getting a healthy diet, cutting down on alcohol, quitting smoking and getting more exercise are the best prevention as well as cure. The government appears to have taken note—in its Tenth Five-Year Plan it highlights non-communicable diseases as a health priority.

HEMILATARA

Remember all those public service advertisements about safe drinking water? Turns out there was no reason to stagger at them. Consider this: in the early 1960 only five percent of rural Nepalis had access to piped drinking water. Today 80 percent do.

In that same period, Nepal's child mortality rate has dropped from 300 per 1,000 live births to less than 100. There is a correlation between safer drinking water and healthier children, and Nepal's success with rural drinking water has become a model for other developing countries. But this is now threatened by the Maoist

insurgency—in the past month rebels have started targeting water supply pipelines in rural areas. (See box.)

Dr Vijaya Shrestha, who worked with the government through three phases of the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project. A reliable supply means infants won't die of diarrhoeal dehydration. It means women and girls who spend hours fetching water with pails on their hips can use that time and energy

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"I'm glad I don't have to climb Mt Everest all over again..."

Nepali Times: The year 2003 is the 50th anniversary of your climb of Mt Everest. How are you planning to mark the event?
Edmund Hillary: Certainly, my wife and I plan to be here on May 29, 2003 which is the day that we reached the summit of Mt Everest. They tried to persuade us to be in the UK at that time, and in New Zealand and so on. But we decided to be in Nepal when it all happens. I'm looking forward to seeing many good mountaineering friends both here in Nepal and also in the United Kingdom. So, it should be a very happy and cheerful occasion.

Is there any special reason for this particular visit?

This is the normal time of the year that we come to Nepal. This is a very special occasion for us. We are largely handing over the administration of our many projects to a very good Sherpa committee and they will have the responsibility of spending the money and carrying out the projects. We will still try and raise money, but the administration will be handed over to a very good and respected friend among the Sherpa community.

What will your role be?

My constant efforts these days is the raising of funds for various projects in Solukhumbu, for the hospital, schools, the teacher training programs, and many other things. And I hope to keep doing that as long as I'm able. I'm now 82-years-old so I'm not quite as energetic as I used to be but I still travel around the world.

Nepal recently opened up numerous new peaks for climbing?
I think it is a very good idea to open up new areas. They may not be the highest peaks in the world, but many of them are formidable mountains and give great challenges for the young, enthusiastic mountaineers. And, I think, probably they are a benefit, financially to Nepal itself.

An international museum is being constructed in Pokhara. The inauguration is planned for 2003. What do you think of the idea?
Well it's a big job, a lot of effort has gone into it. I'm sure many tourists

will enjoy visiting the museum and seeing what is being carried out. Unfortunately, I can't be there for the inauguration.

Can visitors expect any of your mountain memorabilia on display?

It's very difficult. My memorabilia is mostly in museums in various parts of the world and I really have very little left myself to give. But I will see, anyway.

But you have given a lot to Nepal, to the Khumbu region, to your Sherpa friends?

We've put a lot of energy into school, medical clinics, in assisting with the monasteries and various other things. And this has given us great satisfaction.

In February the Maoists attacked the Lukla airport which you originally built. How did you react to the news?

The Maoist problem is a big one, we know, in Nepal. I personally think it is very unfortunate and hope the whole matter clears up as soon as possible.

Many foreign missions have advised their nationals that Nepal is not a safe destination. What do you tell fellow New Zealanders?

I tell fellow New Zealanders back home to be sensible, but no tourists so far have been affected by the problem here. And I would certainly encourage them to come here to see the beauty, to know the people, and just treat everything with good common sense.

Your son Peter is climbing Everest again this spring in commemoration of your historic climb fifty years ago. What do you tell him?

He told me he was climbing this year. I was happy and wished him the best. I'm glad for that it is over for me, and that I don't have to climb it all over again.

(Daniel Lak is travelling and his column will be back next week.)

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For more information, contact the school at 01-4211111 or 01-4211112. The school is located at Kato Bangala, Kathmandu.

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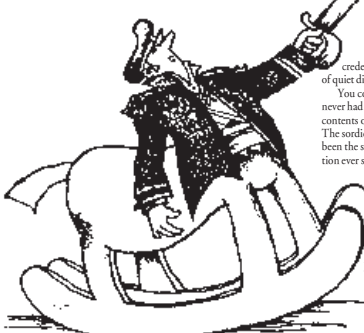
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The general and the labyrinth

What was surprising was not what the C-in-C said, but how quickly the outrage fizzled out. Is "quiet diplomacy" at work here?



I took one word to defuse what looked like a warhead with enough firepower to pulverise the political establishment as we've known it for the last 12 years. Although the official line remains that Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba assured lawmakers that he had "alerted" army chief General Prajwal SJB Rana about their grave objections to his hard-

hitting convocation speech at Shivapuri, much more must have gone into soothing the nerves of our visibly distraught MPs. The flurry of unofficial inter-party consultations and the reality that chief shah didn't step back a centimetre from the core of his caustic comments during a subsequent testimony at a House of Representatives panel give

credence to the supposition of quiet diplomacy. You could argue that the MPs never had a problem with the contents of Gen Rana's speech. The social state of the nation has been the staple of social conversation ever since interim prime minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai lost the 1991 election by a few hundred votes, adding the term "antarghat" (sabotage) to the political lexicon. Donors and diplomats have become more scathing in "their criticism of governance. A few months ago, the top civil servant advised foreigners and Nepalis to start talking about good governance only after the country gets a government. Since the imposition of the state of emergency, it has become fashionable for politicians of all persuasions to express distress over the contamination of national ethics and a readiness to accept responsibility in direct

proportion to their tenure in power. Moreover, a contrite countenance works well among constituents during elections, a possibility a lot of MPs must be preparing for during these precarious times. Politicians alarmed by the army chief's motives zeroed in on one sentence of his speech. From the Janji Adda's perspective, the assertion that only the prime minister and a few younger members of his cabinet were being cooperative was a statement of fact. But it gave the MPs the impression that the general was playing favorites. Politicians know it takes a lot of thinking and writing to put together a 12-page critique of current events. But they seemed to have overlooked the fact that it also takes a lot of humiliation to produce persuasive prose from an institution that is more comfortable with the word than the pen. Since Gen Rana assured MPs of the non-political motive of his intentions, they had good reason to be satisfied, at least on the surface.

But the key question the general raised remains unanswered. It would be wrong to blame today's decay on the last 12 years of democracy. I'm saying this not because I believe the root traces its roots to the birth of the nation but because it would be unfair to Nepal Congress president Gijiga Prasad Koirala. Granted, Koirala happened to live in Baluwatar for the longest time after the restoration of democracy. But it would be a moral transgression on our part to accuse him of ineptitude and immorality while allowing Surya Bahadur Thapa and Lokendra Bahadur Chand to shift their panchayat baggage to the palace and attribute their multiparty antics to the compulsion of a hung parliament. If you really want to enjoy Koirala for castigation, you have to begin by considering the extent of the culpability of his party and those who voted for it.

The Nepal Congress supremo seems to have brushed aside this catch-kim-if-you-can scorn in the broader interest of his democratic alliance. The composure of the older members of the cabinet helped calm the waters, too. It took no time for the country to revert to politics as usual. Lawmakers voted in favour of the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control and Ban) Bill in April 1991. It was in exchange for the government's decision to loosen the restrictions on civil and political rights. Admittedly, the extent of the relaxation was not quite what opposition MPs expected, but it was something worth claiming credit for. (Look at what hap-

pened to the constitution-amendment pledge the prime minister made to get the emergency proclamation ratified.) The events of the past fortnight seemed to reinforce how compromise have become the pivot of Nepal's politics. From the tripartite Delhi compromise of 1991 to the three-way Narayanhi covenant four decades later, Nepal politicians have had to negotiate sharp curves and steep slopes. One set of compromises has sown the seeds of other. Politicians generally have an atrocious record when it comes to keeping promises, but this did not deter the popularity of secret pacts as a tool of transformation. They will maintain their supremacy as long as each party continues to enjoy the freedom to interpret words, clauses and paragraphs in its own way. Regardless of the nature of the backroom negotiations that went into defusing the latest crisis, you have to admit that the experience has been good for the political process. Remember the confidence opposition leaders asked after boycotting Prime Minister Deuba's all-party meeting on confronting the Maoist-sponsored five-day bandh that continued to horrify Nepalis even after the rebels announced an ambiguous last-minute withdrawal in April 1991? It was just as the war with the Trepidation of the leaders who spurred to sessions convened by Nepal Congress president Gijiga Prasad Koirala and CPN-UL leader Madhav Kumar Nepal on saving democracy after the general had spoken.

By pledging to strengthen ties among their sister organisations, mainstream political parties have sought to inject a sense of brotherhood into a society running out of family values. Even if those leaders dashed to the Teku and Baluku conclaves to save their necks together, they still managed to display the notion that the broader democratic alliance was a non-starter, didn't they? ♦

Travelling Film South Asia in Kathmandu
You may have missed Film South Asia '01. This is your chance to see the best non-fiction films shown at FSA. Having made their way all over the world to Lahore, Karachi, Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, San Francisco and Princeton, these 16 outstanding documentaries are once again being shown in Kathmandu.

The films include *My Migrant Soul* (Winner of the Ram Bahadur Trophy for Best Film), *A Rough Cut on the Life and Times of Lakshman Mahar* (Winner of the Second Prize at FSA '01), *Jari Mar: Of Cloth and Other Stories* (Third place winner at FSA'01) and *The Killing Terraces* (A film about the Maoist insurgency in Nepal).

Venue: Bagbighana, Patan Dhoka
Date: Friday, 19 April to Sunday, 21 April 2002
Tickets, film list and schedule at: Patan Dhoka Kitab Pasal (548142), Mandala Book Point (227711)
Ticket price: Rs. 25 per screening
For more information contact 542544 or email <ksa@himalayasociety.org>

Ansals and Everest

Ansals Buildwell Ltd. and the Chaudhary Group have begun their second housing venture which comes bundled with a unique credit scheme offered by the Everest Bank Ltd. Ansals, the builders of Kathmandu Residency, will build another complex the Mount View Residency. The bank has been providing 10-year housing loans of up to Rs1 million, repayable in monthly instalments. The bank is also considering financing the Mount View Residency, an Ansals statement says. The monthly instalments on the housing loans run up at about Rs1,500 per Rs100,000 obtained. Everest Bank so far has sanctioned about Rs45 million housing loans related to the scheme.

Rising airfare

Domestic airlines are up again, this time by 7-12 percent, after a unilateral response of operators to the government's decision to raise registration and other fees. Says an airline source, "We had no choice—we either raised fares again or shut down, for the other fees we have to pay." The airlines had made a formal request to the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN), seeking permission to raise fares. Airlines say they will lower fares only if government does the same with its new charges and fees.

Copper blues

Nepal's copper-wire producers have begun to close shop, because the export quotas agreed upon by Nepal and India 12 months ago have already been filled. Under the trade treaty renewed last month, India allows duty free access only to the first 7,500 metric tons of copper goods. Over 9,000 tons of the metal and its products had already been exported by mid-March. Industry says that Nepal's export for 20,000 tons of copper products to India.

EPABX

There's now a new way to enhance the efficiency of office communication: Ansals's EPABX System. APEX Marketing retails the product says it can provide units that can deal with as few as six, or as many as 355 lines. Four models are available, and each comes with a one-year replacement warranty and service support.

Fiat's Palio

After three months after its launch in India, the Fiat Palio will be whizzing down Nepali roads next week. Palio is one of the new small cars that has swept the Indian market, selling over 3,500 units a month. Palio's designer origins are evident in the Italian touch imparted to the car by Giorgio Giugiaro.

The Palio comes with two engine choices—the 72 bhp 1.2 litre two petrol and the 98 bhp 1.6 litre unit and options that you can choose from. Prices start at Rs1,148,000.

"We believe in radical humanism."

What is your vision for Skikim?

I want to make Skikim paradise on earth. We can become prosperous through its natural resources. People can be millionaires, provided we keep our natural heritage intact. I want to make all the Skikimese self-reliant. Tourism can help—we have 300,000 domestic arrivals annually, and 30-50,000 internationals, and these figures have in recent years been increasing by about 20 percent every year. We can prosper by promoting hydropower. Skikim has the potential to generate 8,000 MW a year, we are working on only 600 MW, by 2006.

How do you plan to translate hydropower into prosperity for the people?

By integrating it with agriculture, floriculture, horticulture, tourism. But development must be tailored to protect the environment. We need education to empower people to take development into their own hands and benefit from it.

How are Skikimese entrepreneurs doing, compared with those from outside? What is investment like? Investment is going up, but not as fast as in the past. Our children are studying, they are specialising. They used to want government jobs, but they are now slowly starting small industries, manufacturing units. From outside we have investment in a proposed five-star resort and other big industries—five or six every year. The technical knowledge comes from outside, but 80 percent of employees are Skikimese. We make it a condition when signing any MoU that jobs must go to Skikimese.

How about Skikimis trade links, such as opening up Nathu La?

We don't see any scope for increased international trade. If we could manage to increase our share of domestic trade, that would be good. Nathu La—I've been trying for the past seven-and-a-half years to have it opened to trade, but being an international issue, it falls under the purview of the Ministry of External Affairs. It is possible, practically speaking, and also probable.

How are your negotiations proceeding with the central government on restoring the earlier representation of ethnic Nepalis in the Upper House, and keeping Skikim an income tax-free state? This is a constitutional matter, and we speak in favour of upholding the constitution. After Skikim became an inalienable part of India, a section of the constitution made special provisions for Skikim, stating that our old laws are to be upheld. That section also applied to the old income tax legislation, something called the Skikim Income Tax Manual 1948. Although this still holds, the centre extended the Central Direct Income Tax Law to Skikim. We believe implementing this violates the Indian constitution.

When did this happen?

It hasn't been implemented from 1988 until now, it's still pending. If implemented, then more than a gain of gain for Skikim, it is a violation of the constitution. If one of our old laws that are meant to be protected are eroded, the people of Skikim will feel insecure, maybe even afraid. This is why the central government shouldn't contravene its own provisions.

When Skikim entered the Indian Union, it was Nepal, Bhutan and Lepcha communities all enjoyed more or less equal representation in the Upper House. That was a kind of security. After it was granted statehood Nepalis lost their seats. 75 percent of Skikimese are Nepali. The constitution provides for proportionate representation. The Skikimese



people decided, of their own will, to integrate with India because they hoped for greater security and development.

We are requesting the central government that the seats reserved for Nepalis earlier be restored to them, and that Indian Nepalis be given their rightful place among India's minority communities.

We've heard you say that given Skikimis strategic location, the Indian government needs to keep its people happy, and provide special economic packages.

That isn't why we are making our demands. We entered the Union 28 years after Indian independence. We lost out on five-year plans. India is like our older sibling, it must help its younger brother. We've reached the point where we can live here with all our rights and entitlements.

What about social sector investment? Subsidised rice for people below the poverty line, subsidised uniforms and books for school-children? do you pay for all this, or does the central government? This comes from the common overall budget. It is also being paid for through the online lottery. In the Ninth Plan that recently ended 40 percent of our expenditure was in the social sector. The Tenth Plan has just begun, and our aim is to increase it to 51 percent.

We provide free medicines and medical care, but focus more on preventive measures. We are the first state in India to provide free Hepatitis B vaccines to all children. Primary school students get free uniforms, books and meals. Education is free up to the college level, and there is a 50 percent subsidy on books. There are merit-based scholarships for people who want to pursue a Bachelor's degree outside Skikim, and stipends for Master's degree and PhD candidates.

We believe in a kind of radical humanism—the poor should also be allowed to live with dignity and in peace. But we cannot leave the poor out when talking about the country. At present 36 percent are below the poverty line, we want to reduce this to 15 percent in the Tenth Plan. Literacy in the Ninth Plan was 70 percent, we want to increase it to 85 percent.

Critics say the government does too much for the people, spoon-feeds them, and they become lazy. From their point of view, that is right. However, we have our own outlook, our own ideas. We give the poor cash—



Rs20,000—as well as provisions. We have 32 model villages where homeless people have been given traditional housing, combining poverty alleviation with tourism. We tell the poor, you will receive such help for at least 50 years, but you must put your mental and physical energies into useful work. What is wrong with serving the poor? Money shouldn't remain with the rich only.

How bad is corruption?

I can't say members of my government are all saints or Buddhas. But corruption is decreasing. I told the opposition parties, keep an eye on corruption and tell me what you see. If I don't take any action, you can take me to court.

In speeches and interviews you always put down your predecessor government.

Nar Bahadur Bhandari is like my older brother, I don't say anything about him, there's no without him, I don't say point out a tendency. Skikim has always had long periods of the same government—the king ruled for 332 years, Kazi Lhendup Dorje for six, Bhandari for 14, and we've been in power for seven-and-a-half years. I am speaking against the patronage tendencies that still remain. When we came to power, corruption was rampant and the economy was dead. That is what we were fighting. Now both GDP as well as per capita income have increased. We are aiming for a zero deficit budget by 2007.

Have you been able to counter these tendencies?

I am satisfied. I wouldn't say corruption has disappeared, but the most important thing is that at least we live in a democratic environment now. We've moved towards real democracy, now we need to institutionalise it.

Is there any truth in all the talk of Nepali Maoists taking refuge in Skikim?

People say so, but so far we haven't come across any evidence of that. I keep an eye on such matters, being chief minister.

How would you describe yourself?

I am an optimist. I take everything—happiness, hardship, victory, defeat, life's ups and downs—positively. I want to keep following my calling to serve the people, the poor. I'm a small man, I never went to college, and I was an average student. My interests are preserving Skikim's biodiversity, our endangered flower species, nature, forests.

South Asian politicians don't retire until the people make it brutally clear that it's time to move on. How long do you plan to stay in politics?

I'm not thinking like that. I don't enter politics to become chief minister. The people brought me here. How long I remain here also depends on them, they are my masters.

Winrock International
Putting Ideas to Work

Announcement for travel and field research grants: Summer Session 2002

Winrock International, Nepal, is pleased to assist promising young scholars by providing them with partial research and travel grants (a) to carry out field research related to Masters/PhD degree and (b) to present papers at international conferences. Winrock aims to provide an opportunity to young scholars in order to build capacity in their respective professional domains and also to encourage them to make academic contributions in their respective fields. The grant program will specifically cover aspects of equity and environmental justice in the management of natural resources. Therefore, it is expected that the proposals/papers, for both types of grants, would clearly state how the outcome of the proposed research contributes to the enhancement of socio-economic equity and how it benefits the disadvantaged and marginalized groups of people in the society. Acknowledging the particular importance of women professionals, in promoting sustainability in the natural resource management sector, 50 % of the total number of grants i.e. both travel and research, will be allocated to women candidates.

CONDITIONS FOR THE GRANTS:

- Eligibility:** Applicants, who have completed their Bachelor's degree in natural resource management fields viz. land, water, energy, environment, forest etc., and are actively engaged in research or in a graduate academic program, are eligible to apply.
- Types and amount of grants:** In order to support as many as scholars with a limited amount of fund, the program is strictly confined to the partial support only. The maximum support for a Ph.D. and a Master research will be NPRs. 75,000 and NPRs. 50,000, respectively. In the case of Travel Grant, the amount will be up to NPRs. 50,000. However, in all cases, priority will be given to the cost effective applications.
- Requirements:**
 - Applicants are required to submit the following papers:
 - Filled-out grant application form (available from Winrock International, Nepal).
 - Full text of research proposals including the executive summary of no more than 2 pages.
 - Full text, including abstract of the conference paper, to be presented in international workshop along with a copy of the acceptance letter from the host institution.
 - A certified copy of round trip ticket and visa (where applicable) for destination of the conference.
 - An official letter of recommendation from the applicant's advisor/supervisor.
 - A cover letter justifying the application for the grant.
 - Applicant's resume.
 - (Note: Clause ii is not applicable for travel-grant request, while clause iii and iv are not required for research-grant applicants)

- Research proposal format:** The research proposal including its title cover page should not be more than 15 single-lined pages (12 point, Times New Roman font). The content of the proposal should have clear-cut research problem, study goals with specific objectives or research questions, literature review and scientific research method. The research methods should include description of study site, sample size, tools to be used for data collection, methods of analysis and finally concluding remarks with expected outcomes. The proposal should also include a timeline and the estimated cost (in local currency) for the research. The budget may include researchers' out of pocket moderate subsistence expenses incurred in the field during the conduct of the research but they should be presented convincingly.

- Announcement of award winner:** The applicant shall be informed (by telephone, email or post) about the status of his/her application within 4 weeks of the last date of submission of applications. However, in the case of Travel grants, evaluation of the applications will be made every month.

Application for
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"I didn't know they were spies"

At 18, Damodar Narayan Suwal was the Nepali liaison officer with a British expedition to Api-Saibal Himal in 1955. Little did he know that the expedition was on a spying mission on behalf of Indian intelligence to find out what the Chinese were up to on the plateau. Nepali Times tracked down Damodar in Kathmandu and heard his side of the story in Sydney Wignall's new book, *Spy on the Roof of the World*.



Damodar this week in his home in Kalimati looking through the book with an expedition picture of him from 50 years ago. (above).



SRIBHAKTA KHANAL

I had been six years since India became independent. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru saw a historic westward movement of new generations emerging from colonialism. He was trying to forge an alliance of "non-aligned" nations and was to ropin other like-minded Third world leaders like Ghana's Nkrumah and Indonesia's Sukarno. For this, he felt China and India should stick together and his slogan was "Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai".



Nehru's closest adviser on China was foreign minister Krishna Menon. But the Indian military was deeply suspicious about Menon who it thought was a closet-communist, and who refused to give a green light for intelligence gathering on Chinese plans in Tibet for fear that it would offend Mao Zedong.

An intelligence operative at the Indian High Commission in London who went by the name "Singh" seemed to know about Wignall's permission from the Nepal government to climb Nallankar (7,100m) and approached him to see if he could slip into Tibet and climb Gurlu Mandhar (7,280m). From that vantage point, it would have been easy to pick up information on any Chinese military activity.

From the account in his book, *Spy on the Roof of the World*, Wignall appears to have willingly agreed to be a spy. But he didn't tell the rest of his team. As it turned out, the Chinese were right when they arrested the three expedition members on the slopes of Nallankar for being on a spying mission. Wignall managed to gather information even during his detention about a strategic highway the Chinese were building towards western Tibet, and an estimate of the garrison strength at Taklakot. But this information didn't do the Indians much good, since Nehru and Menon ignored and were caught unaware when the Sino-Indian war erupted in 1962 during which large numbers of Indian soldiers, including Nepali Gurkhas, were killed in the icy mountains of Arunachal Pradesh and Akaai Chin.

It all happened nearly 50 years ago, but for Damodar Suwal the

rooms. After a week, the commissaries arrived for the interrogation. The sessions lasted up to two hours each and the three were interrogated separately.

"They asked me what I was doing there, how come I was with these foreigners, and my answer was that I was a Nepali liaison officer assigned to this expedition which was climbing a mountain in Nepal," Damodar told us. He told the Chinese that since they couldn't climb Api, Saipal or Nampa, the team had decided to climb Nallankar, and accidentally strayed into China. The interrogations were convinced the British were spies, but according to Damodar did not treat them too badly. This is contrary to Wignall's account in the book where he says most of the Chinese guards (except one) were cruel to the prisoners.

What followed was a harrowing 45 days in a "jail" which was a converted Tibetan house with four

rooms. After a week, the commissaries arrived for the interrogation. The sessions lasted up to two hours each and the three were interrogated separately.

"They asked me what I was doing there, how come I was with these foreigners, and my answer was that I was a Nepali liaison officer assigned to this expedition which was climbing a mountain in Nepal," Damodar told us. He told the Chinese that since they couldn't climb Api, Saipal or Nampa, the team had decided to climb Nallankar, and accidentally strayed into China. The interrogations were convinced the British were spies, but according to Damodar did not treat them too badly. This is contrary to Wignall's account in the book where he says most of the Chinese guards (except one) were cruel to the prisoners.

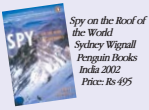
Damodar says they used to get a pot of water in the mornings, and

they ate whatever the Chinese guards ate. The guards took their jobs seriously and always pointed their assault rifles at them, warning them if they looked away.

"Suddenly, one day they released us. Gave us three porters, food for five days—dried meat, sugar and stamps. They told us to go back into Nepal they had come," says Damodar. The return was a perilous crossing of the 5,000 m Ura Lobs pass in winter. By the time they made their way down the Seti gorge to Rajahmundry, they had run out of money and food. Wignall sold his pistol to the Raja of Rajahmundry for 150 Indian rupees. This is the same Om Jung who was killed in an anti-government revolt in the early sixties.

"I went straight to our embassy in Delhi and met the ambassador, Jhauresha Narayan Singh. Embassy staff bought me some new clothes, and made me sign papers not to tell anyone about what had happened since I was so young. I switched on my torch, and shone the beam onto my head I could spy a ball of black wool on the mouth of Megan, a good Welsh name. Megan was a pregnant Tibetan snub-nosed tail-less roan, and she had entered my white while I was asleep bitten into my woolen sweater and retreating into my forehead was in the process of winding in wool, rotating it in her mouth, for the nest she was preparing for her offspring...

I couldn't get back to sleep. The wind was getting up and we were now deep into winter. All the passes to the South into Nepal and India, were closed until the spring. I shivered. "Christ, if they ever let us go, how the hell will we get back over the top in winter?"



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The spy who came in from the cold

Excerpts from *Spy on the Roof of the World*. The author Sydney Wignall describes his captivity in a Chinese prison cell in Taklakot after being arrested for spying in September 1955.

By the light of a flickering candle stub I wrote up my diary of the day's events, to wit the intensive interrogation I had been subjected to... One of my interrogators spoke passable English. I and my companions in incarceration, John Harrop and Damodar Narayan Suwal, called him "Smooty" because of his oily, uncanny manner. I sat up in my quadruple-layered down-filled sleeping bag. It was identical to those used on the ascent of Mt Everest two years earlier. That bag should have kept me warm, but the temperature inside my unheated mud-walled prison cell often dropped to 20 below and rarely rose above freezing point, and most nights I shivered and slept badly. Occasionally I had to visit the lavatory in our prison yard, which consisted of a couple of deep holes dug into the hard ground. I would climb out of my bag, put on my boots, walk barefoot to the cell door (because the ceiling of my cell was so low I could not stand upright), knock hard, and eventually a Chinese guard, clad in khaki quilted jacket and trousers with a padded greatcoat on top would open the cell door and conduct me to the prison's primitive thunder hole. At all times the guard would keep his 7.65 mm PPSH assault rifle pointed at me...

Harrop Damodar and I regarded toilet paper as the one facet of civilised society we greatly missed. I decided to tell Smooty about my next Thought Reform Session that I had used all the toilet paper for the absterion of my fundament. In the meantime, after completing my notes on the day's interrogation session, I duly rolled up a thin sheet of paper and pushed it down the inflation tube of the pillow of my inflatable mattress. The diary was written not just in toilet paper, but also on chocolate wrappers and also our Chinese guards' cast-away cigarette packets. I was eventually to take it with me, out of Tibet, after my release from imprisonment...

Sometimes in the night, I was conscious of something warm on my forehead. I switched on my torch, and shone the beam onto my head I could spy a ball of black wool on the mouth of Megan, a good Welsh name. Megan was a pregnant Tibetan snub-nosed tail-less roan, and she had entered my white while I was asleep bitten into my woolen sweater and retreating into my forehead was in the process of winding in wool, rotating it in her mouth, for the nest she was preparing for her offspring...

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Wignall, Harrop and Damodar trek back into Nepal after being freed by the Chinese. After traversing the Urali Lekh in winter, they descend to the wild gorge of the Seti River.

The ground became steeper and the track narrower, as we climbed away from the Seti River bed. There was a huge rock overhang just below the gully facing us, and icicles ten to fifteen feet in length hung from it, poised over an ice bulge. Ice walls are one thing, but ice bulges are another. One of the main principles of rock and ice climbing is to maintain correct posture, and thus ensure safe balance. With an ice face two to three feet from one's chin, one can stand upright in footholds, and hold oneself in a vertical position by placing hand or ice against the face. But ice bulges demand chipped-out footprints, and no face to balance against. The trick is not to lean in towards the face, for if you do, your feet are prone to shoot out into space.

Harrop ducked under the icicles, leaving a perfect set of cut steps behind him for Damodar and me. Then he was onto the ice bulge, and Damodar and I watched, unable to offer any assistance, as Harrop gradually chipped his way round the corner out of sight. Then we heard his voice. "Back on the track again."

Damodar and I let out a cheer, for the delay caused in cutting steps across those two gullies had taken more than half an hour of our precious daylight. I heard Harrop, out of sight now, chipping away with his axe, and below the ice bulge I saw the ice flakes he was cutting out, sparkling and tinkling down the gully wall, until they vanished from view.

Harrop was waiting round that corner ready to give advice. If any one of us slipped, there was nothing the other two could do to arrest his fall. We were back on the track for a hundred yards or so, just far rocks placed on top of saplings jammed into crevices and cracks on the cliff face. Ahead lay another section of vanished track. We were back cutting steps in the ice. Midway across this section, the angle eased in a shallow snow-filled gully. There was danger here.

Gingerly kicking steps in the snow, standing straight upright, ice axe held almost horizontal against the snow face, Harrop worked his way quickly across, to be followed by Damodar, with me in the rear. I took a lower line than Harrop and Damodar, with the intention of not making two deep single line of steps across that snow slab. I made it with a sigh of relief, but no sooner had I reached a rock stance on the far wall of the gully, than I heard a rushing-swishing sound, and looking behind me, I watched a thousand tons or so of snow avalanche crown that gully, until it vanished over an overhang. If any one of us had been in the middle of that snow slide, he would have gone down into the river Seti, more than a thousand feet below. I followed Damodar, and across another gully I could see Harrop chipping steps round another of those interminable bloody corners.

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Common cause

Gauri Pradhan in Kathmandu, 7 April



MR. BHAKTAPAL

corrupt ministers while he embraced others?

The army chief's speech resulted in a few positive developments. It pushed parliament to pressure Deuba to give a clarification. Deuba's carving of the chief not only raised his stature, it also enhanced the dignity of parliament. We have to thank the political parties, parliamentarians, and the prime minister for this stand. The appearance of the army chief before a parliamentary committee seeking an update on the work of the armed forces, is another sign that democracy is functioning. This in turn has added to the dignity of the army chief's position. The recent visit by the king to Maoist-affected areas, his interest in the situation of the people, and his discussions with political parties, government and civil society are all laudable. Another praiseworthy event was the calling off of the five-day bandh by the Maoist party. The bandh would have affected the future of 250,000 students. The Maoists gave in to the requests of political parties, and to public pressure.

The political parties are finally exhibiting unity, and their commitment to democracy. Even if it is for their self-protection, party leaders appear ready to take the blame. "I must be blamed for the failure of government, not democracy," says Girija Prasad Koirala. After the establishment of democracy all of us have done some wrong, big or small. It is important to face up to them," says Madhav Kumar Nepal, general secretary and leader of the main opposition CPN (UML). The stand the leaders have taken following the army chief's politically-coloured speech, is in the interests of the people and the country, so they deserve our gratitude. Only the future will tell whether it is because they want to remain in power or to save the country. If they are really keen on saving the country, they should make public a common view.

Return to politics

Yubraj Chimire in Kathmandu, 8 April

The Maoist movement must change from a wrong, misguided mob into a positive political campaign. In today's context it is necessary for the Maoist leadership to give that assurance. The Maoists have exposed their murderous and anti-development character. It is natural to raise questions about their commitment to Nepal as well as their long-term goals as long as they remain undeclared exiles in a foreign land. If these questions can be answered satisfactorily, talks might be possible. By what

"revolutionary" ideal can we justify their attacks on basic development infrastructure?

Income for PM

Dehantia, 24 March

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, aware that a no-confidence vote may be registered against him soon, has been advised by his close assistants to make the most of his last days in power. Sources close to the prime minister say that he has been advised to secure a regular source of income even after he's out of power. If he takes that advice, he and a close family relation may get permission to

operate a satellite telephone service. The Nepal Telecommunication Corporation should issue a public notice regarding the new telecommunication services. But, the source tells us, even before that the prime minister, with the agreement of the secretary level, has openly asked for proposals, says the source.

At a time when hurdles are being created for the private sector in the operation of mobile telephone services in Nepal, the new satellite phone service would cause an automatic drop in the demand for mobile services. Since the NTC is the sole operator of mobile services in the country, the corporation will bear the direct impact.

What happened at Bhandara?

Prachi, April 2002

The bus (Jeepur Tiger) had departed from Kathmandu on 22 February at about 4AM and was headed to Birgunj. At Bhandara, about 8-10 people, including four women, armed with khukris, sticks and petrol bombs stopped the bus. The incident took place near a milestone that read "Bhandara 2 km". They yelled at the driver: "Don't you know today is a bandh? Get off, and get the passengers off."

The driver said he was delayed because of security checks along the road and tried to assure them that since it was not time for the bandh to begin, he would reach Birgunj before daybreak. "We don't have time to listen to your arguments, back up right now. Turn off your lights and get the passengers out," they said. The driver backed up, asked the passengers to disembark, and hurriedly stepped off the vehicle. A woman Maoist then lit a fuse and lobbed a Molotov cocktail through the driver's window. The blast was small, but the bus started burning and passengers scurried for the door and windows. Two more petrol bombs were thrown in through windows. Then the bus went up in flames and there was a thick cloud of smoke... there were screams coming from inside, among them the cries of a child screaming: "Mama, mama."

...Because they were not given enough time to get off the bus, five people including a five-year-old child were burnt to death.

(Prachi is published by the human rights group INSEC, which also publishes the annual Human Rights Yearbook.)

Baburam's version

Jana Awaj, 23 March

The reason our middle class is confused is because of the false reports and lies about so-called "encounters" and resulting murders. If our city-centric journalists continue to take the Royal Nepal Army bulletins as the ultimate truth and continue to charge the revolutionaries with being "terrorists" who are "cruel" and "extreme", will they not one day have to get up on the witness-stand of history? When in Chitwan a few people, because of carelessness, were left behind and burnt to death in a bus, they [a section of the press] raised a hue and cry. But why have those who even pinned a picture of the bus on their cover not dared visit Gumbhal in Nepal, where 65 innocent citizens were killed, and report the facts?

(Translated from a column by Baburam Bhattarai from Jana Awaj, which according to the masthead is edited and published by Laxman Pant, G-324 Shankershab Nagar, Jalandhar-482008, Madhya Pradesh, India and printed at Abhinav Printers, WZ48 Shankerpur village, Delhi 34)

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Any policy decision taken by a minister in the course of performing work related to his ministry..."

—The section of the CIAA Act draft being discussed by parliament that specifies what the Commission is empowered to investigate, CIAA Bill 2058, Section 4, Khas



Report: Donor commitments to help

at Poverty Alleviation Fund Act

Drishiti, 9 April

NEPALITERATURE

Reaching for the Entire Sky: Sulochana Manandhar

by MANJUSHREE THAPA



The progressive literature of Nepal has one major woman writer to boast of: Parajit. But Parajit came to the progressive field readymade, as it were; she became a communist long after her education in Darjeeling, and long after her rise, through Nepal's literary ranks, as an existentialist and absurdist novelist of the finest calibre. Those who pride the Nepali left's emphasis on women's equality should question why it hasn't produced many other women writers whose writings ring loud or outdo those of men writers. Perhaps Nepal's so-called progressives aren't as progressive as they claim! (Say it isn't so.)

Sulochana Manandhar is one of those rare women who comes from a solidly progressive background, and also writes very well, thanks entirely to her own efforts. She was active in organising labour unions during the Panchayat years, rallying against the exploitation of labourers and the entire Panchayat system. She writes stories, poems and essays in both Nepali and Newari, her mother tongue. Her most memorable writings are perhaps her memoirs of her years as a political activist, taking disguises to elude the police, being turned away by her own family, and being pregnant without

a husband to show for herself while her husband, also politically active, had gone underground. These essays speak unflinchingly of a woman's struggle to overthrow political repression while also overcoming the oppressions of culture, and they offer some of the most interesting reading in contemporary Nepali literature.

The poems below are more recent works in a quieter, more contemplative voice. Many of them are occasional poems, poems inspired by fleeting occasions—a street demonstration, the death of a child amid savage politicking. Manandhar is the author of a weekly column in *Budhabaar* called "Sampoorna Aakaash," or "The Entire Sky." Indeed, the poems below reach for the breadth of the sky, though Manandhar writes politically, she does not ignore the subtle psychological and philosophical aspects of contemporary life. Though Manandhar writes of the local, she does not ignore the universal.

Influenced by haiku and other Asian forms, these poems are brave in being brief; many of them are excerpts from the author's daily diary. As a whole, they speak of Nepal's turbulent past years, in the process revealing an author who is not satisfied to simply criticise, but a woman who wants a life of the mind, the heart, the body and the soul, a woman who will reach for the sky.

DEMONSTRATION

Many moments of life have joined in demonstrations but deceiving the entirety of life demonstrations are still ending merely as demonstrations (Upon seeing a demonstration in 1997)

THE ROAD

I built a road in an empty place It was a road: I stepped on it and walked onward I don't know whether

I ever reached the destination I found I had turned into a road

AN OBSCURED SKY

The sky is clouded over My heart-sky is obscured The eyesight is also dimmed in the gloom One does not recognise others A stone hurled from far away came to my heart with a thunderclap I don't know if she is in pain anywhere but my heart has broken in agony (Upon the death of 12-year-old Barsha Koirala during the Hritnik Roshan riots, December 2000)

I too had headed out to discover my fate, but the fortune teller's mirror was cracked Should I seek my fate in this cracked mirror or draw new lines on the palms of my hands?

AN EFFORT AT LIBERATION

Some soil got dug up and the whole earth trembled Everyone's breath almost stopped! What kinds of upheavals are these efforts at liberation? When liberation came into my hands it had already putrefied in staleness

JAJARKOT

Once you stir poison in the entire pond why talk of big fish and why talk of small fish All are bound to be killed (Upon hearing of the murder of ordinary people in Jajarkot, June 2000)

COSTLY DESIRE

My desire is costly: Food and shelter are costly to begin with Education is costly equality is costly and even costlier is peace The love of a father and mother is costly and amid such costly air and water how costly it is just to breathe

THE POEM OF THE HOUSEWIFE

Poems well into being like bubbles of water in a kitchen corner in the water of a brass pot even in a baby's diapers When there is no one to gather them the housewife's poems will one by one and drop like wildflowers in a jungle

FATE LINES

I too had headed out to discover my fate, but the fortune teller's mirror was cracked Should I seek my fate in this cracked mirror or draw new lines on the palms of my hands?

THE EARTH

I had no relation of my own with the sun, the moon and the stars When I made the earth my own, when I established relations with a small plot of land a sky much larger than that the entire sky the dawn and sunrise the sunset, the moon and the stars all became my own

THE PAIN OF THE AGES

Have you suffered the pain of childbirth? It's only felt at a time of creation At each hour at each turn we must suffer in our new pains the pain of the ages which has no description which must be experienced alone

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Participatory Learning & Advisory Project (NPLAP)

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INVITATION FOR SUBMISSION OF CONSULTANT CVs

ngo/cbo Participatory Learning & Advisory Project (NPLAP) is a NGO capacity building project working in 8 districts of Nepal. We recruit short-term consultants to facilitate training workshops, conduct research/studies for district NGOs to build their capacity. The project has decided to make a Roster of Potential Consultants who can provide capacity building support for NGOs in future in the following themes:

Thematic areas of Consultant Expertise:

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- Participatory Planning Processes (PRA, PLA, RRA, Livelihood analysis etc.)
- Linkage and Collaboration with Stakeholders
- Multi Stakeholder dialogue (Government, NGOs, Donors, Private Sector, Media, Academia, etc.)
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Potential consultants willing to register their CVs in NPLAP roster should provide full name and contact address (including telephone), organizational affiliation (if any), expected fee per day, area of expertise on the above themes, academic qualifications and relevant years of experiences with 3 referees.

Consultants with at least 5 years experience in the above themes are encouraged to send their brief (two-page) CV along with a covering letter by 30 April 2002, to:

The Team Leader

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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITION

♦ **Exit** Exhibition and sale of oils and pastels by Surabhi. Viceroy Hall, Yak & Yeti Hotel, 10.30AM-5.30PM until 14 April. 413999

♦ **Stupas, Stones and Space** Solo paintings on Nepali paper by Dagmar Mathes. Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisted, 11AM-6PM until 20 April. 411122

EVENTS

- ♦ **Rally for peace** Om Nursing Home-Kamalpokhari Police Station-Kamalpokhari Chowk-Charkhal, Dilli Bazar-Padma Kanya High School, Dilli Bazar-Padmayaya High School-Bhrikuti Mandap. Ends at Nepal Red Cross Society. 3.45PM-5PM, 12 April.
- ♦ **Festival of War** based on episodes of the Mahabharata. Annual drama production of Studio 7. 19.00/21.00/27.00 April. 3.45 May at the Naga Theatre, Hotel Vijaya. 271545
- ♦ **Ethnic Groups of Nepal** Songs, dances, stories by students of L'École Française de Katmandu. 3AM, 12 April. The French School of Katmandu. 411203
- ♦ **Red Ribbon Grind** Nepal New Year with Nepali performers including Ram Shrestha, Alabartos, Hybrid, Pressurized, and Australian band The Agents. 14 April, Hotel De L'Annapurna
- ♦ **New Year Music**, including Nepali songs, cocktails and Nepali snacks. Single Rs 400, couple Rs 750. Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency Katmandu. 491234
- ♦ **Friends of the Bagmati** Presentation on rain water harvesting, 3PM 17 April. More details from friends@thebagmati@yahoo.com

MUSIC

- ♦ **Dinesh & Pemba** Live every Friday 7PM-9PM, Himalatte Cafe, Thamel. 262526
- ♦ **Live music** by Catch 22, Friday nights at the 40,000 ft bar, Rum Doode Restaurant, Thamel. 414336

BEER

- ♦ **Sizzling Singles** Buy one single malt drink, get one free. The Rodi Bar, Hotel Soatlee Crown Plaza. 273999
- ♦ **Beer Mug Club** Talk beer, drink beer. Monday nights, Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency Katmandu. 491234
- ♦ **Classic teas** Thirty teas including all Dimah Tea's herbals, greens, blacks and Dolongs. Also Ilam, Darjeeling, Makaibari and more. The Coffee Shop, Hotel de L'Annapurna.

FOOD

- ♦ **Cakes, Bakes & Baguettes** Pastries, puddings, oven-fresh breads, Shangi La Bakery. Home delivery available. 412999
- ♦ **Sekuwu as it should be** Veg and non-veg barbecue, snacks, salads, desserts, live music by Himalayan Feelings. Rs 555 net per person, Rs 1,010 net per couple, Friday evenings, Dwarika's. 479488
- ♦ **Weekend Brunch** Rs 350 per head, special package available with bowling. Oriental and continental lunch or dinner by the pond. 1905 Boardwalk, Katmandu. 225272
- ♦ **Vegetarian Specialties** and day-even pizzas at the Stupa View Restaurant & Terrace, Boudha. 480262
- ♦ **Charcoalz and Curryz** Instant Karma plays 60s fusion at the restaurant Charcoalz. Rs 895 including seafood. South Indian Curryz at Naach Gar including vegetarian, fish, lamb and more. Rs 495 vegetarian, Rs 595 non-vegetarian. Hotel Yak & Yeti. 248999
- ♦ **Saturday Live Buffet** with unlimited draught beer and live music by the Rusty Nails. The Fun Café, Radisson Hotel, 11.30AM-2.30PM, Saturdays. 411818
- ♦ **The new Roadhouse Café** Completely redesigned with separate bar seating and coffee bar. Original Mediterranean specialties, and wood-fired pizzas coming soon. The Roadhouse Café, 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. Lajana Restaurant, Lazimpat. 413874
- ♦ **Authentic Thai food** Everyday at Yin Yang Restaurant. 425510
- ♦ **Paddy Foley's Irish Pub** A wide range of drinks and food. Live music on Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday nights. 416096.

GETAWAYS

- ♦ **New Year Getaway** Special Nepali menu, village theme with music at Shangi-La Village, Pokhara. 061-2222/23700
- ♦ **Nagarkot New Year Escape** Party 13 April, package for New Year weekend with transport both ways, dinner, games, live music, New Year brunch, Rates for Nepalis and expats from Rs 2,500 nett to Rs 5,000 nett. Club Himalaya Nagarkot. 414432, 680080
- ♦ **Great Godavari Getaways**. Special weekend packages, including room with breakfast and dinner, 25 percent discount on health club facilities. Godavari Village Resort. 560675
- ♦ **Bardiya Dolphins** See Gangetic River Dolphins every day this season at the Royal Bardiya National Park. Tailor-made packages for to all need at the Jungle Base Camp Lodge. Email junglebasecamp@yahoo.com. 06-131631

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

NEPALI WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL



The scorchers are here. After two months of above-normal rain and below-normal maximum temperatures, the mercury is going to start picking up. It may be uncomfortable, but it is this heat that will ultimately suck in the monsoon in mid-June. No sweat, no wet. Another weather band is approaching from the west riding a low pressure system which will be over northern India by Friday, and the accompanying moisture will trigger new thunderstorms early next week. Tara temperatures will cross 38 degrees, while Kathmandu will hit a muggy, but manageable, 28.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
28-13	28-14	27-13	28-14	28-13

YAK YETI YAK

by MIKU



BOOKWORM



Peasants and Workers in Nepal D Seddon, P Blaikie and J Cameron, eds
Adroit Publishers, Delhi, 2002
Rs 720

Nine essays based on fieldwork during 1974 and 1975 analyse the social and economic conditions in the towns and countryside of west-central Nepal with particular reference to peasants, workers and the petty bourgeoisie. The authors use an integrated social science that places the political economy of Nepal in a historical context, rather than breaking it down into history, sociology, anthropology and economics.

Village Tourism in Chitwan Surendra Bhakta Pradhanang
Adroit Publishers, Delhi, 2002
Rs 480

Village tourism generates income, employment and industry, alleviating poverty as well as unemployment. It represents conservation, experience, adventure and benefits to the local people. Dr Pradhanang examines the case of Chitwan and details the specific interests and demands that drive tourists to travel there. He draws lessons on how to develop and plan the national tourism industry, including the trekking sector.



Pilgrimage Tourism in Nepal Vajra Raj Saryal
Adroit Publishers, Delhi, 2002
Rs 640

More than a sociological or economic analysis, Saryal is interested in detailing the legends, history and culture surrounding such places as Mount Kalas, Lumbini, Bhairava, and other sacred temples and monasteries across the length and breadth of Nepal's hills and tarai, and devotes separate chapters to temple architecture, stone idols and popular Hindu and Buddhist signs.

Nepal: A Historical Miscellany Mahesh C Regmi
Adroit Publishers, Delhi, 2002
Rs 800

Regmi's aim is to help liberate Nepali historiography from the confines of political intrigues, wars and diplomatic relations. The materials here are divided into six parts: Law and Administration, Caste and Social Life, Land and Agriculture, Forest and Environment, Women's Progress, and Religion and Culture. The emphasis is on the 19th century, but some items belong in the late 18th and early 20th centuries too.

Courtesy: Mandala Book Point, Kantipath, 27711, mandala@ccs.com.np

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floor: one bedroom with attached bath, store, lobby. Third floor: terrace and laundry room. Location: Galfutar. Tel: 412094.

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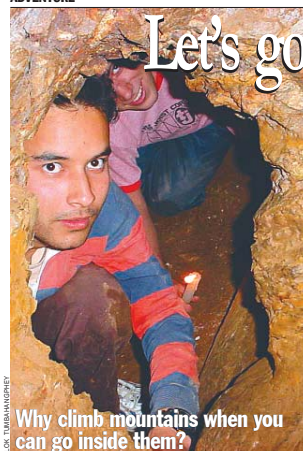
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ADVENTURE



Let's go underground

Why climb mountains when you can go inside them?

ALOK TUMBHAHANGPIEY . . . Remember those National Geographic specials where bearded scientists whispered, stooping over creepy crawly life forms thriving on bat guano in caves below Bororo's jungles? You can do that right here in Kathmandu Valley. Chobar, best known for its defunct cement factory, is where Manjushree is said to have drained the Valley's ancient waters with a swoosh of his sword. It is also home to a vast network of underground tunnels. The womb-like subterranean passages have long served as playgrounds for village

children, rent-free storage space for smugglers and dim rendezvous spots for amorous adulterers.

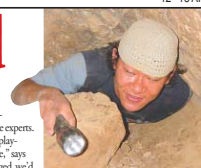
But even the most determined cave should think twice about venturing alone into the eternal night below. The caves are full of hazards, not least, the danger of getting in too deep and not finding a way back out. A careless misstep could deliver you to a bottomless depth and an inattentive movement could mean a skull cracked against one of the innumerable, silent rock bulges. If ever you venture down, try throwing a rock into one of those

dark pits and wait for the sound of the rock hitting bottom. You won't hear it.

The caves are also home to a shadowy life leaved by village folk as Chakoun Tirtha, and even local experts haven't figured out its perimeters yet. Some of the rock projections that endanger human life and limb are worshipped as manifestations of Shiva. In days bygone, devotees bravely ventured inside every full moon of the first month of the lunar Nepali calendar and performed pujas. This practice has been abandoned for some time, but there remains evidence of pujas past on many stalagmites and stalactites. There are even rumours of a football field-sized space somewhere deep below, of smuggler's forgotten treasures and buried one-eyed Rudraksha, the sacred seeds of Shiva.

Before you dreaming about recuing lost treasures be warned: even with help, you need great determination and concentration to make your way safely in and back out. The caves are not one long passageway, but a complicated network of child-sized tunnels leading along a plummeting, zig-zagging subterranean crawl. No one has even managed to explore the caves thoroughly enough to determine their exact depths and dimensions.

There are dozens of entrances to the caves scattered around Chobar, the most prominent is atop the hill overlooking Jala Binyak. Chobar elders say the caves lead out as far as Patan, Swayambhu and even Panchdhal in the east—though they strongly discourage village children from verifying these claims on trips below. Some young Chobar residents, including a disco bouncer and caving entrepreneur named Ravi Lama, have



together to explore the dark spaces of the rocky earth, and their twisting and squeezing around have transformed them from boyish miscreants to tourist guides. "We want to act as guides for any Nepali or foreigner

wanting to visit these caves and make it our full-time profession," says Prasan. Desiring the modest success of their cave (adventure) trust far, they still face opposition from village elders who look down on the idea of crawling through rocky spots to earn a living. "Why do you need to go in there?" scolds Ravi's grandmother as he emerges with a tour group. "Why don't you do something more productive?"

That is just what they are out to prove—that the caves can indeed be productive, and even productive. ♦

(To go spelunking in Chobar, contact Prasan at 331069.)

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Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Sup, dudes?

Now that our generation has successfully messed up this country, it is highly unlikely that we can make it any worse. It is therefore time we thought about passing on the torch, and bequeathing the job to the next generation of Nepalis.

We are placing our trust fully on our young Turks. With their energy, their exuberance, their pimples, these disgustingly youthful whippersnappers will surely be able to steer this nation towards a bright future. As Karen Carpenter rightly said, "Tomorrow will be even brighter than today."

I see some skeptical young faces here, and I know that you are itching to ask me a question. You young chaps want to know who Karen Carpenter is. Well, a long, long time ago when sabre-toothed tigers roamed the Danube Basin there lived across the pond a singer by the name of Karen. She and her brother, Richard, had the habit of humming into their evers so often to yodel. "Every shalalalalala, every wooooowoooo" and stuff like that. Unfortunately, to cut a long story short, Karen went on a hunger strike and died.

Oh. That was not your question? I see, you just wanted to ask if my confidence in Nepal's youth may be a bit misplaced? I don't think so. I think teenagers today are alert and on-the-ball, and know everything there is to know about, for instance, the South-Mid-East Trade Plan. Take my own two progeny. Every day after work, I make my way to home and hearth, open the den door and call cheerfully, "Where is Mother?"

Silence. Progeny #1 is on the Internet and Progeny #2 is on cable.

Me (loudly): "Where is your mother, my wife?"

Silence. Me (screaming): "ACHTUNG, WO IST MEIN WEI TRAUM?"

See what I mean? Children today have taken a vow of silence. If an audible sound does, peedance, emanate from their vocal chords, it is usually a noise resembling "duh" or "yuck". But where today's teenagers, like, come on their own is in cyberspace. Go to any of the chats and you will see that our progeny are sharp-witted and vigilant, taking the patriotic exhortation "jiboo hoinsu hat chalus" very seriously indeed.



blackdeath2002> hey room
kaley> SUP BLACK
tina322> sup
blackdeath> k cha
tina322> asl blackdeath?
kaley> EVERYONE BEST OF LUCK IN YER SLC MAN
blackdeath> 18/m/baneshwor... u?
tina322> 171
kaley> OK GUYS GOTTA GO... ROCK YER EXAMS MAN
<kaley> has left the room
<kurtcobain> has entered the room
<kurtcobain> *****
tina322> oi kurt kcha bro
kurtcobain> HI MY FRNS
blackdeath> tina i love you
tina322> hahahahahaha kasto *****
kurtcobain> HEY TINA WANNA TALK PRIVAT
blackdeath> oi kurt leave my grl alone or i'll kick ur ass
kurtcobain> hahahah
tina322> hahahahahahahah
<sux> has entered the room
sux> hi tina
kurtcobain> HEY SUX YOU SUX... HAHAHAAAAHAH
<Ram> has entered the room
Ram> do you support what the israelis are doing to chairman arafat in ramallah?
tina322> ke ke bhancha yo? Hahahahahahah
sux> did you hear queen elizabeth died?
Ram> it's the queen mother, you moron.
kurtcobain> HEY ANYONE SEEN THAT FUNNY DUDE
kurtcobain> WITH THAT DIFERENT HAT EVERY WEEK
kurtcobain> DONT HE LOOK LIKE HARRISON FORD
tina322> what rubbish hahahahaaah
tina322> he looks like a monkey and a donkey only hahahahahah
kurtcobain> btb
blackdeath> so tina what do you like to do
tina322> i donno reading hangin out wth my frns goin to bakery
blackdeath> cool
tina322> like i also enjoy hangin out and stuffs like that only
blackdeath> cool
blackdeath> wheredo you study
tina322> in holy mt everest east point academy and bar
blackdeath> cool
kurtcobain> HEY I AM BACK NOW ... TINA DID YA MISS ME
tina322> ya
kurtcobain> COOL

What is evident from this transcript is that with these youth at the helm, our nation is steaming ahead to a glorious tomorrow, which I am sure will be brighter than today. ♦

NEPALI SOCIETY



moved on to Pokhara, Narayanghat, Hetauda, and Biratnagar before completing the peace concert tour to a packed house in Kathmandu. Along the way, the group donated money raised from the concerts to local government schools.

"We shouldn't be playing the blame game during this crisis," says Amrit Gurung, lead vocalist of the band that has won the prestigious Music

Nepal and Chhinalata awards. "We should all help by doing what we do best. Intellectuals should exercise thought, writers write, and singers should sing. If everyone contributes from their particular position, there's no need to despair."

Nepathya's most recent hit Resham, released six months ago, has already sold over 30,000 copies, the mark of a successful album in Nepal.

The song, based on an indigenous folk tune from Khotang, is still playing all across the country. Nepathya's third album Mirpachasma sold 133,000 cassettes, leaving sceptics open-mouthed. The band has moved Nepal, now it is looking to expand its horizons to Sikkim. All five band members are optimistic that wherever they go, their gentle thought-provoking music will convey their social message. ♦



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