

EXCLUSIVE
Here we go again
The on-again off-again bandh is on again at press time. Which means the arson and explosive attacks in the capital are expected to intensify in the run-up to 23 April. The government says don't be



afraid, and has offered guarantees of safety. But the Maoists have a more powerful weapon: fear. On Wednesday, a policeman was killed for the first time in the capital.

Via Tibet

The UN's World Food Programme is moving 250 tons of food to Hilsa to support a key road-building project in Humla. The trucks that leave Kathmandu in early May will cross into China at Kodari and drive west 500 km to Hilsa along the Tibetan plateau. From Hilsa the food will be ferried via Taklaktok to Simikot, a three-week journey. The DDC is making the trail to the Chinese border motorable. "The road will re-establish trade links with Tibet and provide vital access for Humla," says Douglas C Coutts, WFP Representative in Kathmandu. (more on p5).

Ghiu again

We thought the Trade Issues with India were settled in March when the treaty was renewed. Well no. India has decided, starting 15 May, to import vegetable ghiu at fixed prices, and only through its central warehousing corporation. That effectively ends retail exports, and wipes out margins for smaller Nepali producers.

Times nepalnews.com
Q. Do you believe 2059 will be a better year for Nepal than 2058?
Yes 47.4%
No 47.2%
Total votes: 1262

Q. Is the government serious about controlling corruption?
Weekly Internet Poll #31. To vote go to: www.nepalnews.com

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Another post-mortem

How many more Nepalis have to die?

RAGHU MAINALI IN SATBARIA

Five days after the attack on the police buses in Dang, vultures are still circling over the forests of Gojena along the Rapti river. Occasionally an army helicopter comes overhead, and the vultures scatter. Blood-stained bamboo stretchers used by Maoists to transport their dead and wounded lie along the east-west highway. There is a sickly smell of rotting corpses everywhere. Villagers walk around with handkerchiefs covering their faces, fearing an epidemic. There are no signs of health workers anywhere.

By Wednesday, security forces had dug up more bodies—many in camouflage fatigues and track suits—taking the Maoist casualties in the battle to 92. Other freshly-dug graves are still being found along the Rapti. At least 150 people died in the Dang battles, and our post mortem reveals a tragic story of warnings unheeded, traumatised families, and diversionary attacks all over Dang aimed at keeping the army away.

This was the first attack on the newly-formed Armed Police Force, and it is hard to see why a 130-strong contingent of the paramilitary force should be posted in the tiny hamlet of Satbaria, except that it is the constituency of Home Minister Khum Bahadur Khadka. The village has no government offices, no health post, not even a post office. The police were housed

in buildings belonging to Minister Khadka's family.

The surprising thing is that everyone we talked to in Satbaria said they were expecting a Maoist attack anytime before 17 March. Strangers had been passing through, and rumours were rife that the APF base would be the target. "We had noticed outsiders at the tea shop talking about a possible attack," a local resident told us. Some 30 or so villagers, including VDC chairman Dilli Bahadur Khadka, fled the village a few months before the attack, thinking the Maoists might target them for allowing the base to be set up in the village. Other families living near the base relocated a day before the attack.

Senior police officials in Kathmandu told us all vulnerable bases are on high alert, and there was no specific threat in Satbaria. Satbaria is located in a relatively secure area: it is on the main highway and there are other police and army bases within a 35 km radius. That could have given the APF a false sense of security. Still, villagers said they saw the armed police laying booby traps the evening before the attack, and also digging new trenches. Many bodies of police were found the next morning piled three high inside these trenches. When the base was overrun, the Maoists fired up the survivors and threatened to kill them if they didn't say who the inspector was. DSP Dhan Bahadur Basnet stepped forward, thinking the others would

be spared. But other wounded police survivors tell us that all were lined up and shot dead.

The villagers woke up to sounds of gunfire and loud explosions at about 10:30 PM on Thursday. Children, the elderly and the sick huddled in what they considered the safest room in the house. Heads of households even dictated their wills and briefed family members on their assets and loans, fearing that they may not survive the night.

And it was a long and sleepless night. The sound of automatic weapons and explosives went on for five hours. The Satbaria post was surrounded by hundreds of heavily-armed Maoists. Diversionary attacks prevented reinforcements coming in from Ghoshali and Bhalubang. Residents heard a helicopter flying overhead several times. The gunfire would stop for a while, and resume when the helicopter flew away.

By morning, when the villagers finally felt it safe to come out, they saw bodies and blood everywhere. Five days later, the children still have vacant looks on their faces, they don't play around the houses, and they are all indoors by dusk. Parents told us their children were awake throughout the night, and many were too shocked to even cry.

Said a local resident: "Every evening my four-year-old still asks me, 'Juvail tonight! It will be like the other night. I tell him nothing will happen, but I am not sure myself.' The children all suffer from nightmares, and they



A photograph of wife and child spilling out of a policeman's belongings at Satbaria.

wake up in fright. There are rumours swirling all around, sometimes making it difficult to separate fact from fiction. The locals don't talk to strangers unless fully assured they will not be identified. The only consolation for the villagers of Satbaria have is that none of their own were killed in the fighting.

Editorial
Absolute Anarchy

Go to ➡ p3

Mr Establishment

Get out of the way, Kathmandu's mayor is on a rebuilding spree.

BINOD BHATTARAI

I Keshav Shitaphi, mayor of the Kathmandu Metropolitan City, had his way he would send out his bulldozers and demolish all the new concrete eyesores that have come up in his town.

His dream city is a mix of Kathmandu's medieval glory combined with the needs of a modern and cosmopolitan capital. When he has his mind set on something, no sayers better get out of the mayor's path. The way he sent bulldozers out to Trinkune and the Malighar intersection two weeks before the SAARC Summit in January to create an impromptu mandala garden raised eyebrows in a country where nothing ever gets done.

Shitaphi's critics—and there are many—point to the desolate and dusty Trinkune as a symbol of his failure. Others say he is a megalomaniac in the North Korean mould. In fact, the mayor is visiting Pyongyang next week for the birthday celebrations of Dear Leader Kim Il Sung. Obviously he will return with fresh inspiration.

We caught up with the mayor during one of his forays to the Valley rim. He points at the city below and tells us: "From here you see all that is still possible to do with Kathmandu. There is still enough greenery and open space in the Valley, and all we now need to do is manage future development properly."

Shitaphi, whose name means "established" in Sanskrit, is passionate about the need to re-inject life into Kathmandu's dying bahals and resurrect the vibrant social life of the inner city. But he is also passionate about building a four-lane highway along the banks of the Dhobi Khola and Bishnumati to relieve the congestion in the city core.

Shitaphi talks with feeling about his pet project, a special bicycle track from Maiti Ghar to the airport. But in the same breath he waxed eloquent about his plan for a megamall under Ratna Park, an entertainment centre like Sentosa Island in Balaui, and a shopping complex at Trinkune with underground parking and a huge figure of Manjushree on top.

Go to ➡ p8



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ABSOLUTE ANARCHY

When the sun finally rose at the crossroads town of Lamahi on Friday morning 12 March after a terrifying night-long battle, the carnage at the smouldering police station on the outskirts became visible. Most shops in the bazaar remained shut. Some Lamahi residents tuned in to Radio Nepal to listen to the TAM news bulletin. The main news was that back in faraway Kathmandu, the government and the party brass of the ruling Nepal Congress were at each other's throats again.

Party president Grijya Prasad Koirala had the Minister of Information and Communication, Jaya Prakash Prasad Gupta expelled from the party for supporting the commander-in-chief's recent statements. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba had sprung to Gupta's defence, and the kangaroo were clashing at each other even while the vultures started wheeling over Dang, and the stretch of death began to spread through the villages along the highway.

There you have it. If you want an explanation for why the Maoist insurgency has spread so far so fast, look no further. They are just filling a power vacuum at the centre. We thought that by now we had become immune to these chronic displays of doings. But last week after Dang it was nauseating. How much worse, I surmised, had to get,

how many more Nepals have to die before our politicians start finding ways to work together, showing solidarity and begin to see beyond the tips of their noses?

The country is stuck between a military stalemate and political deadlock. There are four levels at which ways can possibly be found to end the conflict:

- a) meeting the main Maoist demand for a constituent assembly
- b) agreeing on a referendum to decide whether the people want a constituent assembly
- c) making radical changes in the constitution that would meet most Maoist demands
- d) Crushing the insurgency

The first option would mean the Maoists get what they want, the second would be a plebiscite demonstrating the public's dissatisfaction with the status quo, the third is what the parliamentary parties need to get together to do. The fourth would need a dramatic intelligence breakthrough like in Peru or Sri Lanka.

The Maoist slaughter of security personnel, the five-day bandh, the bombs in public places, and the arson attacks are aimed at putting pressure on the government to talk. A referendum may strengthen the hands of those who want to revert to authoritarianism.

The long-term and sustainable option should be for the peoples' representatives to speak out on behalf of a people fed-up with the bloodshed. Can we even dare to hope that parliamentary parties will bury their differences and agree on a joint crisis government? An alliance of political parties may actually be less far-fetched than a united Nepal Congress.

Numbered by the death toll, it is politically correct to call for a ceasefire and talks. But we can understand why the army is reluctant to agree to such a ceasefire. It has taken the experiences from November when the Maoists reneged on the ceasefire is not reassuring.

A carrot-and-stick approach may be the best bet for now. The army is wielding the big stick. But where are the carrots?



VOYEURS

Difficult to find a cultural explanation for Nepal voyeurism. We love to gloat. Take any minor traffic accident in the capital's chaotic thoroughfares, there is immediate and immense interest on the part of passersby on the outcome of the ensuing altercation. The crowd swells until it covers the whole street, necks craning to look at the hapless taxi driver and the motorcyclist with the broken sidelight. Heads in the crowd turn from one driver to the other, like a tennis match. No one tries to mediate, to bring peace. Everyone is waiting for a live wrestling match—anything to interrupt the boredom of their lives.

Their anger spent, the taxi driver and the motorcyclist realise that the crowd may attract the traffic cop which will mean endless hassles at Baghi Khana, perhaps even confiscation of the license, and the loss of several hundred green things (or maybe even an elephant) to grease appropriate palms. So they hurriedly go their separate ways. The crowd disperses, disappointed at being cheated of a good fight.

The insurgency has become a similar spectator sport. The daily body counts are rattled off like basketball scores, losing all meaning and masking the human cost of the conflict. And when we do attach a human element to the statistics, it is to show gory television footage of dead Maoists being pulled out of the banks of the Rapti River with pickaxes.

Here, you can't really fault voyeuristic viewers. The gatekeepers of our media are singularly insensitive to what is proper to show on television and what is not. Raw footage of corpses, the more grisly the better, are played over and over again on nationwide television. If we can't treat fellow Nepals with dignity when they are living, let us at least give them some dignity when they are dead.

by CK LAL



Do our banners yet wave?

We're still pals, but we ain't buddies.

Washington Consensus.

At the height of privatisation and the free-market ideology, US Ambassador to Nepal Julia Chubb Block used to strut about the corridors of power in Kathmandu like some latter-day victory. Block used to treat HMG ministers like loyal friends. Ambassador Michael E. Malinowski was her deputy back then, and he must have vivid memories of his boss throwing her weight around Singha Darbar and playing matchmaker to the high and mighty of the land.

Despite the departure of Madam Chubb in 1994, the attitude of the US towards Nepal hasn't changed much. The diplomatic mission in Panipokhari continues to be a fortress defending what Ignacio Ramones, editor and publisher of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, calls 'the other axis of evil' comprising the IMF, and the World Bank.

Such misplaced priorities devastate the political economy of poor countries. Their impact on Nepal has not been any different. Empirical studies are needed to establish precisely the correspondence between structural adjustment and privatisation of national economies on the one hand, and the rise of insurgency and increase in corruption on the other. But that there is a direct link between these two trends is fairly clear.

Had there been a dispassionate critique of American policies in Nepal, the damage could have been controlled. Unfortunately, the constant meddling of the Washington Consensus elicits a response too predictable to spur a rethinking. The Nepal Right greets even mundane announcements of Fortresses Panipokhari with an enthusiastic round of applause. The very same decisions irk our Left to such that they vent all their spleen on 'American Imperialism'. It is any wonder then that nothing more than a sneer greets our parroted responses?

Perhaps it is necessary to examine our expectations from each other in order to re-orient the US-NEP relationship. Nepal left-liberals must recognise that Americans are more interested in an economic free market than in a politically free society. All over the Third World, the worst dictators have always counted upon the unflinching support of Washington. Recently, when President Hugo Chavez was dismissed in a coup by junior officers of the Venezuelan army, Americans were the first and the only nation to greet the coup-makers. Now that he is back in the saddle after four years in military custody, Condoleezza Rice sees no irony in preaching the merits of democracy to President Chavez!

A corollary to the myth of

19-25 APRIL 2002 NEPALI TIMES

NATION



from ➤

Traveling from Ghorahi to Satharia and Lamahi, we pieced together the events of that fateful night week:

12 April, Thursday, 10:30 PM

Three powerful explosions go off, exactly the same at the Katernahri bridge, about 100 m west of Bhabhaling, where there is a paramilitary training centre. Another one blew

up on the main road leading from Lamahi to Ghorahi, about 2 km from the main bazaar and close to the army barracks. Another one went off 500 m from the army camp at Tulipur.

As about the same time, the Maoists arrived in large numbers at Lamahi, which is situated at the junction between the Dang road and the east-west highway. Using loud speakers, they warned residents at the bazaar

to remain indoors. Meanwhile at Satharia, the first shots were being fired by the Maoists from the direction of Hattisar forests.

Thursday, 10:45 PM

Maoists set off three blasts at the electricity substation at Lamahi, plunging the entire district into darkness. There was an exchange of gunfire for about an hour in Ghorahi, Tulipur and Bhabhaling, and there were several flying explosions.

The Maoists moved towards the police station at Lamahi, located about 100 m off the highway and began shooting. In Satharia, attacking Maoists were not just shooting from three directions, but also shouting slogans with their guns. But the helicopters found it too dangerous to land, and flew away.

By this time, the civil police base at Lamahi had been over-run. All nine civil police and an inmate in the lock-up were taken. The inspector, Padam Adhikari was tortured and beheaded.

Maoists engaged in that attack proceeded to Satharia to join in the fight against the armed police. The fight intensified, the Maoist police in the trenches ran out of

ammunition and were mercilessly gunned down. The helicopter made a second over-flight, and the Maoists once more held fire. But two hours later the Satharia base was nearly in their hands.

Friday, 2:30 AM

Residents had heard the voice of the police DSP Dhan Bahadur Basnet at Satharia shouting orders in his loudspeaker all night, but suddenly he went dead. The gunfire from the camp also stopped. By this time, 37 paramilitary troops had died, including DSP Basnet. Of about 112 policemen at the camp, some had abandoned and some had deserted or were missing.

Friday, 3:45 AM

Sensing that victory was at hand, the Maoists started raising slogans. But it was a costly battle for the Maoists as well, more than 100 of their comrades also perished. Many of these were hardcore fighters pushed into a show-case attack designed for maximum publicity and to hit the morale of the security forces.

Satharia villagers said they saw Maoists sitting beside the dead looking for bodies and wounded from their side. The dead were carried on specially-designed doos to trucks and tractors on the highway and taken to the Rapti River 1 km to the south.

Friday 7:00 AM

This went on all first light. "When we looked out of our windows, we could see Maoists in camouflage fatigues looking for and taking away the bodies of the dead and wounded," one local villager told us.

At Satharia and Lamahi, traumatised families started stepping out of their houses.



Friday, 12:00 noon

The first reinforcements arrive from Bhabhaling and Nepalgunj after clearing obstructions along the highway. Police-chattered helicopters from Kathmandu land. Shops at Lamahi remained shut the whole day, and electricity was only restored in the evening. Two banks in Lamahi were also looted, and the Maoists took away 100 sacks of rice from a local trader in a hijacked truck. Other loots: 300 cartons of instant noodles, and 20 goats.

In Satharia, the hundred or so police who survived were taken to Nepalgunj, and no sentences posted. So, the Maoists returned on Sunday night and ransacked Minister Khadka's house taking away grain from the store. The Home Minister had stopped by at his house on Saturday, and returned the same day.

On Monday, looters were still unsure about to expect. By now the wind from the east had begun carrying the stretch of the bodies rotting in the Hattisar forests to the settlement in Ghorahi. A 40-year-old there told us: "We did not think we would be alive, now we have all these corpses around us."

(Dadman Sahel, Nijjan Khadka and Satharia Subedi assisted with reporting.)

LETTERS

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

It seared my soul to see the picture of two Nepal girls on the Internet edition of your new issue (#89). One of the girls was reading, and the other was resting right at me. She was asking us: "What are you doing to give me a better future?" I recalled my own past, and my overwhelming desire to study. It is time every Nepal asked what we are doing for little girls like the ones in the picture. This one image has motivated me to dedicate myself to uplifting the lives of Nepali children in remote areas by providing them an education. Outside agencies like UNICEF can only give limited help. We have to do it ourselves. With genuine determination, we can bring changes in four to five years. The future does not lie with Baburam, or Deuba, it is in the hands of our young Nepals.

Biyan Joshi

Norway

ARAFAT AND MAINALI

Kanak Mani Dixit's thought-provoking article "Yasser Arafat, Govinda Mainali and us" (#88) is one of the best pieces that I have read in the Nepal Times. I have read the article many times. Several articles on the impact on Nepal of state elections in India and the peace process in Sri Lanka in *The Rising Nepal* and *The Kathmandu Post*. After staying in Japan for two months, I prepared a voluminous report on the status of the Lhasa refugees. On the issue of the 1950 Treaty revision too, several commissions have submitted their report and recommendations ultimately culminating in then Foreign Minister Kamal Thapa presenting a draft of the treaty to the government of India. But Dixit is right that our academia has never thought it important to focus on these issues by seriously pondering their impact on Nepal. We must really make a departure from the mindset that relishes the closed

assumptions of the past. Nischal N Pandey Bishnagar

Kanak Mani Dixit is right. We lack scholars and intellectuals to comment on issues close to home like Tibet, Bihar, Bangladesh, and Gorkhland, for instance. The lack of intellectuals and scholars means all we do is depend on foreign media to analyse events going on in our backyard. Our own media isn't very analytical and investigative. All they do is make opinion based propaganda.

We need more scholarly journalists and specialists who can analyse and give the public different views and opinions through an unbiased media. Only then can we have a flow of knowledge, opinions and people who will be more open to ideas and can be educated.

Kaishash Thapa, Minneapolis, USA

GLAD AND SAD

I was both glad and disappointed to read Dr Harish Gurung's "The Centre cannot hold" (#88). I was glad because at this time of crisis Nepal's districts need to be stronger in order to stop the carnage of Aacham from happening again. Still, I was disappointed that the government had not yet decided to take the districts inhabited by the Kirat people, because the far cats do not care for indigenous rights.

K Limbu by email

HAIR TO THE CHIEF

I was very impressed by what our Royal Army Chief said about the situation of this country "I who brought the nation to its present condition". #88. The answer of

course, is they corrupt and

visionaries politicians. In the name of democracy they have killed us Nepals and divided our nation along ethnic lines.

As a Nepali activist, the Chief has every right to question these anti-nationalists. The Nepal people have lost all faith in their elected leaders, no matter which political grouping they belong to. What we need now is a change like in Pakistan so these manipulators of the public trust are banished. We Nepals want peace, we want honesty, and we want development. Enough is enough.

Suman Shrestha by email

WISHLIST THINKING?

Poster Gautam appears to be engaged in a bit of wishful thinking ("Chinks in the Maoist armour", #89) about the state of desperation among the Maoists. There may be, he says, a split in the Maoist leadership, but there are no signs that this is affecting their activities.

The recent attacks in Ghorahi and Satharia show they still pack a powerful punch, and the security forces are only in a reactive mode. They now have weapons as sophisticated as the security forces. In the light of Maoist military strength and their recent attacks on infrastructure, the government should initiate talks with the Maoists immediately without any conditions. In my view, peace talks are a must for the state to save the constitution in the short term and the nation in the long term.

Prakash Sarkhe

MORE RAVE, LESS RANT

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visionaries politicians. In the name of democracy they have killed us Nepals and divided our nation along ethnic lines.

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Notwithstanding KAL SA's self-indulgent exercises in pomposity ("Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full,"

#88) I thoroughly enjoyed Puskur Bhusal's "The general and his labyrinth" (#88), which gives vent to all our pent-up frustrations with absolute alacrity, and without that judgemental bias so evident in CK's musings. In the midst of all these doomsday scenarios I want to rave about the great job that the Kathmandu Mayor has initiated by cleaning up Pani Pokhari and whoever is responsible for Tundikhela's facilities. I can't wait to get back to Kathmandu and actually tread through Ratan Park. I want to rave about those hundreds of small mom-and-pop businesses that are fighting the good fight and not giving up. Every day wage earners going about their grind and making it through these desperate times. Enough of death and destruction. There is plenty to rave about, and it's time we felt a little good about ourselves. That is the first step in the reinvention process.

Tashi Sherpa

Seattle

DE COMRADE

Paul Bacon's reply to Baburam (#87) was very powerful. Dr Comrade and his followers have stepped up their civil activities all over the country by destroying infrastructure. Whatever Baburam may say, the Maoists are solely responsible for destroying tourism and with it, hundreds of thousands of jobs for Nepals. How come the revolutionaries do not think about such vulnerable sections of the population in the long term?

Bhanu Pranjali by email

SATHI

I join your other readers in thanking Hemlata Rai for her article "Someone I can talk to,"

Sangita Shresthova

Bobson



STATE OF THE STATE

The signing of the Agreement of Commerce and Friendship between Nepal and the United States on 25 April, 1947 marked the start of a formal diplomatic relationship between two unequal nations seven seas apart. Fifty-five years after, it appears as if the warmth that characterised this relationship during the Cold War years in between is somehow gone.

We are still the best of friends, but the bond between Nepal and the United States is that of cordial formality, somewhat like the distant intimacy between two meers of

different castes. It lacks the spontaneous bonhomie that should have developed over the years. As the slang of years past would have it, we continue to be pals, but we aren't buddies anymore.

The early years of our relationship were full of hope. In the 50s, US assistance contributed to infrastructure. The 60s saw US aid in action against malaria in the inner tarai. During the 70s, US think-tanks introduced the concept of integrated development for the uplift of the rural poor. These areas of emphasis had mixed results, but in general, their

contribution was considerable in modernising Nepali society.

Things started to go horribly wrong in the 1980s, when Reaganomics came to dominate American diplomacy. Bilateral assistance to Nepal was substantially reduced, and the Bretton Wood Sisters—the IMF and the World Bank—gained prominence. Just as in other developing countries, the mantra of economic reforms was sold as the fillip for economic growth, and the status of HMG's Ministry of Finance was reduced to that of an executive agency implementing the policies set for Nepal by the bigwigs at the

WHAT ABOUT US?

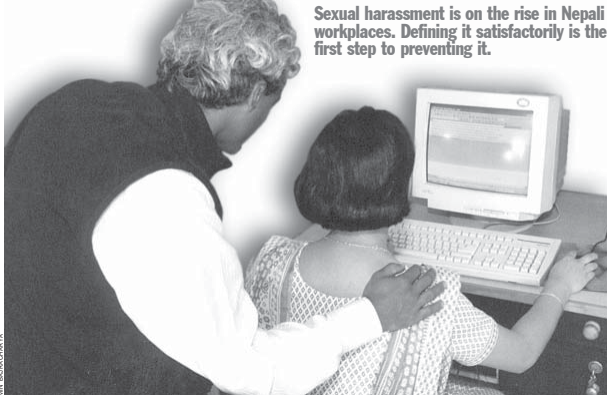
Yet another bhar-bhar entertaining Under My Hat. But "Sup Dudes" (#89) begs the question: "What about my generation?" Have you no hope for all of the twenty-something aspiring Nepali professionals busily collecting academic credentials and professional experience?

Do you see no chance for the likes of us? Do you think we will all sell out, shelve our ideals and patriotism as we pursue the lure of glibly capitalism? In short, (as Michael Jackson so eloquently put it) "What about us?"

Sangita Shresthova Bobson

Was that a blink or a wink?

Sexual harassment is on the rise in Nepali workplaces. Defining it satisfactorily is the first step to preventing it.



ME. BANGALAYA

RAMYATA LIMBU

Ranjana is at the end of her tether. An executive secretary in a government project, Ranjana has been finding her workplace unbearable, as she has to deal with overtures from the manager everyday. "I can't take it anymore," she says. The veiled verbal propositions, flys, fondling, invitations to work late and to accompany the boss on excursions, are all getting to her. Ranjana, a mother of two in her early 30s, doesn't know who to complain to. Even if she does, she fears she'll lose her job. "He's in charge, what can I do?" she asks. Her refusal to comply with the boss has resulted in her banishment to a tiny corner of the office, a delay in promotions, and badmouthing in the office. The only person Ranjana (name changed) has

confided in is a close friend. "I can't even tell my husband, there'd be a scene, and I can't face the public humiliation," she says, frustrated. "I've been looking for another job, but good jobs are hard to get. And I need to help support my family."

Ranjana is a classic case of sexual harassment, an increasingly common, if seldom voiced, experience as more women join the workforce. Last year, the ILO commissioned the Forum for Women Law and Development to conduct a survey on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace in Nepal among trade unions, employers, employees, managers and civil society. The figures in the unpublished report are telling.

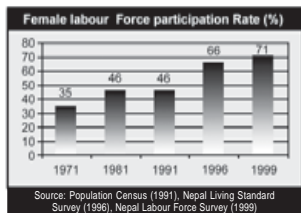
- Over 48 percent of the 66 female employees/workers surveyed had

experienced sexual harassment in the workplace.

- Close to 40 percent of female employees and 14 percent of the 14 male workers surveyed said they were aware of sexual harassment taking place.
- 80 percent of policy makers and civil society, close to three-quarters of employers and management, and 58.5 percent of trade unions acknowledged that sexual harassment is common where there is a significant mass of workers, such as among carpet, garment, and factory workers.
- 90 percent of policy makers and civil society, and 63 percent of employers and managers said sexual harassment is common at the helper level, with sweepers, cleaners, domestic workers, etc. being commonly victimised.

In addition, the study says, women working in private firms, government, in the domestic work sphere and in hotels and restaurants are also prone to sexual harassment. And that isn't all either. Another survey on Gender and Judges conducted by Pro Public found that 53.85 percent of 26 women lawyers in eight districts surveyed said they felt that judges addressed them differently from male colleagues. Seventy-three percent said they felt physical or verbal harassment as women advocates, 69 percent said they have been subjected to remarks and jokes in court, in firms, and in chambers with men and women in general.

Nepal's lack of specific laws dealing with sexual harassment has made it tough for lawyers and victims



to fight cases. Says Anita Chapagain of Legal Aid and Counselling Centre (LACC), "First, we get very few cases of that nature as victims fear public humiliation and feel nothing will be done about it anyway. Second, since there is no specific law, we have to deal with such cases as public crime offence, verbal abuse or attempted rape—the latter being extremely difficult to prove."

It is interesting to note, however, after a decade of the trade union movement in Nepal, which began in 1990, there has been a considerable decline in rape cases, and a marginal decline in other harassment—unwelcome verbal contact, physical contact, and advances and verbal conduct of a sexual nature, says a report on a decade of the trade union movement in Nepal. "Stronger unions and a growing awareness that it's not just a gender but a position-related issue, encourages workers to report cases of sexual harassment," says Bina Shrestha, head of GEFONT's women's wing. "We encourage our workers to take the issue into the open and address the problem. Our women educators ensure that workers don't overlook the chapter on harassment," says Shrestha. She recently managed to coax a group of city cleaners to confront a man who was harassing them in secluded places while on the job.

The Federation has also recommended that the Labour Act should

chapter on sexual harassment in its course book for trade union workers. Chapter six of the book defines sexual harassment as an act of ill sexual intention committed by a man or a woman. The chapter cites rape, unwanted embraces, patting, blocking, walking, pinching, prolonged hand-fondling, verbal harassment (jokes, insinuations, suggestive comments about a person's appearance), non-verbal harassment (winking, tongue-dicking, pornographic pictures) as kinds of sexual harassment. The book explains how sexual harassment can give rise to anger and fear, and have a psychological impact on victims, causing a loss of self-esteem and low spirits. Physical effects of harassment are evident in loss of sleep, weight, pressure, headaches, and ulcers.

"Lack of legal remedies and fear of public humiliation discourage people to talk about sexual harassment," says Bina Shrestha, head of GEFONT's women's wing. "We encourage our workers to take the issue into the open and address the problem. Our women educators ensure that workers don't overlook the chapter on harassment," says Shrestha. She recently managed to coax a group of city cleaners to confront a man who was harassing them in secluded places while on the job.

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by DANIEL LAK



Hello, Dolly

Meeting Dolly Shah in Janakpur I marvel at how diverse and wonderful Nepal is. Here, the all-pervasive fear and pessimism of the Valley elite seems meaningless.

JANAKPUR - Dolly Shah runs the famous women's development centre here. She's 20 years old and has taught herself business skills and English. Down here, her surname doesn't place her in the royal clan, but much, much lower in the caste system.

Dolly is the day supervisor of this remarkable venture. She greets visitors with vivaciousness and humour, and probably sells them a little more than they originally intended to buy. She also bargains with wholesalers from Kathmandu and abroad. I watched a Newari craft shop owner emerge from negotiations with Dolly, checking his pocket and shaking his head in wonder at what he'd agreed to. I'm sure the deal was in the best interests of the women porters, painters and other artists who make this place so special.

As we laboured along rutted tracks from village to village, I met farmers and labourers, women and children. They were poor, they were enslaved by various backward social practices—with beating common in the mid—but they were not afraid. They shrugged their shoulders not with fatalism when asked where the Maoists were, and that they didn't, but with true incomprehension.

Even the soldiers stopping traffic at the army camp just outside Jaleswar seemed much human and relaxed as they grunted passers-by and searched vehicles. Local politicians still pursued local priorities and issues with gusto. There was little talk of constitutional amendments and states of emergency here, much was said, however, about un-built roads and smuggling from the nearby border with Bihar.

I met other Dolly Shabs. Upendranath Banskhi is a local journalist and social activist who runs a drama troupe. They travel the districts, entertaining and putting out messages. Family planning is good, domestic violence is bad. Witchcraft is nonsense, harassing old women for practising black magic is evil. Sanitation and hygiene save lives, daughters need educating,



catechism is against the law... and so on. Upendra, to my mind, is a far, far better actor than the likes of Shah Rukh or Salman Khan, and he does far more good with his messages than those with their cady endorsements. Upendra's troupe is also impressive, particularly the lady who always ends up getting mock beatings or accused of witchcraft, or playing exaggerated women's roles—Urmila Yadav.

As ever, when I'm travelling outside the Kathmandu Valley, especially in the east and the tarai, I marvel at how diverse and wonderful this country is, how the all-pervasive fear and pessimism of the Valley elite is as meaningless

here as the partisan squabbling of the Kathmandu politicians.

Dolly made a face when I asked her about the capital, and whether she might one day make her home there. "Not me," she said, "this is my place, Kathmandu can come to me." There's the spirit that might have saved this country the trauma and bloodshed of Maoist rebellion, not to mention years of unending oligarchy and corrupt authoritarianism. If only Manjushree had sliced off all of the lovely hills around the Valley, perhaps the people that grieved from here might have spread the wealth and power more equitably.

For to return to Kathmandu is to wallow in gloom and immense despair, to hear the rumour mill spewing out ever more fantastic and fearful tales of Maoist prowess, security force incompetence. In Janakpur and surrounding districts, they know about the Maoists, but the pace of urban and village life shows far less change than elsewhere in the country.

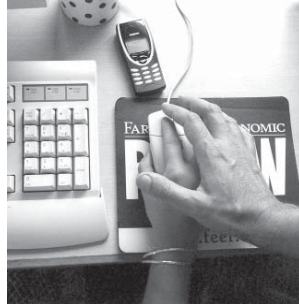
I don't mean the changes wrought by modernity and market forces, the pollution, migration and painted advertising signs. They are there, for better or for ill. I mean fear of the dark and the slithering beetle that plagues everyone in Kathmandu and the west of the country.

I'm not sure why I like it here so much. I am positive that the way ahead for Nepal lies in quiet, local activism and self-improvement, as I saw with Dolly and Upendra. All the aid money in the world hasn't helped this place one iota if fear and loathing rule the land, and they do. In the Janakpur area, the simple approach, the indigenous and the quiet charm of a culturally rich people keep the wolves at bay. For now, let's all hope it stays that way. ♦

Teasing tourists

define all acts of sexual abuse and sexual harassment as misconduct (immoral act) and stipulate appropriate punishment. The recommendations include provisions for expulsion of the offender from the job and, in some cases, imprisonment. They also say that provisions should be made such that the management should pay indemnity to the victim and that the amount should be recovered from the offender.

It's important that the management be held accountable for allowing sexual harassment take place in the workplace in the first place," says Pandey. When Business Age magazine contacted 50 prominent companies to check their preparedness to handle the issue, it decided only six responses. Apart from Sapa Pradhan Malla who conducted the study for the ILO. First, says Malla, in the survey, it is difficult to distinguish this offence from the offence of attempt to rape. Second, this legal provision doesn't



apply to victims below 11, which means that a large number of minors in the formal and informal service sectors are left unprotected. Third, the provision carries minimal punishment. As a result, prosecution for rape or attempt to rape is manipulated and convictions are only made under this provision.

The recently passed Domestic Violence Bill, defines domestic violence as either physical or mental, and includes sexual harassment under physical violence. The Bill stipulates a maximum fine of Rs 30,000, or four months imprisonment, or both as the penalty for domestic violence. ♦

Teasing tourists

Nepal's name is tarnished by incidents of harassment of female tourists.

PATRICIA LUSTIG

Nepal's tourism needs all the help it can get. Besides 11 September and the Maoist threat, there is another insidious danger to tourism, and that is the increasing numbers of cases of public humiliation discourage people to talk about sexual harassment," says Bina Shrestha, head of GEFONT's women's wing. "We encourage our workers to take the issue into the open and address the problem. Our women educators ensure that workers don't overlook the chapter on harassment," says Shrestha. She recently managed to coax a group of city cleaners to confront a man who was harassing them in secluded places while on the job.

The Federation has also recommended that the Labour Act should



would do well to address this problem through an awareness campaign through domestic media. ♦

down in her room, causing her to feel quite uncomfortable. He then boldly asked if he could stay the night with her. She kicked up quite a fuss, told his family and refused to pay for the last night's stay.

In another low-budget guesthouse in Kathmandu two young women were accosted every night by the proprietor who tries to get into their room and bothers them by talking through the door. How about the women who walk down the streets of Kathmandu (most especially tourist centres like Thamel) and get accosted in the street by men who grab their wrists and walk along beside them making indecent and lewd suggestions? Or who talk in loud voices about them to their friends?

This is not to say that it is only the tourists who are bothered, local women—both Nepali and foreign—are also harassed. Nor is it that all Nepali men are like this. It is but a small percentage of mostly young men (early teens to early twenties) men who are behaving in this fashion. But it is happening more and more regularly at a time when tourism is already suffering. The Nepal Tourism Board suggests? Or who talk in loud voices about them to their friends?

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(Patricia Lustig is an independent development consultant and writer who has been working in Nepal since 1993.)

Food for thought

The ongoing Maoist violence and the counter-insurgency operations in the mid- and far-western regions have resulted in a serious disruption of food supply chains. The UN's Food for Work program is worried because some of the most food insecure districts of Nepal are being affected. "Our suppliers are being harassed by both sides in the conflict," says Douglas C. Coutts, WFP representative. Trucks carrying supplies are asked to load and off-load at the checkpoints along the main roads, and beyond the road-heads it is the Maoists who harass suppliers. "That's as good as using 'food as weapon' and it is unacceptable," says Coutts. "It means we are also starving people who are non-combatants."

This is the time of year when all food-for-work schemes go into high-gear, building and repairing infrastructure before the rains, and when most of the food should be there. Most areas of the mid- and far-west are food insecure areas.

Girls at risk

There are about 2,650 commercial sex workers active in Kathmandu, according to a new International Labour Office-Kathmandu study. What's worrying is that at least half enter the trade at an early age—20 percent before 15, and a further 25 percent between 15 and 18. Six percent of those surveyed said they were coerced into the sex trade.

This study also says that despite these grim figures, campaigners running awareness programs deserve a pat on the back—82 percent of sex workers surveyed said they knew how HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases are spread, which has helped keep their prevalence fairly low. The study also indicates the direction social aid organisations need to head in—almost all respondents said they would change their profession if alternatives are available.

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Demolition man

from p1



Clockwise: Mayor Shaphit supervising the demolition at Ratna Park. Aerial view of the city core taken two years ago. A 2001 GIS map showing a section of Chhatrakulo, the red marks are buildings that were standing 10 years ago.

Shaphit, at 42, looks like a man in a hurry. Technically he only has three months to go as mayor unless extended for a maximum of one year. "This was my probation period, I still have much to do," he says.

Shaphit's problem has been that he is from the Marxist-Leninist (M-L) faction of the CPN, which did not have a single seat in parliament and which recently re-emerged with the main opposition UML.

National-level politicians find his style abrasive, and his high-profile populist projects in the capital a threat. Then there is a problem of jurisdiction. Kathmandu Valley is not a single administrative entity as the mayor would like it to be. It is a conglomeration of about 100 Village Development Committees and five municipalities. This makes it almost impossible to carry out effective planning of land use, zoning and transportation on a valley-wide scale.

But the mayor is doing what he can within the boundaries of the Kathmandu Metropolitan City. He has begun to enforce the strict building codes enacted 20 years ago and never really implemented. New settlements and housing schemes are now moving out into the suburban villages which is good because it spreads the economic activity around. What it isn't very effective in doing is imposing

uniform land-use rules.

"The population density in the city core is too high," says Padma Sunder Joshi, National Program Manager of the Kathmandu Valley Mapping Project. But the trouble is that powerful people who have moved to new housing schemes on the city's outskirts, like Bhaishepur or Budanikantha have sucked away government grants for infrastructure.

The mayor's office would like to go for infrastructure building through a more egalitarian land-pooling formula. After the successes of one such scheme at Naya Bazar, it has requests from communities seeking help. Land owners contribute a portion of their land which is collected and reallocated after taking some space for building roads, open spaces and meeting development costs.

There is some talk of creating an umbrella body to plan and oversee valley-wide land use, zoning and implementation in the form of a bill in parliament. However, local bodies fear the bill may just create another central-level bureaucracy.

Even if his future plans never materialise, Shaphit has already done to Kathmandu what none of his predecessors have managed. A former engineering student, Shaphit took up his task by setting up a planning office which functioned almost independently of

government bureaucracies that most other municipalities had inherited. He fought hard to keep this office even during the worst times as mayor, when bad blood after the UML-M-L split caught the metro in the crossfire. This unit sketched some of his early plans—building parks at intersections, restoring medieval temples and patis and roping in the private sector to contribute money to his clean-up efforts.

The City Planning Commission, as it was known has now been replaced by the KVMP, which is supported by the European Union. It is this sprawling office at Tripureswar that helps Shaphit translate some of his dreams into GIS maps and action plans. And with technocrats taking care of implementation details, the mayor concentrates on fighting the larger political battles.

Shaphit can be stubborn, and doesn't want to listen to those who don't agree with his plan of a shopping complex in Tinkune. Urban planners say the area should be converted into a park with tall trees and flowering bushes, as part of a green belt planned for the Ring Road.

Rani Pokhari, like Tinkune and Manjigar, was another difficult one to tackle because it had a fairly large number of stores that needed to be demolished amid growing political pressure. Shaphit was mourning his father's death when he was told that government had asked municipal officials to defer the demolition. He rushed to Rani Pokhari and personally led the charge with bulldozers.

The home and local development mission had asked to postpone demolition," he explained to us. "I knew it was now or never." Now he is under pressure to rebuild, largely because the project is very visible. The plan is to make a leafy park, get rid of the ugly iron railing around the pond and give a Rani Pokhari Park across the road from Ratna Park back to the city. The negotiation to demolish some of the blocks of Tri-Chandani campus north of Rani Pokhari is proving more difficult. Shaphit's plan to move the college to the former cement factory at Chobhar is meeting stiff resistance. The mayor says money is not an issue when it comes to doing things that matter. With land

pooling for housing, private-public partnerships to maintain traffic triangles real estate values rise as neighbourhoods get developed and gentrified and everyone benefits. "I see myself only as a facilitator of progress," says Shaphit modestly. "Once people believe I am not siphoning away their money they come and participate in the projects without me telling them what to do."

The dreamer in Shaphit takes over every time he's on his own, and he says his life's work will not stop with Kathmandu. If given the chance, he wants to

launch a job-creation campaign for Nepalis that could remove the frustrations of unemployed youth that lie at the root of the Maoist insurgency. Besides being mayor, Shaphit is also an amateur poet and has to be restrained from burning into verse at inauguration ceremonies. He dabbled in tai-chi, but gave up after he was unable to maintain a training schedule. Now, he's learning the fearful Kal Bhairab dance. He finds the vigorous traditional dance routine strenuous, but a great stress-reliever. Don't be surprised one of these days to see our mayor alighting from his

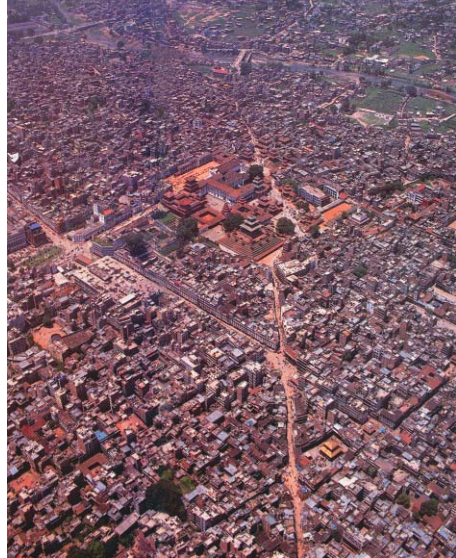


PHOTO BY N. M.

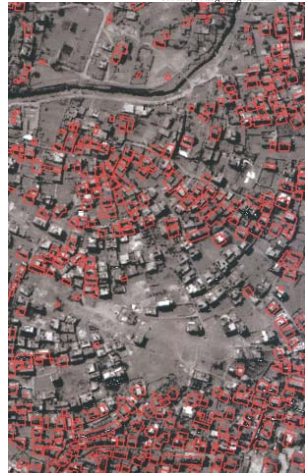


PHOTO BY N. M.

Return of the egrets

ERIC STEFFENS

I inspecting the progress of the restoration of the garden and exploring the antiquated library weren't already incentive enough to visit Keshar Mahal, then surely looking up at the resident cattle egrets that have returned to nest will be

The trees in Keshar Mahal's enchanted garden are once again busy with the squawks and nest-building of the beautiful and elegant egrets. Every year, about 1,000 of these snow-white birds with gold breeding

plumes nest en masse, sharing the trees opposite the royal palace with large fruit bats. Although this small haven nestled beside busy Kantipath and Thamel would seem one of the worst areas in the city for nesting, it does have some advantages. The lack of natural predators combined with the inactivity on the grounds of the Education Ministry ensures a disturbance-free ground space for the many vulnerable fledglings that undoubtedly fall to the ground on their first flight. Over two hundred young birds have been observed

hopping around during recent weekends. Keshar Mahal's trees are also ideal for the clumsy and painfully awkward landings and nest-building habits of the egrets. Pride of Indias, cedars, magnolias and mulberry trees provide relatively open flight paths and easy horizontal branches to land on, and such branches are also easy to build nests on.

The best-suited nesting trees in Keshar Mahal become densely packed with these loosely constructed nests. One Pride of India tree last year had 62 active nests. The male collects sticks and twigs—often stealing from neighbouring nests—while the female builds. Chicks hatch in late May and by July are ready to start flying. Often at this time, adults with young can be seen on Tundhik as part of their flight training. By late August, with the monsoon in full swing, Keshar Mahal is deserted and the fledglings travel with their parents to the rivers and paddy fields on the city's outskirts.



PHOTO BY N. M.

For bird watching in the middle of the city, go to Keshar Mahal.



PHOTO BY N. M.

Although not dependent on cattle, a major food source of the egrets are the insects and small animals stirred up by cows, buffaloes and other large herbivores as they walk in grass, which is why they follow livestock around.

Globally, the cattle egrets are an anomaly in this period of human-caused species extinction—they are one of the few birds widening their range. Originally from Africa, they have rapidly colonised Asia and island-hopped through South East Asia to Australia and New Zealand. A flock of egrets was blown across the Atlantic to the coast of South America in the 1870s, and quite probably from this one flock have spread

across all of the tropical and subtropical Americas up into the United States.

Their successful dispersion is due largely to the rapid cutting of forests and expansion of grasslands for cattle in the last century and their ability to adapt to situations ranging from the plains of Africa to the less-than-pristine urban Kathmandu.

Hopefully, the egrets will adapt to the restoration work and subsequent increased human presence in the gardens below them. The restorers for their part aren't too thrilled with the idea of 1,500 birds each year will be dropping guano near or on the tables of their planned restaurant inside the garden. But the unique Keshar Mahal garden

is also a special treasure that deserves to be preserved with a little flexibility in the restoration design, the egrets can be incorporated into and enhance the gardens for their four nesting months.

Another more selfish argument for the egrets is that they provide a tranquil sight in the midst of evening rush-hour traffic. Just the surreal and calming beauty of their holding pattern over the din and traffic of Kantipath as they wait to land make them more than a worthwhile addition to the city's biodiversity. Show your support by visiting Keshar Mahal with your binoculars and looking up at the branches to catch a sight of the young chicks in their nests. ♦

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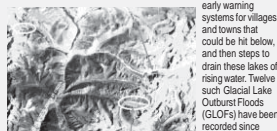
DHAKA

India monitors borders, not GLOF

London — India has refused access to a major study that could stop hundreds of Himalayan lakes from devastating collapse, experts say. The UNEP study has instead been carried out in Nepal and Bhutan. In its next phase, the study will again not be conducted in India, which has most of the Himalaya, but in Pakistan, China and the Central Asian republics. The study has identified 44 newly-formed lakes—24 in Nepal and 20 in Bhutan—that could collapse within the next five years. The expanding lakes have been formed by glaciers melting faster than normal under a temperature rise of one degree Celsius since the seventies, and many are held up only by debris. The consequences of collapse could be devastating for hundreds of kilometres below.

UNEP experts have been unable to get access to the vast Himalayan regions in India because most of these are border areas and there are difficulties getting access," says Surendra Shrestha, regional coordinator in Asia for an early warning and assessment system of UNEP. Indian officials spoke of "other priorities" during earlier talks on access, Shrestha said. Many of the potentially disastrous lakes have formed in Kashmir, along the China border and in the border areas of Arunachal Pradesh, Shrestha said. As a result, the UNEP has been unable to carry out studies here.

The studies in Nepal and Bhutan have been conducted with the help of images obtained by Indian satellite. The Indian satellite images are much better than those we are getting from French and US satellites," Shrestha said. Indian authorities can see these images but the programme to contain danger from these lakes will require physically going to every lake to plan measures to avert catastrophe, Shrestha said. These measures include installation of early warning systems for villages and towns that could be hit below, and then steps to drain these lakes of rising water. Twelve such Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) have been recorded since 1935. The most devastating of these came from the Sangang Chu glacial lake in Tibet in 1954, when 300 million cu m of water burst out, damaging Gyatse, 120 km away, and Shigatse, 200 km downstream and causing a 40 m high flood in the Nyang Yu River.



Recently-formed glacial lakes in Tibet

The 44 glacial lakes identified in Nepal and Bhutan are in danger of bursting into GLOFs within the next five years, UNEP experts warn in the report. By way of remedial measures, early warning systems have been set up in areas below just one lake in Nepal. Draining measures have been launched for just one lake in Nepal. (Indo-Asian News Service)

ANALYSIS

Another oil shock?

US efforts to create a safer world and stronger international economy could mean higher oil prices for a while.



A US soldier watching an oil-well fire set by Iraqis in 1991.

The Middle East conflict—lead versus Palestine now, Iraq to come—creates serious risks for growth and financial stability. To understand the severity of these risks, let's work backwards from what is unlikely to happen.

Neither Iraq nor Iran will mount an effective embargo on the US. Their commitment to oppose America doesn't include a pre-emptive sacrificing of essential oil sales that keep their oil-refiners alive and humming. Both recognise that if they refuse to sell American oil, they will lose income. Even Saddam is smart enough to avoid this, so he and Iran's ayatollahs, grandstand and move oil prices up a

bit, but nothing more serious. To the US efforts, grandstanding is almost as good a proof of leadership as actually doing something. The real risk to oil is hostilities or sabotage of oil installations. Oilfields don't matter as much as pipelines, refineries, and oil ports, which influence spot price by governing the immediate availability of oil. As we saw in the Gulf War, the risk of damage to oil refineries raised spot price dramatically: \$40 then. This time the price would go higher because the risks including sabotage are much more widespread. This would almost certainly happen if and when the US takes on Iraq. Saudi Arabia could offer a price rise by halting production. But it is one thing for Saudi Arabia not to join an

embargo, and another to undercut oil politics by flooding the market in a pro-US move. Saudi Arabia is unstable, so it will try to straddle both sides. Using America's vast strategic oil reserve will dampen world oil prices for a time, but once hostilities with Iraq start, oil prices will shoot up.

When may any of this happen? America demands that Iraq meet three criteria—promoting regional stability, ending its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and ending suppression of its own people—to which Saddam will never assent. Saddam is doomed and it doesn't matter whether Europe cooperates with the US or not. As in 1991, the problem is the absence of a suitable government acceptable to the region as well as the US to fill the vacuum. That, and the unresolved Palestine-land debacle are holding off immediate action, which means oil prices will remain high (possibly higher) for some time.

Consumers in the US, but also in Europe and Asia, will be hit by an oil shock. They will have less spending power, demand will fall and growth will slow, as during the Gulf War. A slowdown of the US and world economy is bad news for asset markets and central banks will have to decide between fighting recession through easier money or fighting inflation caused by rising oil prices by hiking production. But it is one thing for Saudi Arabia not to join an

(Winfried Kluck is professor of economics at MIT)

by WINFRIED KLUCK



COMMENT

Invasion of the Culture Snatchers?

The spectre of "Americanisation" haunts the world. In consequences are demolished, sometimes even drawing on the metaphor of a (real) I say American! science-fiction movie called *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, in which hostile aliens imperceptibly take control of our bodies and minds. But such hyperbolic rhetoric misses the complexity of the cultural change taking place all around us.

Neither side in the debate about Americanisation explains the phenomenon convincingly. Those who argue that it is "cultural imperialism" see it as a product of growing market domination by American media concerns. But many giant cultural corporations—Japanese-owned Sony, Canadian-owned Seagram, Murdoch's empire or Germany's Bertelsmann—are no longer American, though they promote American cultural models. Even if media were American-owned, it is facile to say that consumers of culture worldwide are clay in the hands of skilled marketing experts. It makes more sense to assume that there are some elements of social, psychic and aesthetic gratification that explain the resonance of American cultural models, and provide for their commercial usefulness.

The other side emphasises the liberating anti-authoritarian power of American culture. This may be fitting in 1950's Germany. American youth culture had a strong anti-authoritarian component that helped undermine authoritarianism and contributed to post-war democratisation. But only rarely does American-inspired popular culture possess this dimension explicitly. More often its attack on authority takes the form of wilful provocation or over-moralisation and graphic depictions of violence. At the same time, the retrofitted anti-authoritarian aspect of such programs as *The Simpsons* is commercially exploited to strengthen global media empires, such as Rupert Murdoch's. Anti-authoritarianism is in the whole story either.

We need to take a more nuanced look at American culture's forward march. Cultural Americanisation is the embodiment of modernity's process of cultural modernisation. In the past, culture was tied to prestige and wealth. Until the 18th century, books were comparatively expensive; their ownership was limited largely to the propertied classes. Moreover, a certain educational grounding (such as knowledge of Latin or Greek) was necessary to make sense of most cultural objects.

"Popular culture" is now word for a form of culture that gradually abolishes these restrictions. Its earliest manifestation was the novel, aided by new print

technologies. Knowledge of metre or classical poetics was no longer necessary. The novel became the literature of the middle class, and the *time novel*, an abbreviated, magazine-sized novel for a dense, expanded readership to the lower strata of society, especially adolescent readers. The development of an "entertainment culture" around the turn of the 20th century, including vaudeville theatres, amusement parks, a dance craze triggered by the domination of black plantation dances, and silent movies, further reduced the prerequisites for cultural understanding. Radio and television extended the audience for this new "mass" culture even more, and to the shift to pre-empting pictures and music created a "universal" language.

For a number of reasons, America was in the forefront of this cultural revolution. Due to its multicultural and multilingual composition, especially in the formative years of modern entertainment culture around 1900, American popular culture was faced with a market that anticipated the present global market on a smaller scale. This led to the development of broadly communicable, mass-verbal forms of performance, relying preferably on visual and auditory forms of expression. Before Americanisation of other societies could occur, American culture itself had to be "Americanised."

What a meaning and cultural significance of this process of "Americanisation"? The constant reduction of the prerequisites for making sense of culture may confirm the view that consumers of mass culture are passive. But the development of popular culture around the new mass media is the triumph of popular mass and the "centres" heterogeneity of reduction, created forms of cultural expression singularly useful for the purposes of imaginary self-extension and self-fulfilment.

What a meaning and cultural significance of this process of "Americanisation"? The constant reduction of the prerequisites for making sense of culture may confirm the view that consumers of mass culture are passive. But the development of popular culture around the new mass media is the triumph of popular mass and the "centres" heterogeneity of reduction, created forms of cultural expression singularly useful for the purposes of imaginary self-extension and self-fulfilment.

(Winfried Kluck is professor of culture at the Freie Universität, Berlin)

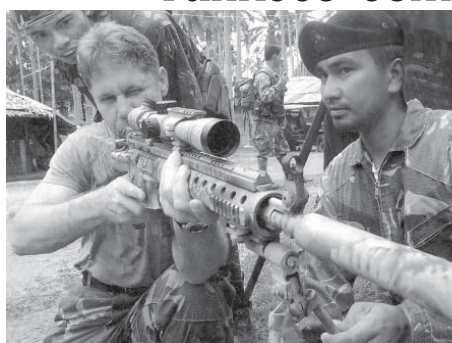
Before the "Americanisation" of other cultures, US culture itself needed to be "Americanised".



ASIA

ANALYSIS

Yankees come back



Manila — With 120 US Special Forces units assisting 6,000 Filipino troops to flush out the notorious Abu Sayyaf band who has made the news kidnapping western tourists, the Philippine island of Basilan has become the so-called "second front" against terrorism. "Link to al-Qaeda" is Washington's stated reason for zeroing in, but even the Philippine government admits there is no evidence of ties between al-Qaeda and Abu Sayyaf after 1995. Several intelligence agencies in the region instead link al-Qaeda to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

The American presence is controversial. Deployment of foreign troops to deal with an internal insurgency or bandit problem is unconstitutional, but President Gloria

Macapagal-Arroyo's government has sought to retain a modicum of legality by bringing in US personnel under the guise of engaging in Balikan ("shoulder-to-shoulder") military exercises.

Training in the use of high-tech surveillance equipment is said to be a vital contribution by the US to the hunt for Abu Sayyaf. After two months of the Special Forces deployment, and despite the use of high-tech equipment, 60-80 bandits holding three hostages, including two American missionaries, continue to lead the troops and their advisers on an adding more troops as they are destroyed by indiscriminate logging. The continuing failure of the military to quell a mere handful of

bandits indicates that the problem is political, not military. Abu Sayyaf has a base in a Muslim majority essential of their steady dispossession by a Christian settler community. More important, there are testimonies from victims suggesting that the bandits enjoy support in high places, particularly in the provincial government and the regional military command.

A recent press mission report says: "Relying on a military strategy is unlikely to produce results. Dismantling the structures of collusion and competition should be the main focus, not adding more troops as they are destroyed by indiscriminate logging. The continuing failure of the military to quell a mere handful of

by WALDEN BELLO

The Americans are back in the Philippines. But who is advising whom?

Philippines' neighbours such as Malaysia or Indonesia. There are more mundane issues that could be powder kegs—the return of the ex-tract catering to US troops or the violation of land rights in the acquisition of training sites.

Yet, the momentum for more intervention has been set in motion. And the Americans aren't unopposed. In Zamboanga province, the Christian majority is said to overwhelmingly favour it. In Basilan there is strong support for the American presence in the key towns of Isabela and Lantawan, where Christians are in the majority, but is said to be much less in the Muslim-dominated interior.

Christians in particular appear to think American presence is the magic bullet to end the 30 years of almost constant warfare that have been waged by Muslims rendered a minority in their traditional homeland in Mindanao. As the noon of Christian-Muslim conflict in economic dispossession, political subordination and religious discrimination, this offers an unlikely way to end the destabilising consequences of the American presence. (P)

(Walden Bello is professor of sociology at the University of the Philippines and executive director of the Bangkok-based research and advocacy institute Focus on the Global South.)

COMMENT

by MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMMAD

Defining terror

KUALA LUMPUR — Terrorism is a heinous crime against the entire world regardless of the target. The 11 September attacks affected far more than the immediate victims and the United States. They shook the foundations of the world economy and brought death and destruction to the country and people believed to be the base of the fear.

While 9/11 may be unusual in the extent of its fallout, terrorist attacks in the past also affected the world. We may have realised it, but we've been living far for many years now, which is why the security measures subsequently taken in countries after the attacks have been so readily accepted. People know that even the innocent may be gunned down, kidnapped or killed. We must all fight against terrorism and terrorism, for none of us are really safe.

But we cannot hunt down terrorists until we agree on how to identify them and on what constitutes an act of terror. History shows how freedom fighters struggling against oppression can be mistaken for and deliberately labelled terrorists by their oppressors. Jomo Kenyatta, Nelson Mandela, Robert Mugabe, and Sun Sujata were all labelled thus, hunted, and faced jail sentences if they were captured. They are recognised as great leaders of their people.

Because today's terrorists may be re-designated freedom fighters tomorrow, and vice versa, hunting down everyone considered by some to be terrorists may result in considerable injustice. Conversely, misguided people and countries may harbour and support terrorists believing they fight for a legitimate cause. In the liberal western countries there are quite a few terrorist cells working in support of terrorist organisations in other countries. Their situation is not so different from that of Afghanistan, which provided a haven for al-Qaeda terrorists.

So how do we distinguish freedom fighters from terrorists, or determine which government should be condemned for acts of terrorism or harbouring terrorists? Groups or governments that support attacks on civilians must be regarded as terrorists, irrespective of the justification of the operations carried out or the nobility of the struggle. It is equally important to have international agreement on condemning any particular incident as an act of terrorism.

Defining terror

There is no authority more competent to make these decisions than the United Nations. Once the UN has decided, the whole world must cooperate fully in the fight against the terrorists concerned. The prevention of new acts of terrorism also requires identifying and eliminating the causes of the business and anger that give rise to it. Suicide bombings aren't carried out for pleasure. They are acts of desperation by people who see no way to redress their grievances or alleviate their suffering. They cannot simply be dismissed as the result of demonic madness. The grievances of the Muslims are real and truly unbearable. For the past few decades, Palestinian people have been expelled from their own land by the Israelis. Their attempts to regain their territory through conventional war with the help of friendly states failed and they lost more land. In the occupied territories Palestinians were subjected to oppression and humiliation. Because they throw stones at the Israelis they are shot and killed, children included.

The Israeli response is not an eye for an eye but a life for a life, killing by the thousands. They believe terrorism the terrorists can stop the carnage. The suicide bombers believe they are already dead and on their way to heaven. They aren't likely to be deterred by the threat of death. Killing their leader will be either—increasing violent leaders will take his place and the terror attacks will go on. The Holocaust didn't deter the Jews. A second Holocaust with Arabs for victims will not deter the Muslims.

Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Jains, and others are equally guilty of terrorism. Terrorists must be identified by their acts, nothing else. And responsible Muslims must contribute to the fight against terrorism by helping define what constitutes it and who are terrorists. If the present crisis in the Muslim world are to be overcome, they must be addressed seriously. Unless the present worldwide anger over the September terrorist attacks is channelled into a real campaign against all terrorists, whatever their religion, Muslim-bashing will increase and any attempt to alleviate the suffering of hundreds of millions of oppressed Muslims will fail. (P)

(Mahathir bin Mohamad is prime minister of Malaysia.)

Tiger meets tiger

NEW DELHI — India's rightwing Hindu RSS is galvanising Sri Lanka's Hindu Tamils against the country's powerful Christian church with its global arm, the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), working in Tiger-controlled areas with the ostensible permission of the LTTE, news reports and analysts said.

Sunday Reports from Colombo told the India Abroad News Service as talking to a senior VHP preacher in Colombo who has been dozens of VHP-linked units working across the country.

Indian analysts say that if true, this could mean India's rightwing Hindu groups could gain access to the weapons used by the separatists. The news is also significant since Pakistan is believed to be involved in storing up Colombo's war effort against the Tigers, and India's ruling establishment, led by Defence Minister George Fernandes are believed to be soft on the LTTE. Any proximity between the VHP and the LTTE could pose a serious threat to Congress party leader Sonia Gandhi who has rejected any ties between New Delhi and the group regarded as her husband's killer. The equation will inevitably also play in Tamil Nadu—Chief Minister Jayalalitha is seen as opposing the LTTE and her rival party, the DMK, which is a member of the ruling National Alliance, has often been perceived as sympathetic towards it. Bal Thackeray, head of the Shiv Sena, has often praised the LTTE, which says it is secular, as a role model for Hindus. Both groups share the same mascot—a roaring tiger. (The Hindu, Pakistan)

Indonesia's religious troubles

JAKARTA — The arrival of an Islamic militia group in Indonesia's newest West Papua province, formerly called Irian Jaya, is sowing fear among residents about sectarian conflict like that seen in other provinces before, and Papua religious communities from churches to mosques want its members out soon. Laskar Jihad was created in 1999 in Java as a response to the massacre of 400 Muslims by Christians in North Maluku, then mixed in communal conflict. The group claims to have 10,000 members, 2,000 with military training. Despite Laskar Jihad's claim that its activities are related only to religion and charity, a Jakarta-based human rights group says members have begun inflammatory preaching plotting to massacre Christians and distribute VCDs depicting the fighting in Maluku. Muhammad Thaha al-Hamdi of the pro-independence Papua Presidium Council says, "Never have Christians and Muslims in West Papua fought each other. Christian and Muslim religious leaders want the Laskar Jihad to leave." Many fear the introduction of a religious angle into demands for independence there would have serious security implications. (P)

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If it's Belgium, it must be Nepalis

Srihakti Khanal in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 30 March-13 April

The number of Nepalis claiming to be Maoists fleeing the counter-insurgency drive and seeking political asylum in Belgium has soared from 270 two years ago to more than 500 today. In response, the Belgian government posted investigators in Kathmandu for three months to find out if their asylum requests were valid. The first phase of this investigation is over, and officials say most of the applications for asylum were found to not be genuine. They say the Nepalis were economic refugees.

The Belgians' argue that if they really were fleeing persecution by the security forces, they would have gone to India. Instead, they have paid up to Rs 30,000 to buy one-way tickets to Europe. Many of the asylum-seekers are presently being deported back to Nepal at the expense of the Belgian government.

Processing an asylum application takes between six months and a year, and it is rejected the applicant will be deported within five days. The applicant is not allowed to go to any other Schengen country, and is not allowed to work.

Nepalis seeking political asylum is not a new phenomenon—it goes back to the Panchayat era when Nepalis made applications claiming to be persecuted by the state. More recently many Nepalis have sought political asylum in Britain, Australia and Belgium, claiming to be Bhutanese or Tibetan refugees. But the numbers have recently gone up dramatically.

In the past year alone there have been 650 applications from Nepalis for political asylum in Britain. Australia has had 95, Netherlands 10. But nearly all these applications are likely to be rejected because the host countries are convinced that the applicants are mostly economic migrants. The most publicised case was the one last year, in which seven Nepalis who had gone on a communist party-sponsored youth event in Algeria "disappeared" during transit at Heathrow. All seven applied for asylum, and the CPN-ML official who allegedly masterminded the entire escape, Rup Narayan Shrestha, was thrown out of the party.

Most Nepalis get to Belgium on student or tourist visas and stay on illegally, or travel to other destinations in Europe. The students are mostly enrolled at the International Management Institute in Antwerp or Brussels. This school is said to be less stringent about both academic qualifications and English proficiency. There are more than 90 Nepali students currently enrolled there, but sources said 30 others who were issued student visas for the school never attended. The institute has started asking for the Euro 7,500 annual fee in advance after student visas started being misused.

Many asylum seekers carry with them clippings from mocked-up newspapers with names like Himchuli or Kanchenjunga containing news items about them being on the police hit list. Asylum seekers destroy their travel documents on arrival at Brussels or London and say they are seeking asylum. Most European countries have lenient asylum laws, and some even allow the applicants to work while their papers are being processed. Other countries give allowances while the applicants wait, which amount to quite a lot in Nepal rupees. Asylum seekers are said to be able to make up to Rs 70,000 a month, and a further Rs 100,000 by working on the side. Many Nepalis already on the continent are paying traffickers to smuggle them into Britain. Seven Nepalis who had applied for asylum in Belgium were caught on 19 February while trying to sneak into Britain in a truck.

Although many applicants are economic migrants, there are some genuine Maoists in Europe, who have been assisted by solidarity groups such as the Anti-Imperialist Revolutionary Forum.

Maoists and Girija

Editorial in *Punjabgauran*, 6 April

The Nepali people and the world community now recognise Maoist chairman Prachanda and Nepali Congress president Girija Prasad Koirala as two sides of the same coin. The Maoist terrorists openly defy the present multiparty system and the constitution, and are waging murder, terror and destruction. Girija Prasad Koirala, on the other hand, is attacking the multiparty system and the constitution in a more covert manner. The Maoists are destroying the outer facade of democracy and Koirala is weakening the very roots of the system. In this sense, Koirala is a more nefarious criminal than Prachanda. After all, bodily wounds can be treated, but internal wounds are difficult to identify and heal.

Koirala's activities are weakening and disintegrating the essence of the nation, and of democracy here. The Maoists cause destruction by numbers—physically attacking soldiers, police and the general public, but the Koiralas are breaking the will and tarnishing the image of the Royal Nepal Army by questioning its intentions and loyalty. The Maoists' strategy is to alienate the present government and the Royal Nepal Army from parliamentary forces. Koirala and his supporters are helping them see precisely this materialise under the pretext of the so-called "broad democratic alliance".

The Maoists have been terrorising Nepal Congress leaders and workers by kidnapping and murdering their colleagues. Similarly, Girija Prasad Koirala is using so-called "disciplinary action" to terrorise the cabinet and the whole of the Nepal Congress.

What the Maoists want most is instability and uncertainty in the country, because when they are prevalent, terrorism thrives. Koirala brings about both instability and uncertainty, grounding the Maoists and fuelling them. It suffices to say that those Nepalis who support the leaders and workers of the Nepal Congress, and are in favour of

democracy, development and stability see in Girija Prasad Koirala another face of Prachanda.

Satharia lessons

Narayan Dhakal in *Dristi*, 16 April

News from Satharia shows how suicidal the Maoists have started to become. Early reports from Dang suggested that they were victorious because they had killed close to 50 security forces and looted over Rs 2 million. But post-battle news reports reveal that their strategy isn't as perfect as it has been made out to be. On Sunday 54 Maoist corpses had been unearthed and security forces were in the process of finding more.

A victory is the goal of every campaign, that is human nature. This is true in every revolution too. Napoleons did not know what defeat was like until Waterloo, and Hitler's forces knew what defeat felt like only after being trapped in the winter under the Soviet blockade. The Khmer Rouge and the Shining Path experienced defeat only very late but by the time they did, the wheels of their political chaos were already loose.

Looking at the sacrifice of the Maoists at Satharia one gets the feeling that Maoism in Nepal may have been established to provide one more example of failure in history. That was the impression I got watching the Maoist forces being exhausted from the graves.

If the desire for victory is human nature, then the intention never to experience defeat is another human weakness. Because victory is the other side of defeat and those that cannot face defeat can't truly accept a victory either. All recent Maoist activities seem motivated by a feeling of being cornered and defeated. I find a parallel between that and the suicide by Gaurish Pandey—both may have felt victorious even while taking their own lives. It is a state of mind dominated by "I failed to win, but I can challenge the world by taking my own life".

The Maoist attacks on drinking water systems, their shooting at passenger buses and killing anyone who does not accept their ways are all reflections of the same mindset. Politics has long ended in the Maoists ranks. It is also not surprising that after politics has ended, militarisation dominates. If this is the case, they may be feeling compelled to win fast, as it would take too much effort to manage a war for a long period. That has been the experience elsewhere too...

But however much in a hurry the Maoists may be for a victory, a win may not be in their favour. They may have been able to establish themselves as a force through military might, but it will take long time to change that of people into a positive one. They may have succeeded in destroying the nation, but most people find it hard to believe that they will be able to rebuild it. They have managed to destroy the democracy established in 1990, but no one believes they will have a better democratic model with which to replace it. So what is their ultimate aim or destination? This is a question we are all forced to think hard about.

They seem motivated by some major goals now. Out to get a victory at any cost, they are craving any negative impact their acts will have on the present government. They want to defeat the Nepali army and invite foreign forces, they don't even care if the country goes back into the hands of those who went back there 1990. They are keen to work away or legitimise their past by seeking negotiations.

The images of the war from Satharia show that the Maoists have not been victorious in any of their previous battles. Trucking away their dead and burying them some distance away from the battlefield seems to be their policy. This is telling, when you want to ask how long such a pathetic campaign can be sustained.

After Waterloo Napoleon reassessed his entire strategy. It is unlikely that the Maoists are doing the same after every defeat. Instead, goaded on by their ambition to win, they seem ready to take a suicidal path, not learning lessons from history.

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Back at Sundarjal >9

The changing of the guard

BP Koirala, incarcerated at Sundarjal, begins his second week in jail in the winter of 1977. In this episode, BP writes about the visit by a new major who is taking over as chief of the prison, and about the uncertainty of an "interview" with relatives.

Every fortnight *Nepali Times* brings you instalments from this unpublished diary written in English. The handwritten pages cover a period immediately following his return to Nepal with a call for a "national reconciliation".

14th January

A new major took over charge from the old one. In the morning the old major bought the new one to my room, where I was taking tea with GM (Ganesh Man Singh), to introduce him to us. The new one appears to be phlegmatic, and not so smart as the outgoing one. We were told by him that the interview perhaps wouldn't take place tomorrow, the day being Saturday. These people don't tell us anything clearly. They qualify all their statements with such phrases as "Perhaps", "I think", "Don't know but". This is exasperating because as it does in conditions of our solitary confinement and uncertain future. If we insist on knowing things that affect the condition of our imprisonment they always take shelter behind the mysterious "higher authority" whose working of the mind they know as much as we do. Now, there will be no interview tomorrow. GM's theory still

stands. But there is some erosion in his firm adherence to his theory because in the evening of the dinner time the captain informed us that our daily food allowance has been fixed at Rs 20 for both of us. Till today we got whatever food we wanted. Now we will have to restrict our requisition within the means. They have also—ie army HQ—tempered the articles of food that could be supplied to us at the prevailing prices. There will be some lowering of the standard. Twenty rupees is more than enough by way of food for both of us, but since the army people will do the purchase and cooking there will be a little waste.

During previous imprisonment we got Rs 7 each. This time it is Rs 10. This increment may be due to the rise in prices. In any case, this seems to be the permanent arrangement now. Why this permanent arrangement? The essence of GM's Theory is that the condition of our detention is contingent. Any permanent arrangement or new arrangement suggesting permanence or regular violates GM's Theory.

I washed clothes, bathed and felt cold throughout the whole day. I didn't do morning exercise today, did not do the one hour's constitutional. Felt tired and went to bed at 7:30 PM immediately after dinner. I think I have low BP. Don't know when this isolation will be lifted. A regular flow of communication, supply of newspapers and books would greatly ease the tension. The description of Shah rulers as erratic and cruel treacherous conduct in Nepal's history description given by Rishikesh Shaha in his "Introduction to Nepal" fills me with horror with tortures.

15th January

We had been informed by the outgoing major in a vague way that monthly interview was to be held today, the expectation that Major himself had roused in us in the first place, wouldn't take place as today being Saturday was a holiday. Therefore we hadn't expected anybody to see us. But we had expected that somebody, either from my home or GM's would

come at the gate with articles of food and other things. Nobody came. A disappointment. Perhaps our people had been told that they mustn't come to the jail gate and mustn't supply us with any articles.

In the beginning, though it may be a mistake, the jail authorities permitted our people to send food and other articles to us in prison. But the "higher authority", having come to know of this, has put a ban on this transaction. They want to keep us in strict isolation. In the evening the new major informs us that the interview which they had thought couldn't be held today but would be held tomorrow, is not likely to be held at all.

He says that they have no instruction about our interviews. But why did they tell us in the beginning that everything would be as it used to be during our detention in this self same camp previously and that, therefore we would write monthly letters and would receive relatives for interview on the second day of the month. We wrote our letters and handed them on to the major. He quietly receives them, still.

Then all of a sudden we are definitely told that there was no order for interview. Then was there an order about correspondence? I think they wanted to read our letter to know our current mood and mind. Our letters have not been sent to our people. They wanted us to write letters which they had no intention to deliver. The Major talked about the interview in order to encourage us to write. It was a ruse to secure our letter.

GM brings a hot water bag for me to use in bed at night. He insists that it would help me get good sleep and reduces the back ache from which I occasionally suffer. He is very considerate and servicable. If Shalaja were also kept here! What a dream! What an ambition! She is the best companion for me in a situation like this. In a prison, or a desert, it is she alone that can provide a full companionship to me. What must she be doing just as I write this diary. I am sure she is not kept in the kind of isolation as we are. I hope she doesn't find the jail this time a little too hard.

ANOTHER FEATHER TO YOUR CAP



Dearest Wife Dr. Kadh.

You have many firsts to your name. The first woman to graduate from the Armed Forces Medical College. The first lady pediatrician in the Army. The first Colonel. And now the historical event of being the first lady to reach the rank of Brigadier General. Forever wishing you all the success, prosperity, progress and happiness. May Lord Pashupatinath bless us all.

Loving Hubby,
Dr. Anurag K.C

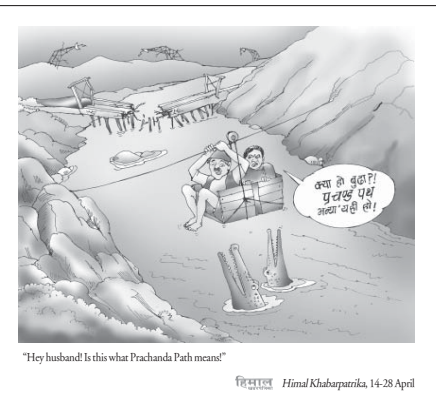
ELD Workshops

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation	29 April-3 May
Presentation Skills and Public Speaking	9-10 May
Letter and Memo Writing	16-17 May
Negotiation Skills and Conflict Resolution	19-21 May
Telephone Skills, Welcoming Visitors, Dealing with Enquiries and Handling Complaints	22-23 May
Developing Project Proposals	27-30 May
Professional Writing for Development Staff / Report Writing	3-6 June
UK registered charity no. 1083385	

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"If Girija Prasad Koirala wants to, he can remove Sher Bahadur Deuba in a second."

— Sujata Koirala, daughter of Girija Prasad Koirala, in *Deshanur*, 14 April



"Hey husband! Is this what Prachanda Path means?"

हिमाल *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 14-28 April

Save the Children US VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Second Advertisement

Save the Children, US and US invites applications from the qualified Nepali candidates for the position Program Officer (Health). The successful candidates will be based in Kathmandu.

Candidates must have MPH or equivalent, minimum three years of working in the community development or health sector. Working experience with the partner NGOs and the UNFPA, UNICEF will be required, excellent interpersonal and excellent command of written and spoken English and very good computer skills.

Main Responsibilities:

- Overall management and supervision of health programs in the Far West region
- Provide technical support, guidance and leadership to partner NGOs and UNICEF health staff
- Guide and assist the health sector team in designing health program in close collaboration with other sectors and District Health Office
- Monitor the SC-US and partner NGOs health teams in manage grant-funded health program smoothly and effectively
- Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation system in coordination with partner NGOs and UNICEF health team. Ensure the quality of programs by regular joint supervision and monitoring of the program

Interested candidates meeting the above requirements are requested to send their application along with complete CV and copies of certificates in the following address no later than May 04, 2002. Female candidates are encouraged to apply for these positions. Only short listed candidates will be contacted for interview.

Telephone inquiries will not be entertained

Candidates who applied during the first advertisement, need not apply again

Office Manager
Save the Children US
P.O. Box 2218
Kathmandu

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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITION

- ♦ **Photographs and drawings** by Leonard Stramitz, conservator and consultant to the Patan Museum Project. 10.30AM-5.30PM, until 25 April. Keshav Narayan Chowk, Patan Museum.
- ♦ **Stupas, Stones and Space** Solo paintings on Nepali paper by Dagmar Mathes. Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal, Kathmandu. 11AM-6PM until 20 April. 41122
- ♦ **X-rays of sentiments** Exhibition of paintings by Suresh Surti Sigdel. Until 21 April, Nepal Art Council Gallery, Baber Mahal.
- ♦ **Synthesis of taral art** by SC Suman. 8AM-6PM, until 30 April, Indigo Gallery, Narail. 413580

EVENTS

- ♦ **Festival of War** based on episodes of the Mahabharata. Annual drama production of Studio 7. 19/20/21/26/27/28 April, 3/4/5 May at the Naga Theatre, Hotel Vajra, duration 1hr 15 min. tea and show Rs 700, reduced student tickets available. vajra@mos.com.np. 271545
- ♦ **Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation** Workshop from 29 April-3 May organised by ELD. eld@wlink.com.np. 524 202
- ♦ **Protect our home Earth** Day Celebrations for school students with dances, skits, songs, short messages, competitions and an exhibition. 11AM-2PM, 2 April, IJUN Nepal, Bakhundole. 528781
- ♦ **Friends of the Bagmati** a group of activists aiming to clean up the Bagmati River. For further details contact friendsofthebagmatinepal@yahoo.com

MUSIC

- ♦ **Gaia—An International Music Event** Musicians from New Zealand, Australia, Guyana, Canada, Nepal, India, Japan, funk, rock and roll, blues and folk. All you can drink special and extensive buffet, Rs 1,299 per head. 19 April, Hotel Yak & Yeti. 245999
- ♦ **Down Memory Lane** Teesta plays tunes from the 50s to the 90s. Wednesday nights, Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 491234
- ♦ **Dinesh & Pemba** Live every Friday 7PM-9PM, Himalatte Cafe, Ramdote. 262526
- ♦ **Live music** by Catch 22, Friday nights at the 40,000 % Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, Thamel. 414336

DRINK

- ♦ **Sizzling Singles** Buy one single malt drink, get one free. The Redi Bar, Hotel Soaltee Crown Plaza. 273959
- ♦ **Beer Mug Club** Talk beer, drink beer. Monday nights, Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 491234
- ♦ **Classic** tea. Thirty seats including all Dilmah Tea's herbs, greens, blacks and Olongs. Also Ilam, Darjeeling, Makabari and more. The Coffee Shop, Hotel de l'Annapurna.

FOOD

- ♦ **The San Miguel Brunch** Brunch, live music and unlimited draft beer. Rs 600 plus tax. Saturdays, The Fun Cafe, Radisson Hotel. 411818
- ♦ **Going Pizzaz** From noon-6PM, each pizza comes with a free bottle of beer or soft drink. All April at Alfresco, Hotel Soaltee Crown Plaza. 273959
- ♦ **The new Roadhouse Cafe** Completely redesigned with separate bar seating and coffee bar. Original Mediterranean specialties, and wood-fired pizzas coming soon. The Roadhouse Cafe, Thamel.
- ♦ **Sekura 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, Dwanika's Hotel. 479488
- ♦ **Weekend Brunch** Rs 350 per head, special package available with bowling. Oriental and continental lunch or dinner by the pond. 1905 Boardwalk, Kantipath. 225272
- ♦ **Vegetarian Specialties** and clay-oven pizzas at Stupa View Restaurant & Terrace, Boudha. 480262
- ♦ **Taste of Beijing** Roast duck and other Chinese meat, fish and vegetarian delicacies. Beijing Roast Duck Restaurant, Brendra International Convention Centre. 485859
- ♦ **Newari Bhoj** Traditional snacks, drinks and meals, outdoors or indoor, in a restaurant designed by Bhakpatri artists. Lajana Restaurant, Lazimpat. 413874
- ♦ **Paddy Foley's Irish Pub** A wide range of drinks and food. Live music on Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday nights. 416096.

GETAWAYS

- ♦ **White rhododendron** getaway at the Horshorse Hotel in Mude, three hours from Kathmandu. Two days of rhododendron walks in forests, package tours at \$30 per day, all meals and sauna included. Email resort@hshw.wink.com.np
- ♦ **Swims, Salads & Sista** Buffet, complimentary shuttle to lakeside, free use of jacuzzi, swimming pool, pool table, table tennis, big screen movies. Saturdays and Sundays, Rs 550 per person, 50 percent discount for children. Shangri-La Village, Pokhara. 061-2212
- ♦ **Behind the Wall** nights bed and breakfast with add-ons. \$99 plus tax for one or two people. Dwanika's Hotel. 479488
- ♦ **Great Godavari Getaways** Special weekend packages, including room with breakfast and dinner, 25 percent discount on health club facilities, Godavari Village Resort. 560675
- ♦ **Chiso Chiso Hawana** Special 2059 summer package two days, one night with breakfast, dinner, transportation and activities. Rs 1,500 per person (twin-sharing) for Nepals and expats only. Club Himalaya Nagarkot. 414332, 680083
- ♦ **Bardija Dolphins** See Ganges River Dolphins every day this season at the Royal Bardiya National Park. Tailor-made packages for all at need at the Jungle Base Camp Lodge, Email junglebasecamp@yahoo.com. 06-131691
- ♦ **Taste the difference** Cosy Nepali-style house on an organic farm in Gamcha, south of Thimphu. Up to Rs 1,200 per person per night including meals. aaa@wlink.com.np.

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

NEPALI WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

0855-1196-2022/0020017

This satellite image taken on noon on Wednesday shows another band of westerlies approaching from over Iran which will hit the Himalaya early next week. This will keep Kathmandu's maximum temperature below normal. Last year this time, the mercury was regularly hitting 32 degrees in late March. We're not complaining, of course, as farmers across Nepal have been badly hit by frequent hailstorms. There is no evidence that the above-normal precipitation will affect the arrival of the extent of the monsoon. For the coming week, look for thick haze which is wind-blown sand from the Indian desert, compounded by morning fog in Kathmandu Valley.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fit	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
28-13	29-15	29-14	28-13	28-14

YAK YETI YAK

by MIKU



BOOKWORM



Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience Donald W Mitchell
Oxford University Press, New York, 2002
Rs 1,200
This volume focuses on the depth of Buddhist experience as expressed in the teachings and practices of a wide array of its religious and philosophical traditions. Mitchell covers 2,500 years, with chapters on Buddhism's origins in India and spread to Tibet, China, Korea, Japan and south-east Asia, Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism, and modern, socially-engaged Buddhism. There are 22 personal narratives from Buddhist leaders and scholars.

Tenzing and the Sherpas of Everest Judy and Tashi Tenzing
HarperCollins Publishers, New Delhi, 2002
Rs 632

Written by Tenzing's mountaineering grandson Tashi and his wife Judy, this is the inspiring story of a poor and illiterate Tenzing Sherpa who left his small ancestral village in Darjeeling and through grit, courage and sheer determination Everest. It is also a tribute to Tenzing's family and the Sherpa people who have contributed so much to exploration in the Himalayas over the past century.



Going on Being: Buddhism and the Way of Change Mark Epstein
Broadway Books, New York, 2001
Rs 1,000
The author, a psychotherapist by profession, recounts in this volume how his intensive study of Buddhism and the meditative principle influenced his approach to therapy. He says Western psychology's focus on problems often results in "paralysis of analysis." Epstein explains, through his own life and stories, the concept of "going on being," the ability of humans to live in a fully aware and creative state unimpeded by expectations or constraints.



Buddhist Masters Tenzing Wangchuk Lhundup (Hydumo)
Tenzing Wangchuk Lhundup, 2002
Rs 425
The author sets forth the life-histories, experiences and teachings of 113 "Buddhist masters", including the Dalai Lama, 17 Karmapas, seven Dzogchen Rinpoches, seven Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoches, Her Eminence Jengye Kishok Chime, and many other prominent Buddhist masters and western teachers and students of Buddhism.

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

CLASSIFIED

- ♦ **Nagarkot special at Naked Chef** Bed and breakfast, transport both ways, three-course gourmet dinner. Rs 1,440 or \$19. For reservations ring 441494, 680006
- ♦ **House for rent** Ground floor: living room, kitchen, dining room, one bathroom. First floor: master bedroom with attached bath, one bedroom, bathroom, pantry, Second floor: one bedroom with attached bath, store room, Third floor: terrace and laundry room. Location: Gallitar. Tel. 412094.
- ♦ **K-Toot Beer and Steakhouse** not the "longest", "hottest", "first" or any other superlative. Just a relaxed, easy-going bar and restaurant with the coldest beer and juiciest steaks this side of the moon. By the Kathmandu Guest House. 433043
- ♦ **The way to Mexico** is too far. Botega Restaurant and Tequila Bar is near Thamel Chowk. 266433. 15 percent off season Tuesday.

For insertions ring NT Marketing at 543333-36.

BBC on FM 102.4

Mon-Fri	0615-0645	BBC World Today
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Sun	0615-0645	BBC Agenda
Daily	2045-2115	BBC नेपाली सेवा
Daily	2245-2300	BBC नेपाली सेवा

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LIFESTYLE

Gods of the night

The planets are getting together. Get out your telescopes.



Early May presents one of the best plane-watching events this century. All five naked-eye planets lie close together along the ecliptic line in the western sky. The best nights for viewing are 5 and 6 May, when Mars, Venus and Saturn form a tiny triangle. This view shows the sky 90 minutes after sunset on May 4 as seen from the mid-northern latitudes.

AVIDIT ACHARYA ON PLANET EARTH

The early Egyptians and the Hindus worshipped them as gods and goddesses. Modern scientists tirelessly seek to plunge weird-looking gables into their surfaces. Today we let them go by unnoticed and unmentioned, despite their majestic and predictable passage through the night sky. But this month and in early May that will all change, as scientists and laymen alike look at one of the gods of the night. These are special times for us earthlings. The planets are cuddling up.

On the nights of 5 and 6 May, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Saturn and Jupiter (all the five planets visible from Earth) will be visible in the sky. The five planets will run across the sky almost parallel to the ecliptic, an imaginary line the sun appears to pass through every year. In reality, the ecliptic is a two-dimensional representation of the plane through which the earth's orbit runs. The ecliptic is an important line also because the twelve zodiac constellations lie on it, which is why their positions change periodically.

Astronomers expect that these rare configurations of this type in the next hundred years—one in 2040, another in 2060 and the last in 2100. But the groupings in 2040 and 2100 will not be as visible as the one this year, since most of the planets will be barely above the horizon. And even those above may be so close to the horizon that they are obscured to see with the naked eye.

Planet groupings of some sort or another are not uncommon. Every year or two there is some

configuration that won't happen for another fifty or hundred years. The last time we witnessed another chance to view the best recent South Asian documentaries. Travelling Film South Asia 2002, a selection of 16 of the best films screened at Film South Asia '01 is on at the Bagbakhana, Patan Dhoka from 19-21 April.

The documentary selection includes My Migrant Soul, winner of last year's Ram Bahadur Trophy, A Rough Cut on the Life and Times of Lachman Mahar, winner of the Second Best Film Award, and Jar Mari of Cloth and Other Stories, winner of the Third Best Film Award.

My Migrant Soul is based on the harrowing and tragic experience of a Bangladeshi migrant worker in Malaysia. Lachman Mahar is a candid film about a naughty old Mahar man, and Jar Mari documents the effects on the lives of workers following the slow collapse of Mumbai's textile mills.

Organised by Himal Association and Himal South Asian magazine, TFSA 2002, selected by the three-member jury of FSA '01, headed by well-known Indian actor-director Shyam Benegal, will also screen The Killing Terraces, a film on the Maoist insurgency, and five silent shorts.

Says Manesh Shrestha, director of Film South Asia, "We have decided to organise TFSA in Kathmandu this year because of the tremendous response we received at the last edition of Film South Asia held in Kathmandu last year. Many people had to turn back because the tickets for the films were sold out. Prior to arriving in Kathmandu, TFSA 2002 was screened at Delhi, Patna, Islamabad, Bombay, Calcutta, San Francisco, Baltimore, and Princeton.

While researching this article, my little brother woke up in the middle of the night to ask, "What if they crash into each other?" My reaction was almost sadistic: "I don't know. Maybe we'll die."

Luckily, however, the answer to the question is a plan and simple. The planets will not crash into each other—in reality they aren't. What is actually a three-dimensional space is squashed into a two-dimensional sky when we view it. The planets are pretty far from one another, along a line parallel to our line of vision. We can't see that because we can't see the line or draw it in the sky.

Some people do believe, though, that the net gravitational attraction of these planets might result in earthquakes and tidal waves here on Earth. That's not true either. Science has no reason to believe this, there just isn't any proof that gravity is enhanced through such alignments. So perhaps the only attraction due to "astronomical coincidences" is not gravitational, but that of seeing the five bright and beautiful dots of our neighboring planets in the solar system shining against the velvet black on Sund 6 May. ♦

More movie magic

For film buffs who missed Film South Asia '01 last October, this week offers another chance to view the best recent South Asian documentaries. Travelling Film South Asia 2002, a selection of 16 of the best films screened at Film South Asia '01 is on at the Bagbakhana, Patan Dhoka from 19-21 April.

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4PM: The Bee, the Bear and the Kuruba (63 mins) Karnataka, 2000, Vinod Raju
The tribal forests and the modern man
5:10 PM: Colors Black (30 mins)



Bombay, 2001, Mamma Murthy
Child abuse in Bombay
King of Dreams (30 mins)
Bengal, 2001, Arun Kumar
What's on a man's mind?
6:20 PM: A Rough Cut on the Life and Times of Lachman Mahar (39 mins)
Nepal, 2001, Dinesh Desai
A naughty old Mahar man
Winner of Second Best Film Award at Film South Asia '01

21 April
2PM: A Sun Sets (45 mins)
Pakistan, 1999, Shahid Nadeem
The bishop's ultimate sacrifice
2:55 PM: Between the Devil and the Deep River (65 mins)
Bihar, 1999, Anvita Sinha
Woe, the embarked river
4:10 PM: We Homes Chaps (70 mins)



North Bengal, 2001, Kesang Tseten
Old students talk about school
5:30 PM: King for a Day (33 mins)
Bangladesh, 2001, Alex Gabbay
Clinton is coming, so what?
Short Silent Films (20 mins)
The Godfather IV (3 mins)
I, Ramu Gayen (6 mins)
Khyale (5 mins)
Play-Stop...Rewind (4 mins)
Video vendor (6 mins)
6:10 PM: My Migrant Soul (35 mins)
Bangladesh, 2000, Yasmine Kabir
A Bangladeshi worker in Malaysia dies
Winner of the Ram Bahadur Trophy for Best Film

All screenings at Bagbakhana, Patan Dhoka. Tickets, Rs 25 per show, available at Himal Association, Patan Dhoka, Patan Dhoka Hiti, Pasal, and Mandala Book Point, Kantipath, Ring 542544 for additional information.



It's time again for the annual Great Himalayan Volkswagen Beetle Rally—all in aid of Nepal's who need cleft-lip and cleft-palate surgery. This year there are going to be nearly 60 bugs travelling from the Park Village Hotel at Budanikantha at the northern end of the valley to

allowed to donate any amount for the cause. The cars will be flagged off at 8:30 and will stop at Dharbar Marg where they will be escorted by an elephant along the boulevard. The Nepal Tourism Board is this year's co-sponsor, along with a dozen other individuals and companies. This isn't a race, and the best decorated Beetle wins the prize: a roundtrip ticket to Amsterdam on Transavia.

Cleft lips and palates are caused by fetal acid deficiency, and Nepal has a high incidence. Many, like Harika Bahadur Pradhan, 32, (see picture) have lived with the condition all their lives and can't believe the change after the operation. Says Fowlds: "The hardest part is to find the people who need the surgery, and from this year we will be able to operate on children below 15 with general anaesthesia."

operations at the National Dental Hospital at Lazimpat and at the Nepal Bums Society in Thapae. If you have a VW Beetle (any model) and haven't registered yet, it is not too late. Just show up at Park Village Hotel at 7:30 AM on Saturday, 20 March. There is a Rs 500 entrance fee, and you are

Harika Bahadur Pradhan, 32, who has lived with the condition all his life and can't believe the change after the operation. Says Fowlds: "The hardest part is to find the people who need the surgery, and from this year we will be able to operate on children below 15 with general anaesthesia."

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Service for your satisfaction

Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Bandhobast

Those of you who have prematurely extirpated the lint that had gathered in your respective bellybuttons in the period immediately after the declaration of a state of national emergency are understandably concerned about how you are going to conduct your navel exercises during the forthcoming Five-day National Hibernation next week. I had warned you about this in a previous column, saying save some lint for a rainy day. But no, we didn't listen did we?

Serve you right. Being former Cub Scouts from the Mountain Goat Troop ("Troop Oath: 'Mountain Goat, Mountain Goat, Ra Ra Ra! Mountain Goat, Mountain Goat, Ba Ba Ba! We are the Mountain Goats, Hurrah!') many of us Tenderfoots were trained to navigate in the forest by following squirrel droppings, we practiced tying various kinds of knots with our kerchiefs, we know how to salute with only three fingers, and we adhere strictly to the Cub Scout motto: "It is not advisable to be unprepared sometimes."

So, as the nation approaches the centuries of history, we have to ask ourselves: Are we prepared? Do we have the Green Light? Unfortunately, the answer to both questions is "no".

We are not prepared. What bandhobast are we contemplating for ourselves? This worry is well-

founded. No doubt about it, we cannot deny without any degree of uncertainty that this may be a conundrum of national proportions. That is why it will be necessary to take the bull by the horns in the china shop, and undertake measures to brainstorm about various ways that we can keep ourselves gainfully employed during the days of National Coma.

Boredom. That is what we have to guard ourselves against. This kingdom is sliding into boredom. It is therefore in the national interest not to be more bored than is absolutely necessary in the forthcoming National Fullstop. Several ideas come to mind to wave off boredom, and with the kind consent of the Secretary General, I would like to share them with some of my valued clients who are still awake:

1. **Sleep.** This is a state in which an average Nepali's conscious mind ceases to function, and only processes such as breathing and digestion continue. Sleep is essential to mental and physical health, and lack of it can cause a condition known in some circles as "wakefulness". If you are awake for any given period of time, there is a high probability that you will also be bored. So the answer is to go to sleep, and be unconscious for five days. The beauty of sleep is that time goes into fast-forward while you take your extended nap. Before you know it, it will be Saturday. So go ahead, press the "sleep" button.
2. **Surgery.** Undertake any urgent plastic surgery that you have not had time to attend to because of your busy schedule. This is your opportunity to have that liposuction you have been putting off all these years, or get a chin tuck. It is difficult to think of a more worthwhile way to pass five days than to emerge at the end of them 15 years younger! Some of the more ambitious among you may even want to have that long-awaited sex change operation, in which case you will emerge five days later feeling like a New Man.
3. **Meditation.** Escape from the mundane world of the struggle of the global proletarian revolutionaries against western fascist lackey imperialism running dogs and reactionary bourgeois know-nothings by going into hibernation at the Vipassana Meditation Centre at Shivapuri for a five-day crash course. Take it from me: meditation will anaesthetise you against the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, and you won't feel a thing afterwards. (This is the actual real-life phone number for the Vipassana Centre: 223968.) You're welcome.
4. **Emigrate.** To New Zealand and join the Cub Scouts.

NEPALI SOCIETY

Manisha, Wang and Nepal's most famous kid.



Manisha and her Chinese-American co-star Wang Lee-Hom were just beginning their film shoot in a classroom in Mahadevstan in Kavre for MTV's widely-popular Speak Your Mind programme when a goat ambled in and nuzzled against Wang's arm. The MTV crew kept the cameras rolling and before we knew it, a star was born. Nepal's most famous kid is going to be on MTV!

Speak Your Mind is a joint production of UNICEF and MTV, and the Nepal documentary will be watched in some 160 million households all over Asia. Earlier programmes, such as those on AIDS in Thailand and the Philippines were great hits, according to MTV producer Melissa Tham.

After the shoot, 15-year-old Santosh offered Manisha Koirala bhuteko makal bhatmas and munching it the Nepali Bollywood star felt tears welling up in her eyes. The smell of roasted corn and soybeans cooked by a school girl in Panchkhal suddenly brought back memories of her childhood, and she felt: "I am home."

Combining the drawing power of a celebrity with the reach of MTV is a powerful tool to spread awareness about issues involving children. UNICEF's Stewart McNab says the rationale behind using showbiz personalities like Manisha and Wang Lee-Hom is to make politicians listen: "A big name brings big fame, it inspires and influences people."

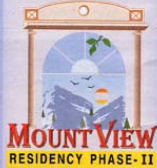


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