



**Sikkim**



**Sikkim is opening up, getting a new airport, and finding its own identity.**

8

**EXCLUSIVE**

**Peace for food**

A 25-nation Asia-Pacific ministerial conference on agriculture is taking place in Kathmandu this week in the run-up to the World Food Summit in Rome on June 19. High on the agenda of both meetings will be the crisis of food security in the world's mountain regions. Chronically food-deficit hilly regions of the world, including Nepal, are now also being wracked by conflict. This is worsening an already bad food situation, says Jacques Diouf, the

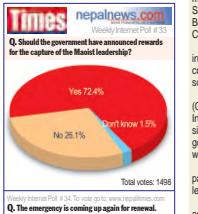
head of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). "Mountain areas are home to most of the armed conflicts in the world as well as many of the poorest and most disadvantaged populations," says Diouf. "Without peace, we cannot reduce poverty. Without peace, we cannot ensure food supply." (see also p. 2-3)

**Truly Asia**

Malaysian Airlines, which has been planning to bring it forward starting from next year after Singapore Airlines decided to sell its 49% share, "We want to come in as soon as possible," says Subodh Rana, of Marco Polo Travels, local agents for Malaysian. Nepal already has some 30,000 workers in Malaysia, numbers likely to grow. Initially, Malaysian hopes to extend two of its 4-weekly Unakai flights to Kathmandu.

**Anti-privatisation?**

By blowing up two power houses belonging to the Butwal Power Company, Maoists have sabotaged its privatisation. The reactors at Jhapa and Dang alone cost over Rs 1 billion. The powerhouse at Andhi Kunda (SMW) is also considerable. A consortium of winning bidders had pledged Rs 950 million for BPC before the attacks, and are awaiting a damage assessment report.



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# See-saw war



**BINOD BHATARAI**

Loknayak Jai Singh Lekh is a thickly forested ridge at 2,500m protected by sheer cliffs to the south. At the western foothills of this range is the Magar village of Thehang, up north-east is Gam, the cradle of the Maoist revolution.

Rolpilla have known that the Maoists had a major base up there. The security forces, working on intelligence, had for the first time started probing the western range of Lekh and Thehang. A team of 28 police and 73 soldiers was sent on Tuesday at eight in the morning on 2 May. They made contact with a large group of Maoists and reportedly killed more than 100 of them, including Dil Man Thapa, a local commander.

Acting on a tipoff by a captured female



prisoner, they then headed further up the mountain range towards Ghurghar, where top Maoists were based. It took until 21:15pm they came under heavy fire. The unit radioed for air support and kept on fighting. A massive hail storm, made it impossible for helicopters to land. By 6:30 the soldiers had run out of ammunition, and they retreated with their five dead.

By next morning, security sources told us, no trace of the battle had been picked clean, there were no bodies and no weapons but the ground was soaked with blood. The army then advanced further up the ridge and came across the Maoists' main base with bunkers, food supply and training grounds, reportedly the hideout of rebel leader Krishna Bahadur Mahara.

They laid siege to the heights, but the Maoists being much more familiar with the terrain, fled along the ridge north-east towards Gam. And that is where, in an audacious counterattack, they stormed an isolated army garrison on Tuesday night at eleven o'clock. From there they are believed to have dispersed into Baglung in the eastern hills.

It took only 90 minutes to overrun the Gam base. Many of those who survived were executed. The final death toll is not clear, but 60 of the 140-strong force were said to be outside the base when it fell. Thirty-five charred bodies were found on Thursday when reinforcements finally arrived. Eighteen injured soldiers, police and a civilian flown to Kathmandu on Thursday afternoon (see pic).

MPs from the State Affairs Committee of parliament who visited Rolpa last week described the area as a war zone. "It feels like Lebanon," says Prakash Jawa, "We are convinced the security forces are doing their best, but there is a severe lack of leadership." MP Hridaya Ram Thani, SAC chairman, agrees. "They need support to make their campaign more effective."

It is now clear that the lack of air support to enforce the cordon around Lise

was a critical factor that allowed the Maoists to break through and flee along the ridge to attack.

In reality forces had been expecting a major attack in the area, and the presence of large numbers of rebels on Lise, they say, was indication they were probably preparing a raid on Lise. This time, they also wanted an attack to coincide with Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's Washington visit. ♦

# Ayo Gorkhalii



**Cherie Booth to the rescue.**

- They are allowed to live with wives only for 3 of the 15 years of service, something that does not apply to British soldiers.
  - The soldiers are treated as Hindu, although there are non-Hindu in the ranks.
  - Promotions are racially tinged, and
  - There is discrimination in pension payments.
- GASEO's Padam Bahadur Gurung told us: "All we are asking is not to be treated as inferior to British soldiers. We are Nepali soldiers, and demand only the same rights." Many British citizens seem to agree. A former paratrooper and now Mayor of Ilfracombe, says in the 30 April issue of the Daily Mirror: "It is scandalous that these people should be treated as second class citizens."

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## "The food security situation in the western hills has greatly deteriorated."

Nepali Times asked Douglas Coutts of the UN's World Food Programme in Kathmandu about the impact of the insurgency on Nepal's food supply.

**Nepali Times:** How bad is the food situation in Nepal?

**Douglas Coutts:** It is logical that there would be a problem this year of year. This is the dry season, the food stocks communities build up over the winter and the hills and mountains will be down. The farmers there don't have the land holdings and soil fertility to grow enough food to feed their families. The food market has been severely affected by the conflict. The major cereal markets have been severely affected by the conflict, and that there have been many incidents where the military and the Maoists have blocked food going into certain areas. I am not talking only about our food, but food blocked by either side from the merchants. In many of the barazas, we have reports of scarcity and rising prices of staples.

**How much worse is it than normal for this time of year?**

Before you had a scarcity problem. Now there is a new and very serious element. In the past, depending on where you were, how much land you had and how many people you had, you could produce enough food for your family and opportunities to earn income to buy the rest. The unrest has affected the traditional coping mechanisms of communities. Men used to leave to work and come back with cash or food. Much of that traditional migration is affected. Many of the men are often suspected by both sides when they transit. We gather the fear element is so high many who would go to find work are just staying at home.

**Have farming practices changed?**

We're getting conflicting reports. Some talk about farmers actually growing less. They worry about it being taken. From our experience globally, this type of conflict, it is typical that food stores are often plundered by insurgents. We hear from the government that Maoists in many areas are having problems of supply, and are really desperate for food.

**So people are just not growing food?**

There is obviously more food insecurity, much more than before. Communities probably also have fewer income-generation activities to earn money to buy food in the markets. The food, again, is not readily available and is more expensive. You add all that together and I think it is logical to say that the food insecurity situation in the hills and mountain in the west has probably greatly deteriorated.

**In other countries famines have followed conflicts? Is that possible here?**

In our business we use the word "famine" very sparingly. It is with great caution that I would even utter the word. Famine is sort of the final step of a long process. It is a state where people are literally dying on the streets. It means all the coping mechanisms are gone. A full-scale famine is rare. There are many warning signs along the way to famine. Long before a famine you'd see an increase in deaths during the difficult periods—in the west that would be during winter and the lean season. Children, elderly people, others who don't have sustained food supply during the difficult period succumb to diseases that a well-nourished person would recover from. That would be the first



warning sign. Those who tend to last longer are typically males in prime of their life. The young and the elderly, pregnant women, breastfeeding women have higher calorie requirements. That's a sign of things to come. We are talking about the conflict, or after. The other sign is migration. We are told that there are people migrating even as we speak, it seems to be primarily because of their sense of insecurity, not only food.

**Gives us a belpark figure for the population with shortages of food?**

It is very hard to define. We have about 45 percent of the population below the poverty line—a government figure of people who consume 2,000 or less kilocalories each day. The highest percentage of that 45 percent you'd find in the areas we are talking about. The people in other places have more options available to them. The poverty issues are everywhere, but there are more income-generating opportunities available elsewhere in the hills and mountains. Then we look at the percentage of people who eat less than a dollar a day—this average and spend 70-80 percent or more of that on food. People die not because of lack of food but because of diseases they develop when they are weakened by less food over a sustained period. We know that there has been an increase in TB rates, that's an indicator of food shortage. TB is an opportunistic disease and affects people who are not fit. We know for a fact that TB rates in the mountains have increased. Put all that together, and that would indicate we are getting into a problem.

**Can others say that now? Half of Nepal's food is food shortages?**

This is where we have to be careful. We don't want to look at it that way. Start at the national level, Nepal is technically a food-deficit country, but produces surpluses pretty regularly. The issue for us is not the national food production line. That only tells half the story. The issue is access to food. The very interesting thing about Nepal is that access is determined by income and geography. It's no sin to not produce enough food to feed a million people if you can't afford to buy food for a million people to buy food. Here people's access is critical, and further complicated by geography, which is why we came with "food for work". The people we target are the poorest of the poor in the hills and mountains, the most food-insecure and most affected. They have no interest in working for cash because they have to buy high-priced supplies. That's how you know we are targeting the right communities. People up there are spending so much of their income on food anyway, and are interested in such kinds of programs.

That was the situation before

# Security

RAMYATA LIMBU

Almost one in four Nepalis will go to sleep hungry today. The same will happen tomorrow, and the next day. That makes Nepalis, in terms of proportion of undernourished, the hungriest people in South Asia. The UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) says Nepal adds 400 more people into its ranks every day, or 150,000 more people every year.

These figures are based on statistics several years old, and food security experts say the situation is sure to have got worse since then because of the widening insurgency, especially in the chronically food-deficit mid-western region.

The production, distribution and storage mechanisms simply aren't working, and hunger is spreading at an alarming rate. Ten years ago, there were 3.5 million underfed people in Nepal, 19 percent of the population. Today there are another three million. 23 percent, according to the FAO's latest global food security survey.

The FAO will be holding its Asia-Pacific regional ministerial conference in Kathmandu 13-17 May, where the country's worsening food security situation is expected to be highlighted. If the insurgency is not brought to a rapid resolution, and if farm productivity is not improved Nepal is moving towards having one of the most serious food crises in Asia.

Our food production has remained more or less constant, but rainfall has been seasonal surplus. The problem is, this is increasing, when they occur, do not translate into more food per head. The terrain doesn't just make growing food difficult; it impedes the government's ability to move food stocks around the country. That was the situation before

Cyan Prasad Sharma, an agriculture expert with the National Planning Commission. Once a food-exporting country, Nepal today imports close to Rs 6 billion worth of grain and other foodstuffs every year. People are still going hungry because there is not enough food in many areas where it is most needed, because people don't have the money to buy it with, or due to transportation and distribution problems.

"What's happening is a very heterogeneous country, NGOs and private institutions to create an enabling environment to increase food security," says Tshik Bahadur Shaha, regional director of the Department of Agriculture for the Central region. "Now, the security situation has made matters worse."

The conflict has affected food

flights to remote

village depots in Mugu last year owing to the security situation.

Remote and Mugu is a food deficit area at the best of times, and this suspension has affected at least 5,000 residents.

"Not a grain of rice

has been flown into the villages this year," says Mugu MP Chandra Bahadur Shahi. "But the number of consumers has gone up—police, security forces, the Maoists."

The districts of 3,000

people

have

been

affected.

"People can't collect rice unless they swim or go through Maoist-infested areas. People are foraging for roots and tubers," says Shahi.

It is difficult to obtain an accurate picture of the state of agriculture in ne-go Maoist-affected areas. One does hear of the Maoists carrying out cooper-

ative support, has more than a ring of truth about it. But people like Professor Catherine Marks, a Nepal expert from Providence, Rhode Island, and a listener named Ursula, calling from Providence, Rhode Island, were having none of it. "Our money," Ursula said, "she was a former Peace Corps volunteer who'd roamed all through the Kamala area over the past two years" shouldn't be spent on furthering war and violence. It should be spent on making peace, encouraging institutions like the courts, parliament and human rights groups. We have spent millions of dollars on developing communities and all that happens in the coming of democracy in Afghanistan," she said.

A forceful point, probably made from a left-of-center idealistic perspective, but a thoughtful one nonetheless, especially coming from an informed source and from a person who clearly loves this country. She deplored the Maoists and their violence but wondered about the rural poverty she'd seen the alienation of remote valleys cut off from the prosperity so prevalent—until recently—in Kathmandu. Professor Marks concurred. She too is widely travelled in the far-west, far more I dare say, than many of the elite in this city, certainly more than I.

Debat is the key thing here. No side is above the right, no one is above the other. Every side, every group, every individual, every leader, every person needs to start talking about how to resolve those woes, they need to disagree and then move towards common ground. That's democracy, that's pluralism, that's the only way forward. That American phone-in program needs a version in Nepali, and it needs to be broadcast nation-wide as the people of this fine, troubled land have their say.

By the way, Professor Marks and Ursula from Rhode Island both speak fluent Nepali and are more than willing to share their opinions with people here. ♦

(www.npr.org, Talk of the Nation Programme, 29 April 2002)

HERE AND THERE

## All things considered

BY DANIEL LAK



Unlike as it may seem, there's been some well-informed debate about Nepal on American airwaves.

I'm Sundeep Kishore, and the prime minister's plane is soaring overhead, off to pay homage in Washington and London and count some seats from the paymasters of the war on terror. The few private airlines still flying send their tricks of passengers high and low. It's misty and warm, a pigeon perches on my balcony, saving a eye on the world below.

Khard to know what to make of things now that I'm back in the Himalayan kingdom. Being abroad, in North America and Europe, meant longing onto the Internet—everywhere I checked our news media coverage of Nepal and all the other media reminders of our own-like news channels the few bold voices was coming from Upahal's Arunachal Cupid in Kathmandu, prominently displayed in my local book super store. I bought it to read on the plane.

It's probably a good thing Prime Minister Deuba is meeting President Bush this week in Washington. The CEO of America Inc was infamously the man most ignorant about foreign affairs in the run up to the presidential election in 2000. Post 11 September, he no longer needs an atlas to suss out all corners of the world. He even knows about our troubles in Nepal and is investing in ways to resolve them. Forty million dollars and counting, unless I'm mistaken, with at least half for the military. That's an interesting intervention at this point in the struggle and one that I worried isn't being properly examined and debated.

It is in America though. A ringing telephone in my father's kitchen last week turned out to be a producer with National Public Radio, America's superb listener-supported alternative to the dreck of mainstream media. Somehow, "Talk of the Nation" had tracked me down in exotic Sudbury, Ontario, Canada and this week, the listeners were getting all they may have ever wanted to know about Nepal and the Maoists. I was there as a guest, so I refrained from offering opinions, but was surprisingly well-informed by listeners didn't.

To a person, they all knew that the Bush administration was being too

black and white in its widening of the war on terror to include Nepal and the

# and food security

**Nepal is the only country in the region where hunger is increasing. Now factor in the insurgency.**



value and endurance farmer income. "We get more rice who are knowledgeable about rice, but don't have an inkling about buckwheat or barley. I've often told planners, give us water, good irrigation systems, not rice."

Shaha is optimistic that a road being built in Humla, under the WFP's Food for Work Project, will allow villagers to exchange local produce like apples, walnuts and medicinal plants for rice from the plains.

It is clear that although the security situation has made the food situation worse, even if the conflict winds down, the agricultural problems with Nepal's agriculture will persist. Nepali farmers are already hurt by their inability to compete with the economy of scale of Indian products. The open border has allowed a backlog of cheaper Indian rice to enter Nepal. "We haven't reached our production potential," says Thapa. "But even if we increased the yield, where do we store it, how do we distribute it, how do we market it. We don't have these mechanisms in place."

So there are, the government opened its borders to Bangladesh, in the hope that it would import food, support for a long-term agriculture plan from the ADB. Before that could be implemented properly, the government reversed its decision. The ADB-backed 20 year Agriculture Perspective Plan hopes to improve irrigation, fertilizers, markets and roads and targets a five percent growth in agriculture, largely cereals. It hopes this will reduce poverty to 14 percent, and narrow the regional imbalances in food availability.

Even so, there are some in government who do not completely agree with the FAO's approach. "The FAO doesn't take into account Nepal's food habitat and consumption, the indigenous varieties of food, and local preferences," says one official who did not want to be named. "You can't base a report on rice, maize and wheat alone."

In general, Nepal's food grain production has been increasing in recent years, thanks to good monsoons and improved services. But food production is not keeping pace with the increase in population. Between 1990-2000, Nepal produced more rice, wheat, maize and mille. Barley, however, production has fallen even year after year. For many mountain communities, increased rice production doesn't really matter, barley is their staple.

Jivan Bahadur Shahi, chairman of the Humla DDC, says the focus should be on promoting indigenous cereals such as barley and mille, and encouraging crops like potato, pulses and vegetables, for their nutritional value.

It is difficult to obtain an accurate picture of the state of agriculture in ne-go Maoist-affected areas. One does hear of the Maoists carrying out cooper-

### Minister-turned-Maoist

Yet another former minister has surrendered to the administration, this time on charges of being a Maoist leader. On 7 May Govinda Nath Upreti surrendered to the Kavre District Administration Office after appearing on a fresh list of Maoist leaders wanted by the security forces. Upreti drove alone in his private car to reach the Kavre headquarters in Daulakhet, and was not seized even once by the security personnel guarding the highway. The district administration has taken him into custody for further interrogation.

### Trying to climb high

Desperate to attract more mountaineers, such as those now choosing to climb in Pakistan, where the fees are cheaper and there are no Maoists, the government has made changes to the royalty system. The new regulation has removed the procedure for obtaining permission to climb big mountains. The new regulation has reduced the royalty to \$25,000 for a team of under seven members from the previous \$70,000. They're also annulled the provision which required foreign climbers had to be recommended by their national alpine clubs or embassies. The new rules also say that mountaineering activities will be allowed throughout the year.

The new regulations also display a new sensitivity towards Nepali who work on expeditions. Youth under 16 will not be allowed to climb, and all support staff on expeditions will have to be provided accident insurance. Finally, in response to numerous complaints, the government-designated liaison officers will no longer be required to accompany expedition teams up to base camps and will have their allowances cancelled should they stop working with an expedition.

### ISDP worries

The National Planning Commission is reconsidering the implementation of the Integrated Security and Development Programme (ISDP) in districts affected by the insurgency. The NPC is awaiting assurance from the Royal Nepal Army that the security situation is stable enough for the development package to be implemented in the 13 worst affected districts. During his appearance at the parliamentary committee for state affairs earlier this month Chief of Army Staff Pratap Singh Rana requested the quick implementation of the ISDP.

The government had selected Gorkha, Rolpa, Rukum, Salyan, Jajarkot, Kailali and Purnea for implementation of the ISDP, but implementation was suspended following the declaration of the state of emergency in November. The programme was implemented in Gorkha on a trial basis one year ago.

### Finally, some good news

Nepal has done well in recent years in the areas of child survival, family planning and fertility, said SAUDI director Rekha Rohra at the launch of the 2001 Nepal Demographic and Health Survey. The survey revealed that the rate of under-five mortality has dropped from 140 per 1,000 live births in 1995 to 103 per 1,000 in 1999. The rate of infant mortality has also come down significantly—from 103 to 64 deaths per 1,000 live births. This goes together with advances in health care. Five years ago, just over one in three children were fully immunised. Between 1990 and 1999, the number of children under five years old increased by 1.7 million.

But it is still probably too early for celebrations. There are other problems in our health sector that could easily drag us back—57 percent of deliveries take place in the absence of trained birth attendants, and less than half of all women are immunised against tetanus. Over half of all Nepali children are shorter than the normal height-for-age, and a fifth are severely malnourished, says the survey carried out by New ERA for the Family Health Division of the Ministry of Health.

At the same gathering Health Minister Sharad Singh Bhandari said the figures would be taken seriously and promised the following: a gender sensitive approach to health care delivery, decentralisation of public health service facilities, and increased participation of communities, local governments and private sector to improve the overall health scenario in Nepal. If only it were that easy.

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Maoist insurgency. That's what they felt the White House was doing with its request for extra military assistance for the authorities here, and they didn't like it. I pointed out that the official American line, that democracy is under threat and the

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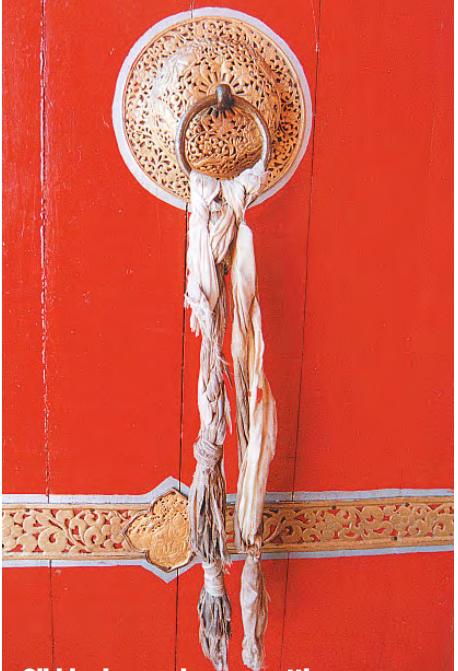
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# Open sesame



**Sikkim is opening up, getting a new airport, and finding its own identity.**

NRI BURKHAYA

JANAKI GURUNG . . . . .  
903, a time for intrigue and explorers. Francis Younghusband, in his obsessive quest for Tibet, makes the journey from Darjeeling into Sikkim, dressed in Marching Orders: "breaches, gaiters, brown boots flannel shirt, khaki coat and forage cap".

Just to get to Rangpo, now a bustling little border town between West Bengal and Sikkim that doesn't think twice in cheap and cheaper boozes, he must cross the Teesta by a non-to- reassuring suspension bridge and make his way through the dense forests of the Eastern Himalaya foothills, all the while worrying about "a haunting suspicion of fever".

He arrives in Gangtok three days later, crossing a cantilever bridge and cutting through bamboo and elephant creepers, enchanted by the sight of untold varieties of

orchids. Further charm awaits him in the Sikkimese capital in the form of the Chogyal's brilliant and beautiful second wife, Yeshe Dolma, "an uncommonly slim little thing". Younghusband, who was after all a bit of a lunatic about Tibet, steeled his heart against the alluring ways and moved up towards Nathu La, one of the two main passes to Tibet, now more notable for its history than for its present. It was between China and India that as 4,392 in high up on the old Lhasa-Kalimpong trade route.

Younghusband could make that journey in four hours by car today. Come 2005, he could even land in Pakyong, 35 km south-east of Gangtok, on board a regular flight. The overwhelming army presence in Sikkim, particularly as you go up north towards the popular tourist route of Yumthang, is a little disconcerting (though no more than in our own capital), and there are

plenty of restricted areas that require more paperwork in triplicate than you'd imagine, but an airport here will almost inevitably result in a real boom in tourism. Bhutan is expensive, and as for Nepal, well, last month in Gangtok we met more than one foreign tourist who if cancelled a planned trip here in light of their embassy's travel warning, and gone instead to Sikkim.

For the newly-rich—or desperate, four-star chopper already flies once a day between Gangtok and Bagdogra, an airport with connections to Calcutta and Delhi. Bagdogra will mean a many-fold increase in Sikkim's tourist arrivals, which currently stand at 30-50,000 foreign and 300,000 domestic tourists annually, and rising by something like 20 percent every year. There is only one direct, open space route between Sikkim and the

## When in Sikkim, be sure to:

- Drive up to the stunning, mirror-like Tsomgo Lake at 3,780 m and three hours from Gangtok; get yourself photographed in Tibetan dress atop a yak sporting a carpet that says, "Welcome to Tsomgo". Marvel at the fact that electricity is taken for granted even at this height, and that a light switch can turn on more than just one 10 W bulb.
- Drive further up to a curious little shrine a little lower than Nathu La, dedicated to one Hanjhang Singh, in life army man, in death baba. Ignore the rabbles and imagine not Younghusband in 1903, but the friends of Tibetans who had already across the passes visible from this road in 1955. Some Tibetans who live in Sikkim say the route is still used by people fleeing the Tibetan Autonomous Region.
- If you really, really want to, get permission in Gangtok and drive up five hours to the border at Nathu La. But if it has rained in recent days lower down, be sure to hire a vehicle with snow-chains, or the persnickety Sikkim army men will tell you, with a crinkle of their sunburst faces and a twirl of their mustachios, that they can't allow you up for fear you'll stick there and they'll have to carry out yet another rescue mission. The most dramatic view of the mountain range is derived from the sight of dazed-looking Indian tourists, mostly Bengali, who can't believe they are at the border with China. And that they have just shaken hands with a member of the People's Liberation Army. Too thrilling for words.
- Bet on young Sikkimese, especially in Gangtok, and you realize that the local airport is about more than making moosah—it's about finally, over 25 years after being incorporated into the Indian Union, being a real part of the country. Enough, they say, of being some exotic outpost, even if Sikkim is known for producing an international-standard footballer, Bhaichung Bhutia, and possibly the most urban bane of Dungsberg beer, Danny Denzongpa, even if the state's own football board doesn't have a team still calling it a kingdom (as in flower kingdom).
- This after all, is a state that has in two successive elections voted to power Pawan Chamling, a man with a couple of pet pecces. Cut through all the mandatory noises about defence and foreign bands, and ignore for Nepal, well, last month in Gangtok we met more than one foreign tourist who if cancelled a planned trip here in light of their embassy's travel warning, and gone instead to Sikkim.
- Imagining the intrigues at the Rumtek Monastery is another worthwhile exercise, especially when every third person gives you a different number of competing Karmapas and feeds you stories of thousand-car-long processions in favour of the Sherpa Karmapa. Or something like that—there are far too many stories. For other, more spiritual experiences, there are any number of monasteries, some very old and venerable indeed—Phodong Monastery is supposed to have been blessed by the Guru Rinpoche and Tashiding was built back in 1717. Pemayangtse is devoted to the Nyinmapa order of Tibetan Buddhism, and the sect founded by Padmasambhava.
- Drink Tashi tea, Kilo for kilo, the highest grade of Sikkimese tea is more expensive than Darjeeling. It is grown at a higher altitude and on a much smaller tea estate that only cultivates the Finest Tippy Golden Flowery Orange Pekoe.



YANNIS BOURGEOIS

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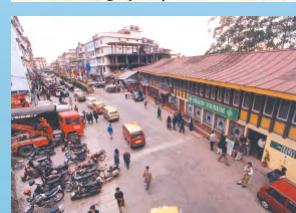
# Sikkim

## Seven Years at a Glance



The last seven years have been good for Sikkim. This has been a time of high achievement for the state that became part of the Indian Union in 1975. Following are some of the numerous strides the state has made in the social, economic and environmental sphere:

- The crime rate in Sikkim is the lowest in the country and the Union Home Minister has declared Sikkim the most peaceful state in the country.
- The Sikkim Planning Commission has been constituted to give a new lease of life to the planning process in the state.
- The *Sikkim Human Development Report 2001 and Sikkim: The People's Vision* have been published.
- We have set a target to increase Sikkim's growth from 12 percent to 15 percent.
- Sikkim has been included in the North-eastern Council as its eighth member.
- Policies are in place to spend 70 percent of the total plan budget to develop Sikkim.
- Chief Minister Pawan Chamling was voted the Greenest Chief Minister in India.
- A new law is being enforced that requires all official papers and documents to list the name of the responsible government department.
- Reservation for women have been introduced: 33 percent in Panchayats and 30 percent in government jobs.
- For the first time, a woman has been induced into cabinet and the SDF has appointed a woman member as Speaker of the State Assembly, Zilla Adhyakshas, Upan-Adhyakshas and chairpersons of different government undertakings.
- We have set a target to improve the literacy rate to 85 percent from the present 70 percent during the Tenth Five-Year Plan.
- The foundation stone for airport was laid in Pakyong by Indian Vice President Shri Krishna Kant in April 2002.
- Season of Mt Kangchenjunga and seven other sacred peaks is banned.
- One tourist centre is being developed in each Gram Panchayat Unit in the state.
- To develop tourism in Sikkim, we have started consultation with national- and international-level industrialists and non-governmental organisations.
- Sikkim hosted the South Asian Conference on Eco-Tourism in June 2001.
- The transport system has been modernised with the introduction of a helicopter service. Eight more helipads are under construction.
- An MoU has been signed for a five-star hotel in the state.
- Airstrips are being constructed.
- Projects are underway for better connectivity in the state through district and village roads.
- The concept of a Model Village was developed and work started to promote village tourism. These villages will have all modern amenities such as electricity, road links, CC footpath, PHSC, school, NLW centre, VLO centre, cooperative societies, bookstall, cafeteria, stockman centre.
- Devolution of power—10 percent of the state's annual plan budget goes to the Panchayats.
- The government has exempted people from paying tax on timber from personal holdings.
- Efforts are being made to exempt Sikkim from Direct Taxation Laws.
- We have completed an economic survey of Sikkim and the *Vishwakarma* will start soon.
- We have decided to close down the Rathang-chu Hydroelectric Project and set up a cultural spot there, considering the religious importance of the place.
- Rajya Van Samrakshan Evam Payaveyan Puraskar was constituted to encourage preservation of nature.
- For the first time, a Sikkimese has been appointed to the position of Advocate General by the Sikkim Democratic Front government.
- Sikkimese people have been appointed to constitutional positions such as Ambassador.
- Efforts are on to have Sikkim's Limbu and Tamang people included in the Schedule VII of the Indian Constitution.
- Equal respect and tradition for Sikkimese cultures and traditions. Demands for the inclusion of Bhutia, Lepcha and Limbu languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
- Tamang, Gurung, Rai, Sherpa, Mangar, Newar and Sunwar languages have been recognised as state languages.
- Arrangements have been made to teach Bhutia, Lepcha and Limbu languages in all schools up to college level. Gurung, Tamang, Newar and Sunwar languages are taught at college level.
- We have been successful in granting the status of Other Backward Castes to Jogi, Thami and Dewang.
- 10 percent of seats are reserved in higher education to the Chhetri, Bahun and Newar communities, who are not included in the list of Other Backward Castes.
- Chief Minister has constituted various state awards carrying Rs 100,000 each under categories such as literature, social service, performing arts and sports.
- We have accorded due recognition to our rituals of Dhami-Jhankri, Bijuwa, Phendhang, Branglung, Janapa etc, based on animistic traditions.
- A gumpa and ghousehave been constructed at Bodhgaya.
- Work has begun on the installation of a huge statue of Guru Rinpoche at Shamputsho.
- We have decided to install a 108 foot-high statue of Lord Shiva at Solang.
- Work has begun on the construction of a ropeway at Gangtok, from Deorali to Tashiding and Naomati to Sandusia Dara.
- The city bus service has been introduced as a cheaper means of transport for the public in general.



# Past imperfect



**The US believes the Old World's entrenched anti-Semitism is showing once again**

**WASHINGTON**—European criticism of Israel's military offensive and National Front leader Jean-Marie le Pen's surprising second-place in the first round of French presidential elections are fueling anti-European opinion on the eve of the semi-annual US-EU summit.

Right-wingers in and outside President George W. Bush's administration have seized on le Pen's victory over Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin as evidence of an anti-Semitic resurgence in Europe, and the Old World's moral hypocrisy in pressuring Washington to be more even-handed in addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Neo-conservatives, particularly influential among the political appointees at the Pentagon, charge that

Washington and Brussels since Bush took power 16 months ago.

With the disappearance of the Soviet threat, old tensions between the US and Europe—particularly on Washington's unilateralism—have resurfaced. The most recent reminder came under strain in Bush's first year in office when he rejected the Kyoto Protocol on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, withdrawn from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, stalled other international arms-control instruments, and refused to abide by the Geneva Convention in his treatment of al-Qaeda and Taliban prisoners.

Bush's "tough" speech in late January, in which he named Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as possible

targets in his war against terrorism, made things worse. Chris Patten, EU commissioner for external affairs, publicly denounced it, warning that Washington's unilateral instincts and military ambitions were misguided. "I do not support anti-Americanism," said German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer in February. Bush denied all the differences in size and weight; alliance partners are not "softies." The US decision to slap steep tariff on imported European steel has been another problem. The White House's refusal to denounce Sharon as he unleashed his latest military offensive in March fueled the fire.

Even before the Israeli offensive,

Western Powers and Bishops who oppose official defiance conventional wisdom here, wrote from Paris that Europeans were ready to fight the tariffs and were shocked by Bush's determination to widen the war on terrorism to Iraq and beyond. Amitai argues by European leaders for Bush to rein in Sharon. The EU began considering trade controls against the Jewish state and Germany, widely considered the most pro-Israel of EU countries, cut off arms sales.

Nevertheless, more than 10 million children die every year of preventable causes; 150 million are malnourished; 100 million are out of school; 250 million work; and 600 million live in extreme poverty. Half a million children, more than the population of Luxembourg, have died of AIDS. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said in a report: "The world has fallen short of achieving most of the goals... largely because of misaligned policies." By some estimates, meeting the goals in 1999 would require some \$70 billion per year in funding for health and education alone.

Advocacy groups like Human Rights Watch insist that the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted unanimously by the UN General Assembly in 1989, be taken as the basis for setting goals. Unless children's rights are acknowledged and investments in their welfare treated as a matter of rights, these groups have said, governments' commitments will remain weak. To date, 191 countries have ratified the Convention. The United States and Somalia have yet to ratify it. (IPS)

## The new economic giants

**GENEVA**—Russia and the transition economies of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, former members of the now-defunct socialist bloc, were among the world leaders in growth in 2001. The economic growth of Eastern Europe and Central Asia surpassed that of the rest of the countries belonging to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), whose 55 members include Western Europe, United States, Canada and Japan. ECE executive secretary Brian Schindler said the economic growth in 2001 of 7.4 percent was "surprisingly good," with an average growth of five percent.

But the top prize went to the group of countries that form part of the Confederation of Independent States (CIS), created after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The overall gross domestic product (GDP) increase of the CIS countries was 6.2 percent, and half of those economies experienced nearly nine percent annual growth. Schindler highlighted the success of Russia, "an engine of growth for the rest of the CIS countries." From 1992 to 2001, Russia's GDP climbed at an average annual rate of 6.5 percent.

The ECE analysts attribute this strong performance to two factors: the sharp depreciation of the ruble after 1998 and the success of the energy sector, which benefited from favourable market prices. But the report also recognises the merits of the Russian authorities, who made "a considerable effort to accelerate systemic transformation and market reforms." (IPS)

## The US and war crimes

The United States renounced formal involvement in a treaty that would have prohibited the use of weapons of mass destruction. Ambassador Pierre-Richard Prosper said this morning, President Clinton signed the treaty in 2000 but Prosper said the US has no intention of ratifying and now considers itself "no longer bound in any way to its purpose and objective." Democratic Senator Russ Feingold, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said was dismayed by the withdrawal from the treaty. "Beyond casting doubt on the US commitment to international justice and accountability," Feingold said, "these steps actually call into question the US's credibility as a leader in the world." The AP reporter promised to run a correction. Surin feared she'd lose her job. The AP reporter promised to run a correction. Surin didn't lose her job, but the damage had been done. This is one of many "softies." Some [international] officer is going to have a copy of the memo, "Surin, you're fired."

The strange continued looking for Khan for several days. He slept at a different location each night, usually, though he never became fully his family's confidante again. After a few days, the American Journalist Forum's reporter Daniel Pearl was kidnapped and murdered. It's unclear whether the two events were related. Pearl's death peaked a great deal of debate about the dangers of working as a foreign journalist. But what about those who are sources for, or who work with, foreign journalists? How often do journalists, and what they write, put others at risk?

Jacqueline Ann Surin, a Malaysian journalist who works for an English-language daily in Malaysia, said that over the years foreign journalists have developed a negative reputation in her country. "We call them 'parachute journalists,'" she says. "They come in, they write the factual information, write the stories, and then that's pretty much it."

Surin has personal experience—last year, after several Malaysian opposition leaders were detained without trial, a group of journalists staged a hunger strike to protest the law that allows for such detentions. The reporters prepared a press statement, listing the names of journalists who had been detained, explaining their mission, and including some quotes from strikers' reporters. Malaysia's government is a parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarchy. The group asked foreign reporters not to quote any one striker as spokesperson or organizer. To be

by JENNIFER BAUDUY

# Parachute journalists

**They jump in, cover a story, and get the hell out. What about their sources who stay behind?**

A man Khan only had time to grab two shirts, two pairs of trousers and a stuff in a duffel bag before he fled home in Afghanistan. Just a few months ago, Khan was a successful businessman in Kabul. And he wife, pregnant with their second child, lived with two dozen of his relatives. But soon after he left a foreign journalist covering the war in Afghanistan, Khan's life dramatically changed. Khan is not his real name, and certain details relating to his story have been omitted to protect his safety.

Last year, Khan's acquaintance, a *Wall Street Journal* correspondent, got hold of sensitive documents through a loose end who stole them from an American diplomat. The documents contained names of individuals, such as names of al-Qaeda members, according to *Wall Street Journal* reports. Having such information put the journalist at great risk, and he quickly left the country. The reporter fled, but what about those in Afghanistan with whom he had associated? Soon after the *Journal* reported its findings, armed men began showing up at Khan's workplace, asking questions about him. Khan's colleagues told him. Newspaper reports of the discover never mentioned his name, but certain details inadvertently associated him with the event, Khan said.

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(Jennifer Bauduy is the associate editor at *TomPaine.com*)

## Children by numbers

**UNITED NATIONS**—Special talks on the status and future of the world's children began here Wednesday, having been postponed following last September's terrorist attacks in the United States. More than 350 child delegates from around the world began discussing child rights and development Sunday, marking the first gathering of children at the UN General Assembly. More than 70 heads of state and government attended the three-day session, originally scheduled for September.

Investments in education and health, and their role in contributing to global peace and stability, will be the focus of the three-day session, a follow-up to the 1990 World Summit for Children. According to official figures compiled by UN agencies:

- Infant and under-five mortality, which was to be reduced by one-third under an action plan adopted at the 1990 summit, actually increased in 14 countries, nine of them in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Some 175 countries succeeded in eradicating polio by 2000 but the disease remains endemic in 20 countries.
- Deaths from diarrhoea have gone down by 50 percent as tandem breast-feeding has gained in popularity after decades of decline.

Nevertheless, more than 10 million children die every year of preventable causes; 150 million are malnourished; 100 million are out of school; 250 million work; and 600 million live in extreme poverty. Half a million children, more than the population of Luxembourg, have died of AIDS. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said in a report: "The world has fallen short of achieving most of the goals... largely because of misaligned policies." By some estimates, meeting the goals in 1999 would require some \$70 billion per year in funding for health and education alone.

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# Burmese days

**Aung San Suu Kyi is free. What are Burma's chances?**

National League for Democracy (NLD) that the junta refused to turn over power to despite its victory after the 1990 poll. "We shall recommit ourselves to allowing all of our citizens to participate freely in life of our political process, while giving priority to national unity, peace and stability of the country as well as the region," read a statement made yesterday through government spokesman Colonel Hla Mi.

This is not the first time that the military rulers have freed Suu Kyi from house arrest. Her first confinement was from 1988 to 1995, but virtually no reform followed her release. In November, she moved under house arrest a second time in September 2000 after she defied the junta's ban on her leaving Rangoon. Many Burmese were keeping watch on what conditions are attached to Suu Kyi's release. She says there are none, and that could mean anything from there being no discussions apart from that about her freedom to the junta being being underway but her release. For instance, there is the question of the relationship between Suu Kyi's release and what gains have been made in the talks ongoing between her and Rangoon, underway since October 2000 through the efforts of UN special envoy Razali Ismail. On Monday, Suu Kyi declined to give details of the talks, but insisted that she and her husband, a British professor-husband whom they refused permission to visit her just before he died of cancer. "It's a success in confidence-building—it creates a more democratic setting that acknowledges that people with different views with the government should be able to participate." Then added, "Our government have no unrealistic expectations."

She release should not be looked at as a major breakthrough for democracy. For all people in Burma to enjoy basic freedom—that would be the major breakthrough." But activists on Burma issues and Burmese academics and exiles interviewed by IPS say it is a confidence-building measure that can at best help to lay the ground for a political environment for real dialogue to take place. "Not everything is okay, but for sure this is a new chapter. I don't know how to describe what we feel," said one exiled journalist, one of thousands of Burmese living in exile in Thailand.

"There are no restrictions to my movement. I can go anywhere I want," Suu Kyi said, mobbed by throngs of local media. She has been freed from her house arrest in Rangoon. The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), as the government is known, indicated that she could resume her activities as the head of her party, the her actions as the head of her party, the

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addition the SPDC was worried her freedom may "trigger the public to come out in large numbers to support her."

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Kyaw Yin Hlaing, also of ISEAS, says that perhaps this has allowed both sides to finally find a way to genuinely talk in a way different from the hardline positions that yield little results. Some say that Suu Kyi has "become more and more diplomatic and strategic, so maybe she will go for evolutionary change rather than abrupt one," he said. Others guess that the military leaders are "looking into the future and looking for a gradual way to win" rather than holding on to power indefinitely. Kyaw Yin Hlaing added, "We just have to deal with it. Suu Kyi once

commented that she had no desire to be president."

There are several issues apart from democracy—as each the complex manner of Burma's ethnic unrest and resistance against the state—that go beyond the issue of a dialogue between the NLD and Rangoon. Some Burmese dissidents have felt ethnic minorities are often left out of the open movement in Burma and are looking for ways to be included. They will navigate this issue especially if she has not fully said how she proposes to deal with it. Suu Kyi once

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## Harvesting death

Kantipur, 7 May  
Guna Raj Lai

"They didn't bury the bodies properly," a local from Thulo Siribari said. "The whole area was reeking with the stench of the decaying bodies of insurgents killed in the recent fight with the security forces. It's normal for villagers to be curious about strangers visiting their village. The man said he'd heard about the massacre."

Bhola Sirinbar has been deserted since six residents were killed in a recent confrontation with security forces. I imagine all the villages that have been saved by death and terror share the same fate. Security forces claim to kill terrorists, but locals are not convinced. They are not ready to accept that their neighbours were ever involved in terrorist activities.

The country has turned into a battleground. Earlier, a day was noted for 10 or 20 deaths, now 500 or 600 is becoming the norm. We are harvesting death—some like mastis, others like dogs. Every death is different and unique. Some are due to the Maoists, others due to the security forces, others might live being wasted for the fun of execution.

Dead bodies are scattered all over—bodies buried by guns and ammunition, bodies gashed with khukuri, bodies battered. We are the brave, we cultivate death, as poet Bhupi Sherchan wrote: we are stupid, for we are brave; we are brave, that is why we are stupid! A Nepal is born not to live, but to die! either it dies in a battlefield, or it dies in a forest.

Death is common and usual for a Nepali, because there is death in our blood. Life in the hills is difficult and this commonplace difficulty might well prove to be fatal. Those who have been killed in the hills have sensed no fight power and created conditions for us to pin them down. Nepalis have battled as part of the British army, as part of the Indian army and as the national army. Nepalis have died in Kusma and Kusil, and they have died in Jana Leek and Sanganer Bazi. Death has become common and usual for us.

Death is inevitable in a war, so the death of a Nepali soldier fighting for a foreign army was easily accepted. It has become common sense in our minds that one can be killed fighting a war. The Maoist war has deepened this, and after the imposition of the state of emergency, every Nepali has learned that death can happen anytime, anywhere.

The first grave in Jana Leek was Hari Gatam and Tika Dara Dulal in Thulo Siribari. Reflected in the face of the villagers, in fetal expression. What will Shaw Hati gain out of this if even they was the war, other than this unmitigated death? Every village has been victimised.

Beweswa Daha, widow of Ram Nath Dahal, who died in the Jhapa Andolan, once said that those who die are the losers, that the winners are always those who live. Those who died were erased from memory, but their comrades in the Jhapa Andolan reached the summit of power. What would those who died in Thulo Siribari and Lise Leek gain from the death they took off?

The 67-year-old father of Shiva Dahal was devastated that he is mounting his young son's body. He is unable to stop himself from mourning the death of their young sons and awaiting their own death in desperation.

Until a year ago, terror was not so prevalent in Thulo Siribari. The people there were making a garden, they had just completed a drinking water project. Rastriya Prajatantra Party worker Tika Dutta Dulal, 70, was much respected by the villagers, and was leading the project. Dulal, who was later pressurised by the Maoists to become a member of the Jana Sarkar ("People's Government"), used to address the Maoist cadres as "comrades". He slipped up once and also called the RNA soldiers comrades. The innocent mistake cost him his life. An incompletely political leader, he was not fit for the Maoist idealism. Tika Dulal was full of need for social work. The fear of death did not linger on his face. Despite the government appeals that like him surrendered, he remained in the village, probably under the pressure of the Maoists. He probably never imagined that such a death lay in store for him.

When the government and the Maoist leadership were having their rounds of calls at poh hotels and resorts, the Maoists were actively derailing Jana Sarkar in villages. The simple-minded villagers probably thought the Maoists had already won the war, and willingly participated in the local Jana Sarkar. The reality is that

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"To save the Nepal Banjya Bank, the governor should be imprisoned."

—Shivaram Paudel, chairman of the Financial Corporation Employees Association in Dishi / May



Box: Submit heads here  
Man: It's definitely a head, sir, but it looks like a goat's...

THIS PAGE CONTAINS MATERIAL SELECTED FROM THE NEPALI PRESS

10 - 16 MAY 2002 NEPALI TIMES

villagers belong to nobody, they belong to whoever is in power. When the government was strong they belonged to either the Nepali Congress or to the CPN-UML. As the major political parties became less active, the villagers came under influence of the Maoists. To break the spell of Maoists, those political parties that are abroad should intensify their activities.

As the mainstream political parties abandoned their activities, villagers probably had the impression that Maoists had already won the war, so they accepted the Maoist leadership under pressure and fear. Isn't it true that "every Nepal was a Pandit and every Pandit was a Nepal" where the pancharatna system was in place? Instead of hunting for terrorists by looking at the faces of the villagers, political parties should work to change the politics in villages.

Adhikari: I don't have access.

Adhikari: How can you get work done without access?

Shah: I have no access.

Adhikari: Use your influence where you have it. Those who are your followers, those who've taken your handouts. Isn't that right? I am aware of all that, Nepal is a small country.

Shah: Yes, yes, yes.

Adhikari: Is that not so?

Shah: Yes, yes.

Adhikari: How can they take handouts and not deliver?

Shah: Yes, yes.

Adhikari: Why don't you ask them and find out what they say?

Shah: Yes, yes.

Adhikari: Instead, you blame me.

Shah: Yes, yes.

Adhikari: I have not had breakfast for many years, now I need to.

Shah: Yes. What would you like for breakfast? At my place.

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Adhikari: Yes. But I rang to tell you. I was held up at the Development Committee. Yesterday, the day before, I contacted you three or four times. Yesterday you were busy.

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Shah: Why? I said the day before that I would give.

Adhikari: I trust you.

Shah: Yes.

Adhikari: Yes.

Shah: Then?

Adhikari: I had also promised you here. Other things, political matters, I don't know much about that.

Shah: Now leave aside other matters. We will take care of political matters. Is that not the way to go?

Adhikari: Yes, that's it.

Shah: Tell me one thing, how much do I need to do for you? Just tell me. Tell me once clearly. No doubletalk.

Adhikari: Yes, Ma'am, what I said was earlier, seven.

Shah: What seven?

Adhikari: I have saved that much for you.

Shah: How much?

Adhikari: Seven in lakhs.

Shah: Ok, ok.

Adhikari: That is what I saved for you.

Shah: So you want all that seven?

Adhikari: I will let you judge. Use your judgement. I never did that to you. I never bargained with you. I informed you that I saved this much for you. You did say you, Ranesh helped me in that.

Shah: If I do that, will my work be done?

Adhikari: I am saying that.

Adhikari: Seven-seven was saved, that was saved by us. We have never been negative towards you. This is the first.

Shah: So you need the seven-seven? Just tell me clearly da!

Adhikari: I am not making any demands. Like I said, we've never bargained.

Jamim Shah: Hello! Adhikari da, how are you?

Adhikari: Haha, what can I say, I am sitting, doing nothing. What can one do, you people don't care (of us), you don't care about us.

Shah: How have we stopped caring?

Adhikari: I called yesterday. Sorry, I had to go elsewhere on Friday. You had

called, but where can I go taking that. You know well how it is. Shah: Yes, what happened? What da? You have to check, right?

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## ABOUT TOWN

## EXHIBITION

Football on show Posters, national team jerseys, equipment, football newspapers and magazines, stamps, memorabilia, photographs and lots more. Also surf the sites of the Nepal Football Fan Club, the British Council, and World Cup sites. From 26 May, British Council, Lanchaur.

## EVENTS

- Second National Drama Festival organised by Bal Chetana Samuha (with Save the Children-UK). 10 May, 2PM, Rastriya Sabha Griha.
- Phillips Saturday Bowling Tournament Each bowler rolls three games, the bowler with the highest average score wins Phillips CD players. 18 May, 12PM onwards. Rs 500, or ten percent less for entries before 13 May. Bowling Boul Evans, Kathmandu. Email: [art@phillips.com.np](mailto:art@phillips.com.np).
- Friends of the Durbar A group of volunteers with the aim of cleaning up the Bagmati River. Membership open to all. [frotd@hotmagazine@yahoocom](mailto:frotd@hotmagazine@yahoocom).
- Extended Festival of War based on episodes of the Mahabharata. Annual drama production of Studio 7. 10/11/12 May at the Naga Theatre, Hotel Vajra, duration 1hr 15 min. tea and show Rs 700, reduced student tickets available. [vajra.mos.com.np](http://vajra.mos.com.np). 271545

## MUSIC

- Club Rumba Latin band, salsa food until midnight on Thursdays. Early bird discounts between 8-9.30PM, buy one, get one free. Hotel Shangri-La. 12399
- Dinesh & Pemba Live every Friday 7PM-9PM. Himalaya Cafe, Thamel. 262526
- Beate Nine Tribute to the late George Harrison. 12 May, 6.30PM. New Orleans Cafe, Thamel. 425736
- Himalayan Feelings live every week at Dwarika's Hotel's famous Friday night sketch. 479488
- Down Memory Lane Wednesday nights with Teesta. The Rox Bar at the Hyatt Regency Kathmandu.
- Live music by Catch 22, Friday nights at the 40,000 ½ ft Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, Thamel. 414336

## DRINK

- Metre of Malt Single malt Scotch exhibition. Shot on the rocks, or 12 single malts economically packaged for Rs 999. Piano Bar, Hotel Yak & Yeti. 248999
- Bear Mug Club Talk beer, drink beer. Monday nights, Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 491234

## FOOD

- Coca Wine Coke-infused sweet and savoury culinary delights for lunch and dinner. Until 17 May, The Fun Café, Radisson Hotel. 411818
- The Tharu Kitchen Dikhi (steamed rice dumplings) with a variety of jungle sauces and hot coriander chutney. Jungle Base Camp, Bardia.
- Ice creams & Sorbets Single, double or triple scoops of ice creams and sorbets, some with alcohol. The Caffe, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu.
- The Sun Migel Brunch Brunch, live music and unlimited draft beer. Rs 600 plus tax, Saturdays, The Fun Café, Radisson Hotel. 411818
- Wood fired pizzas at the new Roadhouse Café. Completely redesigned with separate bar seating and coffee bar. The Roadhouse Café, Thamel.
- Cafe Bakes & Baguettes Pastries, puddings, oven-fresh breads, Shangi La Bakery. Home delivery available. 41999



- Krishnarpur Restaurant Six-16 courses of ceremonial Nepali cuisine in authentic setting, Dwarika's Hotel. 479483
- Weekend Brunch Rs 350 per head, special package available with bowling. Oriental and continental lunch or dinner by the pond. 1905 Boardwalk, Kathmandu. 225272
- Vegetarian Specialities and clay-oven pizzas at Stupa View Restaurant & Terrace, Boudha. 480262
- Saturday Live Buffet with unlimited draft beer and live music by the Rusty Nails. The Fun Café, Radisson Hotel. 411818
- Authentic Thai Food Every day at Yin Yang Restaurant. 425510
- Paddy Foley's Irish Pub A wide range of drinks and food. Live music on Wednesday, Thursday and Sundays 1600.

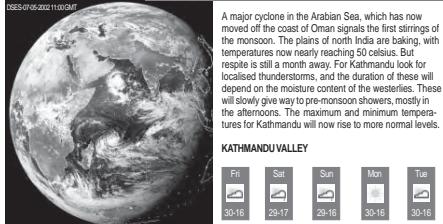
## GETAWAYS

- Khale Ghandruk getaway at the Horseshoe Resort in Mude, three hours from Kathmandu. Two days of rock climbing, walks in forests, package tours at \$30 per day, all meals and sauna included. Email [resorthorshukwink.com](mailto:resorthorshukwink.com)
- The Great Godavari Getaway Special weekend packages including room with breakfast and dinner, 25 percent discount on health club facilities. Godavari Village Resort. 560675
- Chiso Chiso Hawama Summer package with two days, one night with breakfast, dinner, transportation and activities. Rs 1,500 per person with twin-sharing. For Nepalis and expats only, Club Himalaya Nagarkot. 414432, 680083
- Secret Garden Use of new pool, overnight accommodation plus breakfast for two for \$99, Dwarika's Hotel. 479488
- Khale Ghandruk getaway at the Horseshoe Resort in Mude, three hours from Kathmandu. Two days of rock climbing, walks in forests, package tours at \$30 per day, all meals and sauna included. Email [resorthorshukwink.com](mailto:resorthorshukwink.com)
- Shivapuri Heights Cottage 30 minutes from Kathmandu, staff guides to monastery, peak and reservoir. Rs 1850 per person with dinner and breakfast, Rs 925 per child 5-14 years, children under five free. [info@escapenepal.com](mailto:info@escapenepal.com)

For inclusion in the listing send information to [editors@nepalitimes.com](mailto:editors@nepalitimes.com)

## NEPALI WEATHER

DATES: 01/05/2002 11/05/02



by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

A major cyclone in the sea, which has now moved off the coast of Oman signals the first stirrings of the monsoon. The parts of India are baking, with temperatures now nearly reaching 50 Celsius. But respite is still a month away. For Kathmandu look for localised thunderstorms, as the duration of these will depend on the moisture content of the westerlies. These will slowly give way to pre-monsoon showers, mostly in the afternoons. The maximum and minimum temperatures for Kathmandu will now rise to more normal levels.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
30-16	29-17	29-16	30-15	30-16

102.4 Radio Sagarmatha



## Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

# Pleasure centres



**A**t this precise moment, you wouldn't want to be in the shoes of this robotic rat with electrodes sticking out of its brain which went through field trials recently to successfully negotiate a maze while being steered by a remote control joystick. As far as we know this is the first time in recent history that a sentient being has been employed as an all-terrain vehicle.

Scientists at New York's Downstate Medical Centre in Brooklyn, according to an article in this week's issue of the journal *Nature*, have trained lab rats to make port or starboard turns by tickling their port or starboard whiskers respectively, and then rewarding them if they obey (and I quote) "with a pulse of euphoria in their pleasure centre."

Nature magazine does not divulge which body part of the said mice these pleasure centres are located in, or whether the scientists monitoring the volunteer rodents also treated themselves to pulses of euphoria in their pleasure centres. But this is how it works: strapped on the rat is a tiny knapsack with an antenna for receiving radio signals in the very high frequency range and a small microprocessor that sends

electrical pulses to a brain that gives the rat the illusion that it is having a good time when in actual fact it is getting an acupuncture of its cerebellum.

Asked about the ethics of all this poking around, the Brooklyn scientist denied that it was an infringement on the basic rights of rats, and claimed that during the experiments the rats got written guarantees to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Here in Nepal, our main goal should be to find the appropriate applications for these rapid strides in science and technology. By this, I mean we should see if we can't install some of these sophisticated pieces of equipment on our street dogs and turn them into traffic cops. Of course, the Hounds of Handigao will need some training, and we will need to do something about canine Robo Cops being temporarily distracted by the passage through the Singha Durbar intersection of the Municipality's garbage truck.

However, with practice, we are confident that our robotic mongrels will be alert enough to know where southbound traffic is backed up from the statue of King Prithvi Narayan Shah the Great all the way across town to the statue of Queen Poper Narayan Gopal. Then, if it would take is a few electric shocks signalled to the dog's right whisker to move his motor receptors on the right leg. Hey, Ops sorry, Wrong electrode. Let's try this blue wire here on his left whisker. Dear, why is he sitting on my butt and offering me his left paw?

All right, there are still some teething problems with turning our street dogs into Robo Cops, but as science advances we will lick this problem and can move on to the more urgent task of installing these devices on to the skulls of humans who hold high office. Politicians equipped with electrodes attached to the greed centres of their brains have, in recent field trials, successfully rebuffed offers for "breakfast money" from tycoons.

When the bribe offer is made, scientists manning a joystick from a relatively safe distance of 100 yards, send a signal by remote control to the public servant's pleasure centre and transmit him a quick multiple orgasm. Nine out of ten times that this experiment has been tried out in the lab, the official has turned down a hefty bribe. So there we have it, the answer to the problem of graft: replace greed with lust. ♦

### NEPALI SOCIETY

## Sangeeta's first love



**A** lot of people thought I was nuts," laughs Sangeeta Thapa, remembering the early days of the Siddharth Art Gallery. "They couldn't understand why a 25-year-old mass communications and anthropology graduate just back from America was ready to give up life to art." So what was her "Art in my first love," she says simply.

Seven years ago, when Sangeeta saw the work of artist Shashikala Tiwari at the Sitabhava Gallery in Naxal and the October Art Gallery in the Vajra Hotel, she fell in love with it immediately. The two-year-old, then a student of art, got married later in 1995, the friendship turned into a partnership when they opened the Siddharth Art Gallery on Kanipath.

"My father is my inspiration. Wherever he went, he always took me to exhibitions, cultural events, the theatre," explains Sangeeta speaking of daddy, the banker Hemanta Kumar Rayamajhi. Since the age of five, she knows she was born into art. At eight, she had already sold her first painting, and at nineteen, she produced her first major work. But then in art school Sangeeta says she realised that she didn't want to paint all her life. "There was so much going on in the world, outside that I didn't want to be isolated from it."

And so Sangeeta decided that there had to be a way to combine her passion for the

creative media with her sense of social consciousness. The gallery has been a perfect medium, as has Infinity International, an event-management firm that Sangeeta is a partner in. She has used her networks in both spheres to help raise funds for earthquake relief, the Maternal and Child Health Centre, the Maternity hospital, bringing the Pakistani band Junoon to the capital in March 2001, and organise "protests" like the one on the Bamyan Buddha last year. "Artists can catalyse social change," she says with conviction.

The gallery moved to Baber Mahal Revisted, and has hosted over 100 shows. Even now there are a couple of regular future on the arts calendar of a town that doesn't have too many cultural outlets. Sangeeta strives to bring more and better shows from all around the world to Kathmandu, and sometimes even ventures out like she did last month with an exhibition in Janakpur. "I am encouraging local artists. The current exhibition, entitled Made in Janakpur: A Mithile Yastra is a collaboration between the gallery and the Janakpur Municipality, and is a benefit exhibition for the Janakpur Women's Development Centre.

Her next project is called Art for Peace, and she says: "Even if you can't change politics, you can contribute as a citizen, always remembering that you are Nepali, first." ♦

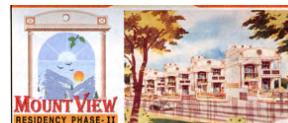
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