



#### Three men and a tree

Since May, the three members of the Election Commission have been poring over files trying to decide which faction of the Nepali Congress gets the tree symbol and the party flag. Multi-partisan pressure is building on the EC to get on with it. On Wednesday, a meeting of ten opposition parties told the commission that they were tired of waiting. There are hints of disagreement between the three commissioners with the chief Achuyt Narayan Rajbhandari said to be tilting towards the Deuba faction and commissioner Ramesh Jung Thapa favouring Koirala. The wildcard commissioner is Biswaman Shrestha, whose allegiances are said to lie with the RPP.



The argument that the tree may actually be a liability for candidates doesn't seem to bother rival kangresis who are using psy-war tactics to put pressure on the commissioners. There have been "leaks" to the press, and threats of a noll boycott. Elections are less than three months away, and the EC needs to select 205 election officers, decide on how to phase the elections, and agree on voting booths and polling officials. The key factor in all this, of course, is security Officials told us a decision is expected by the "end of next wee





lleekly Internet Poll # 49. To vote go to: www.nepalit Q. Has the CIAA done enough, or should it go after the MOHAN MAINALI in SAMAGAUN p here in the remote north of Gorkha district at the base of Mt Manaslu, ten days walk from the nearest road, we should be far away from the Manist insurgency. The silence and stunendous sceners momentarily lulls us with its tranquility.

is no laughter of children greeting strangers walking into town, no curious villagers chit-Chinese border

Samagaun and the villages of Shyo and Lho are located high in the Manaslu region, directly north of the areas of Gorkha district which have been Maoist strongholds. There is one way in and one way out, and the guerrillas have their bases and training camps in the thick coniferous forests on either side of the river. There used to be two police stations at Jagat and Namrung, but they were blown up by Maoists in late May.

In a monastery courtyard in Shyo, past..." Just then his younger brother brothers' identity )

by Bhakti Lamichhane, known as Comrade Sameer, had come up to find out who had flown in on the helicopter. The villagers apparently told the Maoists that it was a group of monks who had come from Kathmandu to paint the monastery.

local lodge owner told us the last time the Maoists came was in June. "I drank an entire bottle of Chinese liquor to fortify myself," he said. They had come to ask him to feed some of their comrades. "Of course I fed them, what can you do when they have guns?

But the silence of these villages is the

silence of fear. You suddenly realise that there chatting on the trails. Fear stalks the valley of the Budi Gandaki, even this high up near the

Driven up the valley by the action of the security forces, armed Maoist guerrillas roam the village trails and train in the jungles. The nearest army base is eight days walk away at Arughat, and the Maoists here don't even bother to hide.

Gyalmo had just started telling us: "People do not treat strangers as they used to in the Pema shouted from the house, "Get inside quick, inside. Maobadis are coming." (Both names have been changed to protect the Later, we found out that a rebel squad led

At Samdo, 3,900 m above sea level, the



Things get more tense as you move south along the swollen Budi Gandaki. The deep gorges and cliffs serve as perfect hideouts, and the security forces avoid them for fear of ambush. "We don't have an idea of where they may be but can sense them all around us," a shopkeeper in Philim told us. "They come when they want, ask us for food and supplies and then leave after painting slogans on our houses." Most villagers are afraid the army will come up and mistake them for Maoist sympathisers because of the slogans.

"One of them told me, Amadon't ever erase this slogan," a 60-year-old grandmother told us in Jagat. "Otherwise you will be killed." Now she fears she will be killed if she does, and killed if she doesn't. The red scrawl on her wall reads: "Withdraw the anti-terrorist

law, and end the military offensive." The slogans are everywhere on the road to Arughat: on destroyed public buildings, the sides of homes, on cliffsides, on bridges.

The villagers are so terrified of forced recruitment by the Maoists or retaliation by the security forces, that many young men have fled the region. There are ver few teachers, or anyone who can read and "If you don't agree with them, you get

killed. So the safe option is to get out," admitted one village elder.

Here in the north, villagers suspect any lowland "Rongba" of being a Maoist and keep away from them. "I spent the whole night in the jungle with my wife when I heard that the Maoists had come to our village," a local in Syala told us.

Soldiers go out on patrol from the Royal Nepal Army camp at Arughat, and venture as far out as Lapu, one day north. The regions beyond are already rife with rumours about what the soldiers do. "Some teachers at Lapu were beaten up, and so was a hotelier who later fled to India." a teacher told us. For their part, the Maoists killed a hotel owner in nala on suspicion of being an informant.

Northern Gorkha is a food deficit area but no food has gone up for the past three months. The villagers have the current potato crop to last them till new supplies are rought down from Tibet. The lawlessness has also increased timber poaching, and hundreds of yaks carry Nepali logs being smuggled into China.

# CIAA to target big fish BINOD BHATTARAI

Clark Chief Suyanath Upadhyaya has begun to come under a new kind of "pressure". This time, his phones at tome and work are reging of the book, not from people seed to the property of the support of the property of the p lawyers are now preparing formal charge sheets against the 22 officials, five of whom are still at large.

How about criticism that the CIAA is not going after the big fish, and has let the

sitting idle," Upadhyay said. "No one is big or small for us. If the crime is serious enough, and we have proper evidence, nothing will stop us from The 55-year-old former Secretary who has a law

degree says that the CIAA could do with more resources and manpower, but it is not waiting for that to go after crooks. "It is the public support that has given us more confidence," he said.

The CIAA had the 22 mainly tax and customs officials under surveillance even before the king signed the anti-corruption act into law three weeks ago. And the moment the ordinance came into force the CIAA swooped down on the homes of the official to make the arrests and gather further evide



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epali Times asked in bold headline (#108) "When will Nepal

officially request the Austrian

stolen Buddha?" This rhetori

cal question, like the prover-

more painful subtext

bial tip of the iceberg, has a far

The obvious task is a

proper criminal investigation-

which, like charity, begins at

cultural artefact to be stolen

from Nepal nor will it be the

conditions" prevail, as the left

The element of an "inside

job" is visible enough to force

Nepal's family and official

custodians into asking where

have all our values gone? Has

the market so overwhelmed

a bank account is sacred

our ethics that nothing except

anymore? How did such a huge

metallic object get past the

Department of Archaeology

seals appear in all the right

places? (Of course, of course

we know how: what is asked

catharsis is the modus operand

of who, when, how much and

how high up the rot chain.)

for the sake of a national

customs and how did the

last, if the same "objective

lingo has it.

home. This is not the first

government to return the

oold headline (#108):

# STATE OF THE STATE **Bonus miles for Deuba**

If a leader on the verge of boarding a plane is unaware of his destination, he deserves our sympathy, not criticism

the parliament, premier Deuba's politics

has begun to decompose. The resulting

reached the Paris offices of Reporters Sans

Frontiers, which has officially declared him

"press predator" and listed him with the

s of the Abu Sayyaf and Kim Jong II.

Even though he called it off mid-trip

Deuba's Johannesburg junket was com-

pletely appropriate. His presence wasn't

here in Kathmandu, and no one (except

eally required in the corridors of power

perhaps the security detail in Baluwatar) has

nave atrophied so much that his leadership

**BLOODY WELL RIGHT** t is when your country starts making it regularly to the News Bar on CNN that you know it has hit the big time. In the past year, Nepal has been seen scrolling across the bottom of the screen with breaking news of some disaster or another. Whether it is manmade or natural, none of the news is good news.

You don't make it to the News Bar with a story on how tourists are beginning to return to Nepal this season. No, it has to be a plane crash. You don't make it to the news with the opening of a new hospital. It has to be on the latest village to be wined

That is the way the business is: news is whatever is negative, out of the ordinary, bizarre, or celebrity-driven, Tabloid television's appetite for news is voracious. But the news menu is shrinking as producers try to cut costs by repeating the same news on the hour every hour. Slahs of news, therefore, come off the assembly lines of the world's Perpetual News Machines, refined, sugar-coated, and packaged for a lowest global denominator in audience surveys.

Live coverage of routine trivia distorts reality by exaggerating the importance of an event. It bends the truth by selecting the negative. The mere listing of facts thus does not necessarily bring us closer to the truth. In fact, facts can distort reality. Facts, if they are selective or

incomplete can lie But it is really not fair to blame the international press when we are doing such a poor job right here. The media has a role in preventing conflict, but rarely do we see them fulfilling it. Mostly, the reporting begins only after the guns start blazing, by which time the momentum of war muzzles media. And we have seen time and again that even the saddest stories of human anguish and suffering of the innocent are not enough to stop conflict once it begins

Body-bag journalism, a daily death count that reads like a cricket scoresheet, dehumanise the misery. It numbs the public into accepting violence as a way of life. It spreads bad blood and a thirst for revenge. Violence may be prolonged even by the loaded words that we choose to use: "terrorists" when it is them, "martyrs" when it is us. We legitimise slaughter by accepting propaganda, by selective coverage, by sterile, clinical listing of numbers, by sensationalism and negativity, by the absence of context.

And when we in the insular world of the media are confronted with our own deficiencies, we blame the censors. Or we hide behind journalism's traditional rules of sterile objectivity and neutrality to make ourselves a safe cocoon. What we need is a journalism of outrage; outrage at the violence, outrage at the injustice that perpetrates it, a journalism that builds public outrage

Let us explore the causes of escalation, and the impact of our own roles. Are we doing enough to heal society's wounds, or are we rubbing salt in them? Why do we repeatedly show the bodies of the dead on television screens strewn about like water

buffaloes at the Kot? How does that help restore peace? We have a choice: media can keep on being a part of the problem. Or we can start becoming a part of the solution.

peaking at an airport ambush before leaving for Brussels last week, prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba appeared to be confused about where exactly it was he was going. Just amassing

miles, he might have said. That would have been okay, but he didn't seem to have any idea whether the ergency would be re-imposed or not, and he had nothing much to say about efforts to make elections free and fair either. But he did use the opportunity to berate the media verything he did.

To be fair Doubs has reason to be

neeved at the media. If noticed his absence. In fact, the country someone on the verge of seems to run pretty well without him. boarding an aircraft is The feeling that the country can be ware of his destinabetter governed by non-elected constitution, he deserves our tional bodies and non-political security ympathy, not forces is gaining ground in Kathmandu. And if the capital's chatterati had its way, it the dissolution of the would willingly hand over the reins of Lower House of power to itself

In this milieu, all politicians are considered expendable. And premier Deuba even more so, because all of Nepali society—barring the government and the faction behind him in his own political party—is convinced that he has little or no say over decisions that really matter. Nobody believes that Deuba can prevent the re-imposition of state of emergency in the country if the security forces insist on it

to remain engaged with the insurgents. Perhaps Deuba knows that if another oossibility of a negotiated settlement with the Maoists arose, he would have no role in it. Completely irrelevant on the home front, it's quite natural for Deuba to venture werseas, and get entangled in domestic

Belgian politics for a change. Deuba has another powerful excuse to spend scarce greenbacks on an exotic tour. Since Nepal is the chair of SAARC at present, and he could've claimed to represent more than one-sixth of humanity at the first ever United Nations' World Summit on Sustainable Development. That is, if he ever got anywhere near Johannesburg.

Intelligently used, it could be an

effective tool to magnify Nepal's visibility at a meet of more than 100 world leaders. Such summit hopping is largely symbolic, so odours have now circled the globe and even he needn't have worried about the substance of what he said

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The third reason Deuba needed to be in Johannesburg was so he could meet Colin Powell and Tony Blair to ask them to put in a word so the hardware deliveries for the military are expedited.

And, oh yes, last but not least, the prime minister could reaffirm Nepal's mmitment for sustainable human development, even if it cost Rs 15 million of much-needed cash to send our delegation there.

Unlike George Bush, Deuba had no credible reason to boycott Johannesburg. And he needn't worry too much if his actions back home bear no resemblance to the speech he would have given from the podium. There is no dearth of hypocrites at any international meet

There is another advantage of this pleasure trip for an ex-believer in social democracy. Far away from the constant bickering of shifty-eyed cabinet colleagues, the junket would have given Deuba a rare opportunity to reflect over the promises that e had made to himself years ago as one of the loval acolytes of late BP Koirala.

No doubt, the expression of "sustainable development" is a fancy edifice, but it rests on the same old three pillars of inter and intra-generational social equitydemocracy, fraternity and liberty,

Democracy incorporates the participa-tion principle, fraternity takes care of both the preventive and solidarity principles, and liberty ensures that the entire process remains human The Washington Consen sus has given liberalism a bad name, but fundamentally, to be liberal is to be tolerant of all kinds of diversity on the planet that is our collective home.

Even if Deuba returns to Kathmandu with just a recollection of things he believed in till a decade ago, the trip may have been worth it. Even if he never made it to Jo'burg.

Artefacts like the stolen Dipankar and sites like Lumbini or Kushinagar belong primarily to the faithful, not the state.

Stolen sanctity and sponsored sacrilege



bank of the Mayadevi pond, a Korean, or maybe Japanese, nun was desperately trying to meditate but could not: too many people, obviously picnick ers, were ogling at her as they walked by with transistors blaring Bollywood obscenities.

When this story broke, one would have expected the Across the fence, a raucous vernacular papers and the cricket match was on, replete electronic talkies to flare up with loudspeaker commentary with livid prose. Their deafenand more Bollywood hiping silence is the first symptom grinders. This trip to Lumbini of the deeper pain I am must have been the pilgrimage of a lifetime for the nun, but the To elucidate that buried anguish on her face spoke of

tivity hit one in the face

everywhere.

agony, let me first recount two deep disappointment. nasty experiences, first in Across the border at Lumbini, the birthplace of the Kushinagar in eastern Uttar Prince of Peace, and the Pradesh, ruled now and for a second in Kushinagar, across period then by acolytes of the the border to his place of neo-Buddhist father of India's mahanirvana. The sacrilege l constitution Ambedkar, things witnessed still sears the were not much better. It was run by the archaeological survey of the Indian government, which

The desolation of Lumbini's dug-up construction site was understandable, but what was not was the touristy bazaar atmosphere, trinket peddlers and all, that was clearly encouraged by official sponsorship. Seated on the

धर्मकी प्रतीक हो।

CLEANLINESS OF THE SACRED PLACE

ITSELF IS A SYMBOL OF DHARMA.

by sunset till sunrise, Why? Most Buddhists I know like to meditate at these sandhya times and at the dead of night, when there is peace and quiet. With such an order, they were forbidden to do so.

Even more outrageous, at the statue of the dying Buddha reclining on his right side another pompous "by order" notice forbade the making of offerings, ostensibly because the Buddha's statue was an ancient archaeological artefact whose value would be diminished when "polluted" by flowers vermilion

powder and sandalwood paste. Furtively ignoring this forbidding sign, a group of Sri Lankan pilgrims were huddled in a corner chanting a prayer. One could see that half their mind was overwhelmed with spiritual emotions, while the other half was on the lookout for official is fine, but the religious insensi reprimand. Honest, devotees were being made to feel as if they were criminals.

It started at the gate where a As if to provide a finale to sign "by order" of the surveyor this surreal scene, a khadi-clad general announced that the site Indian politician walked in with would be closed, off limits to all automatic gun-toting comman-dos in tow. Mercifully, he was only a curious tourist but without a shred of reverence in his face or behaviour. The irony was supreme and, as he walked out of the sanctum, Indian bhikkhus began to heckle him. तीर्थ-स्थलकाई सफा रास्तु ने Obviously, the management of

> the authorities Artefacts like the stolen Dinankara and sites like Lumbini or Kushinagar belong primarily to the faithful, not the state. Only with proper sanctity will the faithful flock to these place and bring with them, as their free gift, the benefits of religious

the site was a matter of dispute

between the local Buddhists and

tourism. For Lumbini, if there is tourism, it should only be a secondary by-product. It canno be the main motive promoted by the state at the expense of

For icons, idols and masks that are part of a living culture, it is a crime to tear them out of their living context and place them in museums, or worse the guest rooms of the wealthy. There they become sad reminders of cultural cannibalism perpetrated by the morally destitute. The Austrian curator who intercented the mask must be thanked for his sensitivity, but what of the Nepali state?

Its insensitivity is not only towards minority religions: the "Hindu" kingdom is unable to assure due sanctity even to Hindu idols or the ghats of holy rivers. This degeneration is perhaps the by-product of state sponsorship of religion. When ethical values reign supreme, religions are the essence of the much-misused phrase "civil society". When one sect receives political patronage as "state religion", that religion loses its civic function, degener ates into pompous form without ethical substance, and (in the case of Nepal's official Hinduism) discourages reforms.

The Buddhist *bhikkhus* of Kushinagar can at least heckle their politicians: Nepali ones, Hindu or Buddhist, would not dare. Perhaps the time has come to argue for a secular Nepali state to regain the civic role for Hinduism and save it from itself through reforms. Only then would active citizens feel confident to assert their ethics, prevent sacrilege and rescue the country's many Dipankaras from the avarice of traffickers.

#### LETTERS

#### BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA

Thanks to CK Lal and Nepali Times ("Disadvantaged abroad", #108) for drawing attention to the rampant divisions in Nepali society that are pushing migrants to seek better opportunities abroad. We must under-stand these "push factors" that force young men and women away, where they often fall prey to smugglers and traffickers. Discrimination is a true curse for everyone .. but especially the innocent Nepalis rotting inside prisons in Thailand, Qatar, Saudi Arabia or Pakistan. It is high time the Nepal government took some effective action to bring its citizens home



 It is good to have CK Lal back. He writes frankly, and exposes the hypocrisy surrounding the plight of wntrodden Nepalis who are forced to seek jobs abroad to families. There has been no development that has not gone beyond the madhead settlements Our overseas workers are the only true breadwinners of Nenal It is not uncommon for some of them to return in coffins. Yet, they are robbed, exploited and despised by protecting them. Our diplomatic ervices in Asia must stop being shopping guides to visiting dignitaries and devote themselve:

to the assistance of fellow Negalis in distress. It is not a shame to seek any honest work. But it is immoral to be callous about the plight of fellow

 On getting your issue #108. I kept going back and forth between the article on page one ("In Vienna museum, Nepalis worship stolen Buddha") and CK Lal's State of the State column on the next page "Disadvantaged abroad") and couldn't help reflecting on the hopeless ness and injustices that Nepalis have to suffer from their government. How can a state that doesn't care about its own citizens and leaves them to fend for themselves so that they are forced to migrate abroad to be exploited (and doesn't help them when they get into trouble) be of any se in bringing back a stolen idol?

#### K Maharian, by email

CK Lal has done a great service by writing such a poignant and heart wrenching piece on the way we treat our migrant workers. He is right, we first drive them away, we are rude to them at the airport, and we cheat and extort the very people who are keeping the economy affoat. However by coining the acronym HANSA (Hindu, Aryan, Nepali Speaking Administration) Mr Lal is taking the easy way out to blame someone one. He should know better than anyone else that discrimination and exploitation within Nepal in this day and age is not restricted to any community, caste or ethnic group.

#### Kamal Acharva, Kathmandu

 "Disadvantaged abroad" by CK Lal was mind-blowing. When our economy is in the hands of crooks, it is those Nepalis working in alien lands who get victimised every step of the way. As Mr Lal says, just look a the harrassment of workers at the immigration line at Kathmandu airport. Even in the aeroplane the flight attendants treat them badly. Few days back I was in the Royal Nepal flight from Kathmandu to Bangkok (RA 407). I was with many fellow-Nepali dajubhais who were heading to Malaysia. The stewardess repeatedly ignored our requests for water and reading material. I have decided never to fly again in our so-called flag carrier. Mr Lal is absolutely right: "You may be an elite back home, but the outside world judges you by the economic state of your country." But what about Nepalis who mis-treat fellow Nepalis?

Giri Rai Dahal, Chosun University, Korea

#### POWER HUNGRY

t baffles many of us why we have failed to sign even a single treaty with India to sell power ("Trading Power", #108)? Isn't India a power hungry country? For example, even when it adds about 5,000 MW of capacity every year (i.e. equivalent to thirty five Kall Gandaki size power plants), its generation has always been below peak demand.

One reason, perhaps, may be that for India buying a few hundred megawatts from Nepal merely to supplement its electricity need, is not an issue worth considering. Let's not forget India too has huge potential to generate power from its own hydro resources, the estimated potential of which is about 86,000 MW (same as Nepal's). It is currently developing a number of hydro plants of a total capacity of 15,000 MW. Besides hydropower, India can always rely on its vast coal resources to generate cheap power. The country is the third largest coal producer in the world. Moreover, the country also has options to import gas either from Iran or from newly discovered gas fields in Bangladesh. Hence, it is not surpris-ing if India looks for a deal which has benefits of having more than

#### Sameer Shrestha, by email

 The answer to the question Binod Bhattarai poses in his article about hydronower trading between Nepal and India ("Northern India is starved." of energy. Nepal now has surplus supply. And yet the two can't agree. Why not?") is self-evident. India has a power deficit running into thousands of megawatts in the peak demand season. Nepal's excess this monsoon is only 150 megawatts. And all we have done is talk about our great hydropower wealth, while the Indians want the power at Bhutan's prices Intil both countries get out of their dog-in-the-manger attitude, and realise that there has to be a mutually beneficial and fair deal, the citizens of both countries will suffer.

# Beyond Article 127

A no-poll situation will benefit those who have never had much affection for the present constitution and multiparty democracy

under Article 127 should be ones that would reestablish the elected institutions (House of Representatives and the local bodies) and make them

Until elected representatives can be re-elected the organisations formed through elections should be allowed to function normally. Reaching a constitutional stalemate because we cannot elect representatives in November is not a desirable situation. Such a problem was anticipated, hence Article 127. Any order to remove constitutional obstacles that may result from a no-poll situation should thus seek to achieve the following object

- The monarchy, functioning as guardian and custodian of the constitution needs to seek a mature role within the framework of a constitutional
- . Outline a strategy to end the instability, corruption and insecurity that we have been living through, and
- Enable the people to exercise their sovereignty through elected representatives (parliament and local bodies) by reinstating them and making them These goals can be achieved by reinstating the

infrastructure needed for economic development. If parliament is not reinstated, then any order issued under Article 127 would be incomplete because such an order has to compulsorily be tabled in parliament. Because Article 44 defines "parliament" as being composed of His Majesty, the House of

(Bharat Upreti is an advocate, and senior partner in the Pioneer Law Associates.)

he justices of the Supreme Court did not find fault with Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuha's decision to dissolve parliament and local But the court's legitimacy comes from the neonle That is why the legal debate about whether the prime

minister used his authority with malicious intention may have ended with the court verdict, but it is just beginning at the people's level. Theoretically, the November elections will test the prime minister's decision. But because we are still under a state of emergency and the Maoist problem

remains unresolved, many doubt if the elections will in fact take place and if it does whether they will be free And people are genuinely concerned about what would happen if the elections are disrupted by the Maoists, and who would benefit from such a situation.

Which force would try to fish in the muddy waters? It is clear that a no-noll situation in November will benefit those who have never had much affection for the present constitution and multiparty democracy. That explains the speculation in various newspapers including this one, (see editorial "Article 127", #107) regarding Article 127. Because a democracy is a system that allows the discussion of alternatives in situations where one or many constitutional provisions cease to function, it is also not unnatural for us here to discuss the possible ways to ensure that the interests of the people are best served.

tion of the constitution in the past 12 years, so there has been no reason for the king to invoke Article 127. But the constitution's framers must have foreseen the possibility of something like Article 127 being needed. Also what type of "constitutional obstacles" the Article can be used to remove would depend on the nature of the crisis that may cause its

That is because constitutional crises can be of several types: those inherent to the statute itself, or those caused by other factors leading to a stalemate. A possible constitutional crisis is a situation where, say the prime minister resigns in a situation where we don't have a parliament, or the position is vacated

However, things are a little different if it is a constitutional crisis caused by the inability of the state to hold elections. This is a constitutional crisis, but not necessarily a constitutional yold or a "constitution-less" situation. The Article itself exists within the framework of the constitution—it is not a provision outside it. In other words, it's not that all the other articles of the constitution are on one side and 127 stands alone on the other. Article 127 is an

integral part of the constitution. The Constitution rests on the sovereignty of the people, and that is its basic foundation. The people exercise their sovereign rights through elected representatives. That is why the orders exercised

dissolved House of Representatives, extending the term of the defunct local bodies, and forming a small and efficient council of ministers of parties in the House that want a representation in government

The mandate of such a government should be to intensify the campaign against corruption, work to resolve the Maoist insurgency, formulate and implement necessary action plans to support localself governance, ensure free and fair elections to parliament and formulate laws that would create the

> Representatives and the National Assembly we cannot imagine a parliament without the House of Representatives. In effect, any order under 127 in a no-noll scenario would have to include the reinstatement of the House of Representatives simply because it is a part of what we have accepted as

Even though more Twin Otter aircraft have been lost in accide in Nepal in the past 15 years than any other aircraft type, aviation experts say the Canadian-built plane is still the most suitable

Away from the glare of national politics, a quiet rural revolution in microfinance is on in the tarai.

ANI RUDRA SILWAL

t is 2PM on a recent Sunday. and the women of Dumkibas in Nawalparasi district know that it is the time for the weekly meeting of their village bank.

Thirty women have gathered in this dusty highway town for the meeting of the Bhrikuti Village Bank. After president Kiran Tiwari formally opens the meeting, she begins calling each member by name. They come forward one by one and hand over their weekly savings to the treasurer.

Once everyone submits their avings, plus payments of installment on previous loans, the president declares that Rs 7,500 was collected that week. She asks who in the group would like to borrow money for the next four months. Two women decide to borrow: one to pay fees for her children, and another to invest in a tea-shop she runs nearby.

Faraway from the corruption and default scandals in the big banks in Kathmandu, and out of the glare of the national media, there is a quiet rural revolution going on in the tarai. More than 1,500 small village banks like the one in Dumkibas have been bringing new hope to farmers, giving women income, empower-ing them and raising the nutritional standards of children.

Nepal's revolution in microfinance-small-scale semi formal savings and credit activi-HERE AND THERE

ties in rural areas-had begun simultaneously with the more famous experiments in Bangladesh in 1981 with Grameen Bank. Here, we called it the Small Farmer's Development Program (SFDP) and twenty years later, every conceivable model of microfinance has been tried in Nepal. The village banking idea is the latest, and what is unique is that the cooperative savings schemes are owned and run completely by local women.

One of these initiatives is the

three-year Women's Empowerment Program, the group PACT Nepal has helped establish and because I have my own savings. train village banks to keep their own records. Each bank consists of 25-35 women who elect a president, treasurer, secretary and a controller from amongst themselves. They decide how frequently they are going to save, which is usually weekly or monthly and how much they are going to save per period, which is usually between from Rs 10-25

They lend only to women within the group for about threesix months at 24 percent interest per year, and keep their own records of saving and lending without help from outside

NO DEFAULTERS

Europeans. It's not that teenaged children of immigrants are rushing into

the arms of the nearest white person, or actively looking to marry outside

their ethnic group. It's that America's economy and society throw people

into a different sort of promiscuity, a whirl of work-related opportunity,

To ensure that members save and repay on time, the cooperatives have strict rules which the members themselves enforce vigorously. This gives them an

accomplishment. Pointing at a heap of corn drying in the sun, Laxmi Chaudhari of Chitwan says: "Although this corn belongs to my family, I don't really feel that it is my own But I feel that the cow that I bought with the loan from the village bank is really my own." Laxmi sells the milk to save in her village bank and uses the rest of the money for purposes that she sees fit. Her end, Subhadra Chaudhari, says she has one less anxiety: "When I get old. I won't have to worry even if my husband leaves me

Because they borrow from themselves, the interest on loans stays within the group, More importantly, it releases the village women from having to depend on local loan sharks who charge up to 60 percent interest. There are also indirect benefits to women for whom financial independence appears to result in social

When an 11-year-old girl was raped in Chitwan a few years ago by two men (one of them a relative) local women from the Mahila Utthan Village Bank caught the two men, tied them up and hired two tractors to report them to police. In Dumkibas, women from the Bhrikuti village bank are working with another nearby women's bank to improve the dirt road that passes through their village because heavy trucks have ruined it.

Still, many women say that



the decisions on loans and spending are still made by the men in the family, "After we set up the bank, women themselves Bidhya Timilsina of Chitwan. "But most of the time, the loan is used in consultation with the male members of the family. Even when that happens, it is women who are responsible for repaying the loans

The other problem has been that most microfinance schemes have not used loans to set up selfsustaining businesses, but to allow the family to tide over an immediate need like a marriage, send a relative abroad to work pay medical or school bills. These activities are not necessarily nonproductive and investing in education, or health can vield long-term benefits. However, it does put a burden on women who have to repay the loans.

Opening up a micro-enterprise in rural areas by women on their own requires a lot of selfconfidence and a change in attitude that cannot be brought about in a few years. Where rural planners are optimistic is that the message of success will spread.

Most village banks are still less than five years old, and most have maintained practically zero default rates, and delinquency is also very low. These results are stupendous when compared with repayment rates at large govern ment-owned banks like Nepal Bank or Agricultural Development Bank which have huge amounts of bad loans.

The reason is the social networks that bind the women in a cooperative. Since everyone in the group knows each other, they use peer-pressure to make sure that borrowers repay their loans, on time. "Women are afraid that they will lose their ijjat in front of everyone in the group," says Nirmala Chaudhary of Sauraha in Chitwan. "No matter what, if we have to do so by borrowing from a different source."

One rule that banks enforce is that at the end of the loan cle (which is usually between three and six months) everyone must repay the loans from the group. The banks have realised that doing so in reality is extremely difficult so they allow women to repay from a different source and borrow the same amount immediately. Doing so keeps the records clear of delinguencies and makes borrowers happy.

Alternative sources of loans for women have been friends. relatives, other groups that women save in, or other microcredit programs like the

# The Mestizo Mall

In the not-so-distant future, we'll all be mixed.



debate and creativity that makes ethnicity subservient to intelligence and vocational skills. Then people who work together get married. It's that simple Kaplan speculates in An Empire Wilderness that as the generations pass, America will become a nation populated by a vast successful swathe of mixed race people with slightly brown skin and slightly Asiatic features, whatever those may be. He coins the term "mestizo-Polynesian", an awkward construct to be sure but as I drained the last dregs of my fancy coffee in that Toronto mall, I could see what he meant. The older couples that strolled between the shops were uniformly similar people Italians with Italians, Jamaicans with Jamaicans, Singhs and Kaurs But then came the younger folk and a rainbow coalition of changing demography in action.

For fun, I started a mental game, saying to myself "Okay, now how nave any offspring yet, but I sense mestizo-Polynesians (think of them as and Canadian) melange culture mixes well with human sexuality to sweep

That's one reason why places like Nepal and India have, in my view and Kaplan's, more potential than citizens often realise. The mixing and creating a microcosm of the vibrant MP culture of the New World. No, ava is pretty good too.

ΝΔΤΙΩΝ



Grameen, Nirdhan, or other government-sponsored lending programs. In the long run this nechanism of instant repaymen and re-borrowing could put the banks in ieonardy

The health of VBs relies heavily on how well they manage to stick to the rules. Penalties for delayed savings or repayment is an example. Although most groups have rules to charge fines in such cases, older groups seem less strict

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about them than newer ones. In the long run, relaxation of rules could raise the default rate, or even cause a bank run with members withdrawing their savings. Most hanks have total saving

of less than Rs 100,000, and the fund is increasing by up to 50% per year. At this rate, they could easily reach Rs 1,000,000 within the next five years. And as the volume of deposits increase, so will the size and complexity of records. Record

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keeping will be a problem for banks which have few educated women. And as the fund increases, the women will need to look for new places and ideas to invest in

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Kathmandu. Job description and application forms are available from Oxfam GB Nepal

office from 3 - 5 P.M. of working days. Candidates should apply using the Oxfam applica-

tion form and attaching two references (one of which must be your current or most recent

employer). Only shortlist candidates will be contacted for interview. Telephone and

Closing date for applications is September 19, 2002.

Interviews will be held in September 27, 2002.

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Experience in working in complex, overloaded and insecure environments.

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Economists have long told us the importance of savings in economic development. And the miracle in the tarai is that subsistence farmers have found that they can save. "In the beginning our group began to save Rs 2 per week," says Kamala

Adhikari of Arungkhola, Nawalparasi. "I would wonder how I would be able to save that amount. But I have become careful about where I spend. Now we are saving Rs 25 per week and I am still managing fine." ♦

(Ani Rudra Silwal is working on a thesis on village banking at Swarthmore College in the United States.)

# members and 15 tourists on board.

equipment for Nepal.

The latest Twin Otter accident was the Shangri-la Air DHC-6 which crashed into a mountain just before landing in Pokhara during heavy monsoon showers last week killing three crew

The Twin Otter was introduced to Negal in 1970 as part of a Canadian aid project, and is the mainstay of the domestic fleet of Royal Nepal Airlines. The state-owned airline has six of the twinengine short-take-off-and-landing (STOL) planes out of an original of twelve. Other private airlines also fly Twin Otters, and find the aircraft to be versatile on the short, sloping dirt airstrips in the mountains of Nepal.

"It is still the best aircraft to fly in Nepal," says George Nowak, of Acres International, a Toronto company which got a Canadian government conract to refurbish Royal Nepal's ageing Twin Otters last year. "We brought 20 years of life back to them," Nowak told the Toronto Globe and Mail. Nowak said there have been improvements in Nepal's aircraft-maintenance records, but pilots still face. dangerous weather conditions flying in the Himalaya during the

Between 1972 and 1979, the Canadian International Development Agency donated seven Twin Otters to Royal Nepal. Subsequent CIDA projects, which were vital to regional development and tourism in Nepal, focused on aircraft maintenance, pilot training, and building a hangar in Nepalganj.

#### **Disabled expedition to Everest**

Fifteen disabled Americans are warming up to climb up to Mt Everest in spring 2003 in an expedition, Team Everest '03 organ-ised by the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities. "I just love the camaraderie of the people facing some adversity in their lives and have found a way to overcome it," said Gene Rodgers, 47, one of four team members who will attempt the climb up to Base Camp in a wheelchair. The group, with members from their 20s to 60s, is looking for five more climbers with the stamina, a sense of adventure and \$6,000. Expedition leader Gary Guller tried to scale Mount Everest last year. Now the 35-year-old, whose left arm was amputated after a climbing accident in Mexico, aims to climb to the 8.848 m peak from the Nepal side after the team reaches base

### **Courting controversy in Belgium**

Nepal's bid to buy 5.56 mm assault rifles from Belgium's Fabrique Nationale (FN), has become controversial in Brussels, leading to the resignation of a cabinet minister. The Belgian government defends the sale of more than 5,000 machine guns to Nepal saying that the Nepali authorities need the weapons to fight the Maoist insurgency. But politicians from other Belgian parties, including Minister for Health and Environment Magda Aelvoet, who resigned over the deal, claim that the sale could infringe on a 1991 law that bans export of weapons to countries engaged in a civil war. They

have demanded an urgent parliamentary debate on the deal.

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about a Tamil and a Laotian", and eventually such a couple would wander by. "A Somali and a Finn?" Yep. And so on. Now none of these people MPs) aplenty will soon be populating the malls of Canada. There'll be horror as the landed generation of immigrant parents contemplate the foreign (relatively speaking) face at their daughter's (or son's) side during the wedding ceremony. But the great American (and British, Australian all that aside. Then MPs marry MPs and the mixed society reigns supremo

matching of castes and communities in cities like Delhi and Kathmandu is not quite Orange County or the Yorkdale shopping mall in Toronto, but a beacon of hope nonetheless. And the cappuccino at Barista or Himalayan



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6 NATION

30 AUGUST - 5 SEPTEMBER 2002 NEPAULTIMES

#### VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

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# SOMEWHERE IN NEPAL by PUSKAR BHUSAL precedents

Does the anti-graft watchdog really have more bark than bite? 

he swiftness with which sceptics releasing explosive diaries as an have stepped in to temper the euphoria triggered by the latest nti-graft offensive shows we haven't lost our equipoise during these tumultuous times. That the Commision for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) could strike with such clockwork precision less than 24 hours after it got new powers shows how prompt we can be when we feel we have to The secrety with which the operations were carried out testifies to our canacity for collective circumsnec tion. If you still believe the anti-graft watchdog has more bark than bite, it wouldn't hurt to be a little cautious

By swooping under the cover of darkness, however, the CIAA has raised serious questions of propriety. No matter how tainted the property in dispute, women, children and pets should have been kept out of harm's way. What about the billions stashed away by those who bought off the accused? How wide is the CIAA prepared to throw its net? Is this a pre election strint not terribly concerned about the putrefaction surrounding those closer to the corridors of po Why such rejoicing in a job the CIAA

CIAA chief Surva Nath Unadhyaya, a lawyer who served as member-secretary of the panel that drafted the constitution, must have mapped his anti-corruption barrle plans with prudence. Since he seems ncerned about his reputation, he can be expected to take us into confidence in due course. The crackdown wasn't entirely unexpected, though. We missed some of the hints Upadhyaya was dropping off these past months. When he gave that speech in Birganj in April exhorting the business community not to offer bribes, we thought he was on the side of politicians and bureaucrats (How could public servants master the art of taking if there weren't so many

people ready to give?) Three months after that speech, a ominent industrialist began warning politicians not to count on the philanthropy of his fraternity during the upcoming elections. Those acclimatised to today's culture of impunity dismissed his threats of

outburst of an entrepreneur envious of the higher internal rate of return politics carried. With reports of Nepali political investments in gas stations in the United States having become the subject of inquiry, it's clear those 22 families were not the only ones in for a rude awakening on the night of 16 August. Don't be surprised if many of these suspects follow precedent by walking out of court with their reputations fully restored. Be less so if some of them trim out to be the most ardent campaigners of probity in

The political undercurrents are equally instructive. When remnants of partyless decadence in the Rastriya Praiatantra Party become the first people to welcome the CIAA onhow much the stakes have changed There is a more profound

tion here. Has the CIAA struck an

alliance with a business community fed up with having to pay politicians money Have officials decided to become state witnesses against a political class that has outsourced fund-raising to the bureaucracy? What immediate impact will all this have on our politics? Tulsi Giri is the name that pops up here, too. The former prime minister and key members o is cabinet and the bureaucracy faced charges of misappropriating Rs 60 million by manipulating the pricing of carpet exports in 1976. They insisted they were the victims of vendetta by a group of businessmen working closely with senior officials at the palace secretariat Giri and the other "camer scandal" co-accused would probably have landed behind bars if restive students hadn't taken to the streets in 1979. With their political credibility having been put to a referendum, the panchas rallied behind their chief ideologue and his allies and hit the

The CIAA's newfound assertion ness might provide the greatest incentive for the Nepali Congress factions to force some kind of preelection unity. ♦

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# Not banking on reforms



Nepal wanted to run a private bank customer service more efficient, and ming economy ensured ess. Until a year ago deposits and investments were growing at 15 percent annually, Bankers profited and so did the shareholders Rut things have changed: growth has plummeted due to the economic downturn, especially in tourism, where where almost 15 percent of all commercial bank loans are, Finally, the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) issued 10 directives to govern the industry, ncluding guidelines on capital macy, single borrower limits.

Narendra Bhattarai: The regulations are well intentioned but not very practical. The state of the economy

zero growth, following the guidelines would be near impossible. This year, 2002/03, our capital adequacy requirement is 10 percent, next year it has to be 12. The definition of supplementary capital has become

two government banks, was 16 percent last year. The NPA of Nepal Bank Limited (NBL) and the Rastriya Banilya Bank (RBB) was estimated to be about 24-25 percent. Now that is said to have grown to about 48

a reason for this, another is the quality of investments, still another, the state of the economy,

should be used to assess whether the timing of the directives was appropriate. Given that the economy nearing

more stringent. Effectively our capacity to do business has shrunk. Will it be possible to raise capital to Rs 1 billion without reasonable economic growth? The average non-performing assets (NPA) at all banks, including

percent. At private banks last year it was about seven percent, now it is up to 11-12 percent. The directives are

CP Khetan: The new capital requirements have made it easier for small banks to enter into a market that used

to be dominated by seven or eight major banks. In a market economy we talk of healthy competition where consumers benefit, which may not have been the case with our banking. There has not been much competition

among banks but (because they had high profits) investing in one became very attractive. The profits earned

Only a few banks have adequate provisioning for loans. Now all banks have agreed to meet the provisioning requirements in three years. But bank owners and shareholders also need mechanisms to help

Manoj Goyal: The NRB is being directed by the conditions of the World Bank and the IMF and has been told

had. If there were adequate flights there could still be a shortage of hotel beds. And then you would have

Rhattarai: Even those who advise us (novernment) on policy have invested in the equity of some of the hotels

that are talked about as having bad loans. There are risks in every business. We did not invest expecting the

blamed us saying that the shortage resulted because the banks didn't invest enough in hotels.

economic growth rate to be 0.8 percent, but 5-10 percent.

ounting standards, etc. Last week Himalmedia invi of major private banks and the central bank to a discussion on the state of namk to a discussion on the state or banking and the impact of the NRB directives. Narendra Bhattarai, CEO Nepal Bangladesh Bank, CP Khetan, director, Laxmi Bank, Manoj Goyal, CEO Rank of Kathmandu Mahashwar Shrestha, manager audit and inspection at Himalayan Bank and Tirtha Prasad Upadhaya, a chartered accountant, upagnaya, a chartered accountant, attended. Standard Chartered Bank Nepal, the Nepal Investment Bank. Kumari Bank and the Nepal Rastra Bank confirmed participation but did not attend. Excerpts from the two-hour

in Nepal, which is now said to be operating with zero debt is now planning to expand to other agro-businesses. RA sells Nepal package in Dubai In an effort to boost passenger traffic from Dubai to Kathmandu, Royal Nepal Airlines is offering a seven-day package for \$800 until

Surya Nepal

31 October. Local general sales agent, Eisa Travels, has reported in a recent issue of Gulf News that ticket sales on the Dubai-Kathmandu sector are picking up. The package includes six nights accommodation in a four-star Kathmandu hotel, economy ticket, airnort transfers, meals and tours "We have had a very good response from the market," K Gehi, airline manager, Eisa Travels told the paper. He said the deal has been popular mostly with Europeans living in the UAE. Royal Nepal is increasing the flights to three a week for the autumn season.

30 AUGUST - 5 SEPTEMBER 2002 NEPALI TIMES

The Rana Group, joint venture partners of the Kolkata-based ITC, has sold 10 percent of its shares in Surya Tobacco to become a subsidiary of its JV partner. The deal became effective on 20

August. ITC, having acquired 56,000 ordinary shares of Rs100

each, now owns 59 percent of the company's stock. The British American Tobacco Company holds the remaining two percent. The

16-year-old Surya Tobacco Ltd., the largest manufacturing company

### Staedtler's range

Papermat Pen Industries has begun marketing Staedtler's new Lumocolor range of the comnany says are "multi-talented" nens and markers. The German pens and markers are said to write on practically any surface-glass, plastic, metal, porcelain, etc, and come in eight colours.

Accounting aide
Sustainable Solutions, Nepal and Cognito Software of New Zealand have begun selling a newly-developed accounting software, which the promoters say is adapted to suit the needs of Nepali businesses. The new software is said to include forms for Value Added Tax, and trial versions can be downloaded from www.moneyworks.com.np. Sustainable Solutions says it is also planning to release a simplified version of the software that is to be marketed as Cashworks.



which we are basing that number? Where is the flexibility needed to make adjustments to our economic situation? Does the central bank have authority to relax the directives if things go really bad? We don't argue that the banking sector has to be strengthened, but what about the environment in which the banks are operating? To be able to fulfil the norms banks are putting undue pressure on businesses. Will they still be motivated to invest? The cost of capital grows when we raise capital adequacy because we also have to earn returns for shareholders, which means that the price of banking products will rise. But we don't have an Tirth Unadhvava: Until recently hanks did not even ask horrowers for financial statements and the NRR had to step in to get them to. The large hotel projects that are now suffering, is it because of today's slow economic growth? It is the fault of the banks that the hotels they financed are now in trouble. Everybody knew tourism numbers were not growing fast enough. I don't fault the government or the central bank for bringing in the directives. Until now the banks operated freely, without licensing. Now the central bank has become smarte Goyal: Banks invest based on future prospects, and the possibilities looked good, based on the information we









Upadhyaya: So why blame the central bank for everything? The 12 percent CAR was not fixed by the central bank, but by the Basel Committee. The directives also cover other very crucial issues. Goyal: We aren't blaming NRB for what it is, but for the manner in which its hands have been tied (by donors). If we were a rich country our central bank would have been run how we wanted and we could have determined what level of health we wanted to achieve and then decided on how to get there. But suddenly we had external advice that moved too fast. Then the economy began faltering. We have certain needs and the central bank needs to be flexible to address those needs. Khetan: We are asking for more flexibility on the NRB's part and greater inputs from it to tackle problems

resulting from other sections of the economy. Maheshwar Shrestha: Four years ago the Maoist problem was not as intense as it is today. Both pashmina and tourism were doing well. The growth and profits in banking were visible. But what do we have left? The pashmina industry is gone and so has the carpet industry. The garment business has changed after 11 September, and tourism is down. Then the NRB directives came. They were initially very stringent but were channed at the request of hankers But certain problematic issues remain. For example, earlier any overdue loan became bad only after five

years, now they have to be classified 'bad' in a year. The methods of counting capital adequacy have also changed, not to mention the increase from 8 to 12 percent. The single borrower limit has also been lowered and pegged to a lower base. It was 35 percent of total capital earlier, now it is 25 percent of core capital. We can prevent major trouble at the banks by deferring certain directives and imposing them when the economy Then there are overlapping and problematic taxation laws. We don't get deductions for loan loss

provisioning. I have to count the interest due from clients even if I don't actually get it, and pay tax on that. All this is in addition to the already high 30 percent corporate taxes we pay. Delay in litigation can go on for 10 years. The central bank says it has taken certain measures because some banks have not functioned properly. Why must the entire sector be penalised for the mistakes of a few?

Upadhyaya: What are banks for? We have a \$300 million hydroelectric project built with foreign investment. and now we have problems paying for the power in convertible currency. Do private banks see a role for themselves in such projects? If banks are run well and if their portfolios are okay, they can start making money



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Manang waits for trekkers

eat black solar panels gleam on sunny windswept rooftops in this desolate country. Even as the government recently announced plans to electrify hundreds of Nepali villages using solar power, Phu gaon in Nepal's remote northwest is already a step ahead. "We first thought of having a hydropower project, but it turned out that electrifying the 33 households here through solar power would be cheaper," says Tashi Namgyal, chairman of

Phu VDC The gleam of solar-powered ights at night is the only indication of human habitation in this otherwise rugged and lonely terrain. After hours of trekking in the shadow of craggy cliffs interspersed with lush green juniper and pine forests, and guiding sturdy mountain ponies along narrow ridges, praying that they won't get spooked and kick us into the river rushing







glimpse of Phu. From a distance, it is easy to miss the village perched atop a cliff,

camouflaged by the rocky, barren surroundings. The original village, a walled city whose gates were kept closed against marauding invaders in the past, is falling to ruins. The few inhabitable homes remaining there are taken up by workmen from Rasuwa and Dhading who earn Rs 300 a day to build bridges, stupas, and homes just outside the old walls-tasks the locals don't have the time to do, occupied with keeping home and hearth together. The average Phu family owns about four or five dozen livestock, the products of which they barter for il and flour with Mananges living wer down in Nyeshang Valley, a vo-day walk away. "People here are neither rich

or poor," explains the Tibetan impoche at Tashi Lakang onastery. This monastery, the last f 108 monasteries said to be built a renowned lama, is the reason nat this remote outpost, a two-day alk from the Tibetan border, gets ny visitors at all, in the form of evout Buddhists. Phu has 150 shabitants, those who stayed back fter the exodus of many from this much to gain." illage to the lower Nyeshang Even the government's 'alley, to take up houses aban announcement to open up Phu and oned by Mananges who have

orated to Kathmandu But as we lead our horses arough the narrow, winding dirt oth leading up to the village, there little sign of life. Most Phu sidents are up in the mountain astures where they've taken their rge herds of yak and sheep to aze. They spend days in tents and adimentary stone sheds on these ast, open, windswept greens, hurning butter in huge bags made om yak hide, shaking the bag back nd forth up to 2,000 times for the esired butter

Fortunately, Tashi Nameyal is is non-existent. ome. He has just returned from ne pastures where he's left his estock to graze. Namgyal is an ducated man by Phu standardsbout two dozen students attend ne only primary school, while in lar, the neighbouring valley, udents from grades one to five are ften lumped into one class as achers play truant. Namgyal was nanimously appointed to the post the villagers who offered him hadas and a bottle of local liquor In this part of Manang, it would e an offence to refuse such a



decision," says Namgyal, who would rather be up in the pastures or carrying out household chores rather than being a local representative "It's a lot of work and time You have to commute between the district headquarters, be away from home. And there's not

neighbouring Nar to tourists appears to have not evoked too much enthusiasm in Tashi and his fellow villagers. In terms of distance, both Nar and Phu are an extremely long day's walk from Chame, Manang's district head-quarters. But in terms of development and access, they are very, very remote. Apart from the odd researcher or a few climbing expeditions permitted to climb Himlung, Ranachuli and Gachikang, few foreigners have visited this former restricted area, and tourism infrastructure

The Annapuma Conservation Area Project (ACAP), which recently extended its network to include Nar and Phu, is preparing a suitable sustainable tourism development plan at the request of the government. They're looking at the possibility of developing restricted tourism similar to that in Upper Mustang. But there's concern that locals won't benefit from organised groups who porter in their supplies and spend little in the area, and tourism dollars don't find their way back to the community, "Another possibility is developing village tourism, like in Sirubari," says Narendra Lama, who runs ACAP in Manang, "There's still a long way to go," Lama says. "A lot of homework needs to be done, tourism infrastructure put in place, marketing carried out." A group of villagers from Nar and Phu will visit Annapurna Base Camp and Sirubari this autumn to see how tourism operates in these areas.

21 year-old Kursang Wangchu

who runs the only lodge in Phu along with her cousin Tashi Khandu, would love to be part of that visit. She's says self-deprecat ingly "Our bhatti is so small We don't even call it a hotel." Today, the one-room enterprise, complete with cooking hearth, two makeshift beds and roughly-hewn tables, serves both as a local bhatti and a lodge for the few weary travellers who find their way here. In winter, Kursang and the villagers of Phu descend to graze their livestock in Kyang (3,840 m), a crumbling settlement of old ruins set amidst sun-warmed meadows, once home

to Khampa warriors on the run. About an hour's walk away, in the remains of a similar settlement called Chokho (3,753 m)-in summer a lush green valley abounding with wild garlic—the Narte, or people of Nar, descend from their village at 4,100 m just below the treacherous Kangla Pass (5200m), to graze their livestock. A gushing river serves as a boundary between the two villages that are bound by geography, culture, and marriage.



Legend has it that a hunter from Nyeshang Valley shot a nawar or blue sheep, in the horn. He followed the nawar up into the untains, where he came upon a field. The hunter sowed some wheat, promising himself that if it turned a ripe harvest, he would stay. Today, Nar Valley has a population of some 400 people who mostly

livelihood All of this might change, and faster than we could imagine, if the instability along other trekking routes remains, and this other valley of Upper Manang becomes a magnet for people looking for

depend on livestock for their

something a little different,





TRAVFI



Chame Manage district's headquarters and Thorons Peak, to market Manang's mystique. Weekly chartered flights take locals and tourists directly into Hunde airfield (3,200 m) built by labour contributed by locals nearly two decades ago. Otherwise, it's a five-day trip

from Kathmandu. Royal Nepal Airlines is also planning to fly Twin Otters twice a week from Kathmandu and Pokhara. The more flights there are the better, we'd like more tourists who can afford to fly in spend a week in and constant stream of visitors, namely tourists, who hike up around Manang and then fly out, like they do in the Khumbu region," says Tripple P Gurung, president of

the Manang Youth Society.

economy, but it has definitely benefited us," nods the bearded lama seated in a cold, cramped prayer room surrounded by hundreds of passport photos of tourists who have visited him glued to the wall. But this monsoon has been quieter than usual. Following the state of national emergency, there is no sign of the student volunteer groups who used to visit in the off-season. Of the odd tourists trakking into the village, few hike up the hill. Most make the customary acclimatisation one-day stop in Manang village before moving onto the challenges of Thorong La on the way

n his rocky abode high above flowering pink

the philings, or foreigners, in his life.

buckwheat fields and the swirling grey waters of the

Marsyangdi river, Lama Tashi, 86, contemplates on

Ever since the oldest resident of Mananggaun and

his 85-year-old wife decided to lead a quiet, contem-

But the elderly counte do not discourage the

to greet the Jama with the customary khada or ceremo-

in acclimatisation and seeking blessings to cross the Thorong La. "Tourism hasn't replaced the pastoral

nial scarf and often a donation of Rs 100- an exercise

ago, the two rarely venture down the steep slopes

leading into this picturesque highland village.

plative life under a craggy cliff more than two decades

"We're keeping our fingers crossed for this autumn season," says Binod Gurung who, with his wife Gita, has been stocking up supplies and cleaning house for the coming season. Two years ago, the couple gave up their curio business in Thamel to invest nearly Rs 10

Like a number of their counterparts, they've been pushed by the global recession, and stricter immigration laws in places like Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore, to look at opportunities at home. "It makes sense to invest here, things don't look too good in Kathmandu or abroad," says Tooke Gurung, 27,

With money earned trading in Malaysia, Topke, with his partner Gyanjen, 28, has been running the Buddha's Kitchen, the popular local restaurant where villagers gossip over cups of black tea and local liquor samosas and jilebis. The two also run a tiny video hall where villagers can watch Devadas and Om Jai Jagadish on VCD and during the season, tourists watch Harry Potter or Into Thin Air.

Relatively untouched by the Maoist movement and a major stop on the popular Annapurna circuit, local tourism entrepreneurs are getting together between





Gurung and his fellow villagers are doing the groundwork to celebrate Destination Manang 2004. An annual calendar of events that reflect and help revive local cultural traditions, and enhance economic opportunities and help reduce the trend of people

migrating to Kathmandu is being chalked out.

Communication facilities are being improved, for a start. A high school graduate, Gom Tsering Gurung, is getting the hang of running the first Internet café in Manang opened this August. With just one VSAT nhone operation for six villages, some an entire day's walk away, it's not only trekkers who drop a line home at Rs 30 a minute; locals are getting online, too. "I chatted to my daughter in New Zealand," says Michung Gurung, former VDC chairman and lodge owner.





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10 WORLD

30 AUGUST - 5 SEPTEMBER 2002 NEPALI TIMES

BANGKOK - The Thai and Burmese governments were at each other's throats just a few months ago, but these days Thai officials

are busy rounding up and deporting anti-Rangoon dissidents working

out of this country. But Thailand and Burma aren't quite friends again,

though Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra is pursuing what critics call a blatant "appeasement" policy with Rangoon. His government's goal

appears to be to patch up ties with neighbouring Burma, which have

been tense since border clashes led to the closure of the border on

In pursuit of this goal-which the government considers a

breaching human rights standards and putting at risk its tradition of

being a humanitarian haven for those fleeing repression and danger.

The Thai authorities Tuesday rounded up 31 Burmese nationals in

Kanchanaburi province, across Burma's Mon state, saying they were

illegal entrants. Some belonged to the National League of Democracy

of Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kvi and other dissidents

groups and some reportedly had UNHCR-issued identification cards

pragmatic one-rights activists and critics say that Thailand is

22 May. The clashes occurred as Burma accused Thailand of shelling

Thailand, Burma, friends again

#### WHO or WTO?

GENEVA - The principle that public health concerns should take priority over trade interests was publicly accepted Thursday by the international organisations entrusted with regulating these two areas, which are often the source of discord. The WHO and the WTO recognise the right of each country to adopt measures restricting imports or exports when they are considered necessary to protect the health and lives of people or to preserve national animal and plant life, "WTO jurisprudence has clearly established that its members have the undisputed right to determine the level of health protection they deem appropriate," says Miguel Rodríguez Mendoza, one of the trade institution's four deputy director-generals. The tensions between the right to health services and the existing multilateral trade rules have troubled the WTO since it was created in 1995, and have been a stumbling block in its relations with civil society. Since then, NGOs specialising in health and development, like Doctors without Borders, Oxfam International and the Third World Network, have waged a campaign to ensure that trade in medicines is subject to universal rights and values. and not to the rules of the market. (IPS)

### Only two kids, or else

NEW DELHI - Several Indian states have been silently enforcing a two-children norm that may worsen the country's already skewed sex ratio and ruin the chances of women taking part in local governance, experts here warn, India's National Population Policy (NPP), released in 2000, aims to have the country-now with a population of more than one billion-achieve a stable population by 2045. India is expected to have 1.63 billion people by 2050. The policy does not state that couples should not have more than two children, but contains measures that encourage small families. An example is the family welfare-linked social insurance scheme for couples below the poverty line, available for those with two or less children. There is also a reward for couples who marry after the legal age of 21, and accept sterilisation after the second child.

But several Indian states have gone further with their individual population policies. Six states debar couples with more than two children from contesting elections for local village administrative bodies called panchavats. These include the southern Andhra Pradesh state, the northern states of Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan, eastern Orissa and central Madhya Pradesh. Ten years ago India reserved a third of all elected seats in panchavats and other local bodies for women-but many potential women leaders may not qualify simply because they have more than

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**Johannesburg** 

for one American is the same iunction as that for 269 Nenalis.

Capitalism has many "laws of motion". but one of the most destructive as far as the environmen is concerned is Say's law, which is that supply creates its own demand. Capitalism is a demand-creating machine that transforms living nature into dead commodities

natural wealth into dead capital. Capitalism has expanded unevenly, being overdeveloped in its heartland in the North and underdeveloped in the periphery. Its environmental impact has been likewise differentially distributed. Nothing captures this better than the difference in per capita greenhouse gas emissions: one American emits as nuch as 17 Maldiveans, 19 Indians, 30 Pakistanis, 49 Sri Lankans, 107 Bangladeshis, 134 Bhutanese and 269 Nepalie

The global impact of the superdeveloped capitalist North may be greater than the comparative statistics reveal. For in response to movement, the North has displaced ecological disequilibrium to the South. Perhaps paradigmatic in this regard is the way Japanese capital has lived up to environmental standards by accelerating its consumption of nature and waste to East and Southeast Asia, Japanese consump tion, for instance, was responsible for up to 70 percent of timber

uncontrolled toxification and the transfer of Japan's pollution-intensive manufacturing facilities to that region in the late 1960s.

Today European and US capital have joined Japanese capital in making cheap-labour, pollutionfriendly China both the workshop and the wastebasket of the world. What is happening to China and East Asia today is, however, only the latest phase of capitalist globalisation's 150-year-old proc of displacing the environmental costs of global capitalist production and consumption from the centre to the subordinate parts of the world

Ten years ago George Bush Sr torpedoed the Rio Summit by saving "America' lifestyle is not up for negotiation". The Europeans and the Japanese feigned horror, but the next ten years showed that consumption was king for them too, and that everescalating consumption was the common recipe for keeping the global capitalist economy going. The G-7 has essentially served as a forum to negotiate which capitalist centre would serve at which period as the consump-

rion-engine of the global economy The Johannesburg Summit was killed a year before it was held by George W Bush's decision to withdraw the world's prime capitalist power from being party to the Kyoto Climate Change Protocol. This is capitalism stripped of its liberal face. Japanese and European

elites pretend to be upset, but they

are most upset by the Americans' acknowledgement of the basic dynamic of the system of production they all share: that its continuing expansion must be achieved via an accelerated consumption and toxification of nature

Johannesburg was a mixture of corporate greenwashing, American bullying, European holier-thanthou posturing, third world leaders begging for aid in return for more orate liberalisation, and the WTO hijacking the environment in the service of free trade.

This failure comes at a time when Latin America is exploding in rebellion against neo-liberal economics and lack of accountability and systemic corporate criminality has eroded the redibility of corporate capitalism in the US, with 72 percent of Americans feeling that corporations have too much power over their lives.

It comes at a time when, owing to

the crisis of overproduction or overcapacity, global capitalism's ability to consume its way out of crisis is stymied. The US, Europe, Japan and East Asia-the engines of consump tion-driven growth—now face the spectre of a synchronised downspin. What analysts from Marx to Schumpeter have discerned as the selfdestructive dynamics of the capitalist world is slowly developing.

(Walden Bello is executive director of Focus on the Global South.)

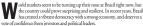
# Three cheers for Brazil

logged-most illegally-in the

produced far away drove the

Philippines from the 50s to the 90s.

Japan's consumption of commodities



en years after the Rio de

Janeiro Conference on Environment and Develop-

situation is unarguably worse. The

capitalist mode of production that

nceasingly transforms nature's

ment, the global environmental

main culprit: an unchecked

bounty into commodities and

incessantly creates new demands

As in any vibrant democracy, differences in views exist. Not all Americans are enthused about President Bush's rapid conversion of trillion dollar surpluses into deficits, nor does a majority embrace his proposals to privatise America's social security system, which has done so much to eliminate poverty among America's elderly. Within Brazil, however, on key issues a broad political consensus exists, and this includes all the major contenders in Brazil's forthcoming presidential election in October.

There is a consensus on sound fiscal and monetary policies: no one wants to return to the hyperinflation of earlier decades. Brazil's monetary policy has been managed extraordinarily well by Arminio Fraga (my former student), but behind him is a strong institution, with the analytic capacities of a first world Central Bank. The initiative that Brazil's Central Bank made to increase transparency and openness are a model for central banks throughout the world—in the developed world as well as the less developed. There may be disagreements about finetuning the economy, but such are routine in any democracy.

There is also a broad consensus that while markets are at the centre of a successful economy, there is an important role for government. Brazil's govern-ment, for instance, pushed one of the most successful telecom privatisations, but also pushed for stronger competition and regulatory policies. Unlike America, when the country faced an electricity crisis, it didn't blithely sit by, saying let market forces (which in the US, meant market manipulation by Enron and others) "handle" the matter; rather, the government came in with strong action.

Repuil is a country of extraordinary human and physical resources. It may be called an emerging market, but it has first rate financial, educational and research institutions. Discussions about economics in Sao Paulo are as sophisticated as in New York. University seminars in Rio are as lively as those in Cambridge, Massachusetts or Cambridge, UK It produces one of the finest airplanes in the world—so good that competitors in the more advanced industrial countries have rried to impose trade barriers

But for all of its strengths, Brazil has one critical weakness: a high level of nequality. It is a weakness that (unlike in America) also carries a broad consensus; most agree that it needs to be addressed, and that government has the obligation to do so. The current government has made extraordinary strides in education. Ten yeas ago, 20 percent of Brazil's school age children were not attending school; now that number is down to 3 percent. Similarly, landless peasants are both an economic and a social problem, and the current administra ion has taken on vested interests to push forward on an exciting market-based land reform, one that has received support from the World Bank, With the AIDS

The role of the government is understood well here, and there is a broad political consensus on issues that matter.



enidemic. Brazil faces challenges to its health system, and while one may agree of disagree with the particular approaches taken by the Brazilian government, e recognises this is a major responsibility of government. Whoever wins the election almost certainly will continue efforts in these areas.

Brazil's debt to GDP ratio is moderate—better than in the US when Bill Clinton became president, far better than that of Japan and several European countries. Unlike its neighbour to the south (prior to Argentina's crisis), Brazil has a flexible exchange rate system: its currency is not overvalued—if anything, it is undervalued. With strong exports, it should have no problem meeting its debt obligations, so long as interest rates do not soar to levels that turn a problem into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Brazil has carved out a path that is not based on ideology or over-simplistic economics. By successfully charting its own course, Brazil has created a broad domestic consensus behind a balanced, democratic, market economy. ♦

(Joseph Stiglitz is winner of the 2001 Nobel Prize in Economic and the author of Globalization and its Discontents.)

# **Maoists fight on in the Philippines**



the action and say this could help end

Asia's longest-running insurgency

government negotiators have been

Maria Sison, the founder of the

Talks between communist leaders and

talled after the killing of two legislator

by communist hir squads last year Tose

movement, now in exile, has ruled out peace talks with Arroyo.

insurgencies have had a higher profile,

eased from the peak in the eighties. But

politicians and analysts here say that it

won't be easy to wipe out the CPP-

'war against terrorism'. Many are

eneral Musharraf is the third Pakistani general in fifty years to seize power proclaiming a reform agenda. Each time the US and its allies nodded in agreement. But Mushamatica. C. 1

resulted from international pressure. Feeble at best, they have invariably avoided

Musharraf doesn't threaten the enormous powers and privileges of the only institution that can seriously threaten him—Pakistan's military. All countries have

armies, but in Pakistan the army has a country. Defence expenditures are one-third

tions. This garrison economy is unsustainable, as Pakistan's poor multiply and the

The army, always the most powerful political force in Pakistan, has undersone

important changes since independence. The army's British colonial traditions were

slowly Americanised during the Cold War. With his 1977 coup, General Zia ul Haq injected a messianic zeal to redefine Pakistan as an Islamic state governed by

Sharia (Islamic Law). "Islam, Pakistan, Jihad" became emblazoned on banners at

glory of Islam. The global jihad industry, financed by the US and Saudi Arabia,

Trade Center. When faced with a US bent upon bloody vengeance, an acute institutional sense of survival sent the military establishment scurrying to join the

US-led coalition and take up arms against its former creation, the Taleban and their

army's bloody encounters with al-Qaeda become more frequent, casualties mount,

and hostile tribal reaction to joint US/Pakistani search-and-destroy operations or

the western border increases. Officers and soldiers are asking what the nurpose of

"shaheed" (martyr). But is fighting America's war a jihad; are soldiers slain by al-

Oaeda or other former allies also martyrs? Since official certification of martyrdon is tied to land grants and compensation to families, this question carries real

the current campaign is. To die in Kashmir qualifies a soldier or officer as a

Amir-ul-Momineen (leader of the pious).
The internal contradictions of Pakistan's volte face are being exposed as the

Today, the army's jihad philosophy lies buried under the rubble of the World

Pakistani army recruitment centres beards proliferated promotions went with piety, and few could miss Friday prayers. It wanted to be an army for the greate

the structural changes Pakistan needs if it is to break out of its worsening crisis

to half the national budget. Senior military officers have been transformed into powerful landlords and retired officers head many, if not most, public corpora-

ement. But Musharraf is no Gorbachev, nor is he Kamal Ataturk, who pushed internal reform on their societies. Musharraf's attempts at reform have

NPA, despite Manila's use of the US

questioning the legality and applicability

Musharraf and the Jihad Industry

of the terrorist label. "The CPP-NPA

as communist guerrilla activity had

In recent years, the Muslim-based

MANILA - Since the sixties it has survived the collapse of communism in the late eighties, the worst split in its ranks in 1992, and the counterinsurgency operations of five Philippine governments, including that of dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

The question now is how will the 33-year-old Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its military arm, the New People's Army (NPA), deal with being classified a terrorist group by the United States? US Secretary of State Colin Powell recently added the CPP-NPA to his list of "foreign terrorist organisations" after an "exhaustive review of the group's

violent activities". Arroyo and her advisers welcome

economy falters.

are rebels, not terrorists," says Senator Rodolfo Biazon, a former armed forces chief who once fought them. The

Philippines has no law defining terrorism as a crime, though an anti terrorism hill is pending in Congress "Declaring the CPP-NPA terrorist is one thing, attacking it like one is another," says Biazon. The US cannot

replicate its recently concluded sixmonth training exercise in Basilan, southern Philippines, to help eliminate the Abu Sayyaf, a Muslim extremist group Washington links to al-Qaeda. "The magnitude could have unforeseen esults," Biazon, explains, referring to the nationwide presence of the CPP-NPA. "Besides, the United States already had a hard time justifying it presence just in the south." Despite the high-profile military

ction against the Abu Sayyaf, the National Security Council (NSC) and military consider the CPP-NPA the "number one threat to national security". After declaring the insurgence dead in the 1990s, when guerrilla activity had weakened considerably military leaders grudgingly acknowl-edge that it has bounced back with a engeance. From a low of 2,000 armed guerrillas in the mid-1990s, it has grown to 12,000, says the NSC. It was present in 445 villages in 1995. but this grew to 1,671 in 2000. This steady growth has been fuelled by rural poverty and landlessness, and the "rectification" campaign initiated by party leaders, to correct abuses such as

forced revolutionary taxes on peasants. Ronald Llamas of the party list Akbayan, says: "The US needs two enemies to sustain its arms build up-one, to achieve quick, small victories like in Afghanistan or with the Abu Sayyaf, the other, includes

Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. The CPP falls under this category,"

he says. Helping the government also provides the US enough excuse to remain in the Philippines, Llamas adds. "They need the Philippines as a forward base as a second front in the war against terrorism." The United States has been pushing for a Mutual Logistics Support Agreement with the Philippines, which would allow the constru tion of supply depots and other

Arroyo needs to demolish the underground CPP-NPA and militant groups like Bayan Muna (Nation First), which the military tags as a communist front, because she sees this group as hurting her chances for the 2004 presidential elections, says Llamas. He says Arroyo sees political gain in going after the communists, citing the growing popularity of some anticommunist groups. "She sees anti-communists and pro-American groups as a social base for 2004," he says, Llamas, whose group Arroyo first labelle as "good communists" and later 'only Leftist", says these are dangerous times not just for the CPP-NPA but for progressive groups that are seeing the political space provided by the 1986 shrink Adde I Ismae "Armoun is trying to isolate the NPA, but she's also warning others that if they become a nuisance, they could be next." ♦ (IPS)

Manila is preparing to battle a resurgence of the insurgency.

> as refugees. Two days later, immigration officials forcibly repatriated the group to Burma, although activists say some had already found their way back to Thai territory. Senator Kraisak Choonhavan, chairman of the Senate foreign relations committee, says that by forcibly sending dissidents back to Rangoon "Thailand would be

its territory to help ethnic Shan rebels.

perpetuating and aiding the violation of human rights." (IPS) Will China get its Young Turks? NG - China's Communist Party has announced a November date

for its long-awaited 16th Congress, but details of the critical leadership succession expected to take place at that meeting remain shrouded in secrecy. The Communist Party's all-powerful Politburg has forwarded a proposal of 8 November as the start date for the Congress, which takes place once every five years. The decision to schedule the Congress nearly two months later than originally expected fuels speculation that the party's inner circles are gripped in an intense power struggle and that key decisions have been left for the last days before the meeting. In a similar move, the decision for the retirement of the former National People's Congress chairman Qiao Shi—a rival of President Jiang Zemin—at the 15th Party Congress in 1997 was not taken until just days before the meeting.

At that same congress, Jiang pledged to retire at the 16th Party Congress to be held this fall as part of a major leadership shift. Jiang, 76, is expected to step down as general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, making room for a new, younger generation of leaders led by incumbent Vice President Hu Jintao. Party observers believe a decision about Hu Jintao's accession was made years ago by then-paramount leader Deng Xiaoping. Five of China's top seven Polithuro leaders, and half the country's ministers and provincial leaders, are to be replaced at the Congress, hailed by China watchers as the first orderly transfer of power in China's modern history. The new line-up seemed fixed early this year, but rumours are that Jiang is now manoeuvring to retain his grip on power for five more years, by keeping either his post as Communist party chief or that of the Central Military Commission chairman, or maybe even both. Analysts also believe that this year's meeting was delayed to allow Jiang to visit the United States and Mexico in October, while he still holds his top jobs of party chief, state president and commander-



Inevitably the anger at having to fight America's war against al-Qaeda and the Taleban focuses on Musharraf, who received high praise from the United Jihad Council after incursions and battles fought against India in Kargil, Kashmir two years ago. Right-wing religious groups in Pakistan welcomed Musharraf's successful coup. Today his survival is ironically yoked to George W Bush who could not recall his name during the US presidential elections.

All countries have armies, but in

Seeking to make permanent his coup, Musharraf has proposed amendment to Pakistan's constitution—a new National Security Council to formalise the army's political domination of Pakistani society, with the armed forces chiefs having the power to sack the prime minister and dismiss an elected parliament. But for Pakistan to overcome its army's Bonapartism and win the war against jihadists, the military—not just society—must be reformed. The army must be downsized and it must accept that there can be only a political, not a military, solution for Kashmir. 

(Project Syndicate

(Pervez Hoodbhoy, one of Pakistan's leading pro-democracy advocates, teaches physics at Ouaid-e-Azam University, Islamahad.)

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# **Maoist dissident speaks out** member, Maoist "people's government". Rudhabar, 21 August

Excernts from an interview with Mukti Pradhan, dissident central committee

How would you describe your departure from the Maoist ipeopleis governmentióas a dissident, an escapee, or as someone who

surrenders to the government?

My forest release makes clear my stand on this issue, on my connection with the revolutionary people's council. I would say that in the time I was underground. I acted independently most of the time. People might speculate, but I have clearly stated in my release that I dissent from the party line. I have clarified that I disagree with the policies of the Jana Parishad (the "people's council"). Disagreeing with policies is rebelling. I was

a professional before, and I want to concentrate on the business of being a professional again. I would also like to continue being concerned and vigilant about human rights violations at the national and international

# How do you think we should move ahead, past the political mess we are in now? I would say that we should find a peaceful solution; that is possible within the framework of the present

constitution. We got this constitution through the 1990 People's Movement. Progress is impossible unless we

#### People find it hard to believe that you just decided to come aboveground. You say you disagreed with the policies of the ipeople's councilî. Which ones exactly did you have the most reservations about?

First of all, I was not allowed to function there. I was consulted and then declared a member of the Jana Parishad, so I cannot point out where I had the most reservations. Since I was interested from the start, I did not even learn why the Jana Parishad was established and with what aims. As far as your query about why I rebelled, principles and politics will always be dehated. Our first priority should be establishing peace, different parties might have disagreements, but we need to find a point from where we can sit across the table and start talking to find some place where we can agree.

#### You must have learnt a lot from your experience of being underground?

Obviously my life took a different turn when I went underground—that is bound to happen when you try to change the whole course of your life.s I learnt about life and living. I learnt about the differences between principles and practicing them for real, now I want to apply that in my real life.

#### Did you find that the Maoists are true to their colours?

I would rather not comment on that because I did not work with them. All I would like to emphasise is that the present impasse can only be broken through talks and compromises for the sake of the life of the people and

#### So you now fully realise that a politics of violence does not yield results?

As a human rights activist, I never supported violence, not even when I was underground. My principle is that one should never take up arms or turn to violence.

#### Would you like to continue with politics, now that you are aboveground?

I will work for human rights and peace. I firmly believe that a peaceful solution to the present problem can be found within the present constitution. I will function independently, but in line with progressive thought. As a progressive intellectual, I will try my best to serve this country.

#### Do you feel threatened, being a dissident from the Maoist party?

Everyone should be able to think and analyse with responsibility and sensitivity. I have appealed to everyone for the protection of my life. I never intended to harm others, I have just attempted to make myself clear everyone has a right to have opinions. No one should feel too intimidated to have a difference of opinion.

Have you appealed to the national and international communities for your protection?

I came aboveground in the presence of the president of the National Human Rights Commission and other human rights activists. Being a human rights activist myself, I have faith that the human rights community of this country will be concerned about my safety. I also have faith that the political parties will be keen to help

#### QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"It's difficult to hide a great deal of money. They say that a minister once burnt a lot of cash in India." Another hid money under mattresses and blankets. This was probably because they were scared that the commission to investigate property would check their bank accounts, or that relatives would use the

-Radharaman Upadhyaya, former chief of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority in Jana Bhawana, 26 August



Not a hospital. I think he needs a check-up at the commission!

Gorkhapatra, 26 August

### 'Secret' meeting Jana Bhawana, 26 August The UML team that was in India is

still keeping its "secret meeting" with he Maoists a secret. When Jana Bhawana asked team member Ibalanath Khanal about the meeting, he said that it was completely imaginary. Despite Khanal's denial our sources maintain that the meeting did take place. Sources say that the UML put forward the possibility of holding a plebiscite on the constitutional monarchy, even as it worked on 'softening' the Congress overnment. In return, the Maoist leadership would direct its party workers to leave the UML cadres alone and even assist them during the upcoming elections.

#### Mind your language Gunaraj Luitel in Kantipur,

to religious connotations. Because

words like sacrifice and martyrdom

off not using them.

encourage more violence, we are better

We have also misused words like "encounter" and "clashes". It is

encounter took place, or whether it was

a clash-and for a "clash", both sides

need to have exchanged fire. Likewise,

why the death was gruesome, but only

terms like "gory" death don't tell us

necessary to specify what kind of

27 August and the same

We have learnt that Madhav Kumar We have constantly been using words Nepal, general secretary of the like "martyr" and "sacrifice" while Communist Party of Nepal (United reporting on the conflict. The Maoists declare their dead martyrs and the Marxist-Leninist) met with Maoist security forces describe deaths in the leader Baburam Bhattarai in Delhi last week. According to the grapevine, ranks by calling them birgati Madhav Kumar Nepal left Jhalanath (marryndom) These words elorify death beyond the physical end of being Khanal and Bharat Mohan Adhikari in Kolkatta while rushing off to Delhi for and give continuity to a cycle of violence by suggesting revenge. This cycle of violence needs to be broken. a meeting with Bhattarai arranged by an Indian leader Nepal is supposed to have told Sacrifice, like martyrdom, also carries with it a political meaning, in addition

Bhattarai that the UML would pressure the government to hold talks with the Maoists if the latter announced a unilateral cease-fire on 31 August or 1 September. In return, the Maoists would back the UML during the upcoming elections.

sensationalise it. There are other

can—and has been—mis to "infiltration". Another widespread practice is prefixing every Maoist

examples of misuse: "human shield:

institution or action with "people's"

people's court" just a Maoist court.

crisis, cruel, deviant, gang, so-called,

systematic, etc. Using them incorrectly

affects the balance of reports and can

even be an obstacle to peacemaking. If

we want to take the country on the path

of peace, it is time we paid attention to

conflict. More importantly, has the

our daily lives?

Tarun, 26 August

conflict dug out words that normalise

violence, and made their use a part of

**UML-Maoist alliance** 

लक्जा

choice of words in reporting the

There are many more expressions

To show our neutrality we should

perhaps not talk about a Maoist

that are used in media: criminals,

A UML source told Tarun that Bhattarai assured the UML of his help in finishing off the Congress if the UML acted as a protective shield. Despite appearances, the UML appears to be internally opposed to the idea of



30 AUGUST - 5 SEPTEMBER 2002 NEPALLTIMES

talks between the government and the Maoists, as it stands to lose the

We also understand that Madhav Nepal said at the same meeting that he could control the army if the Maoists helped them get majority in the elections. The Maoists have constantly been asking for support to elect a constituent assembly. Madhav Nepal has given his word to support a plebiscite for either a constituent assembly or for constitutional amendments. Since the army began operations in Dans from 25 August, the Maoists have been displaced from the area. As the army continues to run operations to displace the Maoists before the upcoming elections, the rebels are divided over whether or not to hold talks. Baburam Bhattarai and Prachanda appear to be in favour of talks, but Ram Bahadur Thana [Badal] and Barsharam Pun ar instigating party cadres against supporting talks. Those in favour of talks have been accused of surrendering. Today, the Maoists are on the defensive. The ammunition they've taken from the security forces is depleted and most of their weapons don't work. The army has seized six months of food supplies in Maoist strongholds like Rolpa and Rukum, and blocked supply channels

# The scale of corruption



Excerpts of an interview with Devendra Raj Pandey, president of Transparency

Who should be primarily responsible for controlling corruption?

The political parties and society have both encouraged corruption. There needs to be a change of attitude. Laws have been promulgated, but not nplemented, and people in responsible positions are reluctant, disrespectful even, towards their duties. Even the general public is unconcerned about pecting laws and regulations to help control corruption

# What do you think of the recent moves of the Commission for the

Investigation of the Abuse of Authority?

The recent CIAA operations send out a strong message against corruption and have raised hopes that things can change. And it is a warning to delinquents

### The CIAA actions have allegedly left out the big bosses in corruption. Do you think they will get away?

This is only a start, no one has yet escaped. This is not a question of big and small, it is a procedure. Besides, the government needs to get moving on controlling corruption and punishing it within ministries and offices, not the CIAA. There is a law that requires that all holders of public positions declare their property. Why are prime ministers and ministers reluctant to respect this legal provision? The CIAA should only be responsible for cases that escape this legal mechanism to check corruption.

Government should think about the impact on the national economy, and consider having consultations with the business sector and the CIAA to find an effective way of fighting corruption. If the government does not support the CIAA with prompt actions to activate the constitutional anti-graft functions, this campaign is lost

### Do you agree with the allegations that the police force, courts, infrastructure construction, irrigation, electricity authority, civil aviation and administration sectors are the most corrupt areas? I would say that the commercial sector is the most corrupt. The country probably lost around Rs 20-22 billion for

revenue officers to earn the Rs 6 billion confiscated in the CIAA raids. And there is a popular belief that corruption of such magnitude is taking place because of political patronage. So you could say that politics is the most corrupt sector. The CIAA should not limit itself to the revenue sector only. Without a drastic improve the political, cultural and competitive environment, raids alone will not achieve much. There should be immediate action to make the upcoming elections transparent-people have the right to know about the candidates' fundraising process. The CIAA raids cannot bring this to the people.

Can a provision be formulated to prevent people charged with corruption from contesting elections? Definitely, we have been demanding it. We cannot prevent anybody from standing unless there are proven charges against them, but parties need to be concerned about allegations too.

constitution. But it will be better if we can move forward with what we already have

#### You were a minister with the interim government and are now president of Transparency International here; do you think the scale of corruption now threatens democracy? Corruption was there before democracy too, but it might have increased in the last 12 years. But that it has increased is not because of a fault in the system, but due to the weakness of the parties and leaders. If corruption threatens democracy, we have to commit ourselves to starting another campaign for democracy and a new

# **Sudha Tripathi**



In the essay below, Sudha Tripathi expresses a common sentiment among first-generation migrants to Kathmandulove and nostalgia for a village home that feels centuries away, along with alienation and a fear of returning. The essay is translated from Tripathi's 1997 collection Jeevansutra ra Swapnabhas.

### I'LL COME WITH FLOWERS

Soonkhaani, my birthplace, you must think I've stopped loving you. It would be fair for you to think so: I've done nothing for you even at the end of my youth. I hear that you look towards Dolakha again and again, shading your forehead with your hands and lifting your feet. I haven't stopped loving you. To do so

would mean to stop loving myself because my 'l' is you. I stay in the depths of my emotion and drench myself in your affec-tion and well wishes. How else could I survive this desert? I won't tell you to stop looking at my path, but I'll likely have to wait a while yet before coming to curl up at your lap. What else can I, your destitute daughter, offer for your faith? What have I to give? I am rich in feelings. I long to place two cupped palms full of white flowers at your pure feet. Scouring this whole city, though, I haven't found flowers enough that bloom from the immaculate grounds of the heart. I so wish to see you decked with buds at least once in this life. But virulent pests are gnashing the roots of the plants. Tell me, Soonkhaani, when will my palms be full?

A part of me thinks-let me stay away, fidgeting at your memory, but not meeting you, not seeing you. Some kinds of pain are delectable, and dreams too can be tantalising. It's better to love from afar than to hate from nearby: Everything looks good from a distance. When I see roses far away I feel-let us live in their midst, let us die in their midst, even if one were to commit suicide, let it be amid rose bushes. Those who follow the allure of beauty become wild. Intoxicated, they approach these bushes, then come to their senses when pricked. They looksuch ugly thorns! Beauty is just a trap that roses lay out. I don't know why, these days I'm afraid to come near you. Soonkhani. May your ugliness not break my faith, may I not stumble off the edge of trust in panic. My return to you might be held back by the lame foot of my scepticism.

Yet even away from you, I am near you. I laugh with the fragrance of your soil on my hands. I live with your sighs in my life force. I sprinkle the waters of Tama Koshi through my veins. When from this desert I see Gaurishankar himal, my hands move up to feel you, Soonkhani. I hear the lisping words I spoke as a child echo off Gaurishankar and return to me now. When I see the peak's white snows, I remember the lumps of butter that I ate sitting on your lap. When I see the rivers lining the peak, I remember the rich curd that spilled over

I'll stand you, now, at the threshold of the past. My eves water at this memory and a smile appears on my lips all at once. This is what happened: I was small, and you were angry for some reason, and you raised your hand to strike me, but by the time your hand reached my cheek it had become affection. At that, the dam of my tears burst, and I showered you with the blows of my dainty fists. My earth, I couldn't forget you even if I tried to. When I place an imported orange in my mouth, my mouth goes bad with its aged, sour taste. I remember the sweet, juicy oranges that you fed m and my mouth waters by itself. I swallow the oranges here in memory of your oranges. Even the water that Kathmandu offers me is unspeakable: your buffaloes wouldn't wade in such waters. I close my eyes and evoke the taste of Tama Koshi as I drink water Your memento this life erodes as it

grinds along Kathmandu's stony centre. I tremble that I might never return this memento to you. I yearn to return it in whatever condition before my body collapses. Yet what chance is there that Kathmandu will allow me to return to you in good condition? This desert grinds down the youth that you gave me. So I may come to you, mother, but please don't panic to see my harried state. Don't gather tears at your eyes to see the erratic ways of my heartbeat, the life that you so cared for. The beauty of the body isn't all there is. The heart of humanity is never unly. This city's touch may have stripped my body of beauty, but my heart is as you made it. That's why though I live far from you. I soften with your love, and drop, melting, in each of these letters.

My earth, my mother, I'll ask you a question if you'll reply honestly. I've started to see bad dreams these days. They say that it's not good to see trees falling, but I saw that all your trees fell and you were making an offering of tears at their roots. I saw that your upper teeth had fallen out. They say that's also inauspicious. It means I'll see the destruction of those whom I revere. I revere no one more than you. Mother, tell me without looking down on me as a daughter, I ask you under my breath with difficulty unable to even speak aloud: are you somehow in danger? I see eagles and vultures swooping down on you in daylight. The terror of wolves grows not just there and here but all over the world. Ah! How cryptic life is! How ill-intentioned!

Soonkhaani, what news of your other sons and daughters? I hear that your sons, untouched by their birthplace's warmth, walk from twilight onward draped in the snug blankets found in bottles. Didn't you make them take an oath of affection? I hear that your daughters, seeing their own brothers startle as though they've seen tigers, and come crying to hide in your embrace. Someone who came from there the other day said that once, when you tried to offer counsel, one of your sons came after you with a khukuri, trying to kill you. Unable to even cry out, you rushed away with all your pain locked up inside vou. Soonkhaani, don't take refuge in the house of someone who shows you a moment's pity. Don't throw away your life for the lust for ease and riches. Don't get led into in the calm ocean in search of coolness. That would mean destruction for us, who do so much in your name, who see our identity in yours: it would mean the end for us. My world would drown with your disappearance I might not be able to save you from deep waters, so rather than drown, play holi with two fistfuls of blood. Recognise your ill-intentioned sons who'd snatch



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- Sizzle in the Drizzle Punchtatva, featuring Abhaya and Raj. Kababs, two-for-one beers, special offers on wines and spirits. 31 August, 7PM, 1905, Kantipath., Rs 250.
- punchtatva@weisesubba.wlink.com.np. 225272

  Fiesta Latino Salsa. tango, food, drink, dance master Andreas Lehrke. Drinks and dance Rs 450, drinks, dance and dinner Rs 750. Hotel Yak & Yeti, Sundays, 7.30 PM. 248999 Young amateur artists and photographers and enthusiasts Work displayed free of charge
- at The Fort Resort, fort@mos.com.np. 226799

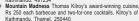
  Nanglo International Club & HITS FM present Nepali ballads by Pravin Rimal, followed by DJ Bishwas, poolside, Nanglo International Club, Surendra Bhawan, Sanepa, Adults Rs 200, children Rs 100, includes welcome drink.

ELD Interactive seminars 3 September: Conflict Management, 4 September: Negotiation, 5 September: Team Building, 2-6 September: Developing Project Proposals. Per workshop Rs 1,500, Rs 1,200 (NGO), Rs 900 (student), all at Hotel Greenwich Village, Kupondole. Details at www.eld.org.uk, early registration at eld@wlink.com.np. 541613

- \* Kegarne Madness Live band Mondays and Wednesdays, everyday free draft beer with every main course, at K-too! Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. 433043
- Live music by Catch 22, Friday nights at the 40,000 ½ ft Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, Thamel, 414336

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- Chef's Special Daily menu for quick lunches at discounted rates. Dwarika's Hotel. 479488 Vegetarian specialties with membership discount for Nepalis and expats at the Stupa View Restaurant & Terrace, Boudha. 480262
- Cool Saturday Brunch at The Fun Café Radisson Hotel with huffet of cold souns salads starters, mains etc, noon-2.30 PM. 411818
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- Secret Garden weekend Local residents buy one night for \$99 plus tax and get the second at 50 percent, single or double, with discounted add-ons, Dwarika's Hotel. 479488
- Monsoon mists Horseshoe Resort, Mude, two-and-half hours from Kathmandu. Nature walks, birdwatching, drizzle walks, Finnish sauna. resort@horshoe.wlink.com.np
- Monsoon in Shivapuri For birdwatching, short hikes, writing. 20 minute drive and 10 minute walk from Kathmandu, two acres 6,000 feet on the edge of the Shivapuri National Park. Rs 1,850 per person with dinner and breakfast, Rs 925 per child 5-14 years, Shivapuri Heights Cottage. info@escape2nepal.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

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



TO DEPRIVE YOUR CHILD OF EDUCATION IS NOT ACCEPTABLE. FULL STOP. NO DISCUSSION.



We aren't finished with the monsoon yet, and as the showers over the coming weekend will probably demon-strate, it can still deliver a powerful punch. It is the late monsoon cloudburst that can trigger deadly landslides since the topsoil on the slopes is already saturated There are few monsoon pulses that will come our way from the bay, in fact, two low pressure circulations spinning into the delta region of Bangladesh. They will lose strength as they move northwestwards, but should bring us some precipitation. Expect clear, bright mornings, hot and humid noontime conditions and afternoon and night showers.

#### KATHMANDII VAI I FY











The Buddha's Art of Healing: Tibetan Paintings Rediscovered John F Avdeon, Fernand Mever, ND Bolsokhoeva, KM Gerasimova, Tamdin S Bradlev Rizzoli, New York, 1998

Rs 1.450

This lavishly illustrated book introduces the history and foundations of Tibetan medicine to the ay reader and explains the painted guide to the body, disease, diagnosis, treatment, and medical ethics. In addition, it contains an essay on the search and rescue in eastern Siberia in Stalin's Soviet Union for a set of paintings called The Atlas of Tibetan Medicine, and the subsequent stablishment of centres of Tibetan medicine in Russia's metropolises.

> A Simple Monk Tom Morgan, ed New World Library, California, 2001 Rs 2.765

This new visual biography of the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, contains provocative ings by Robert AF Thurman, Diki Tsering, Orville Schell and Pico Iyer, an interview of the Dalai Lama by monologist Spalding Gray, and vibrant colour images by photojournalist



The Essence of Buddhism Roy Gillett Caxton Editions, London, 2001 Rs 720

Who wants to be unhappy? We spend most of our lives trying to avoid it, but can we ever succeed: Talking like this puts people off, but those who have lived with Tibetan Buddhist lamas and monks, and even visitors to ordinary lay families are struck by how easy their day-to-day nteractions are. This book gives practical ideas and advice on how to adapt the essence of Buddhism into our modern culture and lifestyle

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

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Lazimpat Book Club We choose a novel and meet one evening a week for discussion and conversation. Join us - tel 429590.

For insertions ring NT Marketing at 543333-36.

A love triangle with a twist. What would you do if the one you loved was not actually the one you loved? What would you do if your best friend was in love with the one you love? What would you do if you knew your best friends are sacrificing their love or you? Raj (Hrithik Roshan), Pooja (Rani Mukherji) and Tina (Kareena Kapoor) are three est friends thrown into situations that time, letters, ove and separation create for them in Shimla and London. A Yash Chopra presentation, Mujhse Dosti Karoge is written and directed by Kunal Kohli.



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30 AUGUST - 5 SEPTEMBER 2002 NEPALI TIMES



**Under My Hat** 

by Kunda Dixit

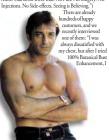
# **Botanical Bust Enhancement**

he quest for human perfection is as old as humanity itself. Ever since our early cave-dwelling ancestors discovered that superzing prehistoric blackheads was not just a delightful way to pass the time, but also resulted in a youthful and unblemished look, mankind has shown that as a species it likes to lease itself/unll measured-

keep ised (well-grooned.

And thank god for that. I'we clân't care about our outward appearance, we would still be wild, armpitereding lanter-gatheres moving in large blends from home to office and back everyday. This is why we are all excited about the fact that after its roaning success in Singapore, the 100% Natural Bonatical Bust Enhancement System is being introduced in Neptle for the first time to address the concerns of manunary-challenged communities of vicing age and above.

(We'll be right back after these messages: "Sag No More! Call us for a free trial. No Pills. No Surgery. No Injections. No Side-effects. Seeing is Believing.")



got great books. Even my wife said the result is good." And that is not all, the beauty industed, the house pindustry in now aiming below the belt. A drug that was developed to reduce made epsema have no found to have anti-cultile reporties, and has just been given approach by the Food and Hard Dung Division in Neyd, (Adventuid: "lajest Boox into your barnecks and get rid origily workless fast.") Elsewhere in the meteopolic partyles decision candidates who think their Barbara Streisand no social period in the libidity are having them re-caved into delse houself social selection candidates who think their Barbara Streisand Mohard and the selection of the selecti

So, you see, we don't have to wait anymore for evolution to give us a body we are proud to call our own. With the new technologies at our disposal, we can take destiny into our own hands and metamorphose into anyone we would like to be. Which brings us to some of the plastic surgery options snow available in Nepal for those who want a total remake of their physical infrastructure.

- Keep Up With the Arms Race. Two hands are not enough to efficiently carry out underhand deals. Install two extra arms to your thorax region so that you can rake it in faster, since time is of the essence. Extra fingers and greasy palms optional.
- Tummy Augmentation. Tired of being kicked around? Add bulk and fullness to your frame with a special Size 40 Silicon Tyre Implant in your abdomen. Be the envy of your peers, let your belly spill out of your belt. Give yourself that Prosperous Civil Servant Silhouette that so many of us crave.
- Brain Enlargement. With new laser surgery it is now possible to expand the average cranium and graft brain tissue implants from donors. Money back guarantee if you aren't visibly smarter in 30 days, and free blackhead removal for all public officials availing of this promo.

NEPALI SOCIETY

# Cry baby

eople might call him a crybaby but 22-year-old Prakash Poudel doesn't mind. Instead, the third year BBS student from Dharan bawls his heart out in unabashed longing for the girl he can't have in *Nai Malai* 

gif he can't have in Nei Melai Typhi Keli Chainchha-the he first single in what he calls the Nepali C-Rap or Cly-Rap genre. The entire song is composed of lyrics delivered through a plaintive wail. What the lyrics lack in magination, the delivery compensates for with originally. And ronically, all this wailing leaves many of his fans howing with laughter. Most others don't know whether to laugh or cry. But don't think

creating C-Rap is easy. Prakash entered a recording studio and cried for six hours straight—in tune and time with the rhythm. And he didn't forget to rhyme. I just wanted to try a different style. I think we need to widen the field of Nepali music. Rap, rock, metal, whatever you do, do it in

Nepali," said Prakash, who was in Kathmandu last month to promote his debut album, 3 Much.

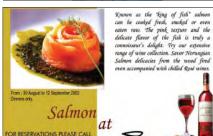
So did Prakash decide to weep publicly when he didn't get his girl in real life? "No, it's just a song I wrote. Also, mostly, in love songs like

these, the families are not involved—they just talk about the girl and the boy. But in this one, I have included the boy's mother, to whom he cries out his sorrows," says the innovative young man who got a cool Rs 95,000 advance from Moonlight Records for 3 Much.

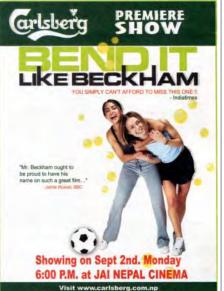
Between playing basketball—he almost made it to the national team, working at the BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, and attending classes, Prakash, whose wailing is gaining immense popularity on

the airwaves, is already at work on another album entitled (what else?) 4 Much. He's tightlipped about whether this one, too, will feature loud, hysterical

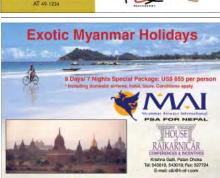
about whether this one, too, will feature loud, hysterical weeping. "I have a few tricks up my sleeve," he says mysteriously. "I will bring them out one by one." Now should we laugh or cry at this threat?



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