



13 - 19 September 2002 Rs 20 OPEL O CORSA No artificial flavours Aust the 'Best Car In its Segme Behrung

Downsized cabinet

It looks like even in this time of crisis, the Deuba cabinet is reluctant to downsize. His "dirty half-dozen" ministers seem to want to be in office for the electoral advantage this will give. Baluwatar denies that there is pressure from the king to dump ministers. Meanwhile, the kangresi factions may soon find there is no need to fight over the party symbol and flag. And the UML is so tantalised by election victory that it hasn't thought of fallback options. Reminds you a bit of a frog inside a snake's jaws still trying to catch that last fly.



Veekly Internet Poll # 51. To vate go to: www.nepalitimes.com Should there be an all party government to take th country out of the present crisis?



So Little Time Sept. 27th to Dot. 6th 2002

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RAMESH POUDEL in SANDHIKHARKA wo days after the Sunday night

Manist raid at the district headquar. ters of Argakhanchi district, government buildings here are still smouldering. There is a pungent smell of rotting flesh mixed with the stench of burnt PVC pipes. Vultures circle overhead, looking for halfburnt corpses in the fields.

The 9,000 inhabitants of this picturesque central Nepal town are still in shock, and loiter nervously outside their homes There are spent cartridges everywhere. *Don't walk too far out, there could be unexploded explosives and booby traps," a security official warned us. They are there to comb through the charred ruins, looking for more bodies hidden in the debris, and for mines. One had exploded earlier that day, injuring three soldiers.

Even Prime Minister Sher Raharlur Deuha had to hop over some unexploded ordnance as he toured the devastation Tuesday. He tried to reassure the locals that the Maoists would be defeated, but the locals wanted relief. which was not forthcoming. He told security officials: "We can't end terrorism overnight, but we'll do everything to make it easier for our security forces to fight them."

By Thursday morning, the death toll in Sandhikharka had crossed 110: 60 security forces personnel and two civilians, and 50 bodies of Maoists had been recovered. Among the dead was a 72-year-old woman who was shot in the stomach by Manists who went house-to-house looking for hiding

The Maoists deployed six platoons of hardcore fighters to ring Sandhikharka in a coordinated and meticulously planned attack. Some of the prisoners later freed by Maoists said the rebels admitted that their 'C' Platoon of 40 fighters had been decimated. The police station, the barracks and the armed police force base were attacked simultaneously. The rebels were supported by paramedics who had established nine field surgery tents outside the

town with equipment and medicines looted from the district hospital. While the fighting raged, Maoist cadres were running back and forth carrying stretchers and resupplying finhters with fresh ammunition, and retrieving weapons from dead soldiers and fallen comrades.

"They spoke in code, I remember someone shouted 'Kalpana Long Range' and suddenly there was a burst of machine oun fire," a local resident told us. Even before the attack, Maoist support teams had already dug graves to bury their dead. They used cutoff dokosto ferry ammunition in, and the same ones to carry away their wounded and dead on the way out. For the first time, there is confirmation that senior Maoist leaders Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Nanda Kishor Pun (Pasang), Top Bahadur Rayamajhi, and Pampa Bhusal were leading the raid.

Independent sources discounted

earlier reports that there were 4,000 Maoists. They said the actual number was closer to 1,500. "I haven't seen so many people even in the Chutre Besi Mela," a local resident told us. "They just sprung up out of nowhere." Most of the Maoist cadres were in their 20s, and bragged to their prisoners that the army's pinht vision helicopters were "no match" for them. Learning from past battles, the Maoists appear to have set fire to vegetation and buildings, since smoke blinds the nightvision scopes on the helicopters.





Maoist message: take us more serio

The past week has seen a classic Maoist attempt at "strategic rigidity and tactical flexibility". After two deadly demos of strike ability, the leadership has sent out an olive branch with a proposal for ceasefire and dialogue. This has several objectives: to tell the government not to take the movement for granted, to give the impression that it is the government that is against peace, and to prove that "the party controls the gun". Maoist leaders Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai wro

parties recently in which they cited "geopolitical and international reasons" why they wanted a roundtable conference to come up with a political resolution. But 15 days later they launched the attacks on Sindhukharka and Bhiman killing more than 110 policemen

It could be their way of saying: "You dight listen to us. Here is another jolt." But what it learning to some once again that there is no consistency between what the Maoists say, and

The security forces need to abandon their solely garrison-based defence for superior did was prove once again that there is no consistency between what the Maoists say, and what they do.

The comrades have got Internet savvy of late, bombarding mailing lists with state-

ments and posting analyses on their new website. The contents of a recent interview with Badal (Ram Bahadur Thapa) and "Reipinder on Some Current Issues" by Baburam

Bhattarai prove that ideologically, the Manists are as hardline as ever And for the first time since the royal massacre, they have lashed out at India. Prachanda's 8 September statement calls the Indian government's arrest and deportation of Maoist central committee member Bamdev Chhetri to Kathmandu an indication of Nepal's "Bhutanisation", and pointedly warns New Delhi not to interfere in Nepal's internal affairs.

There is no doubt that the Maoists are feeling the pressure from India, and despite the this weekend's setbacks the Maoists were feeling the heat in Nepal as well. Some see Chhetri's handover as a move towards talks initiated by New Delhi. The army is spread thinly, and the Maoists have exploited this Editorial

weakness. They continue to use overwhelming force to attack small, Vultures overhead colated garrisons. It helped them this time that the army had not

real-time intelligence with surgical strikes against command posts and training centres. The Maoists, for their part, appear to have struck a better balance now between their eastern and western regions, and will be expected to spread panic in urban areas with more bombs and arson attacks in the run up to their strike on Monday.



VUITURES OVERHEAD





t could be the 11 September anniversary or the news of fresh slaughter here at home, but the combined result is a terrific sense of terror-fatique. This is the kind of weariness that comes after talking so much about it, seeing so much of it that you go beyond caring. Or, your shut yourself off because you can't bear

there is no visible door-to-door political canvassing. Posters of tastefully dressed the emotional stress anymore. candidates look down at pedestrians, but they We who have not been directly affected by the butchery, are in a sense just look more like models for designer business spectators. What must the bereaved be going through: family members like suits. Even on the front pages of daily Ambika, the widow of sub-inspector Surendra Basnet, and her two boys, Amir newspapers, election issues do not get as and Ajit? What of the relatives of young boys and girls forced to join the militant much prominence as other stories. People underground, or who enlisted out of desperation? Do their families know of their on the street are aware that they are going fate? This week alone, there are tens of thousands of fathers, mothers, wives, to polls on 15 September, but nobody sisters and brothers mourning for the 200 Nepalis who died at the hands of othe seems to be too concerned. Nenalis this week

This numbing and mindless bloodshed has gone on too long. It is hard to see who benefits from it besides arms merchants, their brokers, and those who want to see the extinction of the Nepali nation

And as the vultures wheel overhead, we catch the repugnant glimpse of a overnment that has given up doing anything about anything. Political leaders who have lost all legitimacy in the eyes of the public, are clinging on to power by the

It would be stupid of the Maoists not to exploit this power vacuum and political disarray. They're good at what they do. And ruthless. The Maoists are simply exploiting the chronic weaknesses of the security forces—fatal flaws in preparedness, strategy and intelligence-gathering. One side seems to learn from every hattle, the other side seems incapable of doing so. It's not that the Manists are particularly brilliant, it's just that the government is daft.

The police and soldiers in Sindhuli and Argakhanchhi fought valiantly this week Rut after Mannalsen and Khara, the strategy should have been to prevent such hand-to-hand combat in the first place with early warning, pre-emptive and proactive deployment. Instead, they waited in vulnerable garrisons for the onslaught even after Magists in the village below had been rousing the populace with slogans on loudspeakers

In attack after attack, the Manists' tactics have been clear even to lay observers; use of overwhelming force. human shields, precise automatic and long-range firepower, surprise and panic to get the defenders to

expend ammunition, before over-running the base. Not to be prepared with forward defence, pre emptive intelligence and a contingency plan when you know what is coming is not just being fatalistic: it shows a death-wish. This is ideal terrain for small bands of querrillas to ravage a conventional army. If the security forces do not upgrade the quality of their intelligence then this war can drag on for decades more. But you can't fight it when the intelligence budget is used as

There has to be a concept of operations from the high command to the brigade and platoon levels laving out broad guidelines for soldiers in the field: on the objective and how to get there, how to deal with the civilians, how to counter overwhelming force on isolated garrisons.

What needs to be done at the political level is another matter altogether. You cannot cover your political failures by trying in vain to force the military to gain an upper hand in the battlefield. How long do we have to wait for that decisive political leadership to break this cycle of violence?



opinion polls are fair indicators of voters'

preferences, and nobody is expecting anything

new from the general elections next-week. The

front led by Social Democrats (consisting of

conservatives call them The Reds) is likely to

margin. The vote on Sunday would be routine,

The Swedes are surprisingly consistent in

reposing their faith in the party of their choice.

With the exception of one brief episode, Social

Democrats had been in power for 44 consecu-

tive years between 1932 and 1976. Conserva-

remain in power, though with even lowe

the Left Party and the Green Party-

with no electoral upsets expected.

tive coalitions do not last long. But sadly, some vounger Swedes seem to hold a strange ascination for fascism and want a government that is stricter on immigrants conservative about imports from European

Union countries. Rightists are not yet a significant force, but n the swings in France and the Netherands, who knows what will happen as Sweden further integrates with the FLI2 Swedes are holding on to their Kroner for now, and adopting the Euro is sure to be deeply divisive This is the fear that haunts committed social democratshere

The tradition of holding both national and local elections together is now being hotly debated. There are people who hold that local and national issues tend to get mixed up in simultaneous elections. But this Sunday, it will be like any other elections in the past-6.6 million registered voters can vote for local government units and the national parliament. Sweden abandoned the bicameral system in 1971 and the Riksdan with its 349 members is the single house now

Perhaps there is a lesson here for us in Nepal-do we really need an upper chamber where the likes of Diptaprakash Shah are members? Even though individual members of the Riksdag have complete control over their own vote—theoretically, they can vote against their party directives though such a thing rarely happens—it is the political parties that are at the core of the Swedish parliamentary system. Voters choose the party that they want to represent them. If they have strong reservations against a certain candidate, they have a right to tick against that particular name in their vote. But essentially, it's the political parties that decide the composition of the Riksdag. This arrangement may be the reason why the Swedish parliament is the most gender balanced in the world with 43 percent women.

There are seven recognised political parties in Sweden. (That mature democracies ending up with two-party systems is evidently a nyth). The social democrats are the architects of the welfare system, where high taxes and free services go together, and the system works so well it has few parallels in the world.

As in past elections, the issues this time are once again education, health and the care for the elderly. Unemployment is low, and promises of tax cuts do not appeal to voters hey are loath to give up the privileges guaranteed by the state-free education, free health care, and a blanket social security system for all. Such a welfare system is largely financed by the trade surplus that Sweden has with its trading partners, but efficiently managed state enterprises and cooperatives are no less responsible for the quality of service available to all citizens irrespective of financial standing.

Social democrat Swedes bristle when asked if their system is inherently Marxist. But this is a system that the young Karl Mary (rediscovered by some American scholars) perhaps had in mind all along. This is an interesting example for our pink comrades in Balkhu to emulate. In 1990, the Swedish Communist Party changed its name to the Left Party, and has been doing rather well

Last month, our own Communist Party of Nenal (United Marxist-Leninist) got a scathing press for hiding the portraits of The Five Wise Men when the American ambassador visited the Balkhu Palace. Soon after, Comrade Madhay Negal invited some huddhiiibisfor consultation. The portrait episode wasn't discussed, but someone did suggest that if the CPN (UML) changed its name to Nepal Social Democrat Party, nobodywould beable to stop it from coming

to power again Comrade Madhav Nepal's reaction to that suggestion was typical bourgeoisie—he defended his party's name by comparing it to Coca-Cola. But if brand-building was the issue, then the word "communist" has been hijacked by the Maoists. The UML should take a study tour of Sweden to see how the



NATION

our violence-ridden nation, one can be fully assured that the army is aware and sensitive of the critical need to hold and preserve the moral high ground.

It would be naïve to assume that the military is not aware that counter-insurgency warfare is the most dirty and despicable form of conflicts a professional

army can get into. All sensible armies try to avoid it unless, of course, they are pushed into it as has happened in the case of the Royal Nenalese Army, However, once the army deploys, then the criteria to maintain the moral high ground—especially since the 'enemy" is one's own people—becomes a conspicuous factor.

The RNA's strategy is not so much to break the back of the Maobadi and force the movement into submission, but to try and bring back all the aggrieved parties into the national mainstream and thereby achieve national reconciliation and peace. Breaking the back of the Maobadis, as erroneously stated, is not a strategic end but it could be construed as a potent and viable military means. The military actions conducted all over the country are, therefore, a part of the means adopted in pursuit of the strategic end. This is not to

say that the means justify the ends. The fact that the volume of the army's operations are necessarily at a quantum level higher than those carried out by the police during the 1997 Kilo Sierra Two in the mid-west ("Fighting by the rules" by Kanak Mani Dixit. #110) is an inescapable fact. However, one cannot logically infer and equate the actions of an inept, demoralised, directionless, corrupt, and badly led quasi-civilian public force with the actions of an unpoliticised and professional military force. And it definitely does not do justice to the selfless actions of the

safety net is a generic term, and it cannot be provided for each and every individual. What we lack is a brave and courageous civilian sector that can deliver services to the people under the security umbrella provided by the army. All military actions are derived from political directives. Favourable public

organisation and the individuals who

Ever since the storming of the Dang

military installation and the imposition of

the emergency last November, it appears

that the army is traveling down a long and

lonely road on its own. No one has shown

counter-insurgency operations, of course,

does not mean involvement in military

operations. It just means working within

the safety net provided by the military. A

sincere endeavours. Support for the

the interest or initiative to join hands in its

<u>If t</u>he public expects the arm\ to deliver peace then the army also expects the public to provide it the requisite support: moral, psýchological or

physical.

RI INNHA

The army is operating in difficult conditions after years of

neglect. Military capabilities cannot be built overnight, and

security is expensive.

opinion is the basis for success and failure Here I would like to pose a question to all the professed and genuine nationalists of Negal: is the army receiving the prerequisite public support from all quarters, or is it just being criticised and dragged into unnecessary controversy aimed at covering up for

political games? Besides, who defines human rights, who makes the rules and who judges whether they are being followed? Violent societies that have perpetrated genocides, launched bloody world wars, and exterminated whole peoples have little moral authority to ecture to a peaceloving, compassionate and cultured people.

On the other hand, human rights are a late-20th century concept encapsulated in the UN charter. It is a concept not easily understood or cared for by an uneducated people working to eke out a basic living.

The moral high ground and the rules of war These are the ground realities in Nepal. The army has acknowledged its organisational shortcomings in this area, and has taken prompt corrective measures. This relentless pressure of viewing every single action of the RNA under the human rights microscope may be essential at times, but it seems rather incongruous. The focus of the public debate must be on the problem at hand. Human rights activists have their own particular political biases, not to mention questionable moral and ethical standards.

Military operations in counterinsurgency campaigns entail the use of force. When applied by any military, force has to be overwhelming and decisive. The insurgents on the other hand are organised into highly compartmentalised and pervasive cell formations, hence the visible effect of limited casualties and small numbers of wounded and captured.

The army is a product of its society. A nowerful nation like the United States had to bite the dust in Vietnam largely because of unfavourable public opinion and lack of support for the actions of its military. The army is not necessarily averse to criticism in the press or elsewhere. However, there are certain norms, conditions and sensitivities that have to be respected and recognised by all Nepalis on matters of national security.

The army is operating in difficult conditions after years of neglect. Military capabilities cannot be built overnight, and security is expensive. This in itself creates tremendous pressures on the Nepali polity as a whole Trresponsible and immature analysis and peurile outpourings just add

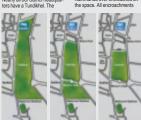
If the public expects the army to deliver peace then the army also expects the public to provide it the requisite support: moral psychological or physical. Healthy and constructive criticism of the army's actions is a precondition to guiding and controlling it along the righteous path to peace. Immature analysis and alarmist inferences only create confusion and thereby, harm our ional interests and security.

(Samrat Rana is the pen name of a military analyst.)

LETTERS

THE PEOPLES' TUNDIKHEL Thank you for the timely article y Hemalata Rai ("Shrinking Tundikhel", #107). Few clarifications. Tundikhel literally means an open space for practicing archery and martial sports. Nearly all our district headquar-

discovery of a dhunge dhara of Bishu Varma Rajbansi (571-616 AD) while construction the underground pedestrian walkway n Ratna Park shows that Fundikhel is at least 1,400 years old. In that period, no citizens of Kathmandu ever encroached on the snace. All encroachments



have been done by for govern-During the Rana regime, the army took good care of the

razing were not restricted. Fencing Tundikhel was never a necessaity then, nor is it now. The historic khari ko hot not capital punishment (without trial), up came the Sainik Manch, Khula Manch and Ratna park. Tundikhel lost much of its grandeur and value because of this compartmentalisation and fencing. With the pile driving for the foundation of the Sanchaya Kosh Building, the Sundhara went dry, another Bagmati Civilisation heritage was lost forever.

Then came democracy, and today a 9 ft high metal fence is encircling and enclosing Tundikhel at a cost of Rs 28.1 million. The justification given is: "Kathmandu's only open space is being encroached." Oh yes?

Who is encroaching? It's not the people. A simple Rana-style trespass prohibition law

enforced by the army would have done the trick, why did we need a fence? Let us start restoring Tundikhel to its lost glory by making a living museum of the Bibhu Varma water spout. The city planners should also make the people of Kathmandu feel that Tundikhel belongs to them, it belongs to all of us, we must have a say in how it is pre-And finally, we are not living in Jung Bahadur's or Bhimsen

Thapa's time. The location of the Royal Nepal Army headquarters in the centre of town may not be the best location from the strategic point of view. The army's present facilities on Tundikhel should not be misused, unused, underused or overused by whichever civilian authority inherits it. It should be given back to the people Huta Ram Baidya, Tripureswo

ANTI-AMERICAN Just as you have fulfilled your apparent self-yow of publishing anti-American articles in the Nepali Times, I must fulfill my yow of canceling the delivery of your publication to my home. Do realise that you would be able to accomplish very little if you did not daily enjoy and utilise the global American culture of computers, internet. TV. air flight, etc. How. come you do not publish articles thanking the Americans for all you are able to do today? Please adjust your worldview to the correct perspective. I will visit our local newspaper distributor today

to make sure to immediately continue delivery Tim Ackerman Kathmandu University Medical School CK Lal's tryst with an unnamed

BIG BROTHER

Indian diplomat ("Distant neighbours", #110) proves that our net theories about New Delhi's assessment of Nepal's strategic importance was correct all along. But the real question is, what are we going to do about it? Are we going to keen on living in an ultra nationalistic never-never land, or will we try to figure out how we can give what they want to get what we need. In the spectrum of possible bilateral models. Louess Nepal-India relations should fall somewhere een Sri Lanka and Bhutan

EVERYONE LOST Raiendra Dahal's "No one won. everyone lost" (#110) was ceptive analysis. It was clear that the state of emer gency wasn't needed, and vasn't what Nepal and the Nepali People needed. The real

problems were to address the

D Gairai, Kathmandu

battered economy, falling and the lack of development. It was the myopia of our leaders that made an emer gency necessary. This country can still turn the corner, but it must give the nower and responsibility back to the people. Our politicians, policy-makers, intellectuals and also the media have squandered the nine months of emergency by doing nothing. Mr Dahal's analysis is correct, but maybe it is also his job to show us a way out of this stalemate Rabin Giri, Dharan

· A headline speaks a thousand words, and Rajendra Dahal's "No one won everyone lost" was one of them. In five short words, it tells us why all this is senseless and stupid. And a curse be upon the Maoists and an

unfeeling elite for unleashing it Man B Gurung, Brunei

CKTAL I am a regular follower of CK world be struggling for Lal's ability to offer a different dignity, independence and perspective on issues. His articles have an optimistic balm But, somehow, reading "Distant neighbours" (#110) made me feel sick. What is he actually trying to project? That our independence all our efforts to develop and is more of a burden for us than a boon-well, it might be, in terms of some material gain, but not when you take into account the dignity and pride factor. It might be a matter of shame for him to carry the passport of one of the poorest countries of the world, but not for all those migrant people for whom he seems to have so much sympathy in his column. In fact. I find Nenali migrant workers here in India talk about being Nepali with a great

being Nepali somehow shamefu

identity? The fact that such an opinion is coming from an advocate of freedom and self-identity makes it much worse. Is he trying to nullify

maintain an identity of our own for centuries? Or is it that while trying to outsmar the "Indian diplomat", he himself became more Indian than Indians? Calcutta BLOODY WELL RIGHT I share your sentiments about nedia coverage in the editorial "Bloody well right" (#109). Great job! sense of pride. CK Lal has made

He should realise that

monetary gain is not the only

thing required in life-or else

Kalvan Pande Madison, Wisconsin

Vienna museum, Nepalis why would people all over the worship stolen Buddha' (#108), that devotees are worshipping the image of the Patan Buddha, It shows that the icons of Nepal's culture and religion are not some dead material objects of art This is a vibrant and living culture, not a lost civilisation whose artifacts can be plundered and sold for cash The German art dealer is reported to have wanted 200,000 euros for the Buddha mask. Does he know that some things don't have price tags, some things can be priceless some things are too sacred to trade? The Buddha image is nart of Patan's Samvak fesitval when hundreds of Buddhas from individual outhis are paraded around the

I was moved to read in "In

town. Their combined sanctity

is a bit like drug trafficking It is driven by demand.

is supposed to give devotees a

Having said that I am annalled at

the apathy of the Nepal government in bringing back its stolen property. How can a state that doesn't value its own faith expect others to treat it with respect?

The trade in stolen idols

There is no point blaming the people who sell the objects saving they don't value it so we will buy it for "safe keeping". If the temptation wasn't there, no one would steal it in the firs place. And the tempta-tion comes from the high prices that these "art objects" fetch in western "art markets". The sooner both east and west learn to attach great spiritual value to their faith and heritage, advancement of both

civilisations R Fabian, Berne

It's a Zoo out there



but they are beautiful here says Lhakpa Norbu Lama of V mriga in Nepali spotted deer. His two they eat our millet harvest and Kathmandu-born grandsons the villagers kill them in anger,

Helambu pointing to a pair of giggle, shriek, and cling on to nis clothes in excitement. This isn't what they expected to see in busy Jawalakhel.

Lama visits his children in Kathmandu three times a year, and his favourite activity on these trips isn't watching movies in the theatres or sunning himself on Tundikhel. picking up the gossip. It's pending a full day or two at the Central Zoo in Jawalakhel. Here on holiday last week. Lama made his pilgrimage with two grandsons and a son in-law in tow, saying it always gives his companions a fresh tially nature-loving people-they

The zookeepers are enthusiastic, and visitors can't get over the open space and exotic species. Now if only the Central Zoo had some more cash.

long years, and has taken

to stare at them—some

responsibility for the hippos.

"People are just awe-struck at

compare the animals with pigs

others think they look like

rhinos without their rough

outer hard skins," he laughs.

Maharian has seen how close

the bond between human and

beast can be. "These animals

have become my family. I feel

sad and worried if they get ill."

More than that, Maharian can

the sight of them. Children love

appreciation for living in Kathmandu.

The Central Zoo entertains about a million visitors every year, but the high point for workers there is the annual Bhoto Jatra in May or June, when about 35,000 of the people who come to lawalakhel from all over the Valley to view the vest of Machindranath also take in Nepal's only zoo. "During Bhoto Jatra we have a tough time controlling the crowd, some years we even run out of tickets." savs Chiri Maharian. zoo quard. "Nepalis are essen-

they come here," he smiles. No surprise, for right in the heart of downtown Lalitnur visitors are confronted with six hectares housing over 800 animals of 126 species-30 mammal varieties 66 birds, eight reptiles and 22 fish species. There are a number of exotic species too, the most recent additions being a pair of siamang brought in from Malaysia, ostrich from Australia and a hippopotamus from Thailand.

go wild with excitement when

This is a much-neglected institution, but don't blame the zookeepers. Most of them are

committed beyond the call of tell whether his charges are mere duty. Krishna Maharian happy, depressed or plain has worked at the zoo for 18

The Central Zon was established in 1932 by Prime Minister Juddha Sumshere Rana as a private collection of wild animals. Life-size bronze statues of his mother and sister-in-law still look down on visitors to the zoo. With the political and social changes that followed 1951, when the amassed wealth of the Rana prime ministers was nationalised and a number of properties turned into public utilities, the ownership finally came to the government in

There once was a sea

lying back—finally—to South Asia this past week. I soon gave up on the horrible films, bland food and general squalor of British Airways economy class and wandered to the back of the aircraft. There, I leaned on the rear door, feeling that neculiar sensation that comes from knowing that a simple mechanical failure in the latch would launch one into space for a few minutes of wondrous, freezing terror, followed by the

But I wasn't there for cheap thrills. I had noticed on the in-flight route man that we were flying above Central Asia just crossing the Lizhekistan border from Russia. Below us, according to the map, lay a great blob of blue called the Aral Sea. Once this was one of the world's largest landlocked bodies of salt water. Now, as most people know, it's a testament to

howling ignorance about the consequences of our arrogant ineptitude. Instead of a body of water several hundred kilometres across, the Aral Sea is now a series of poisonous ponds, linked by toxic salt flats. Badly rusted fishing boats sit on ridges of corrosive soil, three days walk from the nearest water. The communities where the fisherfolk lived and plied their trade have either disappeared beneath the shifting sands or become gravevards of the victims of the Aral Sea's despoliation.

It's easy to blame the arrogance of Soviet communism for the fate of the sea and its people, the once rich fishery and culture on the shores of a once pristine body of water. Engineers from Moscow planned the great diversions of rivers that fed the Aral, urged on by political commissars drunk on the notion of conquering nature. Cotton, the world's most widely grown crop, killed the Aral Sea. The rivers were ripped from their natural courses to irrigate thirsty cotton fields in Uzbekistan, the old Soviet Union's cotton belt. Cotton sucks water and pesticides like few other plants and the aguifers of the northern Uzbek plains were soon drained.

So fresh water from the Amu Darya, known in Europe as the River

There are scary and depressing lessons for anyone who supports restricting access to information.



Oxus, and other great streams was sent gushing into a desert that once lay under the ancient Silk Route but now was a vast, white-tufted cotton plantation. Year by year, a sea deprived of inflowing waters receded, stranding those fishing fleets. At first, the people were puzzled, then alarmed as the fishery failed in the remaining waters of the Aral Sea—by this point too toxic, too overwhelming salty, for life ever to be born. Then hey were frightened as their growing poverty and hunger was compounded by wracking respiratory disease. Storms of poison dust were blowing off the cotton fields and the salty bed of the dried up sea. Even the unborn were affected. Rirth defects snared and the living died, how many we'll never know. The USSR had more anonymous victims of viscous bureaucracy than any other

evil empire the world has known. I wonder if there are any more miserable than the lost citizens of the area around the Aral Sea.

The big plane banked to the right and I could see more clearly the lay of the devastated land below. A long gnarled peninsula protruded into a remnant of the sea-small and no doubt shallow. I wondered if this could he the dreaded "Island X" where Moscow had once developed its deadly. biological weapons: anthrax, smallpox, influenza and other dreaded disease bred to kill people in the name of a twisted state ideology. Intrepid reporters-most of them Russian and citizens of the former Soviet Uniondiscovered this still walled up and highly mysterious laboratory while ferreting through declassified documents and the subsequent outcry had led to its final closure, once and for all. The viruses and compounds within were supposedly made inert and harmless, but we may never know.

Supremely, severely ironic it is, that the commissars of Moscow chose an island in the Aral Sea to plan deliberately an assault on the health of ordinary people in enemy lands, while all around their own policies were killing tens of thousands of their own citizens. That of course lay suppressed and husbed up too until the fall of communism.

It's funny what you can see from a great height. It's equally stark just what you miss. I can only hope that governments in today's unipolar world, in Washington, Europe, Asia and elsewhere, learn something from the hideous errors of the old Soviets Union. Arrogance and secrecy breed only death and destruction, and the commissars discovered to their cost. To those in America who are closing minds and restricting access to information in the name of security. I say only remember the Aral Sea.





Keeping the zoo's success story afloat

In 1997, the zoo began a project called Friends of the Zoo under its conservation education program, targeting schoolchildren and their parents. Already, the FoZ is acclaimed as one of the best undertakings of its kind in Asian zoos. For an annual fee of Rs 150, schoolchildren can avail of conservation educational activities. tours to the wild, discounts in various stores in the Valley and free entrance in the zoo, and also participate in tending to and feeding the animals. FoZ presently has over 9,000 members from about 75 schools in Kathmandu Valley. "Children between the ages of 11 and 14 are more keen on our activities; the older ones are already overburdened with preparing for SLC exams," explains Geetha Shrestha, chief of FoZ.

Most of the members are students of private schools, in large part because the Rs 150 is simply too much for children in government schools to pay. Bhawani Raman Subedi, a teacher at the Bhaktapur Adarsha School, who was taking his 54 students around, was disappointed, but not too much. "Our students are not members because their parents cannot spare the cash. But we bring them here and other nearby animal reserves for their project work in

zoology and biology," he said. FoZ would like to subsidise membership fees for government students, but simply cannot spare any of its Rs 1.7 million budget. The fees it collects only total Rs 300,000-400,00. But, says FoZ's Shrestha, they are considering the request of the government schools for group memberships and have started identifying contact people in schools so the children can have more opportunities to participate with their more privileged peers.

Another program, under the zoo animal welfare scheme, is getting sponsors for animals. The cost to partially sponsor the feed for an animal ranges between \$170 and \$3340 annually, depending on the animals and the size of their enclosure. This programme was introduced to lighten the zoo administration's Rs 4 million annual feed hill

Rocomo a mombor of Friends of the 7on

become a member of the last of the 200			
Nationality	Individual	Family	Student
Nepali	Rs 200	Rs 500	Rs 150
SAARC	Rs 300	Rs 600	Rs 200
Other	Rs 500	Rs 1,000	Rs 300

1956. The management of the zoo has changed hands a few mentally what its creator envisaged-a collection of rare wild animals but with one important amendment to his vision—the right of the public to enter the area. The public could enter but

for a long time there was little reason for most people to do so. Mainly because the government lacked the expertise and the motivation to manage a zoo and develop it into an educational institution, it fell into disrepair, and the cursorily tended to animals and their surroundings were far from attractive. Many Kathmanduties had even fornotten about the existence of the zoo by 1995, when the management of it was handed over to the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC), The KMTNC was given the responsibility for 30 years, and the government agreed to stay on as a facilitator and monitor the zoo activities

Zookeepers say the central government has virtually abdicated this role. For the first five years after the

Mandala House DESIGNATION OF THE PERSONS IN

government provided the zoo grants to cover its running costs. "But after it stopped the grants, government authorities hardly even visit the zoo anymore," says Chief Administra tion Officer Achyut Raj Pant. Things at the zoo are a lot

better, though. For the first time last fiscal year it earned enough money through ticket sales and renting out animals as well as space to raise the Rs 20 million it needs to cover its annual costs. It seems like a lot but after the salaries of 72 employees, animal and bird feed, small-scale renovations and constructions and administrative costs, there's nothing left to pamper the beasts. Some of the animals do

need pampering. The Central Zoo exhibits 13 out of 38 endangered animal species of Nepal, and has been particularly successful in breeding hlackhuck --- some eight years ago it released 25 of the deer in the wild. The program wasn't

KMTNC stepped in, the



too successful, but the keeners residents couldn't care less what have learnt from their mistakes happened to the animals. and are considering the release To address these administra of a second batch of 25. "This tive and financial concerns, the time we are taking serious KMTNC has developed master precautions," says director RK plan for the development and Shrestha. An animal exchange modernisation of the zoo. The program was also initiated after major thrusts of the plan are the KMTNC took over the physical design development, management—the recent rare animal collection and manage additions are courtesy zoos ment and conservation activities

Animal security is the other major concern of the zoo management and an area where it could really use some more cash. The six hectares are guarded by just 10 untrained men. and two low-ranking nolicemen. This is just not enough to repel an attack like the one in 1999, when poachers broke into the zoo, killed two rare one-horned rhinos, and mutilated them, then escaping with the precious horns. Zoning laws are such that there is no huffer natrol zone on the perimeter of the zoo, instead there are private houses whose

now the challenge is finding money for the physical design development estimated to cost Rs 600 million, "Informal talks have been held, but nothing concrete has hannened yet. We are still looking for donors and collaborators," says Shrestha. ♦ Welcome to our Mexican Food Postival

The plan for the animal collection

and conservation activities has in-

built fundraising components,



Summit Hotel

The pen is mightier

Residents of Jogimara VDC in Dhading district were moved when they received \$500 sent by fellow Nepalis living in Washington DC, upon reading the plight of the village, which lost most of its working male population in an army operation. (See "Unfriendly fire", #106.)

"At least there are neonle who share our sorrow" says Gyan Bahadur Biswokarma who lost two sons who were working on an airport runway in Kalikot. The money was raised by the District of Columbia Athletics Club, a group of Nepali amateur athletes, who

need Parents who had lost a and orphans from Jogiman walked three hours to gather



at Maihitaan Bazar on the Prithvi Highway Monday to collect the money. Families received Rs 2,250 for each member they lost, Tanka Bahadur Malla. former chairman of Jogimara VDC, says the community is drawing strength not just from the money, but from the fact that someone is listening to them. "Apart from the monetary assistance, we feel that there is someone to share our sorrow. While the army remains quiet over its killing of innocents, it's heartening to see Nepalis living in America extend a helping hand."

Thais to try two more Nepalis
Two Nepalis accused of heroin trafficking are to appear in court on
19 September for trial. The two, Hari Bahadur Gurung and Pore Ghale, are currently at Bangkok's Klong Prem prison, which has six other Nepalis serving sentences. Gurung and Ghale were accused of trying to smuggle 7.5 kg of heroin, but say they were framed by smugglers and forced to sign a confession at gunpoint by police. They say the evidence was planted on them. According to Thai law, the two face the death penalty. But activists working with Nepali prisoners in Thailand say that with legal support and consular representation by the Nepali embassy, the sentence can be reduced. There are over two dozen Nepalis in Klong Prem and other Thai jails.

Nepal in elephant polo meet

A Nepali team will compete in the King's Cup Elephant Polo tourna-ment next week in the Thai resort town of Hua Hin. The draw for the tournament, which will tru from September 17 to 22, was made Monday by Tim Baade of Kimberly Clark and Somchal Jinnovart of PriceWaterhouse Coopers. Drawn in league A were Singapore Polo Club, Mercedes Benz Thailand's German team, Sandalford Winery from Australia. Chivas and King Power's Thailand B team. In league B are American Express World Elephant Polo Association team from Nepal, Tickle and the Ivories team from Sydney, Sri Lanka's Ceylon Elephant Polo Association team and King Power's Thailand A team



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SWORLPAZ BERUTY HOME

Hariharbhawan, Pulchowk, Lalitpur (in front of Sajha Bus Garage)



there's little to suggest he didn't know what he was talking about. He had to pay the price for thinking out aloud a bit too Qualifying Round For prematurely. Case dismissed. Now it turns out that the manner in which his resignation was tendered and accepted was glaringly uncon-

stitutional With post-1990 political life having been defined too extensively by articles, barristers and clauses, 's remarkable we don't have a

of the panel that drafted the

a public debate on the matter

At the other end, a palace-

nominated Upper House member

was forced to step down after his

idea of a grand coalition including

sounded too outlandish even to his

peers. Since the gentleman used to

the Manists under Article 127

be the army's top legal expert,

varrant consideration.

We, the people

irst, it was the Supreme Court's impending ruling on the dissolution of the House of Representatives. Then it was the separate constitutional court. The uncivil war in the Nenali Congress constitution used to be the last Until last week, we thought it was refuge of politicians in the past, too. the November 23 elections. Now our political future appears to hinge over of 16 December, 1960 was in on what the authors of Article 127 of the constitution actually had in

conformity with Article 55 of the basic law of the day. Weeks after the restoration of multiparty Thinkers of all persuasions have democracy three decades later, key been ruminating over whether the commanders of the People's House of Representatives could or Movement conceded that Marich should be restored by a royal palace Man Singh Shrestha's government order in case the elections cannot was upholding the partyless be held on schedule. Even before constitution while mowing down you could start wondering whether pro-multiparty multitudes. Since that would amount to contempt of constitutional correctness doesn't court, a newly retired Supreme necessarily translate into prudent politics, some introspection is in Court justice jumped in to say his old office has the sole prerogative to Part of the country is already revive the Lower House. Since the man also happened to be a member

doing that. Politicians can't stop apologising for allowing their constitution, his repeated pleas for obsession with achieving democracy to infect their ability to preserve it.

The much-maligned palace take-

Since the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority raids, bureaucrats have started reviewing whether it was a good idea to accept political fund-raising as part of the job description. Other institutions and individuals are busy blaming each other for national degeneration. The robustness of these deliberations cannot compensate for the reticence of the people.

During the three decades of disorganised politics, there was an incentive to keep quiet. Critical thinking invariably brought trouble. The letter and spirit of today's constitution allow us to holler as lourd as we want, but there is an ominous apathy. The political class may not have enshrined its right to ignore us while allowing us to

speak. But many of our leaders must have expected us to eventually recede into silence. We mustn't hand them an easy victory by

drifting into self-pity. When the constitution vested sovereignty in the people, it presupposed our perpetual predominance. We, the people, have a responsibility that transcends keening track of the latest arms deal or speculating about who might switch camps the next in the three major political parties. Too bad voting isn't compulsory in Nepal. That's another good reason to reactivate the people.

A citizens' election compact might be a good beginning. Each household with three eligible voters should pledge to send at least one to the polling station. The elderly, sick and conscientious objectors can qualify for exemption. In several districts, getting neonle out to vote could prove hazard

schedule that would meet the constitutional deadline A better idea might be to have neighbourhood committees run mobile polling stations, complete with all-party representation, and go from door to door. If this sounds unworkable-and even undemocratic-consider how much faith we put in our Census Bureau enumerators. Their work determines everything between the voting-age population and the number of MPs each district can

probably too late for this election.

with the Election Commission to

work out a delivery and collection

Unless postal workers can liaise

send. As for voter turn-out, does that matter when the system is at stake? ♦ ous Mail-in hallots could be a good answer, but it's

"This war can be won, but we need adequate logistics and public support."

The logistics and timing appear to have been carefully planned. A vehicle with unarmed Maoists defied a curfew to approach the town's checkpoint at 7PM, saying that they were delivering fish to the barracks. The main force errived at around 10PM, and some of them were even shot at hy sentries

From the bullet casings and accounts of survivors, it is evident that the Maoists' main target was the army base, and that they deployed most of their firepower at the barracks. In addition to SLRs, machine guns and RPGs captured from the army, there are unconfirmed reports that the Manists this time also had some AK .47s

After the army base was overrun, the police fought hard until they, too, ran out of ammunition. There seems to have been some confusion between them about the chain of command. Also, the Manists told the police that the army had already surrendered, and vice versa, sowing further doubt.

The army platoon at Sandhikharka had 54 soldiers, the police had 150 and the armed police about 30 Of them 17 soldiers 35 policemen, and nine paramilitary were killed. Of the 100 taken prisoner and forced to porter guns and ammunition looted from the harracks 70 have since returned The rest are believed to be straggling back to Pokhara in small

groups, or dead. Assistant CDO of Argakhanchi district Babu Ram Khatiwada was at home with his wife and three-yearold when the shooting began, "We hought we were safe because the

army was there, and I thought the army was firing warning shots in the darkness as they often do," he told us. Soon, the Maoists were at his door They handcuffed him and took him away with the others. Like the others. Khatiwada was forced to sign a document saving he would guit his job before being released.

The security forces guarding Sandhikharka seem to have been caught unawares. Sunday was the day when women had Teej feasts at home. Locals had noticed strangers passing through, but one shopkeeper told us: The police and army didn't seem aware of what was noing on ' The fighting went on till early Sunday morning. The Maoists were so

confident that they even staged a victory parade before marching off with their cantives who were made to carry the stolen weapons and Rs 90. million looted from the local bank. The telephones and electricity in the

town have not been functioning. and all development activity has neen at a standstill After a tour of the area

Brigadier General Prakash Bahadur Basnet from Pokhara admitted that his was a sethack, but said that the army was capable of fighting on, provided there is adequate equipment. He told us: "It is critical also to have support from civil society, political parties, and the people." DIG of the western. region. Kumar Koirala, agrees: This war can be won, but we need adequate logistics and public

ECONOMY BIZ NEWS

More Suzukis

Arun Intercontinental Traders, authorised distributors of Suzuki vehicles in Nepal, has introduced three new models in Nepal. The company says all of its three new offers—the Ignis, the Liana and the Grand Vitara XL-Seven are fuel-efficient, less polluting, and reasonably priced (Rs 1.9 - 4.1 million).

Faber cooking

Universal Trading Circle has begun marketing the Faber range of kitchen appliances, from food processors and gas stoves to ovens cooking ranges and electric chimneys. The company says its Faber chimneys are more efficient in extracting kitchen vapours as compared with other chimneys, while being more energy-efficient and having reduced noise levels.

A cap for SCBN

The Standard Chartered Bank Nepal has been awarded the Bank of the Year 2002 Award, making it the first recipient of the prize in Nepal. The prize is awarded by The Banker, a source of reliable global financial intelligence and coverage on the industry, that is a part of The Financial Times newspaper group. Banks that meet the minimum benchmark to qualify for consideration for the prize are invited to apply, and are then judged on the basis of their safety parameters, use of technology to advance their market position, and banking structure and strategy, says an SCBN release.

Anchor sales

The Sharda Group and Samiksha Enterprises have entered into an agreement with the Anchor Group (makers of the toothpaste by the same name), and Anchor Health and Beauty Care to market Anchor products in Nepal. Anchor toothpaste—certified to be 100 percent vegetarian—has a unique formula that strengthens teeth, says the company,

UTELL & Fulbari

The Fulbari Resort & Spa has signed a service agreement with UETLL, a leading hospitality market and distribution network. The Fulbari is the latest group to join roughly 5,5000 independent and chain hotels in 150 countries that are members of UTELL. The Pokhara property has been classified as Superior First Class, a company press release asys. Listing with UTELL makes Pilbarn freservations easily accessible travel agents and tour operators.

Solar water heaters

Winter's approaching and so are the sellers of water heating solutions.

Water Pure International's products include the Solar Pro, a water heating system with a seven-year warranty. The heaters use vacuum glass tubes for faster heating and well-insulated storage tanks to keep water hot for up to 72 hours. The heaters are available in different sizes-from 77 to 250 litres-and with automatic electric heating for cloudy days. Water Pure, the authorised agents, also sell a range of water filtration systems imported from Singapore





The secret ingredient to make summits work for us: action

n the papers in the United States World Summit on Sustainable Development Rasehall nerhans has don't ask me why the US won't sign the Kyoto convention or why so many other commitments are not met. President Bush preferred to take a vacation and sent Secretary of State Colin Powell. The most interesting thing the Reed read about that development was a small protest item in an East Coast newspaper. A number of Nepalis, however, did hobnob with the earthy olitterati, and we can only hope that they did an adequate job, filling in for those who should have been invited but weren't, and for those who were asked, but found other, more

That said, for Nepal, Johannesburg doesn't really mean much. Its predecessor did little for us than sour the proliferation of the NGO industry Funds for the environment began to flow indiscriminately, and sustainable development became Nepal's mantra for economic nirvana. Ten years later the buzzword has changed. As far as the Beed can tell, Rio + 10 is something like Beijing +5—another junket for people to network and a chance for individual countries to muscle in on the meet's purported agenda.

The political social and economic

interesting places to go to

climate today is also vastly different from that a decade ano. In 1992, the political situation in most countries. we could be unequivocally positive seemed to be stabilising. The break-up about the Earth Summit. of the Soviet Union had created many more nations and in countries like



Nepal, democracy was enjoying a resurgence. Economic reforms, mostly focusing on opening up economies and boosting the private sector, rode on the wave of political stability. There was great optimism on most fronts at this point, and the agenda of the Earth Summit was seen as something that could be accomplished, rather than as a hindrance. But the fall of the markets, the setting in of a kind of political rot, and the insidious spread of terrorism easily relegated environmental and sustainable development

issues to the backburner. Don't get the Beed wrong. There's no denying that Rio was good for Nepal in many ways, and having a plethora of environmental organisations means that green issues will remain in the spotlight. The flow of funds for community forest develop ment and management made Nepali forest preservation efforts among the most successful in the past decade. The strengthening of local bodies in many villages rode on the success of the orest management committees Perhans if this surress could have been expanded to other areas—such as real. honest-to-god decentralisation—then

The challenge now is to redefine what sustainable development means

the market economy has become a stronger force all over the world. How do we sustain markets in a way that their heneficial effects make a difference in the lives if the majority of people. The South-east Asian economic crisis raises a number of questions on using trade and investment for economic development. At the same time, the recovery of the Korean economy after the debacle points out many more underlying issues.

The way in which Nepal itself has come to this level of political instability and seen the erosion of governance forces us to examine the very fundamentals of sustainable development, as we have been talking about it so far. What are the priorities of a country like Nepal when it faces continuous crises and realises that sustainable development has become for it only a slogan. We are overwhelmed by any number of development concepts that make their way here from around the world. How do we sift through them alter and synthesise them to find real solutions What is the value of

something like Jo'burg for us? All that said, the core issue has not changed much from a decade ago: planning, talking, strategy meetings are all very fine. Now it's time to take

artinn 6

"Don't blame private power producers'



here have been efforts by officials and media recently to discredit independent power producers (IPPs). This merits a response, and a need to shed light on the ground realities of private investment vis-a vis public sector undertakings in the development of hydropower

The international financial community is watching the performance of the Bhote Kosi and Khimti projects closely before committing any more resources in Nepal's hydropower.

As far as the Bhote Kosi Power Company (BKPC) is concerned, we have been able to finish the project pretty much on time and within the stipulated budget despite a force majeure flood. While the license is for 36 MW. we were able to install 52 MW bringing the cost of the project to roughly \$ 1.92 million per MW. This includes international project management fees, interest on money during construction, several types of insurance, international legal fees etc. The entire project including the 25 km transmission line is operated and maintained by 20 personnel.

We were never approached for hand outs. The SoalteeGroup does not condone nor participate in such activities involving graft by any name. We had the occasional request for in kind services such as building something in the area over and above the agreed responsibilities the project had undertaken for local and area development. The only request of a shady nature came from officials requesting a few more days in Korea on their way to China to inspect the equipment being manufactured, with a higher daily allowance, which of course was flatly

In order to secure debt financing on the project, we approached close to 100 international banks along with International Finance Corporation (IFC) as the lead financier. Nepal simply does not feature on the international private sector infrastructure investment map. The international financial community will closely watch the performance of the BKPC and Khimti before committing any more resources in this sector for sometime. The track record on contractual obligations will determine the future of the hydropower development here in Nepal.

Hydropower may be Nepal's wealth, but we cannot develop it without foreign capital. Neither can equity or debt be raised on any project of medium size domestically. Furthermore, investors as well as the financial community have little or no experience to exercise project finance, a complex financing tool which is the norm in long term infrastructure development. Nor do we have the legal expertise in the country. We lack the project management expertise to be efficient. Insurance options do not exist here. All in all, we have no other option but accept the norms of globalisation to draw from overseas the inputs. required to developing the hydropower sector.

Let us look at some of the public sector projects, the most recent being the public sector 144 MW Kali Gandaki A. The project is also financed mainly in US dollars, which had delays exceeding two years. The project cost is estimated at \$435 million and perhaps will finally end up being up to \$70 million higher as the contractors negotiate. This could bring the per MW cost of production to around \$3 million to 3.3 million—not counting the capitalisation of interest during construction legal fees, and insurance premiums. Add to this the level of overstaff ing that would most probably be a burden on the project. For example, state-owned Sunkosi with a capacity of 10 MW employs 342 staff.

What is even more surprising is that the state utility borrows money from the government in Nepali rupees at the rate of 12 percent when in fact the government borrowed that money from multi-lateral

agencies for between 1-4 percent.

The major problems inherent in the NEA are management issues such as over-staffing, weak financial controls, receipt of debtors, delay in repatriations from branches, inability to expand its distribution, transmission losses, low employee productivity, high employee to installed capacity ratio, low revenue to employee ratio, low fixed asset to employee ratio. The problem is not the PPA with independent power

We would be more than happy to debate the merits and demerits of nublic sector undertaking vis-à-vis the private sector in an open forum It would open the eyes of the public, which ultimately has to shoulder the burden of the NEA's perceived poor management and nontransparent practices. The high end of the per unit consumer tarriff of NEA is almost twice the per unit charge that BKPC charges NEA. Hence a 50 percent margin, an enviable contribution to any business

(Siddhartha Rana is Executive Director and local partner in the Upper Bhote Koshi Hydroelectric Project and Chairman of the Soaltee Group).

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understand what it means to wear the more-or-less knee-length tunic with the loose, gathered trousers is a meditation on geography, religior history, national identity, the relentless march of modernity laziness, and the all-too-human desire for variety. "It is convenient comfortable to wear and easy to maintain. It's versatile, and does not require skill to put on, like a sari does," savs a enthusiast Aditee Maskey who works with the International Labour Organisa tion's Kathmandu office Two decades ago, few Nepalis would have believed that the

our lives, and they are also getting

more and more common. After all,

there are only so many permuta-

suruwal strikes just the right

tions that the traditional six-yard

Nepali fariya can take. The kurtha

balance between moder

The choice to wear

nity and tradition.

ou know that old gag

about hemlines going up

with the economy? Well

in Nepal, that's

reversed. As the

kurtha-suruwal would be the subject of so much fashion discus sion. Women don't anymore suddenly stop wearing them when they hit their mid-20s, or get married. Increasingly, older women are also turning to the outfit, if somewhat hesitantly, and even traditional mothers-in-law are accepting the outfit as convention ally appropriate for their daughters in-law. The sari, that symbol of staunch Nepali Hindu womanhood, is being seen less than ever, only on ritual occasions The perception is that the

traditional fariya is out of place in most urban settings, and the Nepali mindset is not yet ready to see most western styles nain widespread currency. As increasing numbers of women work outside the home, the kurtha-suruwal allows them to be more mobile-be less fussy when running after microbuses, sit astride motorcycles, not bother about the sari immodestly slipping down. It also reduces the workload of women at home-no more starching or unwieldy ironing in

presentable. The silent concurrence on the kurtha-suruwal among people from

different economic and social strata, has granted the outfit a remarkable acceptability. Women in rural communities have taken urban middle class women as their role models as far as the sari is considered, and are slowly switching their loyalties. And even if they do not wear it, the kurtha is one more kind of social code. One of the first groups of women to embrace the outfit was development workers seeking acceptability among rural communities, and yet wanting to move away from the hassles of the sari. "It muts the villaners at ease and helps them identify with the development workers-which makes establishing communication much easier," explains Jasmine Raibhandary of Save the Children (UK), who frequently visits rural areas.

Practicality aside, the kurtha's aesthetic virtue and malleability as a fashion object has helped ensure its popularity. Man Shova Gurung, 49, wore saris all her life—she graduated from high school in a sari. obtained a college degree wearing a cotton dhoti and the sari remained her conventional 'official' wear at the Nepal Banijya Bank, where she has worked for some time now Recently, she discovered the

a fracture in her right ankle and found out that the three-piece outfit required less effort to put on. When kurthasuruwals—

chunni, something Zeenat-of-the shalwar 'suits' in Pakistan-first streaked-hair wouldn't dream of started really catching on in doing. Everyone. Whether it suits Kathmandu in the late 1980s, the them or not. In this newspaper's rage was styles copied from considered opinion, women of Pakistani teleserials, Kathmandu medium height and a somewhat mothers and their daughters well-rounded build are the only wanted anything that made them people who look good in this style look like slightly flighty, yet modest, belles of the ball, (Wonde if the somewhat disturbing current rage for bleached and otherwise badly coloured hair stems from the

same TV shows.) Peshan Lal, a

kurtha-suruwal retailer from Bag

Bazar, fondly remembers those

days, "They all wanted that

wistfully.

Pakistani touch!" he exclaims

But as video faded and rable

caught on. Indian fashion trends

satellite channels that catered to

an overwhelmingly Indian market.

Peshan Lal's clientele now inquire

more about designs worn by Prerna

spread with the footprint of

and Kusum, leading female

All this chopping and changing has had a salubrious impact on the skills of Kathmandu's tailors, and has led to a spurt of interest in textile design and traditional Nepali textiles, too. Fabrics traditionally produced for saris and blouses are now being made into trendy kurthas. In the mid-1990s women in Kathmandu stitched kurthas out of Indian silk and imported language synthetic saris Now, fashion designers are displaying their creativity, and using dhaka fabric, giving a fillip to

an art that was stagnating. Fashion designer Uma Chand says that her boutique in Kupondole gets about 200 orders for kurtha-suruwals each month and that the modifications her clients request to personalise the outfit are various. Pockets for women like Rajbhandary, higher slits for those who ride two wheelers, slimmer silhouettes for the summer and less so for the winter, better to wear a sweater under, skinny shawls, buttons on the sides, enaulettes elastic suruwalutons vou name it.





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comfort of the kurtha-suruwal literally by accident-she sustained cramped apartments. Kurthas take

characters in popular Sony and Star soaps, rather than those sported by the Zeenats and Afsana of yore. And because, as we all know. TV viewers Want More Variety and Get Bored Easily sitcom producers have realised that one way to keep their predominantly female audience hooked is by putting on a bit of a fashion show for them. (And thank god for that, who could bear those massive, hideous 1980s shoulder Let's hope kurthallengths come pads anymore.) While 2000 was the year of the floor-sweeping kurtha paired with the tight churidar, a mere two springs later, everyone is wearing super short kurthas with slits on the side up to the very top of the straight pants that no with them, sometimes without even the 'shawl' or

situation is "normal".

clever procedural ploys to undermine irritate important allies in the counter-

UN wrong on rights

being criticised. These

tendencies have been

compounded more

recently by the war

Western demogracies

against terrorism.

are unwilling to

Human Rights, Mary Robinson is to be replaced by the Brazilian Sergio Vieira de Mello, a Ionatime UN diplomat on 12 September. That transition will be a tricky one, because the governments that dominate the LIN commission for human rights (CHR) are increasingly trying to protect themselves-and their allies-from any scrutiny or criticism.

During the last annual session of the C.H.R., held in Geneva last spring. the body voted to ignore severe human rights violations in such places as Russia/Chechnya, Zimbabwe, Iran and Equatorial Guinea. For other violators such as China, Algeria, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Saudi Arabia the CHR couldn't even muster the will to put their abuses on its agenda. It also cut back on several country. specific monitoring mechanisms, compromising one of the most powerful of human rights tools, that of naming and shaming.

This is happening, in part, because countries with vile human rights records-Algeria, Burundi, China. Cuba. the Democratic Republic of Conno. Indonesia. Kenya, Libya, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, and Vietnamcommand a powerful bloc within the CHR, composing a near majority of the 53-member body. In 2003. Zimbabwe will join them and, unless African countries reverse an earlier decision, Libya will chair this body for

Such countries go out of their way to secure seats on the commission and then actively work to build alliances with pliable governments. In addition, they have developed a number of

There's an anti-human rights lobby at the UN, and they're gaining ground.

the commission. Their resolve is not terrorism struggle simply because they might be violating the rights of their matched by a balancing impulse on the part of the traditional promoters of human rights in the west. To some During the past year, for the first extent, this is because, rhetoric time in its history, the US was not a notwithstanding, rights ranks member of the Commission (though it will be regaining its seat in 2003). You might think that America's relatively low among these governments' priorities. Trade often trumps absence contributed to the CHR's it, and governments, especially in Europe, are often loath to jennardise sorry state as in the nast the LIS was lucrative contacts when governments often principled and outspoken on that violate human rights retaliate at some issues, in particular regarding

certain specific abusive countries. But increasingly obsessed at the prospect of its own citizens and practices coming under international scrutiny. America has over the past few years contributed to the general erosion of the UN human rights monitoring system. It adamantly opposed several important and promising new human rights initiatives notably the International Criminal Court (ICC), and a new

anti-torture mecha-

On the anti-

torture protocol.

the US sought to

of a universal

system of visits to

places of detention

under an optional

protocol to the Conven

tion Against Torture. Here

America found itself allied

that it normally rebukes as

chronic human rights violators...

Cuba, China, Iran, Libva, Sudan

or Zimbabwe. Still, without US

with some strange bedfellows

derail the creation

nism.

nowerful countries and the fees of human rights have left the CHR in bad shape. Vieira de Mello must be willing and able to draw on his own region and on others to make sure that the UN human rights system serves the victims rather than the violators He will also need to entice the west into becoming more pro-active and the US in particular into re-establishing its role as a constructive rather than destructive force in human rights affairs. • (Project Syndicate)

(Joanna Weschler, a onetime activist in Poland's Solidarity movement, represents Human

.....

support, the initiative was overwhelmingly endorsed in late July by the UN's Economic and Social Council.

Of course, not everything in the LIM's human rights nicture is uniformly bleak. The International Criminal Court will be beginning its work soon, and with greater international support than expected, thanks to America's efforts to undermine it. The universal system of visits to places of detention is gaining ground. Even at the CHR, there has been some recent progress for example, on work to establish "disappearances" as an international crime. Here, countries with fresh memories of repressive rule. such as Latin American and East European nations, have increasingly taken the lead in promoting human rights initiatives and defending the principles. (Latin America, in particular, played a pivotal role in all the situations described above.)

All the same, manipulation b

Rights Watch at the UN.)

Are Islam's values really different?

de marco

ince the terrorist attacks of 11 September, questions about Islam—its nature, its distinctive identity, its potential threat to the west—have seized centrestage in intellectual and political debates. While the 20th century's major conflicts_fascism_communism_and other "isms"_were primarily ideological, the terrorism of 11 September posed anew the spectre of "culture wars" and "clashes of civilizations."

It is often claimed in the Islamic world that, because one of the five funda mental duties of a Muslim is zakat (charity to the poor), Islamic society is less atomistic, which limits inequality and social exclusion. At the same time, western observers often see in Islam a faith that disdains personal freedom, especially for women. Oriana Fallaci published a long rant along this line shortly after

Facts on the ground do seem to support these perceptions. Muslim countries tend to be characterised by lower levels of inequality and crime (a good proxy for social exclusion) than other countries at similar stages of economic development, such as those in Catholic Latin America. But political scientist Francis Fukuyama disagrees. He suggests that particular social outcomes (including income levels) result from the fact that countries are at different stages in a modernisation process within which every society is converging towards a set of universal values.

Harvard University's Samuel Huntington sees something sinister at work within Islam. Because of Islam's messianic fusion of the political religious and cultural dimensions, says. Huntington, the west and Islam are destined to "clash

because the two systems are fundamentally irreconcilable. But if we want to discover the role that a religion like Islam plays in determining a society's fundamental shape, we need to look at individuals within an individual country to understand the true power of "Islamic values" in shaping a society. We need a country with deep religious cleavages between Islam and Christianity and, unlike America's "melting pot." limited mixing among social groups.

Two studies I conducted with colleagues at the University of Beirut use Lebanon to examine the relationship between religion and such social and cultural characteristics as inequality, preference for sons, and the degree of female labour market participation. Lebanon has a large number of geographically segregated religious groups and strongly enforced communal boundaries. And more than religion divides the population: some Lebanese see themselves as Phoenicians rather than Arabs, and claim closer cultural affinity to France, We examined Christian Maronites (who hold belief

Vague statements about "culture wars" don't tell'us anything, but comparative studies do.

akin to those of Roman Catholicism), Muslim Sunnis (the official religion of most Arab countries), and Muslim Shiites (the official religion of Iran and of Lebanon's Hizbullah movement), and found no evidence of lower inequality. among Muslims or less discrimination against women among Christians.

Our study of religion and social inequality in Lebanon examined social mobility rather than overall inequality, because societies in which opportunitie and inequality are inherited are considered less fair than societies in which family background is less important. Social mobility in Lebanon is extremely low and family background is a key factor in determining social outcomes. Moreover, the Christian Maronite and the Muslim Shiite upper and middle classes tend to have similar levels of social mobility. In both groups social mobility is higher than among Sunni Muslims

The position of women also does not seem to be primarily determined by adherence to Islam. We found that all Lebanese families strongly prefer sons over daughters. Families with two daughters are 9 percent more likely to have a third.

> child than families that have two sons. Statistically, this is a huge difference—nine times larger than in the US. Just as our initial research uncovered no evidence of relative Muslim egalitarianism, we discovered no major difference between preference for sons among Christians and Muslims, If anything, bias toward males is stronger in

Christian families The same holds true for female labour market participation, which in Lebanon is low but uniform across religious groups. This does not guarantee that no relationship exists between religion and discrimination against women, but suggests that if it does exist, it is unrelated to female labour market participation or preference for sons. Of course, disproving the idea that different countries have different values is impossible. but our work strongly argues that if the Islamic world different from the west, that is because it is backward not because it is Muslim. Project Syndicate

SAMUEL P. HUNTINGTON (Llan Panizzi is a visiting professor at the American University of Beirut.)

Al-Qaeda, alive and well

UNITED NATIONS - The head of the United Nations group charged with gauging the effectiveness of global sanctions against Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda group said this week that the measures have failed to deal the organisation a crippling blow. Since 9/11, \$112 million of the group's assets have been frozen in the US and ahroad. Lists have been drawn up of suspected terrorists and front organisations, and travel bans imposed. But efforts to choke off al-Qaeda's cash flowattributed partly to the personal fortune of bin Laden-are slowing down, according to a special UN panel. It wants to expand the international blacklist of individuals and groups now suspected of terrorist links, which numbers about 223.

Michael Chandler, a former British military officer and head of the

13-19 SEPTEMBER 2002 NEPALI TIMES

five-person UN team investigating the blacklisted group, said, "Al-Oaeda has sufficient resources to plan and launch additional terrorist attacks." A leaked copy of the team's report broadly states that "al-Qaeda, despite the successful inroads made against it over recent months, is, by all accounts, 'alive and well' and poised to strike again how, when and where it chooses". The report's lack of detailed evidence and reliance on unidentified sources troubles some countries. Singapore and Mauritius expressed anger at the report's contention that al-Qaeda money regularly flows through the two countries. The US was unhappy with the implication that its hunt for al-Qaeda assets was

The fallout in Muslim Africa

NAIROBI - It is now one year since the 11 September terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, which killed over 3,000 people and just over four years after the twin bombings of the Kenyan and Tanzanian embassies on 7 August, 1998, in which more than 250 died. Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network are believed to be behind all three acts of terrorism.

The powerful Islamic presence in East Africa—Somalia to Kenya to Tanzania—brought the area under US suspicion as a potential haven for fleeing al-Qaeda fighters. Kenyan Muslim leader Sheikh Ali Shee charges that "the FBI has harrased Kenvan Muslims, gone into houses and places of worship." He says that the Kenyan governmen

became an agent of American government to "harass its own people. Somalia has suffered the most. "The impact of 11 September has destroyed the micro-economic situation in Somalia, the infrastructure of communications, the transfer of money," says Mustapha Hassouna, a political analyst at the University of Nairobi. The US government froze the assets of Al-Barakaat, the country's largest money transfer company through which thousands of Somalis living in the diaspora sent money home to their relatives, charging that the company was being used to

Sudan, though, has gained, though it has long been on the US list of states harbouring terrorists—the most infamous being bin Laden who lived there from 1991 to 1996. In 1996, then president Bill Clinton launched missile attacks on a pharmaceutical factory in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, which he believed bin Laden was using as a weapons factory. Desperate not to be targeted again, the Sudanese government quickly co-operated with the United States after 9/11. The US is now the driving force behind a renewed push for peace in Sudan, which analysts say represents Sudan's best chance for ending its 19vear civil war in years. (IPS)

Internet wars

PARIS - A report published in Paris last week by Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF) lists tightening control on communication on the Internet as among the "collateral damages" of the 'war against terror'. The RSF lists China, North Korea, Tunisia and Saudi Arabia, and western democracies such as the US, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Demmark, and Canada among countries introducing censorship on the net. The report says that "Saudi Arabia has built a giant filter system in Jeddah, blocking access to electronic addresses," In China, which has about 20 million Internet users, the government has created "anti-web police brigades to wage war on anti-government and anti-communist articles published on the Internet." 'Cyber criminality' in China can

carry the death sentence. In the US where spread of information through the Internet is quaranteed by the first amendment of the constitution, the attacks led to a tightening of controls on the Internet, and the US government is now "playing world policeman on Internet too". In Germany the argument of a "terrorist threat" has been used by the government of Gerhard Schroeder to pass "security laws" that go beyond the country's needs and restrict the freedom of electronic exchange of information, the report says. Countries such as Spain, Denmark, France and Italy have also adopted "exaggerated security measures" restricting freedom of communication and information through the Internet. (IPS)

War good for stock market

LONDON - Investors are being urged to prepare for a stock-market rally if the US and Britain decide to launch a full-scale war against Iraq.

American share prices have soared by an average of 36 percent in four recent wars, but they tend to suffer in the run-up to a military

Last week, the FTSE 100 index slipped about 3 percent to 4,107, despite rising Friday. However, any rally is not expected to last long and investors should therefore take the opportunity to make a quick profit. A recent study by the London Business School has calculated hat the Footsie could take a decade to recover its record high of 6.930 in 1999. David Schwartz, a stock-market historian, said: "History tells us that when America suddenly finds itself on a war footing investors tend to take fright and the market falls anywhere between 15 percent and 17 percent. But once combat starts, shares on both sides

When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in August 1990, raising the spectre of war, nervous investors dumped their shares. Within weeks, the American S&P 500 index had tumbled 17 percent and the Footsie

No peace without rights

aimed at ending the nearly two-decade

old conflict between the state and Tigers

Monitoring Mission (SLMM), charged

The Norwegian-facilitated peace

process has stopped the fighting and a brought a semblance of normalcy.

seeking a separate homeland. In July,

even the Norwegian-led Sri Lankan

with overseeing compliance with the

resselire made harsh criticism of the

LTTE's behaviour

tions here and overseas are demanding that human rights monitoring be a central aspect of the peace negotiations between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government starting 16 September. The demand has become increasingly critical since the two parties sinned a formal ceasefire agreement in

Since February, widespread violations by the LTTE in the areas of child conscription and recruitment. abductions and intimidation of political opponents in the North and East have continued, and even increased in areas the group didn't previously have such unrestricted direct access to. This has dismayed

Killings of civilians, routine for years, have virtually stopped. But the normalcy is very fragile. The ongoing consistently documented, LTTE use of child soldiers, forcible conscription, and other systematic exploitation in eastern Sri Lanka, and the disappearance of about six political opponents, abducted in violation of the ceasefire, qualify the LTTE's relationship with the civilian nonulation The agreement signed between the government and the LTTE at the behest of the Norwegian government is conceptually and practically a weak mechanism to deal with the civilian predicament under the LTTE's dispensation. The Tigers still control all

function independently when it come to LTTE violations. It is critical that a human rights expert be present-as promised by the government and the LTTE to Amnesty International— during the talks when an interim administration is discussed. Civil society arouns outside the North and East and other structures such as the UN and the Red Cross need to play a more active role in enforcing account-Human rights are paramount here not only as a transitional justice

question but to counter the hold of authoritarian ideologies in social and nolitical institutions which will degrade the process unless checked. To talk of "normalisation" while ignoring subtle and gross violations taking place everyday will mean the talks only infuse funds and give power to the I TTF to show that this abnormal

Bangkok 16 September mean little unless human rights abuses are addressed.

expression within the Tamil community. The Tamil media's complete censorship of reporting on the SLMM's critical July statement is an indication of things to come in event of an interim administration controlled

Given the LTTE's history of anti-Muslim violence and current attitudes, the Muslims have legitimate fears of an I TTF-controlled interim administration. There are others, too. Can women demand that their children be allowed to go to school without fear of being forcibly taken away? Will those already been taken away be released? Will independent political activity be allowed to re-emerge?

Given the political environment in the North and East, it is unrealistic to expect state structures like the courts to

> restore even a semblance of normalcy. •

......

The experience of Sierra Lenne is instructive. After the signing of the Lome Peace Agreement on 7 July 1999 many Sierra Leoneans believed the country was on the path toward reconciliation and an end to violence destruction and human rights abuses. The resumption of hostilities in May 2000 was a shock. Both the government and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the rebel group notorious for its rights abuses, were faulted. The human rights community had been concerned about the neare deal which gave immunity to the RLIF leaders. In August 1999, a New York Timesarticle commented that institutions like the UN Commission for Human Rights, Amnesty and Human Rights Watch were sure to condemn "any peace treaty or political accord that promises to let human rights abusers off the hook-even when continued conflict risks destroying a country", as in Sierra Leone But the view that the RUF abuses were part of Sierra Leone's war culture and could be ignored proved wrong as May 2000 showed. It took the intervention of British troops and

(Vasantha Sritharan is a membe of the University Teachers for Human Rights (laffna), an independent human right watchdog in Sri Lanka)

the capture of RUE leaders to

gather information and technology, officials say. (IPS)

Conspiracy theories

Left wing and Islamic movements

like Abu Sayyaf in south-east Asia

ccording to the Malaysian government. Ezam Mohamed Noor is a danger-A ous extremist, a leading conspirator in a violent plot to overthrow the state and a man deserving of his detention without trial under the country's infamous Internal Security Act (ISA). Ezam Noor was arrested five months before Osama bin Laden's men crashed

their planes into the World Trade Centre, and the soft spoken 35-year-old is as close to al-Qaeda as Dr Mahathir Mohamad is. But he is one of the scores of Malaysians rounded up since last September, accused of being part of a bin Laden

conspiracy to spread terror across the region. Ezam's real crime was challenging the 21-year reign of the Malaysian prime minister. He was once political secretary to the former deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim, now serving a 15-year iail sentence on trumped, up sey and corruption charges, and remains head of the youth wing of Keadilan, the Opposition party led by Anwar's wife. Dr Wan Azizah

ANALYSIS

Before 11 September, the United States was a strong and consistent critic of human rights abuses in Malaysia and especially the persecution of Anwar and his supporters. Now they are virtually silent. Many lines have been blurred. many certainties have been eroded in the realm of international justice, politics and diplomacy. But in few places has the landscape changed more starkly than in South-east Asia.

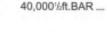
Once-respected champions of democracy and the rush to support America. minority rights are dismissed as extremists. Common bandits and parochial fanatics are abruptly elevated to the grand pantheon of Terrorism Inc, a status beyond their wildest ambitions and capabilities. In the Philippines, an opportunistic president has parlayed a small but nutbless kidnapping gang into a new frontier against international terrorism and a lucrative alliance with the US. In Singapore and Indonesia, tough leaderships have capitalised on their importance to Washington's new international agenda while unices of domestic political dissident and aspirations for self-determination are

In December the aftershocks of 11 September were felt in Singapore when the government arrested 15 Asian men accused of plotting attacks against the US and other western targets in the city. Singapore authorities said the group planned to assemble seven truck bombs and hit buildings including the US embassy and the adjacent Australian High Commission. Evidence of a link to al-Qaeda was a videotape of the group's surveillance of prospective targets in Singapore found in the bombed ruins of a Kabul house used by Mohamad Atef, one of bin Laden's most senior lieutenants. The Singapore government claimed

the group was affiliated with Jemaah Islamiah, an Indonesia-based fundamentalist group the Americans say has ties with al-Qaeda.

Soon after that, Philippines authorities detained Indonesian Fathur Rohman al Ghozi. a lemaah Islamiah member accused of coordinating plans for the Singapore attacks and assembling weapons and explosives to be transhipped via Indonesia. But little has emerged since to demonstrate that the Singapore plot was more than an ambitious proposal by young freelance extremists. Despite persistent claims that money for the 11 September attacks was channelled through the region, by March even FBI director Robert Mueller felt compelled to dismiss a report in Newsweek describing Malaysia as a "primary are treated with a new suspicion in operational launch pad* for the attacks. In the Philippines, President Gloria

Arroyo quickly suggested the hand of al-Qaeda behind hardline elements of an Islamic separatist movement that had been fighting in southern Mindanao province for decades before the world ever heard of bin Laden. By early this year, Arroyo had won pledges of more than \$100 million in extra US military aid and hundreds of American troops were on the ground helping to hunt Abu Sayyafa kidnap-for-ransom gang whose links with the legitimate nationalist aspirations of the Moro Muslims had become as flimsy as the evidence that they were doing bin Laden's bidding.



Indonesia cracks down on media

JAKARTA - Indonesia's parliament is set to clamp down on the

explosion of new television and radio stations since the downfall of

former president Suharto with draconian legislation similar to that in Singapore and Malaysia. Abdulla Almadi of the Indonesian Press

Institute said: "This turns the clock back nearly 40 years to 1964 when

President Sukarno, during Indonesia's confrontation with Malaysia, banned the listening of foreign broadcasts." The bill is being pushed by MPs gearing up for the election in mid-2004, when they can claim

ISLAMABAD – Pakistan's military government says the new press laws it

disagree. They say journalists and publishers could be jailed for three

government only consulted media owners and their associations before finalising these laws," says IH Rashed, president of the Pakistan Federal

nance ignores the right of a reporter, editor or publisher to defend the

Not learning from mistakes

NEW DELHI - Monday night's train mishap in Bihar state in India, which has claimed over 100 people, has turned into a full-fledged

accidents in recent years has been due to populist budgeting that has

kept fares low and the trains and tracks overcrowded, even as the 150-year-old network continues to move 15 million people everyday. CM

Khosla, former member of the country's Railway Board, says: "While

upgradation and modernisation are being neglected for lack of funds.

Khosla said that over the past 10 years, the money allocated for track

Progressive Pyongyang?

TOKYO – Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi arrives in Pyongyang
Tuesday, the lirst Japanese leader after World War II to visit North

Korea and meet reclusive leader Kim Jong II. 60 years after Japan's colonisation of the Korean peninsula ended, its relations with North

Korea have not been normalised. North Korea's inclusion in US President George W Bush's "axis of evil" does not help the relations of

longtime US ally Japan with the Stalinist state. Japan is the only target of North Korean aggression, and Japanese gestures that aid

China and Russia—are vital. Japan's problems with Pyongyang range from the abduction of 11 Japanese by North Korea, to Pyongyang's

Japanese are used to teach Japanese language and customs to North

Pyongyang's emergence from isolation—Kim has recently visited

1998 test firing of a missile over Japanese territory. The abducted

Korean spies, who infiltrate Japan for military surveillance, and to

renewals alone has gone down from 17 percent to about 14 percent

decisions are being made on political considerations, technical

political squabble. But experts insist that the spate of horrendous

approved this week will make the media more objective. Journalists

months or fined at least \$850 dollars—a fortune for poorly paid presspeople—for publishing anything proven defamatory. "The

Union of Journalists (PFUJ), an umbrella organisation of small journalists' groups. Media leaks suggest that the Defamation Ordi-

validity of published material by producing official documents,

summaries or other required evidence. (IPS)

when it should have been going up. (IPS)

credit for replacing un-Islamic, "foreign" material with homegrown shows. It is also payback time for parliament, which has been fero-

ciously criticised by the media for incompetence and corruption

Pakistan, too



..... Where the tales are as tall as the mountains

Succulent steaks and burgers bountiful, with a vegetarian variety. The friendliest bar between Tibet and Timbucton, Live band on fridays!



rWaiting **1** for

had to work the whole day in the zamindar's house. I had a seven



Nepalgani - I am here on a mission-to look at the situation of the freed bonded labourers Kamaiyas I wonder why do we still call them Kamaiya? The system has been banned, why do we not reinstate their identity, their right to recognition as an indigenous people of the tarai who, through circumstances, were reduced to becoming bonded labour.

They are the Tharu, and their

other development efforts. Man is

but they were not even born free.

have not been able to leave the

zamindar." (Bhagini's name has

born free but is ever-where in chains.

kamalahari." says Bhagini. "We still

identity.) How can they, when half

the bataiva grain that they get for

"I am the seventh generation of

despair, a canker sore on development efforts in Nepal. We call them free, but you have to be there to see the futility of the situation. They are free-cardholders categorised like animals for slaunhter red blue yellow cards, identified by lists issued by the land reform office, receptacles of the government and

In the event that you do get your vote stolen, you can also say, 'I have been betrayed by workers of our political parties, all of who have Ram-Ram on the lips and a dagger in the pocket.' In fact it is always advisable to check the metaphorical pocket of any aphorical daggers.

If the narties reform their ways, we can still make nocracy work, of course. (Who really wants to build alternatives to the existing parties? It would be so much easier for people to rally around a new, reformed Congress and UML. Or two new, reformed Congresses and UML. Whatever). Some will say that this is wishful thinking, otherwise known to Nepalis as indulging in eating the sweetmeat of the mind with

There will be no elections. Stop dreaming. There is To such people, one can only say: well now we've burned down the house, so we won't lack for ashes

Now there's a depressing thought. There are limits, obviously, to the sychological release that irony

> Nepali expressions and riddles are collected by Krishna Prasad Paraiuli in his illuminating book Nenali I Ikhan ra Gaunkhane Katha (Royal Nepal Academy 039 BS and Ratna Pustak Bhandar 2047 BS). This book rould make an excellent gift fo Nepalis living abroad, who must surely miss the verbal bandving that goes on every day among

Expressions to get us through elections

angst of being stuck in unpleasant situations. (Bathos is another widely used literary tool, but it is much less fun). A story, poem, or even conversation studded with a sly innuendo here, a witty repartee there can really get you through an insufferable day (or week, month, year, life). Now given that we are stuck facing an election that may not live up to our low expectations of election-time freeness and fairness, we might, for our own sanity, seek refuge in irony. To do, so, one need only turn to Nepal's oral tradition: spoken Nepali, even today, contains a vast storehouse of expressions that whether or not you agree with them-help release pent-up frustration. Go to any wayside teashop, and you will overhear people tossing about the most artful expressions: colourful expressions are a way of life here. I have translated some often-heard expressions below as a public service to help us all

get through the upcoming elections: One useful expression for the months ahead is artha na bartha govinda gai, which roughly translates as neither meaning nor seaning Govinda cow. This expression cleverly exemplifies its message: it makes no sense in itself (Govinda being a male name, and a cow being, well, female), and it is hurled, usually in a tone of bewilderment, at anything that is essentially senseless. As in, 'The candidate has made yet another public speech of

neither meaning nor seaning Govinda cow import. That expression competes with many for Nepali affections. Another good expression for the upcoming months a festival like no other is taking place in Handigaun. Why poor Handigaun- a respectable neighbourhood with deep cultural roots-gets blown off so, I could not say. Sure, its surplus wealth didn't build as many temples and palaces as in nearby Basantapur and Patan, but it was still respectable, way back when. (Handigaun native conservation architect Sudarshan Raj Tiwar is even writing a book about how respectable the neighbourhood was, way back when). This saying car be applied to many aspects of public life in Nepal. For example, throughout the campaign, you might consider saying, 'The way people keep urging me to go down to the voting booth, it's like a festival like

other is taking place in Handigaun Now almost everyone I speak to is considering boycotting the elections. (If the elections even take place, they say, not wanting to give into irrational exuberance, Nepali-style). But keep this in mind: if you vote, and actually help elect a sober, chastised party which then forms an actually governing government, this will be a case of if it comes, it's a mango. If it goes, it's a stick. Meaning, why not make the effort? You stand to gain a whole mango (read actually governing government), and all you stand to lose is a stick (read vote). (Actually, I came across a brilliant adaptation of this expression recently, when a longtime NGO/INGO hand remarked, 'If it comes it's a project, if it goes, it's just a proposal.' I would credit this man for his brilliant

adaptation, but I worry that his career will end). In the spirit of if it comes, it's a mango, then, we must all vote (again, if the elections even take place). But I sympathise with those bitten by the

shitting on the plate that they eat from. This is highly not recommended to do. We the voters, not being plates but people, notice when we are being sullied.

This time around, we demand that the parties offer us candidates who know where their party offices' out-

Which brings us to the matter of party intellectuals. Sure, they at least know where the outhouse is. This doesn't mean they should run for office. Our intellectuals. Such intellectuals. Seven villages. drown as the fishermen confer. While the country rapidly regresses to authoritarian rule, our intellectuals hold verbose thought-conventions (I'm sorry, the term bichar gosti is utterly untranslatable, so let's make do with thought-convention). And what our intellectuals say at these thought-conventions is: "We must save democracy. Vote for my party," or, less actively, Democracy must be saved. My party must be

done), first we need qualified candidates. Otherwise

Now translating expressions is a failed mission from the get go. (For instance, from the get go would not fare well in Nepali translation). Too many local idioms, colloquialisms, and references remain stubbornly untranslatable, or they end up being so funny that their meaning is unduly eclipsed. (Example: aaskaashko fal aankhaatari mar: die looking at the fruit in the sky). None of the translations offered here captures the pithy zing of the original, so reade who understand Nepali must stop reading this column at once and strike up a conversation with a nearby Nepali

a chicken that has eaten salt. Now I have never seen one of these, but I am told, by others who likely also haven't seen one, that these creatures lack vigour: around most of the time. Anyway, readers might try throwing this expression about on especially had days example in November, some might want to say, 'After I spent two hours in the sun waiting in line I found that somebody had already voted in my name

clarified butter. Democracy is already lost, they say

These and hundreds of other

ENCOUNTERS

houses are. voted for." Yes. We must save democracy, and failing that,

democracy must be saved. To do so (or to have this our next inept government will bungle away our last remaining civil liberties, and then we'll have to sit around saying, in bitter tones, 'The creature of shit enjoys staying in shit. Our politicians prefer chayat-like rule to democracy.

For those who do not speak Nepali, another expression that may come handy in November is like they are dehydrated, their necks droop, they squawle about weakly, looking unenviable. This is how I walk so I walked home in the manner of a chicken that had

friendly politician near you to see if he is carrying

boycott bug. It's hard to know which party to vote for. given that they have all spent the past twelve years



sharecropping is further reduced when their "owner", malik, subtracts the rent for the tubewell. the cost of the fertilisers, the pesticides and the beghari, the extra free labour that he elicits from

these, his freed kamaiyas. While floods wreak havoc in the east, here in the west until a week ago, there are no signs of the monsoon, the fields are parched, and the rice seedlings—twice planted—scorched. And again the women of Kanchanpur, fast, praving

to their ancestral deities for respite placating the forest gods. The Rapti is usually in flood, hut now she is a waist, deen stream one can wade across. We say these are Maoist-controlled areas, why would they not be? When one sees the apathy, the frustration of the people who talk of having been iven land by the hal ko chaar bhako party, yet have no sale deeds, no claim to ownership. Their women have been asked to work for free, and many have removed their children from schools, as it is more profitable to work as domestic

servants One woman recounts "I

their heads. One more deluge like the one today, and their efforts are going to be wasted. Each seedling back-breakingly planted, is going to go under. No more food, no more work and labour lost going to the Indian hired from across the border. Once more will they be the recipients of the landlord's scorn heaten and driven away from their thresholds. Their sunburnt skin drenched and stretched, their children standing naked, bitten b snakes, purging what little that they have in their stomachs, their

women trying to suckle the

voungest born on breasts gone

long dry, while the gods shed

day-old baby. I could not get time

to feed him and I fell sick. Finally

landlord and I was given leave."

my husband refused to work for the

Her husband now works as

she says proudly, "My children are

free. We are the Mukt kamaiyas, we

ment decision." This categorisation

were free even before the govern-

has created a division among the

community, as there is resentment

from those who do not have those

nromised five kathas of land and Rs

8,000. Those who sit by the edge of

the river in makeshift shacks, the

donor-given plastic sheets no match

for the wind and rain, their dry eyes

Now on my return, they stand

turning towards the sky waiting in

by their flooded fields and shake

vain for that one drop of rain.

mason, a bricklayer, a carpenter and

The scenario unfolds while development churns its gargantuan wheels in the name of poverty alleviation, conflict resolution rehabilitation and reaching the "poorest of poor", the marginalised" and the "disadvantaged". How pithy these words are, as the world empathises with taxpavers' money, providing relief yet asking for community participation. They say it develops a sense of ownership, otherwise the beneficiary becomes "aid dependant". What can these pathetic creatures contribute, when food sufficiency hardly extends more than three

months? How can they rise up?

HIMAL The Great Game of

In the September Himal

FACING CHINESE FACTS • RELIGIOUS REVIVAL . INTERVIEW WITH SAMDHONG RINPOCHE. NEGOTIATING A FUTURE ON THE INSIDE . LIVING IN THE RUBBLE . PHOTO GALLERY .

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More corruption Deshantar, 8 September

attenua amendas The whole process was Here's an incident that reveals underplayed. The CIAA has directed the how helpless the CIAA is despite Council of Ministers to clarify winning accolades from the entire country for arresting corrupt where the money-meant for revenue department officials. intelligence matters and to pay informants- is being used. If the Once they announced the council is not able to do so, it Baneswor assembly, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba should specify the reasons. While and Home Minister Khum the commission has come down hard on officials of the revenue Rahadur Khadka looked to the Home Ministry for funds. In middepartment during the initial June. a sum of Rs 9.2 million was phases of its anti-corruption sanctioned from the Home campaign, it has let the prime Ministry on the instructions of minister and the home minister Khum Bahadur Khadka, and sent walk away, even though it was handed proof on a platter

to the prime minister. Fearing that they would get into trouble with the accounts committee, the Auditor General and concerned officials who might investigate such a large ransfer, Home Ministry officials took protective measures, and told the prime minister that a receipt was necessary. The prime minister directed them to prepare the necessary papers and, along with the home minister, signed the receints

When other officials found out about the money, they appealed to the CIAA, saving that the money had been misused. The CIAA began an investigation. Khum Bahadur Khadka then put pressure on CIAA chief Surya Nath Upadhyaya, ringing him directly and threatened to put him behind bars on the grounds hat he was a Manist informant Then, Undersecretary Dwarika Acharva and senior officer Janak Sharma, who oversee accounts at



Ghatana Ra Bichar.

King and PM

11 September CONTRACTOR (STATE) Three months after parliament was dissolved, unprecedented and unnatural differences have been brewing between the king and the prime minister. The differences between the two high sources is sure to create uncertainty in the country

the Home Ministry, sanctioned

the amount and gave a copy of

the signed receipt to the CIAA.

Bhattarai's principled explanations of the past are becoming weaker Recent incidents have According to sources, the shown that the king wants major changes in the battle of guns council of ministers. He indicated cannot be controlled by intellectual this to the prime minister three weeks ago. The prime minister thought. In the had also expressed his desire to face of repeated the king for a small and efficient Manist attacks cabinet. But Deuba got a rude the attempts of awakening when the palace political parties and presented him with a list of civil society to names of high-ranking ministers it encourage talks, have wanted removed from the heen weakened. Of cabinet. The list includes the course, the Maoists names of Chiranjibi Wagle, Bijay may feel the necessity to display their Anand and Bal Bahadur KC. It is strength. After the losses they suffered in understood that on receiving the list, Deuba sent back a reply Khara, Rukum, the saving that he could not betray Maoists wanted to riends who had helped him in prove that their status trying times, and that he would hadn't changed. They rather resign than do this. After made that clear in hat, certain power centres have Sindhuli and rted bargaining, asking Deuba Arghakhanchi. ether he wants the tree

However, there was no need for them to engage in this show of

vmbol. Deuba has maintained hat democracy is more impor-

"Human rights are being violated. If this is proved, Prachanda, Baburam [Bhattarai] and Sher Bahadur [Deuba] could be brought before an international criminal tribunal in The Haque."

- Nayan Bahadur Khatri, Chairman, National Human Rights Commission in Deshantar, 8 September.



"Mr Minister, have you seen any corrupt minister come this way? Newspaper: Corrupt ministers to be punished by prime minister

स्पेसराङ्ग देनिक Spacetime, 8 September

security forces may have been denying this, but the majority of people believed that the Maoists were still strong. Prior to the emergency the Maoist had declared "people's governments in 15 districts. After the emergency, they added two more. If they regard themselves as a national power, the Maoists are

strength: their campaign was

continuing in the hinterland. The

THIS PAGE CONTAINS MATERIAL SELECTED FROM THE NEPALL PRESS

tant and larger than just the tree

symbol, and that he isn't ready

democracy. He'd rather go to

minister revolves around the

reshuffling of the council of

ministers. If there are any other

reasons, it is difficult to know

what they might be.

Camouflage

Gunaraj Luitel

Kantipur, 10 September,

Today, the influence of military

thought is increasing among the

Maoists, and political leadership

is declining. Dr Bhattari does

parties, including the UML, in

military perspective. Rather than

Maoist insurgency falls into the

not accept this. But when he

met with leaders of the left

Siliguri, he expressed the

solving the problem through

talks he stressed war As the

hands of the guerrillas, Dr

कान्तिपर

iail, he says. Today, the coldness

between the king and the prime

o bargain in the name of

also responsible for protecting the country from foreign interference The government is intent on purchasing guns. We can't rule out the idea of foreign forces entering Nepal to control the Maoists. Let's hope that the recent redesigning of Nepal Army uniforms to resemble those of their Indian counterparts is just a coincidence

Let them eat guns

was started by Dr Uma Srivastav of the Nisantan Clinic in Putali Deshantar, 8 September Sadak. According to Srivastav, 35 देशकार सम्बद्धिक women keen to deliver test tube The entire nation was shocked babies contacted the clinic when when Sher Bahadur Deuba they heard about the possibility went off to Belgium instead In the first phase, 19 out of the 20 women fit to undergo of attending the Johanneshura conference Army treatment were selected. At personnel were even more present, 15 percent of married shocked when they heard couples in Nepal do not have that they were getting children, and the technology ha more arms than the been introduced in Nepal for 2.000 FN rifles they their benefit. It's been eight years had expected. At since experts have been trying to present, the illintroduce in vitro fertilisation equipped security technology in Nepal with the forces are fighting help of the private sector. Nepali

with Maoists in couples have until now have been Nepal's remote hills going to India for the treat in order to nt—an expensive undertaking. establish neare The women were first They don't even administered injections to get nourishing develop their ovaries. They were meals. They divided into two groups: those don't have who have to take injections 21 days prior to the start of their adequate barbed wire to protect period and those who began their security posts. taking injections on the second The home minister and day of menstruation. "Since you the prime minister are have to take injections until the giving them rifles eggs are formed, it can be pretty expensive," says Srivastav. One instead. The prime injection costs about Rs 1,700. minister has agreed As there is only one company registered to manufacture such

to the purchase. f 5.500 rifles at a cost of \$4000 each. If the nation has to spend Rs 1.73 billion to buy these arms, a 15 percent commission on that amount comes to Rs 267 million Once the agreement is signed and the initial deposit is paid, that would mean a commission of

almost Rs 130 million. It's understandable that the prime minister, who has become used to commissions, would prefer to go to Belgium than listen to dry speeches at Johannesburg. It's also evident that the Belgium trip was personally more

Start politicking Kantipur Editorial, 10 September

If the Maoists want to be a part of national politics, they have to realise their past wrongs, renounce violence and try to win the acceptance of the people. It's dangerous for the Maoists to forget this reality in the flush of a momentary victory. It is criminal of them to think that they have to kill as many people as possible to create an environment for talks. But recent incidents indicate

is evident that the Maoists' goal is

Spacetime, 7 September More than 400 Indian citizens that it's been difficult for the Manists to let go of this belief. It have been successful in noing to

blance to the couple and are of the same caste. A semen bank Wannabe Nepalis

appear more eager than women India," he said.

13 - 19 SEPTEMBER 2002 NEPALL TIMES

Since Indians are not permit-

employment companies and

abroad on Nepali passports,

says Superintendent Prabal

Sumshere IB Rana, who is

responsible for security at

leave Nepal on Nepali

India after replacing the

original photos on Nepali

passports with their own. The

Malaysian government has

stopped employing labourers from India in recent years, as

it is not satisfied with their

Investigation Department

have flown to Malaysia on

Nepali passports in the past

year. This was revealed after

the Delhi Immigration Police

a Nepali passport who was

Employment Entrepreneurs

three-member committee to

investigate the matter. Says

Balram Giri, coordinator of

the committee, "We've found

that the photos on passports

agencies are switched so to

send non-Nepali citizens

abroad." Indian police hav

and Khem Rahadur Painia

passport scam, and handed

security officials. The Nenal

two men involved in the

them over to Nepal, say

Police has also started an

investigation, and recently

agencies-Pioneer Overseas,

Gorkhas Overseas, and Heet

ment and the labour depart

ment are pointing fingers at

Lalit Bahadur Thapa, director

Employment Department says

managed to go to Malaysia on

Nepali passports, that is due

to the carelessness of the

immigration department

director general of the

maintains that it is the

Anand Rai Pokhrel.

Immigration Department,

responsibility of the Labour Department to follow-up with

the country in which workers

have been employed. "It's not

nossible for them to fly from

Nepal. We wouldn't know

about people flying from

each other over the scam.

general of the Labour and

that if Indian citizens have

The immigration depart-

raided three manpower

hased in Raluwatar New

Overseas in Sukhetaar

also arrested Dil Bahadur Rai

stolen from mannower

Association has formed a

bound for Malaysia.

arrested an Indian citizen with

The Nepal Joint Foreign

According to the Crime

more than 400 Indian citizens

performance

passports, they fly out from

Tribhuvan Airport. As it is not

possible for Indian citizens to

mafia groups are sending them

ted to go to Malaysia as

foreign labourers, foreign

to get the emergency extended so

that Nepal can become a heaven

for arms imports. It is the duty

and the responsibility of consti

Maoists' objective. It is equally

tutional parties to defeat the

important for the Maoist

leadership to analyse the

situation, otherwise there is a

danger to their very existence.

bodies, despite the nine-month

emergency, is a message and a

government, too, to renounce

Test tube Nepalis

For the first time in Nepal, there

is a test-tube baby project, with

injections, the drug is in short

of the procedure is having

hormone checks. About 30

percent of the women who

undergo the process are able to

have babies. It is mostly upper

class and middle class families

800 childless couples before

introducing the technology in

Nepal. She feels the government

should subsidise the equipment

accused of helping add to Nepal's

already large population. Men

too, but they tend to be shy

about having their 'masculin

ity' tested. People have even

has been established and the

Malaysia on Nepali passports.

centre arranges for sperm

asked her to find a sperm

donors who bear a resem

necessary to help childless

couples, though she is often

Srivastav says she's treated about

who come for treatment.

repeated ultrasounds and

supply. The other expensive part

19 women on board. The process

Gorkhapatra, 8 September

The increasing number of

warning to Sher Bahadur Deuba's

13 - 19 SEPTEMBER 2002 NEPALI TIMES

PHOTOGRAPHY

. The Lost Valleys of Nar and Phu Free slide show on newly-opened destinations in Upper Manang. 14 September, 5.30 PM, Hotel Marshyangdi, Thamel, 414193, 981038325

* Young amateur artists and photographers and enthusiasts Work displayed free of charge at The Fort Resort, fort@mos.com.np. 226799

♦ Full Circle Acquetic R&R Mondays and Thursdays 7 PM on Yak & Yeti. Piano Lounge. 248999

- . Jazz your blues away The Jazz Commission with Vidhea, Fridays 7PM on, Fusion, the bar at Dwarika's, 479488
- Saturday Night Fever with Blind Faith, Saturdays 8.30 PM, The Rox, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu.
- Nanglo Bakery Café live music The Strings, Fridays, Nanglo Café & Pub, Darbar Marg. 6.30 PM. The Heartbreakers—Saturdays in Teku and Sundays in Baneswor, 6.30 PM.
- Shangri-La Re-Unites Prism Friday nights live at the Jazz Bar, starting 8 PM. www.hotelshangrila.com. 412999

 Meter of Malts Single malt tastings, 12 varieties, the Piano Lounge, Hotel Yak & Yeti, Rs 999. 248999

 Risotto and sabayon specials at the Al Fresco, Soaltee Hotel, Rs 350 nett per person. 273999 Mexican food festival Until 15 Sentember at Summit

- Hotel, 11.30 AM 9.30 PM, and Patan Museum Café. 11.30 AM - 4.30 PM, 521810 Walter's Bodega relocates opposite KC's, Thamel.
- Mexican food promotion including failtas, enchiladas. burritos and more. Buy one entrée, get one free.
- Barbecue with live band 6.30 PM = 9.30 PM. Wednesdays and Fridays, Splash Bar and Grill, Radisson Hotel



- ❖ Mountain Madness Award-winning cuisine at Rs 250 each BBQ, two-for-one cocktails at Rs 250. Kilroy's of Kathmandu, Thamel. 250440.
 ❖ Fresh claws Fresh crabs all September, with lunch buffet, Cajun crab cakes with mesclun, baked
- crab with mustard and fontina and more. The Sunrise Café, Hotel Yak & Yeti. 248999 Krishnarpan Fifty percent discount for five quests or more, reservations preferred. Dawrika's
- Hotel, 479488 Buy one get one free Cuisine Du Jour daily special theme menu, Shangri-la Kathmandu, Rs 700. 412999
- · Vegetarian specialties with membership discount for Nepalis and expats at the Stupa View staurant & Terrace, Boudha. 480262
- Iced Lemon Sour Plum Sour, sweet, salty, bitter, to go with the improved Singaporean and Malaysian food, Sing Ma, the Food Court, foodcourt@wlink.com.np. 520004

Monsoon mists Horseshoe Resort, Mude two-and-half hours from Kathmandu. Nature walks,

- birdwatching, drizzle walks, Nepal's best Finnish sauna. resort@horshoe.wlink.com.np Trust your sixth sense Indulge the other five at The Old Inn, Bandipur, the ancient hilltop town near Dumre, Pokhara Highway. Contact Himalayan Encounters, Thamel, 417426.
- Monsoon in Shivapuri Birdwatching and hiking 20 minute drive, 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
- . Writing Retreat Full board package. Aesthetic living, innovative thinking, creative writing and
- ture at Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha. 375280 Bardia Bonkers Freshwater dolphins, giant tigers, elephants, safaris, rafting, evening cocktails, traditional food, junglebasecamp@vahoo.com.
- Behind the wall Local residents buy one night for \$99.00 plus tax get the second one at 50 nercent single or double at Dwarika's Hotel 479488

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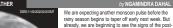


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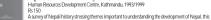








Nepal: Growth of a Nation Ludwig F Stiller, SJ



volume attempts to provide a historical framework to understand the present. Stiller focuses on Nepalis' relationship to land, vision and leadership, politics for profit, control and decentralisation. He outlines the complex socio-economic and political heritage that frames the choices Nepali bureaucrats and citizens

> Planning for the People Ludiwg F Stiller, SJ, Dra Ram Prakash Yadav Human Resources Development Centre, Kathmandu, 1978/1993

This volume is a study of Nepal's planning experience from 1951 to 1976. The authors begin with the xpressions of the Nepali people as expressed in the literature of the early development era, and then goes on to the interaction of international development thought and Nepal's own development effort. They



The Rise of the House of Gorkha Ludwig F Stiller, SJ Human Resources Development Centre, Kathmandu, 1995

Rs 150

The period of the transition in the hill regions of Nepal from the era of Himalayan valley-centred petty states to the period of national growth is of fundamental importance to the politics of the country today.

Stiller contends that the basic quidelines of Nepali politics have been family-criented, not party-centred. and that in the Nepali terrain the land-military complex has been central in determining the relationship between Kathmandu and the hill regions

Sociology of People with HIV/AIDS in Nepal: A Critical Reflection Narbikram Thapa ActionAid Nepal, Kathmandu, 2002-09-10

This volume, based on extensive fieldwork among people living with HIV/AIDS in rural and urban areas of Nepal, tackles the illness as a social and developmental problem, not only a health issue. It discusses how people with HIV/AIDS are marginalised, and how social realities ought to play into planning to help alleviate their situation through a rights-based approach, as well as control the spread



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13-19 SEPTEMBER 2002 NEPALI TIMES 15 CULTURE

Radioactive in P

An FM-craze grips Pokhara as listeners tune in to news and music



arly morning in Pokhara. Through the monsoon drizzle, a procession of slightly stocky men in tracksuits walks briskly along the lakeside on their morning constitutionals. On one hand they have umbrellas, in the other radios. Earphones are stuck into their ears. No, they are not listening to music on the discman, they are catching up with the main news headlines

of that morning's Kathmandu If you have been wondering how it is that Pokhara citizens are suddenly so well informed. the reason is clear: it is the

Name and Tel: 861-30130

the most popular Nepali folk songs have been composed and equally enthusiastic. "We have sung by Pokhara's talented tried to stress the quality of music musicians. One of them is Saroj and current affairs, and the Gopal Bairacharva, who wrote response has been overwhelming," the famous songs Bijaypur khola he told us. "The challenge now is tarera and Nakkali lai bhagai to make the stations break-even. lagyo, which were big hits in That could happen soon, since the 1970s national-level advertisers are also Pokhara native Shrestha is drawn by the high purchasing

now station manager of Radio power of listeners to Pokhara's Machapuchre, and he is happy FM stations. that FM has given folk songs a big boost with popular programmes like "Hello 91", "Old is Gold" and "Your Choice". "This is a great example of new technology supporting culture and tradition rather than destroying it." Shrestha says proudly.

Sushil Lama, managin director of Annapurna FM is enough to sustain four stations There is bound to be a shakeout soon, with Machapuchre and Annapurna battling it out for the ton slot. Both have lucrative cable television businesses to sustain losses for the present. *There is enough business here for us to do well and recoup our investment " says Dev Chhetri

Besides Machapuchre FM 91 digital studios in the town three stations have gone on air: recording new songs by Annapurna FM 93 4. Himchuli Pokhara's budding crooners who FM 92 2 Pokhara FM 95 8 are mixing folk with non. The Between them, the stations cover big difference with Kathmandu the Pokhara valley, and can even is that FM has given Pokhara be heard as far away as Bandipur, artists a tremendous burst of the hills of Palpa, Baglung, creativity and new songs are Svangia and Parbat districts. hitting the airwayes every week As a business, the advertising *There may be a thing or two

that Pokhara can teach

pie does not seem to be large

There are now numerous



Kathmandu " savs Sushil I ama their regular programming with

of Annapurna FM. Feedback from listeners throughout central Nepal has heen phenomenal, Bairacharva points to the sack of letters on the table at the reception desk at Radio Machapuchre, and says they are all two days worth of letters from listeners. Most are requests for songs or sending in poetry for broadcast and

feedback and suggestions on programming.

Now that the Surpeme Court has ruled that nongovernment FM stations can broadcast news, the stations provide breaking news and updates. When events like the Maoist attack in Argakhanchi happen producers interrupt

reporters calling in from Palpa and other points with fresh updates. Besides relaying the morning news headlines, the stations go regularly to Kathmandu for fresh political perspectives from the capital.

Himchuli FM has a tie-up with Radio Sanarmatha in Kathmandu and other stations hook up with private production centres for news updates. The only loser in all this seems to be the venerable state-run Radio Nepal, which has suffered a massive exodus of listeners from its medium wave hroadcasts Radio Nepal is now confined largely to its AM listeners in areas which are beyond FM reception.



CONDITIONS APPLY: SEPTEMBER 04, 2002

<u>16</u>



Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Larry King interviews God

A sis well known to all and sundry (mostly sundry), there is evidence of a certain degree of facily on the part of God towards this country of late. If the amilghity is acompassionate and considerate about our welfare as is reported in the national electronic media from time to time, then how come traffic is so bad on Putall Sadák? How come Harmer to the ora raise?



These were some of the burning national issues that were raised during a rally outside the gates of heaven recently.

In order forthord ut exactly what is going through Cod's mind, Lary (King recently obtained this exclusive interview. God does not usually give interviews to television journalists (considering them, as he push it in his finitile wisdom. "The Sournal The earth" just it is an honour even for Cord to be interviewed by CONI. So, in are and exclusive the South of the Cogolec frankly and freely on a range of Issue is noturing regime change in Irray, the Kysolo-Protocol, and the goings on in a tiny and feel. The interview of the complex of the complex of and feel. The problem of the complex of the complex of and feel. The complex of the compl

Larry King: Allow us, first of all, to say how glad we are that you agreed to fit us into your tight schedule. We know you are terribly busy these days. God: Glad to be here, there, and everwhere.

Q: Mr God, sir, how many of you are there actually? Some say you are one, while others believe you are member of a divine jumbo cabinet.

A: Well, Larry, in the last census in heaven there were 33 million of us, give or alke a few hundred thousands. But since then, most have emigrated to New Zealand and sought political asylum, and many have been stolen and are now residing in museums in Austria. So, that leaves just me up have to hold the fort. Q: This must put a lot of pressure on your time, having to take care of the dayto-day affairs in paradise. Is this why you have let the landlocked kingdom of the tubes? A'Yes and no It is

true that on any given day, I have to universe, but in parallel universe away to the powers to straighten things out not just in your universe, but in parallel universes as well. I am aware that things are drifting abit in Nepal, and I have send instructions down to my emissary there. We have that which to do whatever the deems fit in the parallel with the down whatever the deems fit in the parallel with the down whatever the deems fit in the parallel with the down whatever the deems fit in the parallel when the deems fit in the parallel when the

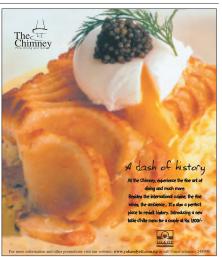
Mr Pashugali Nath, to do whatever he deems fit within the constitutional framework to bring things back to normalcy. He's been a bit tide dup with demolitions lately, and putting his own house in order, but he should be getting down to banging some heads together very soon.

O: Is it true that you are cooperating with the CIAA to debar corrupt people from going to heaven?

A Yes, we have signed an MoU to that effect under which those convicted on graft charges will spend a transit period at a halfway house in purgatory until their appeals heard and, if found quility, will burn in hell for eternity. We think this will serve as a deterrent to others who are tempted to sital from the people.

Q: And lastly, on a slightly personal note, are you a man or a woman, or both? This is a question that has bedeviled man since the dawn of history.

 (Laughing heartily) That is a bit below the belt, Larry. And it just goes to show that you are the scum of the earth.









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