



NEPALI

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2002 was the most violent year in our history. Which way in 2003?



BHAGIRATH YOGI

As we go into 2003 there are three main political forces in the country: the palace-army, the political parties and the Maoists. The king and the parliamentary parties should logically be on the same side, but they're not.

For many pundits in Kathmandu, the biggest riddle is why the king decided to open up two fronts in October and thus effectively isolate himself. Did he underestimate the internal pressures preventing the Nepali Congress and the UML from joining the royal cabinet? Is he really on an autocratic path?

The huge Panchayat-type royal rally planned in Biratnagar on 3 January is proof to many that the king is willing to go it alone if the political parties keep out. He is banking on public disillusionment with the parties, but this will not necessarily translate into support for him

unless he can arrange a breakthrough with the Maoists.

The big political parties are not supporting the rally, and by announcing a bandh on the day of the Biratnagar event the Maoists have flung down the gauntlet. "There is really no alternative to a rapprochement between the king and the parties," concludes Kapil Shrestha, a professor of political science at Tribhuvan University.

The result: in addition to the military stalemate in the countryside there is a political stalemate as well. The flurry of high-level visits by western officials to Kathmandu in the past two months shows that the international community is getting worried that Nepal's problems now affect regional security.

"The international community including our neighbours, particularly India, see the seriousness of the problem and they are eager to cooperate with

Nepal to solve this problem," says Ram Sharan Mahat, former foreign minister from the Nepali Congress. But that support is conditional. The west and India have said publicly they prefer a constitutional role for the king in a parliamentary democracy. They are also getting nervous about human rights violations, the damning recent report by Amnesty International and their feeling that the army is in denial. If not handled properly, the promised hardware support to the army could be jeopardised.

The guns and helicopters are necessary to improve the army's efficiency and could put pressure on the Maoists to come to the negotiating table. Despite overtures and recent soft language from the Maoist leadership, there doesn't actually seem anything going on behind the scenes. Said one senior source: "As far as I know, they're not even talking about talking."

Everest Sagarmatha Chomolungma 50

RAMYATA LIMBU

2003 marks the 50th anniversary of the first ascent of the world's highest mountain. Celebrations will reach a climax on 29 May at Base Camp on the Khumbu Glacier where a temporary village will sprout among the crevasses as 20 international expeditions try to repeat the ascent. This is twice the average annual number of expeditions to Mt Everest from the Nepal side.

Besides the unprecedented number of mountaineers eager to follow in the footsteps of Edmund Hillary and Tenzing, there are other celebrations planned. The Kiwis want to mint a commemorative gold coin. Sir Ed is already on the New Zealand five dollar note. Turning down invitations to attend ceremonies in London, Sir Ed and his wife June have decided to be in Nepal for the festivities. "I'm looking forward to seeing my mountaineering friends in Nepal, so it should be a very happy occasion," Hillary told us.

Nepal Mountaineering Association and the Nepal Tourism Board have been gearing up to run what they call a wide range of "inspirational events"—including paragliding, trans-Himalayan mountain biking and a Kathmandu-Lhasa auto rally. There is also going to be a mountain philatelic and photography exhibition, a mountain film festival. And, to top it all, there will be a summit of Everest summiteers in Kathmandu on 29 May. Start stocking up on the champagne.



Tenzing Norgay at 8,848 m on 29 May, 1953.

Army refutes Amnesty

MANJUSHREE THAPA

CENTRE FOR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

In an action that could have negative consequences for the army's domestic and international image, a local army officer in western Nepal has responded to allegations of the rapes of two girls by making them retract their statement.

Local witnesses say that Captain Ramesh Swar of the Chisapani army camp went to the Bhatti Tole, Nepalganj home of Tabsum and Tarnum Maniyar on 23 December, four days after Amnesty International released its report, *Nepal: A Deepening Human Rights Crisis*. The teenaged cousins had reported to Amnesty that they were held three days at Chisapani last April, and raped repeatedly by Swar and another man referred to as "Saheb".

This week, Swar is said to have threatened the girls' families, pressuring them to retract the rape claim. In a strong statement from London on Monday, Amnesty asked the prime minister and Chief of Army Staff for "immediate action to stop the intimidation of these girls and prevent further human rights violations in the area".

In a briefing to the media on Wednesday, army spokesman Col Dipak Gurung refuted the charge, and showed a video in which Tabsum denied that she had been raped (See picture.) Speaking in Hindi, the girl said on camera: "Nothing happened, we were treated well."

Responding to other allegations of civilian casualties in army operations, Col Gurung said a preliminary investigation of the incident at

Kahule in Nuwakot on 27 November in which five young boys were killed had determined that they may have been innocent. If this is confirmed, he added, the boys' families would be compensated.

But on the incident in Kalikot on 24 February this year, Gurung said an army helicopter in hot pursuit of the attackers of the Mangalsen garrison had come under fire and in the ensuing gun battle 34 people were killed.

"The Royal Nepalese Army does not shoot blindly at civilians. These allegations are fabricated and intended to tarnish the image of the security forces. But if we find violations of human rights have occurred, then we will deal with them within the purview of military and prevalent laws," Gurung said.



MIN BAIRACHARYA

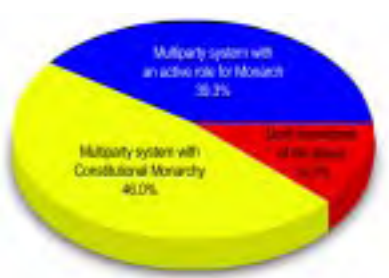
In Nepalganj itself, despite the Amnesty appeal, Swar returned to the Maniyar home twice on Tuesday, along with Major Ajit Thapa and a team of local journalists. The girls were reportedly warned not to talk about the incident, or leave town. Tabsum, 18, is said to be in distress and suffering psychological trauma.

On Tuesday, the National Human Rights Commission asked the Defense Ministry to ensure the two girls' safety. NHRC's Sushil Pyakurel said: "It can only help the RNA enhance its credibility to investigate the charges in the Amnesty report." A joint meeting of human rights organisations is planned, and the women's wings of major political parties are preparing to speak out.

Timesnepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll # 65

Q.What should be the future shape of our constitution?



Total votes: 1,346

Weekly Internet Poll # 66. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Do you think 2003 will be a better year for Nepal and Nepalis than 2002?

Which scenario?

Nepali Times interviewed politicians and academics to chart out a series of possible scenarios for 2003. Here they are in descending order of optimism:

- 1 Government and Maoists muster political will to resume truce and talks. They reach a compromise by shelving irreconcilable differences like republicanism, and agree to rewriting the constitution without constituent assembly elections. Bringing the army under parliament convinces the Maoists to participate in a "bourgeois democracy". Election dates are announced, the Maoists form a political wing to contest.
- 2 Parliament is reinstated, an all-party national government formed, the king and parties agree not to disagree. The Maoists remain on the outside, but scale back the violence as peace overtures with the new all-party government begin. Maoists say they won't disrupt polls, but keep away. Dates for elections for local bodies and/or parliament are announced.
- 3 The parties and the king call a temporary ceasefire, but can't agree on the composition of an all-party government. Palace goes hardline, woos some more party defectors. As haggling goes on, the Maoists resume violence, strikes and extortion. Army launches a full-scale offensives on Maoist hideouts with heavy casualties.
- 4 Country descends into anarchy, Nepal becomes a failed state. Hundreds of thousands of refugees flee into India. Danger of foreign intervention grows.

SECTOR	FLT NBR	DAYS	DEP (KTM)	ARR (AMS)	EFF DATE
KTM/AMS	HV6978	TUE/FRI	20:20	05:55 *	TILL 26 OCT
KTM/AMS	HV6978	TUE/FRI	21:20	05:55 *	27 OCT-19 APR
AMS/KTM	HV6977	MON/THU	19:45	11:05 *	TILL 26 OCT
AMS/KTM	HV6977	MON/THU	19:45	12:05 *	27 OCT-19 APR

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The grieving face of Nepal in 2002

A young woman in the small village of Pandusen in Bajura district after seven of her neighbours were killed during a security force operation on 29 October.



MOHAN MAINALI

ENDGAME

The only good thing we thought we could say about 2002 is that it was perhaps not as bad as 2001. After the royal massacre, street riots and the army getting sucked into the conflict, we really thought that things in 2002 couldn't get much worse.

But they did. More Nepalis were killed in 2002 than have ever been killed in our nation's history. As many people died in the past year as were killed in the previous five years of the insurgency. And, as the recently released report by Amnesty International points out: more than half of the "Maoists" the security forces claim to have killed were actually innocent civilians. As for the Maoists, their brutality, arbitrariness and targeting of the innocent only shows that "the peoples' war" is indeed what it claims to be.

There are indications that the Maoists are now being forced into an endgame. The internal dynamics of the party, the need to keep the cadre occupied and show results means that it can't go on like this. Matters are coming to a head. By deliberately timing their bandh on the day of the royal rally in Biratnagar, it is clear the comrades are now on a do-or-die trajectory.

Their revolutionary student wing has forced commercial schools to lower fees, but the biggest cuts are in the expensive schools where parents can actually afford the fees! The sword of an indefinite nationwide school strike still looms in February. There isn't much else you can close after you close all schools for all time. Going by the number of ads in Kathmandu papers, the people who are raking it in are Indian boarding schools. Inured by the statistics, hardened by the daily horror and numbed with compassion fatigue, most of us have retreated into our shells.

You'd only expect the Maoists to behave the way they do. Revolutions put concepts like humanity, compassion, conscience and rationality on hold. But it is up to the state to show restraint, accountability and a willingness to abide by basic humanitarian norms.

This they must do not just because we are signatories to the Geneva Convention, but because it is militarily the intelligent thing to do. Every Nepali villager killed, tortured, raped, or beaten will spawn twenty more Maoists. So the question we want to ask the captain in Chisapani is this: which side are you on?

End games can go either way. They bring a catharsis and a resolution. We may well see that in 2003 and can only hope that, either way, it will be quick.

STATE OF THE STATE

by CK LAL



There are silent tears flowing down our rivers.

When the women begin to weep

According to the Rocca Doctrine the Maoist insurgency isn't just Nepal's problem anymore. Himalayan ultras are now a serious threat to South Asia's regional security. There are now hints that the Indian establishment is also beginning to get over its not-in-my-backyard syndrome to share this view. Ambassador Shyam Sharan turned allegations about Maoists' India connection on its head last week by publicly alleging that Naxalite ultras from Bihar may be getting their training from Nepali comrades.

So, at least we all seem to agree this crisis has a cross-border dimension. Post- 9/11 and pre-Iraq, the region is now under the US security umbrella whether it likes it or not. And if Rocca declares "when you act like a terrorist, you are in fact a terrorist", she is merely underlining the new rules of this global Great Game.

Despite the bravado of Comrade Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai in their cyber-statement this week, it is clear the Maoist leadership has also started to feel the impact of the Rocca Doctrine. The supporting pillars of their armed revolution may not be tottering yet, but they are showing serious structural damage.

Intellectuals have been the first to give up on the Maoists. All of a sudden,

the issue of addressing the "root causes" of the insurgency has receded into the background. The new theme in the seminar circuit is "conflict resolution". In any conflict resolution process, extremists are sidelined.

Then there are the royalists. The extreme right initially found common cause with the extreme left because they both needed to squeeze the centre. But it was only a question of time before the royalists got repelled by the Maoists' hardcore republicanism. Also, the global right sees the need to stick together in the global war against terror.

A section of Nepal's urban middle-class once harboured the hopes of a benign revolution led by one of their own. But no one ever thought that urban planner Baburam, agro-scientist Pushpa Kamal and engineer Ram Bahadur would steer them towards the abyss. The middle class took one peep down, and didn't want to have anything to do with it. Maoist noises about their willingness to hold talks with the vestiges of the *ancien regime* is perhaps aimed more at the middle class than at the government itself.

Romantics of the fashionable left also decided the revolution is a lost cause when they figured it was unlikely that the red flag was going to flap on Sagarmatha any time soon. When a revolution goes sour,

international reds seldom linger around—they move on and find another cause somewhere else in the world. Commitment is a luxury when you are sitting on the sidelines, as it must be for the likes of the pro-Maoist Pinay-American, Li Onesto.

And last but not least, the seven year itch is sure to afflict the Maoist middle-order once it becomes plain that the dictatorship of the proletariat is a mirage. Prachanda Path is more of a creed than an ideology, but can it keep the loyalty of half-educated youths who have already spent the better part of their prime in the wilderness? Had the answer been yes, the Maoists would not be looking for a safe landing. Impatience of their own cadre is a bigger threat to the leadership, especially when the safe havens aren't all that safe any more.

More than logic and reason it is often the raw emotion of an alienated population that causes a violent revolution. That fire of revolution seems to have been put out in Nepal because the explosion of violence sucked out all the oxygen. After the death of thousands of innocent victims, there is a silent torrent of tears flowing down our rivers.

There is a proverb in Maithili: when women begin to weep, no force on earth can stop a cataclysm. The architects of this revolution seem to have finally realised that. ♦



“I will work to bridge the gap between the king and the parties.”

Nepali Times: What are your priorities for the RPP now that you have been elected leader?

Pashupati Shumshere JB Rana: As we all know, the gap seems to be widening between His Majesty the King and parliamentary political parties. I will work towards bridging the gap. This has become urgent since the sovereign people want the restoration of peace as early as possible. But this can't be done unless all the forces within the constitution come together. Only then will negotiations with the Maoists be possible.

But who should take initiative, the king or the parties? His Majesty has already taken the initiative in this regard by granting audiences to Girija babu and Madhavji. Of course, the situation seems exaggerated from the side of the political parties. They seem to be toughening their stands in the mass meetings. But we must find a practical way out. In fact, if we are really committed to peace, such a deadlock is against everybody's interests.

So, what could be the meeting point? First of all, all should put aside their prejudices. We must admit that the parliament failed to find a way out to the problem of Maoist insurgency for nearly three years. So, there is no guarantee that the restoration of parliament would help to resolve the problem. All of us should accept that restoration of peace is the main agenda at present. We should not try to promote our individual agendas. If we agree to do away with our baggage, we can certainly work out a common agenda.

Do you have a workable agenda to achieve this? It's not my agenda. Neither do I have a magic wand. The question is that of good will and good intentions. We should find a common platform that is agreeable to all seven parties in the dissolved parliament and His Majesty. We have seen that the Maoists have been able to keep the establishment divided over the last three or four years. G P Koirala was their enemy number one till sometime back. Now, they are befriending him. So, if the establishment agrees to come together, the Maoists too would be forced to come to the negotiating table.

What do you think could be the points of agreement as and when Maoists agree to come over for dialogue? It is obvious that the parliamentary parties and government can agree on the bottomline of constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy. We have to take into account that the Nepali establishment will also be getting the support of the worldwide front against terrorism. In that case, it will be possible to bring the Maoists to a point of agreement through dialogue.

How could this be possible when the political parties are protesting against the October Fourth royal move? The job we, political parties, have is to represent the aspirations of the sovereign Nepali people. We must admit that the present situation came into being as we failed to do that. So, let's honour the popular mandate.

Two years ago you went on record to say that Nepal is passing through one of the worst crises in its history. Has there been any improvement? Where does this crisis emanate from? The crisis still persists. This crisis emanates from the very deep socio-economic problems that abound in the country for the last several decades and poor governance, especially over the last 12 or 13 years. Until we succeed in cutting out corruption and

Suave and fluently bilingual, Oxford graduate Pashupati Shumsher JB Rana was recently elected chairman of Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP). Rana now leads a centre-right party whose other leader is the king's nominated prime minister. Nepali Times asked him about this, and his own future plans. Excerpts:

resolving major socio-economic problems including that of janajatis, backward ethnic groups in the tarai, dalits and women, we can't overcome this crisis. At the same time, our administration must be allowed to function in a neutral basis and on the basis of merit. Constant interference in administration will make it dysfunctional and not capable of dealing with new challenges.

Do you see any external dimensions to this crisis, especially the Maoist insurgency? The Maoist insurgency does have a regional dimension in the sense that there are very similar movements in other parts of the subcontinent such as People's War Group (PWG) and Maoist Communist Center (MCC). The Maoist parties operating in the region have also set up their regional network. The geopolitical affects us in the sense that if the situation persists, a security vacuum would emerge here. As we are located between two nuclear powers to the north and south, a very dangerous situation could unfold. So, it is not in the interest of either India or China to let instability in Nepal prolong itself.

Based on the latest situation on ground, how would you foresee the Nepali politics taking its turn in the year 2003? The whole thing rests on whether all the forces within the constitution come together or not. If they can come together then there is a chance. Otherwise, the situation could further deteriorate. What is important is all of us must work together to turn the unpredictable situation into a predictable one.
What is the basic tenet of your party? It is based on four broad principles: multi-party democracy, constitutional monarchy, liberalism and nationalism. By liberalism, we mean protection of people's individual freedom from state intervention. That means human rights and the rule of law has its roots in the thoughts propounded by John Stuart Mill, John Locke, among others. These four principles are like four pillars of a table. Our party won't be able to stand up if one of these pillars gets shortened.

But some suspect that you are in favour of an active monarchy? That is not true. I as well as my party believe in constitutional monarchy that is in accordance with multi-party democracy. It is because monarchy has contributed a lot in nation building as well as modernisation of this kingdom. All of us want to remain under the umbrella of constitutional monarchy for any foreseeable future. This is possible only if the monarchy functions within the sphere of the country's constitution.

Has your party become rightwing after it adopted the line of a more influential role for the monarchy and the departure of Surya Bahadur Thapa? Actually it was the central committee chaired by Surya Bahadur Thapa that adopted the line of a more influential role for the king four months ago. The Pokhara convention merely ratified that decision. The political paper restricts that influential role within the confines of the constitution, so we haven't deviated even an inch from the multiparty mainstream.

As a prominent politician, you must have an ambition to become the Prime Minister. Would you prefer to be a popularly elected prime minister or a prime minister appointed by the king? What kind of a question is that? It may be natural for a politician to aim high. But at the moment, our party leader is already the prime minister, so I would focus all my energies on delivering as the chairman of my party.

LETTERS

THE EXODUS

Thank you Karuna Thapa for "The Exodus" (#123), which brings to light the awful situation of youth manpower running away from home. I think this is an aggregate result of the last 12 years of Nepali politics. This loss of our young is heartbreaking.



In many hill villages, there are no young men left. Even the elderly and women are now leaving. And they are leaving for India where they are mistreated, abused and harassed by the Indian police. But even that is better than the uncertainties at home and being caught in the middle between the Maoists and the army.

No one benefits from the conflict in Nepal, only the Indians do.
Mohan Bhatta,
Kathmandu Engineering College

• In the same issue of Nepali Times (#123) there is an article on Nepalis leaving for India ("The Exodus") and the rock concert in Kathmandu ("1974 AD Rock Yatra"). These two simultaneous articles lead me to wonder about how surreal the two items were. It resembles Charles Dickens' The Tale of Two Cities. The first few chapters of the Nepali version of the Les Miserables has already been written in the blood, tears and the sweat. Are these signs of our own revolution? Liberte egalite and fraternite.

Subarna Bhattachan,
Kansas, USA

RED LAL

I am writing to compliment your columnist C K Lal for his analysis of the unjust agitation against private schools. Lal sounds like a communist sometimes, but his views are balanced. No one is arguing that all private schools are great, but most of them are better than government schools. Lal must restrain himself from blindly following the communist line and opposing the so-called "commercialisation of education". But anyway, at least he is critical of the Krantikari students. For that, I salute him.

Abinash Khanal, by email

NOTE ENLIST

The analysis of Christina Rocca's Nepal visit that you translated from *Jana Ekata* (From the Nepali Press, #124) contains the following sentence: "She also hinted that her country might enlist the Maoists as a terrorist group". You probably meant "list" and not "enlist". What a huge difference two letters make. Reading the piece, some may have thought that the US is going to enlist the Maoist to terrorise someone other than Nepal.

Barbara Collum, Kopundol

RABINA AND RABIN

Thanks to Nepali Times and Naresh Newar for the followup with the happy news of the treatment and response from your readers to Rabina and Rabin ("Why the children?" # 121 and "Rabina and Rabin in hospital" (#124). We were assured once more that humanity counts, that most people are basically decent and generous, and therefore there is hope. It was heartening to learn that the children are recovering steadily, and are in good hands. We must congratulate the offer by Dr Andreas Settje for the care of the children in Sushma Koirala Memorial Hospital at Sankhu. Thanks also to the human rights organisation, INSEC for taking on this effort. And last but not least, thanks to Nepali Times for underlining the important role that media has to play in peace and humanitarian action.

Jhabindra Bhandari,
Nepal Participatory Action Network

TEUTONIC RESPONSE

Mr. Karcher's article ("5-point peace plan", #123) instilled me with great pride of being a German. After all, we are known for our meticulousness. As the CEO of the multinational conglomerate UNDP, the multi-pronged 5-point peace plan is the epitome of clear-cut strategy, mission-critical priorities and down to the core execution.

I find it commendable that UNDP utilises its brand value, lean and efficient management and expertise in product placement for "awareness creation and generating a culture of peace". Three decades of development, trial marketing at the root level and the most successful product launches have made UNDP the powerhouse behind the upsurge of Nepal Inc and its shareholders, who feel so richly rewarded that they leave the country for a longer vacation in the south in droves.

Is it therefore a wonder that a strong contender—admittedly with questionable marketing prowess and a dusty, disingenuous label—wants to launch a hostile takeover? After all, raiders get active when they see the unrealised intrinsic value in a company, or an arbitrage position. It is exactly here, that UNDP with its dependable cash flow, asset-lite development strategy and tyco-esque accountability can make the difference: Community level work (which inexplicably has been overlooked before), Track I and II negotiations will ultimately pull the White Knight out of the hat and Human Rights, well, they are *de rigueur*.

As a taxpayer and thus a shareholder of UNDP, may I safely assume that UNDP's re-branding, re-positioning combined with enterprise resource planning at the root level will ultimately realise the desired shareholder value? I do see the first concrete linings on the horizon, such as the customer-friendly labeling of corporate cars in a soothing blue and sufficiently sized letters that even the still 60% illiterate in Nepal can read and the people in the villages are going ape.

Mr. Karcher rightly said, "nobody knows" when the peace talks will begin but, reassuringly, United Nations Development Pretenders will be there.

iHans Nixi, Jhamsikhel



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Nepal's anonymous



HEMLATA RAI

Alcoholism in Nepal is overshadowed by other addictions like injecting drug use and smoking. But because of its cultural acceptability, experts say, alcoholism has become the single biggest medical and social problem in Nepali society today.

Most families are in denial about members who are alcoholic, or they hide it because of the shame and stigma. Yet, recent research proves that alcoholism is rife, it strikes all economic, social and ethnic groups and it has repercussions on family and society

that go beyond just the medical problems of the addict.

Alcoholism today is understood as a chronic disease with genetic, psychosocial, and environmental factors influencing its spread. In Nepal, our present attitudes reflect prejudices that existed in western countries more than four decades ago. Alcoholism here is still thought to be a self-indulgent problem of the emotionally weak-willed and immoral. Alcoholics are stereotyped as binge drinkers, or have physical and financial problems because of their expensive addiction. Insensitive pop songs and music

videos that glorify drinking as a form of escapism enforce the stereotype, while advertisements that present it as socially respectable make it acceptable.

The commonly held Nepali perceptions of alcoholism prevent many people from identifying their problem. If the family is aware, it is swept under the rug. Instead of seeking professional help the alcoholic family member is shamed and isolated, forcing them to drink more.

A recovering alcoholic in his early 20s confessed to us: "When my drinking became a problem, my

family forcibly sent me to the Gulf for employment by concealing the fact that I had a drinking problem." Now back from three long dry years in Saudi Arabia, he is undergoing rehabilitation in Kathmandu.

"Nepalis should learn to accept alcoholism like diabetes—a disease genetically carried and triggered by an environment a person is born to," says Mike Krajniak, of the Recovery from Alcohol Abuse Program (RAAP) in Kathmandu.

Studies have shown that Asians are genetically weak in tolerating intoxication, and the children of alcoholic parents are more likely to

Alcoholism is a disease, it is spreading rapidly across Nepal. But it can be prevented and treated.

become alcoholic if there are environmental triggers. Treatment is impossible without the help and support of family and friends, something that is in short supply for alcoholics.

The fact that alcohol is readily available even to minors accentuates the dangers of abuse. Many social organisations and support groups are working on an alcoholism agenda, but there aren't enough. Only about 200 persons a year receive professional counselling and treatment for alcoholism in Kathmandu. None of the existing organisations deal with women. Counsellors say most people don't know that alcoholism is a disease, and recovery is possible.

Another problem is the cost of the treatment. A standard three-month recovery program costs between Rs 3,000- 5,000 a month. Those who can afford to, go abroad for confidentiality.

There has never been a study in Nepal about the social and economic cost of alcohol abuse. Neither is there any reliable statistics regarding alcohol consumption. Jagadish Lohani of Youth Vision, a drug rehabilitation centre, told us: "Nepali society is firmly in the grip of an alcohol epidemic, and this is the first step towards other

substance abuse." He is worried that most of us are unaware of the social and economic burden caused by alcoholism when we persist in ignoring the social implications of the disease.

In the last fiscal year, the National Trading Company imported alcohol and cigarettes worth Rs 50 million. Unofficial sources say the consumption of home brewed alcohol is five times that of branded liquor. A source at the Nepal Brewery and Cigarette Association estimated more than 40 million litres of liquor are produced and consumed by individuals at home.

After the government officially recognised the liquor industry as a potential major revenue generator, the consumption of alcohol has increased greatly. Restrictions on mass production and sale of liquor were loosened more than 30 years ago. That decision encouraged both the import and the manufacture of cheap alcohol in the country, which suddenly increased availability and access.

Within a decade of licensing, liquor industries became one of the highest investment sectors and also the strongest lobby group. The huge investment, an average of Rs 70 million, and the huge revenues it contributes to

HERE AND THERE

by DANIEL LAK

The season of war

TORONTO - The consumerist frenzy known as Christmas is over. Thus passes the season where the Christian world pretends that it is celebrating the values propagated (unsuccessfully at the time) by Jesus Christ, the man who urged his disciples to forgive, forget, love their neighbours and most famously, turn the other cheek if enemies slap them in the face.

So now, after sending each other cards and emails urging peace and forgiveness of transgressions, the Christians are going to war. They're hoping that Saddam Hussein's cheeks can be swiftly and easily slapped into submission.

Iraq (Sunni Muslim-lead but a mixed bag in the religious department) will come under sustained attack from a coalition of countries founded by, and still largely inhabited by, people who profess to follow the Christian faith. Jewish Israel, an obvious ally, will be excluded, because of American fears of further antagonising Muslim Arabs, who believe with almost religious intensity that what is coming is yet another clash of civilisations—"ours against theirs".

Ever since the horrific events of 11 September, western leaders have been at pains to stress that there aren't going to war against Islam or Muslims. British Prime Minister Tony Blair—ridiculed in London's Private Eye magazine as "the vicar of St. Albion's church" for his often insufferable holier than thou tones—even



preaches Islam to Muslims from time to time. "Yours is a religion of peace," he tells them, "We have nothing against you." When the war begins, and the tanks roll towards Baghdad, the planes pound Iraqi infrastructure, we can count on hearing this sort of dreck again. I will reply then, as I did post 9/11, that Christ's philosophy puts peace first too. Why don't his followers, asks Arab public opinion, and the odd crotchety columnist.

The mainstream media in much of the (Christian) west brims with stories about the evils of Saddam Hussein and his clan of wicked sycophants and future war criminals.

The American writer Mark Bowden, author of "Black Hawk Down" has even written a 20,000 word article about this in the *New Yorker* magazine, in which he states almost incidentally, that he's never been to Iraq! The latest issue of the *New Yorker*, house organ of the American liberal, has another piece in a similar vein, a sort of Cook's Tour of Saddam's atrocities over the years.

These are, I suppose, an attempt to get the usual suspects of liberal opinion-making behind the war, to rekindle the post 9/11 spirit in America, perhaps to make the same calm righteous anger arise again, despite the failure to find Bin Laden, propel the invading forces into Baghdad.

For what strikes me as I read, watch, and absorb the flow of public opinion here in the heart of Christendom is how little support there actually is for the plans of Bush, Blair, and others. How disgust for Saddam Hussein

In Christendom, disgust for Saddam Hussein is mixed with great skepticism about the utility and morality of this coming war.

is mixed with great skepticism about the utility and morality of this coming war? How few people—even those well aware of Saddam's wicked deeds over the years—accept the need to righteously smite him at this moment, as opposed to any other. Could it be that a little residual Christian spirit still resides in the bosoms of those who still follow the faith of Jesus here? If so, how then to explain the many Jews, Hindus, Muslims and atheists who swell the ranks of the peace movement. No, this is a matter of politics and distrust of the political elite, more than any other.

Even more orthodox thinkers who usually support the actions of conservative governments, especially US administrations, find the war mongering distasteful and frightening. Abraham Lincoln decried the giving of war powers to presidents, despite exercising them himself. There's an element of this in war opposition here. There's also a notion that it's impossible morally to support Saddam Hussein's nasty regime. People are troubled; this whole exercise is causing deep unease.

The case for war has not been made, far from it. America's anti-Iraq coalition will march under a perilous banner, that of soft public support and uncertainty of outcome.

Christmas is over, as are all the major religious holidays until Losar or Holi. The gods—it seems—have deserted us as we enter this season of war. Who could blame them? ♦



alcoholism



MIN BAURACHARYA

Mahesh Gurung counsels a group of recovering alcoholics in a Kathmandu centre.

A startling 15-30 percent of inpatients at hospitals in Nepal come with problems directly or indirectly related to alcohol abuse. The ratio of males to females average 60:40 and most of them are between 20- 40 years. "Drug addiction has a high profile appeal for social organisations, but in the Nepali context alcohol abuse is almost 15 times a bigger problem," says Dr Mark Zimmerman, medical director at Patan Hospital which is Nepal's first to start an alcoholic support group. But even here, the problem is so vast that doctors are stretched too thin to provide adequate counselling.

Over the last decade, the Nepali chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) has tried to reach more Nepali alcoholics but without much success. Says Krajniak: "There is only so much the support groups and rehabilitation centres can do. We must take the social stigma out of alcoholism and recognise it as a disease that can be treated." ♦

Alcoholics Anonymous
Nepal: 411605
Patan Hospital: 522266/ 78
Mike Krajniak, Recovery
from Alcohol Abuse
Program (RAAP): 442512
Youth Vision: 429192

the exchequer have gained the liquor industry a strong standing. In the last fiscal year, these distilleries produced more than 5.9 million litres of liquor, approximately 3.8 million litres were exported.

Alcohol commercials have been banned on radio and television, but liquor manufactures are sponsoring socially valued activities like popular sports and public gardens. They have also started putting up street hoardings highlighting the health hazards of drinking.

A drug addict who claims his substance abuse started with alcohol says, "The government is happy with the revenue from

liquor. I think it should stop and rethink its policies. It should realise that the nation's youth and families are paying a high social and emotional price to generate those revenues." So far, the only group that seems to be listening are the Maoists who have declared parts of rural Nepal dry, and have threatened liquor manufacturers.

Alcoholism goes far beyond hangovers and liver damage, and therefore does not just have medical consequences for the drinker. It is a progressive disease, and a social one that claims primary and secondary victims. The family, especially the women and children, bear the burnt of it.

DOMESTIC BRIEFS

Building bridges

Switzerland is giving a grant of Rs 576.3 million to help Nepal implement the trail bridge sub-sector project. The five-year project is a continuation of the suspension bridge project and bridge building at the local level, both supported by the Swiss government. According to the finance ministry, the grant will be used for the construction and maintenance of trail bridges, procurement of construction materials, training and local infrastructure development. It will cover operating expenses including digitisation of maps, local consultancy and local staff cost. The local counterpart is the Ministry of Local Development.



Nepal upgraded

A crucial meeting of the World Bank (WB) board of executive directors in Washington DC last week upgraded Nepal into a "base case" from the former "low case" status in the bank's lending categories. This means Nepal can now receive loan assistance worth \$100 million or more annually, depending on the sustained progress that Nepal makes in accelerating reforms. Prior to the graduation, Nepal was eligible for an annual loan assistance of only up to \$50 million. The future resource availability from the bank will depend upon the acceleration of reform processes in the country. "The latest decision is important for Nepal as it sends a positive signal among the donor community over Nepal's commitment on reforms," said Shankar Sharma, vice-chairman at the National Planning Commission. The upgrade was based on a progress report from the World Bank's Country Assistance Strategy (CAS).

EU concern

The European Union expressed concern over the deterioration of security, law and order, and human rights in Nepal. A statement issued by the Danish Embassy, presidency of the EU in Kathmandu, condemned the ongoing Maoist violence and called upon them to "immediately stop the systematic campaign of killings, harassment and destruction". The EU regretted that killings of party activists and sabotage of physical infrastructure has continued, even after the recent Maoist call for a halt to these atrocities. They also expressed concern over "the evidence of human rights violation committed by the security forces with impunity". The government has been urged to take immediate action conforming with its international obligations, and to implement the recommendations made by the National Human Rights Commission.

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Talks? What talks?

As unlikely as it may seem, Maoist supremo Prachanda and Nepali Congress President Girija Prasad Koirala seem to have the same speech-writer. Both are now demanding that the Royal Nepal Army be under control of a popularly elected government.

Statements like these and the gradual drift of the parliamentary parties away from the palace, has

increased the prospects of some kind of common platform between the Maoists and the parties. To be sure, there is just too much bad blood between the two—the Maoists have murdered, threatened or chased away the grassroots cadre of all parliamentary parties. But as the gap between the parties and the king grows, so it seems to narrow between the Maoists and the parties.

Most independent analysts now believe that Nepal's monarchy is on an autocratic path despite protestations to the contrary by the king himself and by members of his nominated cabinet. Smelling blood, the Maoists have hardened their anti-monarchist stance. They are therefore pushing their three-point agenda for an all-party roundtable conference, the formation of an interim government and constituent

assembly elections. They also want to show the outside world an image of a reasonable outfit to bolster those abroad who oppose military aid to Nepal. The aim here is to either stop or delay western financial and military help.

But the feckless parliamentary parties haven't been able to present a united front. They can't seem to come up with a common alternative to present to the king. Their public meetings have failed to deliver any meaningful message to supporters. Aside from blowing their own trumpets, and calling on the king to correct his "mistakes", reinstate the dissolved parliament, all they have managed to do is prove to the people one more time that all they are interested is to use a "democracy" façade to climb back on the saddle.

The task of finding a common democratic solution may therefore fall upon the king. Though the parliamentary forces failed to conclude successful negotiations with the Maoists for the last seven years, they have the power to disrupt it by operating from behind a thick façade of democracy.

And lurking in the background, as always, is the India factor. When asked about perceived Indian high-handedness vis-a-vis Nepal, senior Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai said cryptically in his interview with a US paper that there was "no need to talk about each and every leaf and bush when you have described the whole forest".

The Maoists have remained enigmatically silent on every major contentious issue between India and Nepal in the past two years. Many Nepalis have started to notice that the Maoists have mostly spared Indian-owned industries, business establishments, and tarai-based smuggling rings from "peoples' actions". Although all other political parties have been targetted at one time or other, the Nepal Sadbhavana Party has emerged largely unscathed.

The Maoist leadership abuses the monarchy in every statement, but spares New Delhi's pressure tactics from criticism. The up-

shot is to create the impression that peace cannot be restored without India's meaningful support. In other words, if India is not a part of the equation then the war will drag on—despite Indian ambassador Shyam Sharan protestations last week that Nepal is capable of solving its own problems and there was no role for India.

Whatever the Maoists may say tactically, they never lose sight of their strategic objectives. The so-

tional donor community. This so they can concentrate on military planning, and buying time so that foreign military support for the security forces is delayed.

No one really gives much weight to the present cabinet. It has neither the political drive nor the standing to initiate negotiations with the Maoists. So, unless King Gyanendra himself can unveil a dramatic surprise breakthrough we cannot expect much from the



Wars inevitably wind down. The only question is: How can we accelerate that process?

called indirect "unity-in-action" of the Maoists with the late King Birendra, their suspicious silence towards India, their recent peace overtures, and their call for a constituent assembly are all stepping stones towards their strategic objectives. And since they are not loath to change tactics to suit the times, they often appear to contradict themselves.

In their obsession with analysing every Maoist tactic, western observers as well as Nepali rights activists seem to fall into the trap of losing sight of their long-term objectives.

Having skilfully driven a wedge between the king and parliamentary parties, the Maoists are now working to widen the gap between the Nepali state and the interna-

government side. And since the Maoists see the post-October 4 developments going in their favour, there is really no compulsion for them to sit down with the king. That is why the four-point precondition laid out by Prachanda this week were just sweeteners intended to show flexibility, paint the government side as war-mongers in an effort to delay western military help.

Baburam Bhattarai in his interview says his group is "ready to hold talks with the new leadership of the old establishment"—words that hark back to the *ancien regime* of the French Revolution. Talks can't realistically take place until one or both of the warring parties gets weary of war. The bloodshed and misery, it seems, hasn't reached the critical mass that is needed for a genuine desire for peace.

It took 65,000 deaths for the peace constituency to cross the threshold in Sri Lanka. As many lost their lives in the Sendero Luminoso revolution in Peru, the Philippines has the longest-running insurgency in the world. Wars inevitably wind down. The only question is: How can we accelerate that process?

It seems now that neither Prachanda nor King Gyanendra can put brake on the conflict. War has its own momentum. Peace-building needs vision, statesmanship and a political will. When positions are so far apart, and so rigid it is hard to see where the meeting point could be. But there are two: Nepal's sovereignty and democracy. This is where, in the final analysis, the king and the Maoists on one hand and the king and the parties on the other, all have to agree. ♦

(Puskar Bhusal is on leave and will return in two weeks.)

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Business Advantage 9/27/02/12

Introducing “Ambition”

Hero Honda, the largest individual two-wheeler company in the world, recently introduced the 133cc Ambition motorcycle. A scaled-down version of the Honda CB400, it incorporates the well-designed knee recesses, side panels and tailpiece for a sporty look. The 4-stroke, 1100-mm high motorbike has a 12.5 litre capacity. The bike bridges the gap between the 97.2 cc Splendor/Passion and the 156 cc CBZ in the Hero Honda fleet. The bikes are available through the Syakar Company and there are three options available, ranging between Rs 105,400 to Rs 121,400. On 22 December more than 300 enthusiasts took part in a very successful test-drive launch at the Hyatt Regency.



More noodles

2 PM, introduced by Asian Thai Foods, is the new contender on the instant noodle market. The ready-to-eat ramen outweighs its competition at 100 grams and has four seasonings to the regular three—something the company hopes will snare consumers who eat noodles for their meals. Competitively priced at Rs 12, these noodles promise you will “Hunger no longer”. The company also introduced the first instant noodles in a disposable hygienic cup with a fork, 2 PM Cup Noodles. The cups are priced at Rs 25. To order online: www.rumpum.com.

Food to go

Rum Doodle Express, the multi-cuisine food court, offers a year-round food festival for food lovers at Thamel, Kantipath and Durbar marg. It's as easy as placing an order at 443208 for well-prepared food at very reasonable prices. If you have time, visit the Rum Doodle food court next to Hotel Vaishali in Thamel. Try the handmade ice cream.

Keeping cool

Electronic appliances from Tatung Company of the US are now available in Nepal. Assembled in Taiwan, the company offers a range of high quality refrigerators. Jyoti Trading International at Swoyambhu stock these stylish eco-friendly home appliances.

Heating solutions

Eco Nepal, a member of the Tri-Shakti Group, has introduced ultra-efficient solar water heaters based on Australian vacuum tube technology. The ISO 9002 certified product absorbs heat from solar radiation and transfers it to stored water. The system can withstand and perform even in frost prone areas, is non-corrosive and produces drinking water.

Quality viewing

Video CD players from the Japanese company Akai are finally available for quality conscious people in Nepal, thanks to K V Overseas Marketing. The company has already introduced Akai TVs and refrigerators to the local market.

Snack bites

Recognised for hygienic meat products, Prasuma has diversified into baked products for Kathmandu consumers. You can now snack on Prasuma pizzas, hamburgers, sausage rolls and other goodies for an average of Rs 15 per item. The producers hope to entice office executives, students and other busy folk who may welcome a delicious diet change with their hygienic and affordable bakery products.



Wish list

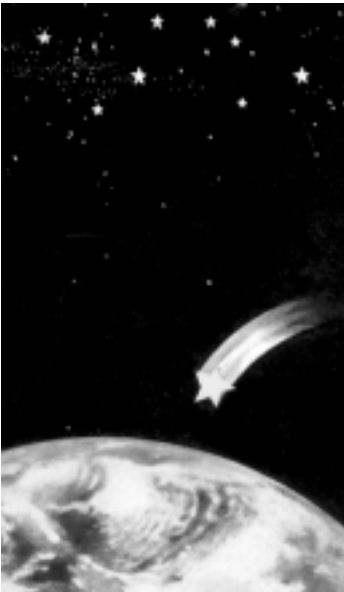
First, let's overcome our fear of failure.

The events in Nepal over the couple of months have left the Beed with few options but to look to the future. It is important to reiterate that if the present is not good, it is not necessarily true that the future is hopeless. A country of 23 million people should find inner strength to get through the current rumblings and rise above petty politics, egos and 'isms'.

The year 2003 will begin testing the efficacy of the current cabinet and how well the transition will take place. In business-speak this is purely project management, not an operations team. If the cabinet were to drag its heels, it would defeat the purpose of its creation. The emphasis on holding elections both central and local is paramount, and the credibility of the current government rests on this issue.

The anti-corruption drive should not lose momentum. As bigger fish get caught, the net will become harder to handle. We must not lose sight of the objective—a corruption free Nepal. Our commitment to fight corruption is the only way to win back the support of the people. And, we might add, of donor nations and development agencies. The process must be continuous, vigilant and independent to remain effective.

The business sector has an important role in resuscitating the economy. We already have an advantage—a cabinet that



understands the business of doing business. Unfortunately, the reports and studies churned out by various Action Committees with commendable regularity are inversely proportionate to the efficiency of how the economy is run. What better time than now to tackle problems that have long plagued us? As the first step, the Beed recommends the reports be actually read and implemented. Advice, no matter how sound, is worthless if it remains tucked in the filing cabinets.

While restoration of peace is a paramount issue, we must not shrug our shoulders at other responsibilities and use the pursuit of peace as an excuse for poor performance. We have enough people in the government machinery to get

cracking. Many of those cogs and wheels have rusted with disuse and procrastination. Inaction and mediocrity are labelled Nepali traits. In the spirit of the season, and just this once, the Beed will interpret those flaws as fear of failure. And in the next breath exhort that we need to stop making excuses and get moving. To have effective labour related laws or conducive industry policy does not hinge on whether a dialogue for peace takes place or not.

Finally, we must work on rebuilding Nepal's image. It's difficult for the Nepal Tourism Board to sell images of ruddy-cheeked village people, pristine mountains and a hospitable culture when the international news projects Nepal as a state under siege from her own discontented people. The Nepali intelligentsia abroad needs to understand that criticism of the present may be a popular tune to play but it does not benefit Nepal in the long run. We need goodwill ambassadors who propagate future prospects, not dilettantes who indulge in a myopic condemnation of the present.

And this takes us back to the beginning. This year was not our finest, but 2003 can be better if each Nepali takes individual responsibility for our collective future. The Beed maintains cautious optimism. ♦

(Readers can post their views or comments at arthabeed@yahoo.com)



Beyond the Hindu rate of growth



If India can now complete the unfinished business of fully integrating into the global economy, there is no reason why it cannot improve upon its impressive recent growth performance.

Everyone nowadays seems obsessed about the question as to whether or not Islam can be reconciled with modernization. In discussing this issue, what constitutes modernisation is often confused with westernisation. Understanding the difference is vital. India's encounter with the West over the past three centuries underscores the distinction between the two processes – modernisation and Westernisation – that are often assumed to be synonymous. In fact, modernisation does not entail Westernisation, as the example of contemporary Japan demonstrates. Whereas modernisation entails a change in belief about the way the material world operates, Westernisation entails a change in cosmological beliefs about the way that one should live. Like China and unlike Japan, India resisted changes in its ancient beliefs about the way the world works (and should work) which modernisation entails. Instead, like many Islamic countries today, India wrongly believed Gandhi's doctrine that modernisation necessarily means Westernisation. Fitfully, and under the influence of the British Raj, parts of the economy and society were modernised during the second half of the 19th century of *laissez-faire* and free trade. Some of the traditional literary castes also embraced Westernisation. British policy turned India into a pioneer of Third World industrialisation, with an economy increasingly based on domestic capital and entrepreneurship combined with imported technology. But modernisation stalled when protectionist pressures from Lancashire and the exigencies of Imperial finance led the British to abandon free trade and *laissez-faire*. At the same time, Westernisation fueled the rise of a nationalist movement. The introduction of income taxes and UK labour laws in the late 19th century led to nearly a century of mounting state intervention in the economy, a process that accelerated after independence. This damaged India's growth prospects

and hopes of alleviating its ancient scourge of mass poverty. The breakdown of the global economy in the first half of the 20th century in the wake of the First World War further eroded India's incipient integration into the world economy during the British Raj. Finally, beginning with the economic reforms of 1991, India at last rejected inward-looking policies, returning to where it left off at the end of the 19th century. We now have a fairly clear quantitative picture of the performance of the Indian economy throughout this period. During the 130 years from 1868 until 1999-2000, per capita income more than trebled, as national income increased by a factor of eight while the population grew nearly five-fold. This suggests that the age-old combination of economic stagnation and cultural stability that I call the "Hindu Equilibrium" seems finally to have been broken. But on closer inspection, it turns out that this was largely due to the economic performance of the last two decades. The sub-period from 1868-1900 saw the beginning of industrialisation and India's partial integration into the world economy under the Raj. National income did not stagnate, as nationalist historians once maintained, but grew modestly, at an average annual rate of 1.1 percent. Growth was fastest from 1870-1890, followed by large fluctuations in output. A fairly low rate of population growth ensured a modest annual rise in per capita income of about 0.7 percent during this period. The second sub-period, 1900-1945, saw the breakdown of the global economy and the start of India's population explosion. Growth of per capita income decelerated between 1902 and 1930 and declined further in the last fifteen years of British rule until 1947. After 1920, this was due entirely to the rise in population growth, to 1.22 percent per year, which outpaced fairly high output growth throughout the decade until 1930. Over this entire 45-year sub-period, output grew at just above 1 percent

annually—the same rate as under the Raj—but yearly population growth soared to 0.8 percent, causing virtual stagnation of per capita income. The third sub-period, 1950-1980, marked the heyday of economic planning. Infrastructure investment—which had been difficult for the embattled British Raj to finance—suddenly boomed. This, together with high agricultural growth rates, led to a dramatic rise in output, which increased at an annual average rate of 4.5 percent. But the demographic explosion that began in the 1920's had by now driven the rate of population growth up to 3 percent per year, so that annual per capita income grew by only 1.5 percent. A departure from what the late Raj Krishna dubbed the "Hindu rate of growth" came only in the fourth sub-period, from 1980-1999. Partial economic liberalisation, undertaken by the Rajiv Gandhi government in the mid-1980s, and the more substantial Narasimha Rao-Manmohan Singh economic reforms in 1991, boosted national income growth to an average annual rate of 6.8 percent. At the same time, yearly population growth slowed to an average of 2.3 percent, so that per capita income rose at an impressive annual rate of 4.5 percent, making a dent in India's mass structural poverty for the first time in millennia. If India can now complete the unfinished business of fully integrating into the global economy, there is no reason why it cannot improve upon its impressive recent growth performance. If it succeeds, Nehru's pledge, on the eve of Indian independence, "to wipe every tear from every eye," will finally be redeemed. ♦ (© Project Syndicate)

(Deepak Lal is professor of international development at the University of California, Los Angeles, and wrote *The Poverty of Development Economics*, *The Hindu Equilibrium*, and *The Political Economy of Poverty, Equity and Growth*.)



SRADDHA BASNYAT

SRADDHA BASNYAT

Tennis, the game of kings arrived in Nepal with unrivaled pomp. During the early 1900s tennis in Nepal was confined within the walls of Rana palaces where it remained a source of entertainment and social outlet for the privileged. It was a game the Rana generals not only played, but also umpired. Soon, as Nepal opened its doors to the outside world, diplomats and donors arrived to join a small community of players. Nepal's tennis pioneer, Hem Lama, returned to Nepal in 1965 from Burma and began teaching tennis in his free time,

charging Rs 15 rupees an hour, the cost of a can of Slazenger balls. His talents were much sought after. "They said my footwork around the court was like a dancer's and the American women liked my legs," Hem recalls. At the time there were only a few "commoners" in the game. Amar Dil Lama, better known as A D Lama, three-time Burma champion had bagged a couple of men's singles titles and was twelve years older than Hem. His contemporaries were Singha Bahadur Basnyat and Shail Kumar. With his precision ground strokes, Basnyat dominated tennis, representing Nepal internationally in Singapore, Iran, and Thailand.

Today, anyone looking for a good tennis lesson will undoubtedly be directed to Sharad Lama, Subha Ratna Shahi or Krishna Ghale. Their's is a generation with humble beginnings. "I started as a ball boy and I am not ashamed of it," says Ghale. Encouraging each other along the way, they represented Nepal internationally in the Asian Games, South Asian Games, and throughout the SAARC nations. Sharad Lama became the first Nepali player certified as a US Professional Tennis Registry professional. The trio dominated men's tennis in the 80s and 90s. Subha Ratna continues to secure one of the top four

Love at first strike

Tennis anyone?

position at the age of 43 and Krishna, 41, admits, "I am still playing. I should have retired but there are not enough young players coming up." You can find Sharad, Subha and Krishna, all coaches certified by the Professional Tennis Registry, through the All Nepal Lawn Tennis Association Tennis Complex. Sharad Lama, undoubtedly one of Nepal's most enthusiastic proponents of what he calls "grassroots level tennis" assures all players will be accommodated. To increase youth participation in the sport, juniors are encouraged to join as members or for lessons. Over at Hem Lama's Academy you will find some of

Nepal's rising stars. Hem's objective is to produce champions but the motivation, he insists, must come from the kids. And 14-year-old Utsav Rizal, with five years of tennis under his belt, is on his way. In his age bracket he holds an International Tennis Federation (ITF) ranking of 15 for South and Central Asia. Utsav aims to play college tennis in America or England, and says: "I have learned discipline, improved my tennis and I still have a lot to learn from the academy." On the ancestral lands of Juddha Samshere Rana in Jawalakhel, Madhukar Rana has established the Shaligram Tennis Academy. An informal non-registered training program



GALENDRA ZOOM PHOTO

especially to encourage junior players, the academy awards certificates of proficiency to beginners after completing 90 to 120 hours of lessons. However, Madhukar insists:



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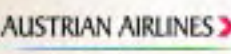



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Girls and women's tennis is seriously lagging in Nepal. Eleven-year old Priti Rizal finds tennis very exciting and wants to turn professional, but

there are not enough girls to train with and compete against. Rizal won the under-12 at Hyatt. Clinching the under-18 and women's doubles partnered by her mother at the winter tournament, Vindiya Dayananda is the leading lady player in Nepal. Vindiya is Sri Lanka's number two lady player and number one junior and has an ITF ranking in the top 500 for under-18s.

With no dearth of talent or facilities what's the hitch? The call is unanimous: the infrastructure for tennis in Nepal remains weak. Until ANLTA lays foundations for youth programs, regular coaches workshops, and organises enough tournaments

annually, the players can do little more. "As coaches we are here and we have always told the association we will be happy to work with them, but we cannot always work for free or on a salary that cannot support the game," says Krishna Ghale.

For most of us not in the competitive mode, it is still love at first strike. Says Sharad Lama, "Tennis is a game you never master completely. It is on a life scale. The best person wins for the day, not for yesterday, nor for tomorrow, and then you go on. There are so many elements involved yet it is a game that is tolerant and forgiving...that is the magic of tennis." ♦

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Open book

LONDON - At \$7.5 billion a year, what the British government gives NGOs is more than what most expected. The figure has been an eye-opener because no figures at all on central government funding to the voluntary sector were published between 1995 and 2000. Funding from the Department for International Development (DFID) to British NGOs represented about \$270 million in 1998-99, grew to about \$300 million in 1999-00, and is likely to have fallen back slightly in 2000-01.

Government funding represents about a third of the income of general charities in Britain, which means that many NGO's still have to depend on private sources for most of their funding. This level of income from independent sources might seem to put international organisations in a strong position but this is not the case, says Cathy Pharoah, director of research at the Charities Aid Foundation in Britain. The uncertain and often shifting source of aid determines in turn the kind of work many of the NGOs can do in the field. Much of government funding goes back to government departments in other countries through NGOs. (IPS)

Ethnic divide

SYDNEY - As 2003 approaches, Australia finds itself moving toward a divisive brand of politics based on the fear of the 'other', one that some critics say threatens not only human rights but the country's multiculturalism. Signs of this worrying trend in the political landscape can be seen from the fact that so far, Prime Minister John Howard's approval rating among Australian voters has soared along his brand of conservative, divisive politics.

Earlier this month, the New South Wales parliament passed the 'Terrorism (Police Powers) Bill 2002' which gives police new search powers and removes the rights of courts to review such decisions. While the government argues that these powers are essential to pre-empt terrorist acts in the state, civil libertarians say the government is taking advantage of the 'War on Terror' to stifle political dissent.

But apart from civil libertarians, ethnic community groups and supporters of multiculturalism are equally worried that 'anti-terror' measures are eroding tolerance among the different ethnic and cultural groups. Geoff Kitney, political analyst of the *Sydney Morning Herald* warns that in the new year Australians will see tougher and divisive politics, with nationalism and patriotism being key words in the political debate. (IPS)



John Howard

LEONARD GUARENTE

Since the dawn of human consciousness, we have contemplated our own mortality and dreamed of ways of overcoming it. Until recently, achieving control over our own longevity was the stuff of fairy tales, disconnected from actual scientific progress. But new research suggests that the molecular basis of aging may soon be understood in detail. Applying this knowledge could be close behind.

Recent scientific breakthroughs have come from research not on humans, or even on rats and mice, but on simple laboratory organisms like yeast and roundworms. These primitive life forms have yielded important, generally valid clues that have forced a comprehensive re-evaluation of the nature of the aging process.

Traditional evolutionary thought views aging as a process that occurs by default in the post-reproductive phase of life. After all, Darwinian natural selection cannot prevent the wholesale decline of an individual whose

As another year goes by, a Harvard professor contemplates the molecular basis of longevity.



genes have already been passed on to the next generation. According to this view, many cellular and organic processes thus degrade concurrently, and aging has many causes. As a result, the post-reproductive shortcomings of a great many genes would have to be remedied to slow the aging process.

Recent research on yeast and roundworms suggests otherwise.

It turns out that mutations even in single genes can lead to a substantial lengthening of life span and an accompanying slowdown in the aging process.

But how can this be possible if aging has many concurrent causes, as evolutionary theory maintains?

The answer can be found by examining the molecules that make up the genes in which

mutations extend life span. For example, a universal gene called SIR2 determines the life span of both yeast cells and roundworms. In both organisms, if an extra copy of SIR2 is added by genetic intervention, the life span is extended. Conversely, if the SIR2 gene is deleted, the life span is shortened.

In both yeast and worms,

OPINION

by ANDREW NASH



Lotts of problems

US Senator Trent Lott's decision to step down as leader of the American government's upper legislative chamber brought to conclusion one of the most disturbing, odd and illuminating episodes in recent American political memory. Speaking at retiring Senator Strom Thurmond's 100th birthday party on 5 December, Lott told a Capitol Hill gathering that he was proud that his state, Mississippi, had voted for Thurmond's 1948 segregationist campaign for president. And, as if that weren't enough, Lott added, "if the rest of the country had followed our lead, we wouldn't have had all these problems over all these years, either."

Precisely what Lott meant by "all these problems" was never really clarified, although the statement seemed ominous enough considering Thurmond's role in the 1948 election. As the "Dixiecrat" candidate for president, Thurmond rallied racist Southern whites by pledging: "All the laws of Washington and all the bayonets of the Army cannot force the Negro into our homes, our schools, our churches." Whatever it is that Lott did mean by his Dixiecrat endorsement—and he pleaded in subsequent interviews that it was not a wistful longing for segregation—it remains troubling, especially given Lott's political

Race remains the most perplexing social issue in the United States.

prominence and the fact that his state is both the poorest in the country and home to one of the largest concentrations of African Americans.

That an adroit, experienced politician would self-destruct because he failed to anticipate the fallout from endorsing a racially divisive past is disconcerting and baffling, but it also highlights the contours of contemporary American political life. After Richard Nixon created an electoral alliance of Southern whites, Christian revivalists and Wall Street bankers, African Americans flocked to the Democratic Party, where they have remained ever since. Democrats count on the African American vote to keep them in office, and Republicans—who now control the White House, the Senate, and the House of Representatives—rely on prosperous whites and evangelicals.

Race remains the most perplexing social issue in the United States, and with good reason. African Americans are poorer, more likely to be imprisoned, and are grossly under-represented in political and economic institutions. There are no African Americans in Lott's Senate, and the only African American Republican in the 438-member House of Representatives is retiring after only three terms. Fewer than ten percent of African Americans voted for George W Bush in 2000, and Senator Lott has perhaps never had to reflect on racism—and his state's role in it—because he's never needed African American votes to keep him in office. The challenge for the entire US political system, including the Democratic Party, is to court African American voters in a meaningful way, not just rhetorically, but through actual competition for them and bring them within the fold of economic prosperity. In a two-party system, if a block of voters is ignored by one party and taken for granted by the other, it can't expect to be taken seriously. It can't even expect to be free from the indignities of racist longing. ♦

(Andrew Nash is Editorial Assistant with Himal South Asian magazine in Kathmandu.)

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grow older

SIR2 appears to sense the availability of food and stall the aging process in times of deprivation by stimulating the formation of specialized body types—spores in yeast and dauers in worms—that can survive for extraordinarily long periods without nutrition. When conditions improve, the dormant life forms revive and reproduce. The survival function that SIR2 exists to serve—forestalling aging and reproduction during famine—is adaptive and therefore pervasive in nature.

So the classical evolutionary theory of aging must be modified. In times of plenty, the aging process plays out as evolutionary biologists say, with reproduction followed by the failure of many genes and a wholesale decline of individual organisms. But in times of scarcity, the survival program kicks in to slow the aging process. Even more intriguingly, a single gene can promote this survival mechanism across a wide swath of nature’s creatures.

Does SIR2 also promote survival in mammals? Interestingly, in cultured mouse or human cells, the mammalian SIR2 gene determines a cell’s

response to DNA damage. When faced with damaging agents, cells have the ability to commit suicide. The mammalian SIR2 gene modulates this process, and higher levels of it dampen the cell death response. Just like in yeast and worms, mammalian SIR2 promotes survival, in this case of cultured cells.

Does this mean that mammalian aging is at least partly caused by the gradual loss of cells and the accompanying failure of organs? Possibly, but we must bear in mind that the cell death response is a way to cull genetically damaged cells before they progress into tumors. So increasing SIR2 activity in mammals may actually cause cancer by keeping bad cells alive too long.

Yet this seems unlikely for two reasons. First, as an evolutionary matter, it makes little sense that a gene anointed by nature to promote survival would also cause cancer. Second, recent experiments in genetically altered mice show that the cell death response may be slowed without causing cancer. This suggests that there is a window of slowing cell death that does not cause cancer and may promote longevity.

Obviously, the practical implications of these findings could prove extraordinary. If single genes can determine the life span of mammals, it should be possible to develop drugs that bind to these genes’ proteins and alter their activities. Thus, drugs that slow the aging process could be around the corner.

But will such drugs prolong youth and vitality, or simply extend our stay in nursing homes?

To answer this question, consider the effects of calorie restriction, which has been found to increase life span in organisms ranging from yeast to mammals. In yeast, where the process has been studied in molecular detail, the longevity triggered by calorie restriction is mediated by SIR2. In mammals, we have not yet discovered the molecular basis of the longevity. But we do know that restricted animals are vigorous and healthy for the duration of their longer lives. ♦

(©Project Syndicate)

(Leonard Guarente is professor of biology at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Director of its Aging Laboratory.)

The Envelope Please...

DANNY SCHECHTER in NEW YORK With Time Magazine honouring three women for blowing the whistle on corporate illegalities and FBI incompetence, perhaps it is time to broaden the frame and single out some journalists and media makers who are sounding the alarm about the rush to war in Iraq. Their work deserves attention too as the stakes may be much higher. Everyone in the news business knows that truth is one of the first casualties in any armed conflict. But knowing that does not seem to inform or improve most conflict reporting. What would the categories for the journalism prize be? There might be the Emperor Has No Clothes Prize. Paul Robinson of the conservative Spectator magazine is already in contention for heresies such as this: “There exists no legitimate reason for us to wage or threaten war against Iraq,” he wrote recently, “Saddam Hussein poses no threat to us.”

“As recently as ten years ago, it is unlikely that any British government would have considered taking military action unless there was a genuine threat to our national security. Today we are reduced to twitching over fantastic delusions of enormous enemy capabilities and make-believe scenarios of future holocausts, and Tony Blair can drive us inexorably towards an unnecessary and quite unjust war.” Next, there’s a Take No Prisoners Award for debunkers. Journalists James Cusick and Felicity Arbuthnot of the Glasgow Sunday Herald are my nominees for scooping the rest of the world media on the extent of Washington’s interception of Iraq’s weapons declaration before other UN members could even see it. They discovered that “the United States edited out more than 8,000 crucial pages of Iraq’s 11,800-page dossier on weapons, before passing on a sanitised version

to the 10 non-permanent members of the United Nations security council.” Next, there would be the Lifetime Achievement Award for investigative reporting. One candidate might be Seymour Hersh, now of the *New Yorker*, who has covered nine US Administrations and all the wars in between. In a recent interview, he said the Bush Administration is the hardest to get access to: “Oh, it’s much harder. There’s almost a ferocious animosity toward people in the press who ask questions they don’t want to hear. And this is a government that has tremendous influence over cable television, over radio talk.” In the running for most controversial war on terrorism TV documentary is Scottish filmmaker Jamie Doran’s film of an alleged massacre of Taliban prisoners of war last year. It has created a stir in Europe. He says he would lead US authorities to investigate any involvement of American soldiers.

Doran told Reuters—before screening *Afghan Massacre: The Convoy of Death* on Germany’s ARD television network—that witnesses saw US special forces stand by and watch as Northern Alliance allies murdered Taliban POWs. What unites all of these disparate voices, some of the right, and others of the left is their willingness to probe below the surface layers of the conventional wisdom and the official story to take a more critical approach in terms of the questions asked and information offered. As the Italian thinker Umberto Eco advised “sometimes you have to follow the opposite course and find in dissent the confirmation of your own intuitions.” ♦ (© Globalvision News Network)

(Danny Schechter is the author *Media Wars: News at a Time of Terror*)

Cultivating peace

TOKYO - Dogged by a sluggish economy, and a series of political and corporate scandals, Japan is turning its cultivating peace diplomacy in Asian conflict situations in order to revive its global profile. Over the past year, Tokyo has hosted several donor conferences on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Asian countries torn by conflict. There was one for Afghanistan in January and another for Aceh in December. It is also hosting a donors’ conference for Sri Lanka next year. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has pushed Japan’s strategy as peace broker under his agenda for national reform. Peace diplomacy is expected to balance off a reduction in the country’s clout stemming from the drop in its aid funds long a pillar of Tokyo’s international profile and a main part of its foreign policy. Aid reductions have seen Japan slip from the rank of the world’s top donor and take second place behind the US. Experts say this would promote a Japanese foreign policy that is not heavily dependent on the US. This is especially important as the US mounts pressure on Japan to support an attack on Iraq and public concern about Tokyo’s support for this action. (IPS)

Rookie Roh

SEOUL - Few imagined that a rookie like Roh Moo-Hyun would be able to run to be its presidential candidate—much less win the presidency in the December polls. The President-elect did not have the backing of senior politicians, a high educational background or the crucial support from his hometown. A farmer’s son, Roh never studied at university but went to night school to become a private practice lawyer. Most people in his hometown electorate in Gyongsang province voted for his conservative rival Lee Hoi-Chang. Youthful voters saw him as the way to steer away from the old conservative connections and money politics. Roh beat his older conservative rival Lee by 2.3 percentage points, taking 48.9 percent of the vote. Almost two-thirds of the under-40 voters voted for Roh, while two-thirds of the older generation voted for Lee. Polls show that many people hope the new government will close the gap between the rich and the poor, which has widened since the economic crisis of 1997. Roh promises to pursue dialogue with North Korea despite its admission of a nuclear weapons program and to seek ‘mature’ ties with the US. (IPS)

Pilgrim flights to Gaya

A month after allowing Sri Lankan Airlines to fly to Bodhgaya from Colombo, Indian Airlines has inaugurated a weekly flight from Bangkok. The flights will operate from a newly-opened international airport at Gaya in an effort to tap the Buddhist pilgrim market. The Indian Airlines flights operate via Calcutta, while Sri Lankan Airlines flies directly from Colombo and on to Delhi. Syed Shahnawaz Hussain, India’s civil aviation minister, said there was vast development potential for the tourist sector with Bodhgaya as the focal point. Sri Lankan Airlines’ weekly Colombo-Gaya-Delhi flight is fully booked through April. Singapore’s SilkAir was likely to be the next carrier on the route, he said. Bodhgaya is the site of a holy tree where Lord Buddha is believed to have meditated before attaining enlightenment and is the second-most important Buddhist site after Lumbini in Nepal where the Buddha was born. Other Buddhist pilgrimage sites like Sarnath and Kushinagar are near Gaya. (IPS)

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Only solution: constituent assembly



Professor Krishna Khanal in *Jana Ekata*, 23 December

जनैकता

There has been a sharp polarisation of views among royalists, parliamentarians and the Maoists. All three powers have changed character. The power of the king is becoming more concrete—many feel it is regressive. Looking at the situation following the royal declaration on 4 October, the pro-parliamentary powers appear to be playing a more democratic role. But their party interests have become narrower. Rather than looking for a way out of this crisis, parliamentary powers are intent on fulfilling their own agendas.

The role of the Maoists, who have emerged as the third power, is also changing. A party that has managed to mobilise the public to a great extent, cannot make such an abrupt U-turn. If a solution to the current crisis cannot be found then the three-point power equation will be reduced to a two-point power equation. Who will benefit in the end remains to be seen. Regarding the monarchy, the Nepali people respected the king and held him in certain esteem. But given the changing circumstances and based on the role the monarchy played in the past, the king cannot expect this to continue unquestionably.

Parliamentary elections, Article 128, a plebiscite, whatever we talk about—the sole truth is that the present constitution has failed. What can we expect from a constitution that is unable to provide solutions to the political crisis?

It is now necessary to draft a new constitution. In the past 12 years there were complaints that the king was not given his proper place. But in the past year and a half, the king has sought his place. So, it's foolish to think that the royal declaration on 4 October was the outcome of the current crisis. Rather, it's the materialisation of the palace's wish to seek a more definite role. If the political parties are unable to keep the people happy, then we can't ignore the rise of an alternative power. If the Maoists lay down their arms and remain powerful, who can stop them?

The solution to the current crisis is a constituent assembly. How can you talk about the sovereignty of the people but not allow a sovereign people to exercise their fundamental rights? Many say this is the Maoist agenda, but that is not true. A constituent assembly should be the demand of all democrats. The Maoists should take part in the constituent assembly without arms. This has to be made clear to them. But people should not think of what will happen if the Maoists win, or if someone else wins. Their views should not be coloured by political gains. What is important—the good of the people—should be kept in mind.

An assembly must be that of elected representatives. Those who say individuals can be nominated to the assembly are undermining the importance of the assembly, they are reducing its worth. If the democrats, instead of the Maoists, demanded a republic, it would be a bigger challenge for the state. The state cannot fight against democracy. Whoever believes in democracy has to be in favour of a constituent assembly. It has to be given greater importance. The people must look for a solution to the current crisis. And there is only one solution—a constituent assembly.

Another shutdown

Jana Aastha, 25 December

आस्था

A press release issued by Maoist leaders Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai calls for a Mechi-Koshi bandh on 3 January. The date coincides with a civic felicitation program planned for the king and queen in Biratnagar. This puts not only the organisers of the civic reception in a difficult position but also the king and queen. If the program were cancelled it would appear they are giving into Maoist threats, and if it takes place the low turnout is likely to dampen the occasion.

The Maoist party, the People's Liberation Army and the Joint Revolutionary Peoples Council will also be co-ordinating a series of protest programs, including a publicity campaign till 14 January. From 15 to 28 January, the Maoists have planned public meetings, processions and various public mobilisation drives. From 29 January to 12 February, they have called for a people's resistance campaign and a bandh on 13 and 14 February to celebrate the party's eighth anniversary.

The Maoists have repeated their demands for a roundtable meeting, an interim government and a constituent assembly. They have warned stern action against corrupt individuals within and outside the palace. They have accused the government of being autocratic and

not paying taxes. The strongly worded and comparatively long press release states that taxes collected from the general public has been misused for purchasing weapons and endorsing corrupt deals and commissions instead of being used for the economic and social good of the people.

There is a strong possibility the other political parties—who have been protesting the civic reception program but haven't made plans to undermine it—will silently support the bandh. The palace has put itself in a sticky situation since it has neither rectified the royal declaration of 4 October nor been able to create an environment conducive for talks with the Maoists.

Jagat Gauchan

Ghatna Ra Bichar, 25 December

घटना-बिचार

Interview with Jagat Gauchan, newly elected Central Working Committee member of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP). Excerpts.

How can you be so confident you'll achieve what the elected leaders could not?
No matter what the Nepali Congress and CPN-UML claim, the political changes of 1990 had less to do with them than with King Birendra who instituted the multiparty system following the Shah tradition of respecting the people's desires. The incompetency of our political parties

has become obvious in the last 12 years. The likes of Girija Prasad Koirala and Man Mohan Adhikari are labeled leaders. I say they are incapable, inept and inconsistent to be true leaders. If they had any degree of sincerity, the country may have been in a much better situation today. The leaders are responsible for the deterioration of Nepal.

Would you say the Congress and Communist leaders are totally unconcerned about the people's welfare?

That fact seems obvious to me—the Nepali Congress claims to be synonymous with democracy, but cheats the people to garner luxuries for itself. Meanwhile, the UML claims its commitment to the people but have yet to put it into practice. They told lies and now the people have rejected them.

Leaders are not god-sent and they cannot be imported. The people will accept only those who work for them. I have always been proud of my nationality. I could not stay a passive witness to Nepal's deterioration. We have a responsibility to this country to the next generation of Nepalis. My entry into politics was not done out of any personal political ambitions. I just want to devote my life to the service of this country.

How do you propose to deal with the Maoist problem?

Presently there are three powers that exist in Nepal. The first is absolute monarchy, which is respected as the symbol of national unity. The second is the Maoists and lastly, the pro-multiparty powers. The latter has been discarded and criticised by the people. The Maoists are asking for a political system that failed all over the world. They should understand that their demands are impossible. They should change their demands for a constituent assembly and a communist state and instead try and find a solution within the constitution of 1990. Of course, power sharing would be an option for them. What I don't

understand is where will he transfer the power—to the chief secretary? Until the next election, executive power will automatically lie with the monarch.

Damn Nepal

Narayan Wagle in Kantipur, 20 December

कान्तिपुर

In the old and blackened shops at Laxmi Road in Mumbai, you can see the young women, with heavy make up on their faces waiting for customers. Their eyes, however, don't seem to convey any emotions. Their dusty laughter lacks feeling. Some 1,000 Nepali women are said to be serving as sex workers in Laxmi Road alone. When a group of visiting Nepali journalists visited them recently, they got agitated and began to curse the country that sent them here.

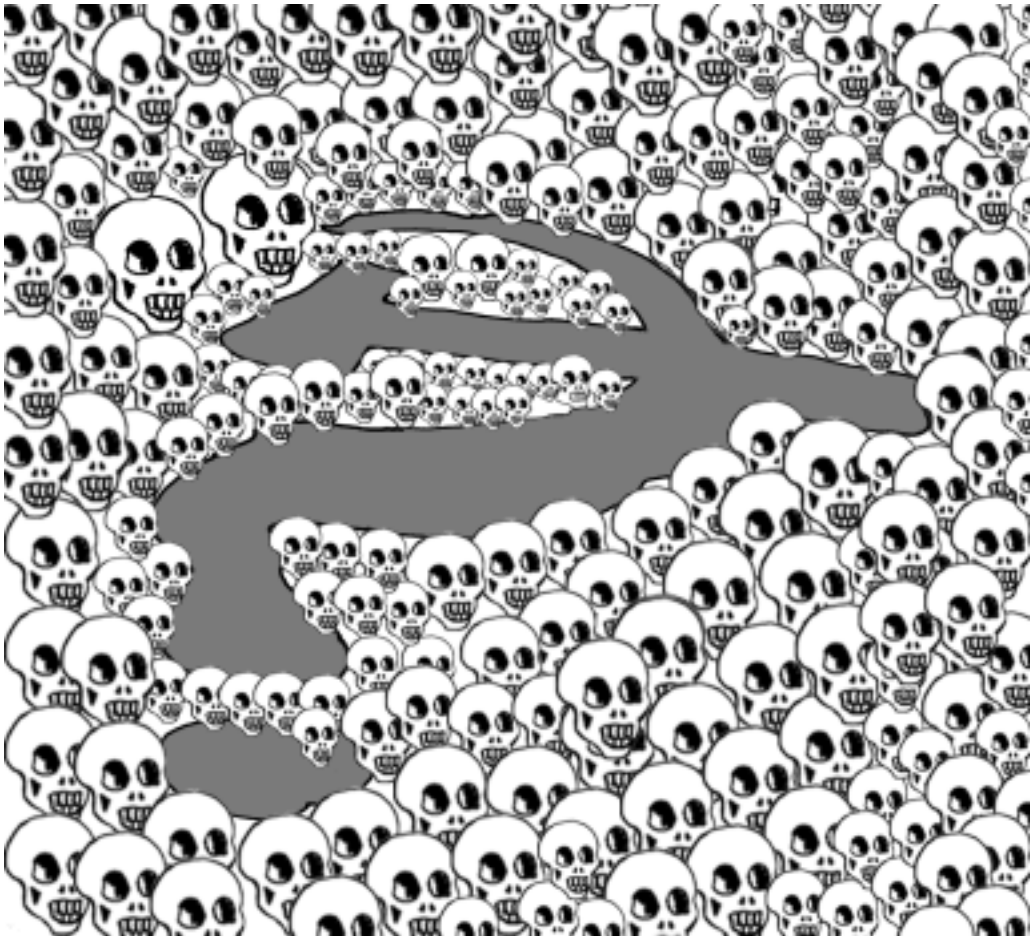
"Why have you come here to talk to us?" one of them asked us in a combative tone of voice. Her face was contorted with anger and disgust. "Go and ask the people manning the border. Ask your government. Don't they know how many girls and women are leaving their homes and are disappearing?"

Another woman said that she had been trafficked when she was only 13. "I didn't know where I was being taken and for what purpose," she said. "Is it our crime if others take advantage of us?" A few years back, some trafficked women had been repatriated from Mumbai at the initiative of a group of NGOs. But the initiative fizzled out. Walk into any big cities in India—Mumbai, Kolkata or Delhi—the plight of Nepali women is no different. After losing their freedom and their dignity, the women have now been forced to come to terms with their existence here. Another woman shouted, "Damn Nepal! Our country has forced us to come to this hell. But at least here we have food. If you can return us our dignity and give us jobs back home, then take us back. Otherwise, why have you come here?"

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

Every time I've met the king, he has spoken positively. But his actions following our talks have always contradicted what he said.

- Nepali Congress president Girija Prasad Koirala in *Kantipur* on 19 December.



हिमाल

Robin Sayami in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 16 to 30 December.

1,300 widows

Karuna Thapa in *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 24 December

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

NEPALGANJ: Muna was seven months pregnant when her husband, Madan, was killed. They had fallen in love when Madan was posted in Dang, and last year they got married in Madan's home village in Bardiya. Soon, Madan was transferred to Jumla, and that is where he was killed during the Maoist attack last month.

He had written only twice since being posted to Jumla, saying he was all right. He promised to come and visit her as soon as he got leave. When he finally came home, it was his dead body brought in a police jeep the day after the Jumla attack. Muna fainted when she saw the jeep.

When she regained consciousness, her tears and cries of grief made the whole village of Sitapur weep with her. Even villagers hardened by their own struggle for survival wept, and there was not a dry eye in the village.

Today, Muna is taking care of herself and her baby—the only thing that Madan left her. Madan's family has told her: "You are our daughter we will take care of you."

Also killed in Jumla was another Bardiya native, Bhawani Khatri. He left behind a 19-year-old widow, Jayarupa, and two small boys. Bhawani and Jayarupa fell in love when Bhawani was posted in Dadeldhura four years ago. When her husband's body arrived in the village, Jayarupa fainted with grief and shock. Bhawani was the sole breadwinner of the family, and Jayarupa has no one else to turn to.

The seven-year "peoples war" has already left at least 1,300 widows like Muna and Jayarupa all over Nepal. Of these it is estimated that 160 are widows of soldiers, more than 700 are widows of civilian police, 90 of armed police and more than 400 are widows of Maoists killed in action.

The government has promised that it will give a compensation of Rs 700,000 to the family of every police and army personnel killed in action. But most of the widows and families have never received that money. Even the widows who have gone to the police or army to ask for the compensation have been so mired in red tape that they have given up.

Jayarupa says she hasn't got a paisa from the government, even though she has gone to the local administration and police several times. "There are thousands of widows like me, and we have to really struggle even to stay alive. Our husbands gave their lives for the government, but the government doesn't even take care of us," she says, appealing to charity organisations and the government to give them some hope and relief.



MOHAN MAINALI

Back at Sundarijal >24

“The king will soon open a dialogue with us...”



Another series of entries in BP Koirala’s prison diary gives us a hauntingly relevant analysis of Nepal’s present political predicament and we see a striking similarity to the current polarisation between the parties and the monarchy. BP’s analysis is applicable today as it was in 1977: “If a compromise is

achieved both (the king and the parties) will be the partners in a difficult undertaking of leading the nation to progress.” BP is writing in English, and the next few entries are blank, as he falls sick with bronchitis.

23 February, 1977

Sundarijal
Our present line incorporates also a conviction that the king is compelled by critical development of the relationship between India and Nepal and also by the stagnation in the economic development of the country and by an awareness that this has not produced expected desired results to respond to our gesture. If this analysis of ours is proven correct—so far no indication—then the king will soon open a dialogue with us. What should be our stand, what line of argument and strategy should we adopt in our dialogue with the king? Of course over time is quite clear: restore parliamentary democracy, ie restore ante-1960 status quo. That this will be for the king some kind of ultimatum, at least a...demand which by virtue of our own strength we are not in a position to make. Moreover if the talk is intended to achieve a compromise then we too will have to take into consideration the position and difficulties of the king. The spirit of compromise means that both sides should take into consideration, when advancing their respective proposals and suggestions, the difficulties dignity of the parties concerned. If a compromise is achieved both the parties will be the partners in a difficult undertaking of leading the nation to progress. In this context we must, therefore, be guided by two considerations which are difficult to reconcile and would tax the ingenuity and diplomatic capabilities of the parties to the maximum:

1. The objective ideal of total restoration of democratic functioning should not be diluted, but at the same time shouldn't be rigid to the point of breaking the prospect of compromise. A very tall demand. GM wants me to start thinking out ideas for eventual dialogue with the king which he sees coming very soon. I think the first prerequisite is mutual trust. I will appeal to the king to be frank and fully trusting and trustworthy. We have established our bonafide by returning unconditionally and thus placing ourselves at his disposal and mercy.
2. Full democracy should be the mutual objective.
3. First process is to grant total and unconditional amnesty and restoration of property, etc.
4. Immediately or after a gap of three months restoration of fundamental rights.
5. Six months thereafter permission to parties to function and at the same time or again three months after that declaration of a date—say one year later—for elections to the national panchayat at by adult franchise and at the same time prospective granting of authority to the elected national panchayat to make appropriate amendments to the constitution and this arrangement the king will not have to appear to have conceded substantially or yielded considerably, at the same time we will have been assured of restoration of full democratic process within a specified period.

24 February, 1977

Sundarijal
Washed a bucketful of clothes. Feeling very tired. Didn't do anything.

25 February, 1977

Sundarijal
Ill with bronchitis, so...

26 February, 1977

Sundarijal
Not well.

27 February, 1977

Sundarijal
Not well. Have asked for medicines which I used to take in India on Dr Vaish's (BHU) [Banaras Hindu University] advice. The doctor said in the evening that a doctor would come to see me tomorrow.

FICTION

by RANJAN ADIGA

The marriage of Ram Kumar's son—Part III

Stout and plump, Mrs Sharma was also dressed in a garish red sari, matched by colourful sets of bangles that tinkled against each other as she proffered her namaste. But the similarities ended with the features because unlike her counterpart, the mother of the girl greeted her guests looking straight into their eyes.

After the courtesies were exchanged, they were led into the drawing room, which had a green sofa set on each side of the wall and a round table with a colourful spread of sweets and biscuits in the middle. Ram sat down, stealing a furtive glance of the room. Maya Devi, out of general courtesy parked herself on the edge of the sofa and Rajesh, on whom the blush still hung like a curtain, cringed next to her. The room was painted in grim gray, matched by a spread of dull linoleum on the floor. Ram reacted to the linoleum with a quick mental calculation.

“Hmm...no carpets. Perhaps doesn't want to show he takes bribes.”

On top of the TV was a cluster of tiny animal statues, some wooden, some brass and some plastic. As Ram Kumar covertly continued his inspection, his eyes fell on the framed picture on the wall of Mr Sharma standing proudly in front of the Eiffel Tower. When he turned his head, he found Mr Sharma looking at him.

“My 1985 trip to Paris. Office expense. Beautiful city. Ever been there?” Ram, who had never been farther than India simpered, shaking his head. For some time they sat there smiling at everybody but nobody in particular. It was Kiran ji who broke the silence. “I'm telling you, this pair is made in heaven, just like Lord Ram and Sita.” Another burst of mandatory laughter followed and after some small talk Mr Sharma called for the bride-to-be.

Bina finally entered, in measured steps, her head bowed down, her fingers clutching the edges of her silk sari. Her hair was tied in a delicate bun, partially shielded by the sari, like a veil covering a woman's blush. Her cheeks were soft and rosy, with just a teasing dab of powder on each side. On her lips hung a faint and demure smile. Suddenly everything in the room, from the sofas sets down to the last grain of dreary paint seemed to have become younger in the presence of this fresh young being. She sat next to her mother, so delicately that she seemed to melt into the sofa. At this very first glance Ram felt the magic and like his son, sat frozen in his seat, transfixed by this picture of pure beauty.

“Ram ji, Ram ji.” Suddenly he was jolted from his trance by Mr Sharma. “Would you like tea or coffee?” Ram looked up, the words struggling to come out.

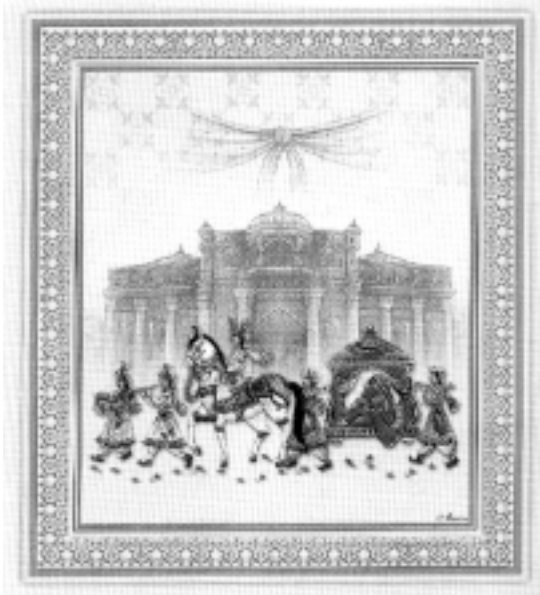
“Tea would be fine.” He muttered. Then Mrs Sharma, teasingly rolling her eyes, asked Rajesh.

“And what would it be for you Rajesh Babu?”

Rajesh squirmed a little bashfully looked into Bina's eyes and said, “I want coffee.”

“Bina nani, make sure you sprinkle enough sugar for him, huh? Hahaha...” Kiran ji cut in, twitching his moustache. Bina gave an easy nod and walked out of the room. Rajesh was smitten and felt defenseless against her bewitching charm. Sheepishly, he edged closer to his mother and clutched her hands as if to say, “I want her.” Maya Devi, out of character, pinched his hands, a cheeky smile appearing on her own face. Ram on the other hand managed to pull himself together and complemented his host.

“Well our only daughter, now will be at your mercy.” Replied the host, passing around the biscuit tray. When Bina came back with the tea tray, Kiran ji was complementing her cooking skills, especially her expert hand at making pickles. Her entry made Ram once again divert his complete attention on her and her every delicate



Winner of the British Council Short Story Competition (18-35 category).

feature. As she approached, he felt he was drowning into a world where there was nobody else in the room but the two of them, her beauty floating in a wave of surreal images and her faint but depraved whiff of perfume enveloping his very being.

“Tea *Buwa*?” He was the first one she served, slightly bowing down, glancing at him for a fraction of a second then looking down, the eyelashes covering her big eyes like a beautiful screen, the honeydew dripping from her lips. When he took the cup their eyes met once again and Ram made an effort of returning the smile but she sauntered past him, the silk of her sari brushing against the fabric of his trouser, giving him a strange sensation.

“Is the sugar ok?” Mr Sharma asked, which immediately jerked him back to the real world. He turned to his host; nervously adjusting his cap, hoping nobody had noticed his behaviour. When Maya Devi looked up, she noticed beads of perspiration glinting on her husband's forehead.

In the kitchen that night, Ram could not even concentrate on his food. Rajesh, sitting on the floor next to him was fiddling with a potato.

“So you like her huh?” Ram asked, without looking at his son. Rajesh looked up, the blush slowly giving away to a confident grin. “Yes father.” Ram forced some food into his mouth the suddenly got up, leaving the rice unfinished, with Maya Devi gaping behind him.

He went to the patio, lit his cigarette and started pacing up and down. Soon he was sweating, the heat of the summer evening gripping his body. Images of Bina, her flowery youth, the particular way she glanced at him, the slight drop of her head and the quivering smile, all flashed before his eyes and he felt as if she was sitting right there with him, now inviting him with her smile, now piercing him with her looks.

That night sleep eluded him.

The next day at noon, Ram and Kiran ji sat in the canteen, licking their fingers stained by pea curry. As they got up to leave, Kiran ji once again took Ram's hands and shook them vigorously.

The wedding date had been fixed. ♦ (Concluded.)

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ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Forest Based Products Development Exhibition** Bhrikuti Mandap. 10AM-4PM from 27 to 29 December. Free entry. Nepal Foresters' Association, Babarmahal, 268193
- ❖ **Snow and other adventures:** "Poems in Frames" by Mark Wyatt at Lazimpat Gallery Café, Lazimpat.
- ❖ **Woodturning in Kathmandu** by Dan Hogan, and **Unspoken Words:** new Tibetan Calligraphy by Dhumakhang at Indigo Gallery, Kathmandu. 8AM-6PM till 14 January. 413580

EVENTS

- ❖ **Weekly dialogues** on life and living: Borrow books and audiotapes at K Study Centre, Swoyambhu. 2PM-6PM, Saturday. Anil/Arun at 227704
- ❖ **Winter Day Camp** ECCA for students (Class 4-9) 29 December-14 January. ECCA, Thapathali, Kathmandu. 268297,268328 email: ecca@mos.com.np
- ❖ **Reiki (Healing) Level One Workshop** at Everest Bookshop, Babar Mahal Revisted, 28 December. 541613

MUSIC

- ❖ **Live music** by Catch 22, Friday nights at the 40,000 ½ ft Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, Thamel. 414336
- ❖ **1974 AD** Exclusively at Moksh, Pulchowk organised by the Grahamites Association of Nepal in aid of Dr Graham's Homes, Kalimpong. 6.30 PM on 27 December. Rs 750 (includes dinner). Limited tickets. bitarak.com. 529726

DRINKS

- ❖ **New Year's Eve at Rox Bar** with Mumbai's Sonia Saigal and Harmeet Menetta performing jazz, pop and R&B, with in-house Teesta. Rs 1200 single, Rs 1800 couple. Hyatt Regency Kathmandu
- ❖ **Paddy Foley's Irish Pub** A wide range of drinks and food. Live music on Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday nights. 416096.
- ❖ **Friday Indulgence** Taste 12 Scottish single malts for Rs 999 at the Piano Lounge, Hotel Yak and Yeti. 248999

FOOD

- ❖ **Moulin Rouge** New Year's Eve at Hotel Yak & Yeti French Can-Can dancers, dinner and free entry to Sinners in Heaven. Rs 7777 couple, Rs 4,444 singles. 438979/411122.
- ❖ **New Year's Eve at Rox Restaurant** Five course dinner, complimentary wine and free entrance to Rox Bar. Rs 3000. Hyatt Regency Kathmandu.
- ❖ **Festive Season Menu** of 'Cosmo' cuisine at Cafe Mitra. 259015
- ❖ **New Year Groove** at Dwarika's features Cadenza Collective. Bonfire, BBQ, 30 percent beverage discount Rs 1500 single, Rs 2500 per couple. 479488
- ❖ **K-too! Beer and Steakhouse** Free mulled wine or Irish coffee with every meal. 433043
- ❖ **Kilroy's of Kathmandu** Traditional New Year's Eve fun Rs 1200 + tax. 250550
- ❖ **Multi Cuisine** at Nanglo's Deli, relocated to Durbar Marg. 224707
- ❖ **Jazz by the Pool** Weekend BBQ lunch with Chris Masand and the Jazz Commission. Rs 600 per person free beer or a soft drink. Soaltee Crowne Plaza
- ❖ **Wood fired pizzas, cocktails and coffee** at the Roadhouse Café, Thamel.
- ❖ **Taste of Beijing** Roast duck and other Chinese meat, fish and vegetarian delicacies. Beijing Roast Duck Restaurant, Birendra International Convention Centre. 468589
- ❖ **Tukche Thakali Kitchen** Buckwheat, barley, bean, and dried meat specialties. Also brunch with porridge and pancakes, all raw material from Tukche village. Durbar Marg.

GETAWAYS

- ❖ If you want to escape Kathmandu's New Year Eve frenzy, you probably couldn't do better than Club Himalaya Nagarkot Resort. This four-star establishment has everything from an indoor swimming pool and a helipad to luxurious rooms with private balconies, all the better to enjoy an uninterrupted view of the Himalaya. Greet the new year with a sumptuous breakfast while watching the first sunrise of 2003 from behind Mt Everest. The historic towns of Bhaktapur, Sakhu and Changu Narayan Temple are a short commute away. You could mountain bike down from Nagarkot, a fun and easy activity, and then have the resort pick you up for the return trip. **Club Himalaya Nagarkot Resort.** 680045/ 48/ 80/ 83. Email: club@mos.com.np Website: www.nepalshotel.com
- ❖ Adventure Tented Camp cradled among thick forests of magnolias and rhododendrons, is far from the madding crowd on Pokhari Thumko hill, 15 km south-east of the city. It commands an impressive view of the mountains and Kathmandu Valley, and is a treat for nature lovers and hikers. An easy walk will take you down to the bustling Newari village of Panauti, renowned for its 16th century Bhramayani Temple. If you want something more rigorous, try the uphill route to Phulchoki. Their cozy mountain safari tents for two are perfect for that intimate weekend away. The rustic Country Kitchen serves a variety of cuisines and when the day is done, you can enjoy your *chotta* pegs from the well-stocked Lakhuri Bhanjyang Bar on the patio. **Adventure Tented Camp & Country Kitchen.** 418922 Website: www.advcamp.com Email: advcamp@wlink.com.np



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

BOOKWORM

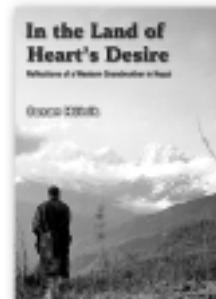


Everest Gita: Nepali, Hindi and English translation Madan Prasad Aryal and Rama Devi Aryal
Rs 250

The author has undertaken a multilingual translation of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita from the original Sanskrit. The Gita, a compilation of Lord Krishna's teachings to Arjuna before the battle of Mahabharata, is widely read as a guide to living according to Hindu principles of *dharma* and *karma*.

In the Land of Heart's Desire: Reflections of a Western grandmother in Nepal Susan Höivik
Eco Himal Publications, 2003
Rs 400

For more than a decade Susan Höivik immersed herself in Nepal: trekking, practicing Buddhism, environmental volunteering and recently, training teachers as a VSO volunteer in Eco Himal's Rolwaling Eco Tourism Project. This is a personal volume of her reflections and insights.



Child complementary feeding in urban areas of Nepal: Practices and nutritional implications Sushila Malla
Udaya Books, 2002
Rs 600

The purpose of the book is to study existing child nutrition and commercial complementary feeding practices observed in Kathmandu Valley. Assessment of availability, nutritional status of children and analysis of selected supplements contributes to detailed analysis and practical solutions.

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

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BROTHERS AND SISTERS
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James Bond's 20th cinematic outing, Die Another Day, keeps things fresh. Bond is leaner, meaner and edgier, especially when MI6 strips him of his double-O status after his imprisonment in a North Korean prison. Pierce Brosnan's fourth movie as the super suave spy has more than the usual signature action chases, requisite gorgeous co-stars, snappy one liners and exotic locales. Judi Dench (M) and John Cleese (Q) return in this sequel, joined by Halle Berry (Jinx), Rosamund Pike (Miranda Frost) and a cameo appearance by Maddonna, who also sings the title track. Die Another Day will silence critics who said the Bond series should've been buried years ago.

Die Another Day

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Daily	2045-2115	BBC नेपाली सेवा
Daily	2245-2300	BBC नेपाली सेवा
Sun-Fri	0740- 0800	एकैछिन् (रेडियो पत्रिका)
Sun-Fri	0800- 0830	डबली (विषयगत अन्तरक्रिया)
Sun-Fri	2000- 2030	आजका कुरा (समसामयिक विषयमा बहस)
Sat	0800- 0830	शान्ति अभियान
Sat	1930- 2000	आचार विचार (अष्टाचारविरुद्ध सहकार्य)
Sat	2000- 2030	कूटनीतिक मञ्च

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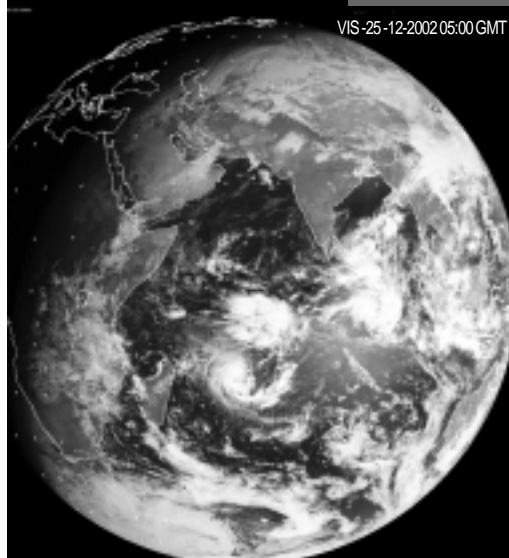
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NEPALI WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL



VIS-25-12-2002 05:00 GMT

Another dry December with every westerly so far bypassing us. There was some hope that this week's moisture front would come our way, but alas no such luck. As this satellite picture taken on Wednesday morning shows, the cold has intensified the tarai fog, bringing down the maximum temperature considerably as the sun fails to heat the ground. The Valley will have misty mornings, but the mountains of Nepal will be crisp, sunny and clear through the New Years' holiday with just the occasional high clouds and chances of snow flurries in the the higher valleys.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
18-03	18-03	17-04	18-03	19-02



EVENT

The red windmill in the valley of the gods

Paris 1900: Of all Parisian music halls one stood out. Moulin Rouge—literally “Red Windmill”, a holdover from the time of Louis XIV in Montmartre—was where the otherwise jaded French crowd stood six-deep around the stage to see the Can-Can. The dance was an elaborate production with lithe performers who wore outrageous costumes, often exposing more than was concealed. Translated, the daring Can-Can means tittle-tattle, and it became an instant sensation. It turned Moulin Rouge into a legend that has been immortalised in theatrical shows, Hollywood movies

and today is something of an icon. Kathmandu 2002: The Moulin Rouge is still alive and magnificently vibrant. That special Parisian magic will be recreated at the Hotel Yak & Yeti on New Year’s Eve for the first time in Nepal. Don’t be fooled into assuming this will be a gentle retreat into sepia tinted nostalgia—not with true French Can-Can dancers and a program to tantalise even the most blasé, world-weary reveler. The new twist to the old theme is the introduction of contemporary music like “Big Spender”, a medley of 1950s jazz and even a little Latin flavour with “Ay Caramba”. In the great hands-on tradition of the

Can-Can, the audience can participate on “Man Wanted” as the talented Josephine coaxes even the most inept dancer to try a few steps of Avant Can-Can. The grandeur would be incomplete without a menu to match the opulent ambience. Leave it to Executive Chef Victor Holla to create a different symphony of flavours and tastes to complement the festivities in an extended international gourmet buffet. Rest assured there will be no mundane matter-paneer or mashed potatoes, unless reborn in a more glamorous avatar. After wallowing in the decadent past till midnight,

patrons are welcome to join Sinners in Heaven, the best dance party in town featuring hip DJs and today’s fresh young things. The Yak, as regulars know it, always delivers and if there is to be a Moulin Rouge in our neck of the woods, no one will do it better. So ladies and gentlemen, bring out the formals and brush up the French—Moulin Rouge is coming to town! ♦ Tickets will be sold from Hotel Yak & Yeti only. Ticket price will include a bottle of sparkling wine per couple, dinner and free entrance to Sinners in Heaven. 248999 Extn: 2865

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Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Stories we'd like to read in the new year



Fed up with all the dismal news? Bored with politics? Irked by nose-parker journalists? Then we have good news for you in the new year. In fact, we're looking forward to a paradigm shift in the way the media covers news by

accentuating the positive and making citizens feel better about themselves. Under the new guidelines made public by the Ministry of Informatics and Telepathy (Motto: "No news is good news") the media will play an important role in national reconstruction by building bridges, improving access, cementing ties and doing concrete things like erecting the headquarters of media societies in each district. Here is a sample list of news items you are likely to see in 2003:

No Bandh on February 29

KATHMANDU – With most days in 2003 already taken, the government has announced that February 29 is the only date still open for any political force which still wants to declare a bandh for whatever reason.

"We completely overlooked that date, I don't know how that happened," said a government mole in charge of bandh date allocation. "We have been taking bookings for bandhs on a first-come-first-serve basis, and due to a computer glitch, that date seems to have just slipped through the cracks."

The government will now auction off February 29 to the highest bidder so that the goal of "Totally Bandh Nepal 2003" can be declared 100 percent successful. (RSS)

RNAC kissing assets goodbye

By Our Flying Correspondent

Royal Nepal Airlines is jettisoning assets in an effort to become a lean and mean airline, it is learnt from highly-placed sources at 35,000 ft.

In an exclusive interview with two-dozen reporters, the corporation chairman who did not want to be directly quoted by name, said the airline was going ahead with privatising the airline by selling off excess assets like overhead lockers, folding tray tables, life jackets, toilet flush tanks, all heavy-duty non-vegetarian items in the menu, and unclaimed gold bars smuggled from Hong Kong in 1988 and still lying concealed in the bulkhead.

"Aviation worldwide is becoming very competitive, and all this weight is dragging us down," the high-flying official said. "We're already mean, now we're working on the lean."

Minister bites corruption watchdog

From a CIAA Agent

KATHMANDU—The Commission for the Investigation of the Abuse of Authority has refused to confirm or deny that an ex-minister in custody bit the ear of one of his watchdogs.

Reliable sources had earlier told CNN that the corruption watchdog indeed had the tip of its right ear missing in a "work-related incident". He refused to divulge exact details of how the perpetrator was able to sink his teeth into the victim's ear lobe. As rumours of the incident spread, however, speculation was rife that bits of fur had been found between teeth of a former ex-minister during a routine dental examination. Unconfirmed sources said the ex-minister first wished his guard "happy new ear".

The watchdog in question has been given necessary injections, while the minister has been remanded in custody for obstructing justice and his request for a Rs 4 billion bail has been refused.

Prime minister climbs Mt Everest

From Our Mountaineering Correspondent

NAMCHE BAZAR, May 25 — A government team led by the prime minister has successfully climbed Mt Everest to mark the 50th anniversary of the first ascent of the world's highest mountain.

The prime minister lead a large rally from the South Col, marched up the south-east ridge chanting pro-monarchy slogans, and the rally was converted into a mass meeting when it got to the top. Addressing the gathering in a brief speech, the prime minister said: "Great view. Didn't think I'd make it. Better call Kathmandu and tell them I'm ok. Ladies and gentlemen, I am breathless with pleasure to be here today to remember that historic day 50 years ago when Mt Everest was still a virgin peak. Thank you all for coming. Let's get out of here."

Before declaring the function over, the chairperson of the Sagarmatha 50th Anniversary Celebration Publicity Sub-committee proposed a vote of thanks to the prime minister for taking time off his busy schedule to be on top of the world, and awarded him a certificate for being the first head of government to climb Mt Everest without the aid of bottled oxygen.

NEPALI SOCIETY

Super Granny

"Hari Sharanam" Laxmi Bhusal was in her late teens when she began playing Budi Amai (Grandma) in the immensely-popular farming programme on Radio Nepal with that opening line.

It was a radio persona she adopted so wholeheartedly that many listeners refused to believe that the 60-something, talkative know-it-all was so young. These were the days before cable television, so when she feigned a coughing fit in the studio, or rattled on about nitrogen and phosphates in fertiliser, or compared the relative merits of *bikasay* corn and local corn, the whole nation listened.

Pretty soon, Budi Amai became a household voice. Her popularity soared as farmers from all over Nepal sent letters, made phone calls or even sent prize cauliflowers to her as present. Budi Amai is far from the stereotypical senior citizen. If anything, she is Super

Granny—someone who always has ready answers to queries and solutions for farmer's problems. After producing over 100 farming programmes a year, Laxmi has become something of an agricultural expert herself in real life. "After playing Budi Amai for 35 years, it is difficult to separate myself from the character," she told us at the Agriculture Information and Communication Centre where she works.

It wasn't easy for Laxmi to get to where she is now. Women were discouraged from the male-dominated area of radio production, and in a patriarchal society her family nearly disowned her. Male colleagues felt threatened. But times have changed, now Budi Amai is not just a role model for all Nepalis, but also for Laxmi's younger family members.

Laxmi has an explanation for the enormous success of Budi Amai: "It was practical, common sense information, and Nepalis have a tradition of respecting elders so when it was an old woman's wisdom, they listened."

Her other radio characters are less known but no less successful. Laxmi ran a question-answer show on radio for 18 years, and nobody guessed she doubled for both parts. Today, Laxmi still uses her Budi Amai persona to

do commercials, promotional tele-dramas and even films. Two years away from retirement, she is planning a radio production training institute. Laxmi Bhusal is now going to be a real-life senior citizen, but for this remarkable woman getting old is going to be very familiar terrain indeed. ♦



MIN. BAIRACHARYA

Advertisement for 2PM Noodles. The ad features a bowl of noodles, a packet of 2PM Curry Chicken Soup, and a bowl of 2PM Noodles. Text includes: "100 grams 100% full", "INTRODUCING 2PM", "CURRY CHICKEN SOUP", "100gms", "Rs. 12/- only", "READY TO EAT NOODLES", "ENRICHED WITH VITAMINS & MINERALS", "HUNGER... NO LONGER!", and "Dealer for Kathmandu: Sayami Distributor, Kuleshwor. Tel.: 280323, 273990, 280249, Mobile: 981037905".