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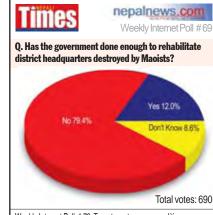
ather of the brid

ing Gyanendra with his daughte Princess Prerana on the occasion of the marriage to Kumar Raj Bahadur Singh on Wednesday.

Ayo Nepali!



Aba dekhi Roman Nepali ma sathi haru lai email pathaunu pardaina, Nepali mai lekhe hunchha. Didn't you always want to email, do accounting, databasing and Internet surfing in Nepali? A workable and universal font standard for Nepali is now here to make all this possible. No more downloading typefaces for every Nepali website, no more scanning text to send as jpeg files. Soon, we may be able to get grocery bills from electronic cash registers in Nepali, be able to spellcheck, sort and list alphabe-tically—all on standardised Nepali keyboards. Read more in our IT Special on page 8-9.



Weekly Internet Poll # 70. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com Q. How do you rate the 100 days of the Chand

ANALYSIS by **RAJENDRA DAHAL** fter a hard winter of frozen politics, spring brings with it the possibility of a thaw in Kathmandu. The outcome, in turn, will have consequences on the direction of the Maoist insurgency.

The air is warming up, the king is wrapping up family obligations that had him tied up, the political parties are stirring and the Maoists are preparing for the seventh anniversary of their "peoples' war". It may look hopelessly tangled, but it could also mean that the political deadlock has a chance of getting unstuck.

Even though the Nepali Congress hasn't given up demanding a reinstatement of parliament, some kangresis now privately admit that there is no hope of the king agreeing to it. So, what the party has done is apply pressure tactics on the palace to shake things up a bit. The party modified its 50year-old stance towards the constitutional monarchy by demanding a limit to members of the royal household allowed to have the "Shree Panch" title.

In addition, the central committee meeting on Monday also wanted the army brought under elected civilian command, and a provision in the constitution allowing

Nepali delegation here.

fora referendum on issues of national importance. The paradox here is that

these terms have striking similarities to the Maoists' own preconditions for talks. Many don't trust the Maoists to stick only to these three demands when negotiations start, but the wily leader of the Congress, Girija Koirala, seems to have his reasons to firmly believe

radicalisation of the Congress has had a dramatic impact across the political put itself in direct confrontation with

spectrum. Now that the Congress has hardliners in the palace, being communists, the UML can't afford to look "more royal" ahead of its party convention in Janakpur next weekend. Squeezed by the palace on the seen as being too weak to give proper one hand the Maoists on the other, the

When things get so messed up, they can only get better.

UML will be compelled to come out forcefully vis-à-vis the palace.

The Congress stance also forced the four-party meeting on Wednesday to decide to launch a united agitation against the royal move. However, the parliamentary parties are far from united. The centre right RPP and the tarai-based Sadbhavana

were both kept out of the fourparty meet as punishment for defecting to the king's side. And the Deuba faction of the Congress was kept out as per Koirala's wishes.

Within the RPP itself, newly-elected leader Pashupati S Rana finds himself in a tight spot. He needs to listen to the Surya Bahadur Thapa faction which wants the RPP to align with the other parties, but he also wants to make peace with the king. It is pressure from the Thapa faction that made the RPP's central committee on Tuesday give prime minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand a 15-day obey-party-or-quit ultimatum. This is a warning not just to Chand, but also to the king.

Either way, this means Chand's own future in the prime minister's seat may be numbered. And if the king wants a change of face, he can use the RPP's ultimatum as an excuse to replace a prime minister widely

An alternative to Dayos

BHAGIRATH YOGI in PORTO ALEGRE, BRAZIL

ust as Nepali anti-globalisation activists joined thousands of others from around the world in this Brazilian port city this week, a Nepali business delegation is touring the United States and Canada to seek duty and guota-free access to Nepali garments. The irony of it is not lost on the dozen-strong

Nepal is set to join the WTO within a year and hopes to benefit from a rule-based trading regime that will throw open the world market for its products like hand-woven carpets, pashmina, and readymade garments. But WTO and its fifth ministerial meeting in Cancun in September is exactly what the activists gathered here are protesting against.

This is the World Social Forum (WSF), billed as the "Third World Davos", where birds of a feather—activists, academics, intellectuals, with some professional junketeers—who oppose the World Bank, IMF and WTO have been gathering since last year. They say the WTO will make rich countries richer by flooding poorer countries with their subsidised produce, while rich country markets will continue to be closed to Third World exports.

The rallying cry here is "No New Round", and this slogan is emblazoned on the T-shirt of every other delegate. They say the WTO has a non-democratic decision-making process which will

further marginalise developing countries in WTO decisions and benefits. The WTO maintains that globalisation will benefit all and spread prosperity. But Porto Alegre already seems to have an impact on the WTO, which has now started talking about

Unlike the cold and sterile Swiss ski resort, Porto Alegre is a vibrant, tropical city in the middle of the southern hemisphere summer. "Porto Allegre is the future while Davos is the past," says Filipino activist Walden Bello of the Bangkok-based think tank, Focus on

the Global South.

Bello is here with leftist intellectuals like Noam Chomsky, Tariq Ali and Samir Amin to enforce the forum theme, "Another World is Possible". The conference is being held amidst the drumbeats of a possible war against Iraq, which activists here call a "blood for oil" conflict. "The US war against terrorism is a perfect cover for the failure of the neo-liberal economic doctrine," says Ian C Rivera of the Hong Kong-based Asian Alliance for Peace.

Porto Alegre hopes to address the issue of a growing global gap between rich and poor. The world's richest 20 percent now own 86 percent of the world's GDP, while the poorest 20 percent have only 1 percent. Three of the world's richest people have assets greater than the combined output of 48 of the poorest nations.

To balance this, activists are pushing for the "Tobin Tax" on international currency transactions that could raise \$45 billion a month to ease world poverty.

Cancellation of debt is the other demand. Highly indebted developing countries—Nepal among them—transfer more to

service their debt to the North than they receive in aid. Nepali and South Asian delegates here are also raising issues like untouchability and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples. •

Marcopolo







STATE OF THE STATE In the meanders of history

O E > Y

Seeking BP Koirala's soul in a village by the Kosi where he spent his boyhood.

explored. But theories need expert

reflective and cautious.

interpretation. It is the very lack of such a

and rebellious, and the lazy meanders of a

us...the family began to discuss where to

crosscurrents of history. Re-reading

Kosi, you begin to empathise with the

loneliness of boy who grew up with the

unpredictability of a temperamental river.

his English prison diary from Sundarijal

(being serialised by this newspaper every

frustrations. But that impression is only

partially valid. More importantly, it records

the valiant attempt of one man to transform

Like an addiction to drugs, the involvement

exhilaration of carrying a gun, and that too for a

higher political purpose, seems to be so intense

and heady that revolutionaries get hooked to the

extreme loneliness into profound solitude.

in an armed struggle is intoxicating. The

log of an old man fighting his own

To those not aware of the circumstances of

BP's imprisonment by King Birendra in 1977,

fortnight, see p 13) reads like a monotonous

knowledge that allows me to frame a sweeping

BP writes: "We lived five/seven years in

move." Like a lonely man in a boat, BP found

Atmabritanta here on the fog-bound banks of

THE PEACE PRIZE t's all getting a bit too ad hoc. Nepalis can't take this aimlessness for much longer. Stung by criticism that there had been "zero" achievement in 100 days of this administration, state-owned Gorkhapatra has come up with a long list of the administration's accomplishments: chasing corrupt officials, trying to begin negotiations with the Maoists, investing in rehabilitation of infrastructure. Yes, some members of the cabinet have taken genuinely bold moves to stem the rot in the lethargic government machinery. But these were interventions that were needed even during normal times. These are extraordinary times and the people expect extraordinary breakthroughs. Especially since we paid a heavy price for it: a dismantled parliament,

a sacked elected government and dissolved local councils Instead, recent decisions by the government are so reminiscent of 1962 that even those who were willing to give the royal move the benefit of doubt are now beginning to suspect that 4 October was a regressive attempt to turn back the clock. How else does one interpret the signs: a grovelling government media, the appointment of a roving squad of trouble-shooters who are going to visit the 14 zones behaving like neoanchaladishes. We've really come a full circle. Centralised partyless rule, to elected local self-governance, back to centralised partyless rule. Do we really need to swing between extremes all the time?

We can see no logic in the palace battling it out on two fronts: against the political parties and against the Maoists. The king has repeatedly stressed he is for a constitutional role for himself, for democracy and pluralism. All the parliamentary parties believe in the same values. So, where is the problem? Unless there is reason to doubt the sincerity of royal pronouncements, there is really no other way out of this impasse than for the fractious parties to first get together, and then jointly forge an

Instead, what we see is tough talk that is hardening positions, accumulating bad blood, spreading mistrust and pushing back chances of compromise. If this is all about power, then unless a deal is struck there will be no power to fight over. The Maoists, for their part, are sitting in the sidelines watching this show play itself out while gearing up for their anniversary fireworks next month.

The Girija Koirala Congress's decisions at its central committee meeting on Monday are unprecedented in scope, and puts the party in direct confrontation with the king. You could say the parties are just talking big to prevent the corruption watchdog coming after them for past misdeeds. But by calling for limits on royal titles, bringing the army under the purview of parliament and pushing a provision for referendum on national issues in the constitution, the party's position is now for all intents and purposes analogous to the Maoists. This has already radicalised the RPP and will put pressure on the UML ahead of its party convention in Janakpur next weekend to be even more critical of the king.

However, by formally declaring their positions the parties will have sent a clear signal to the Maoists: We have now gone as far as you, there can be no discussion on the preamble to the constitution, but let's sit down and talk about do-able changes.

The real problem, however, is that neither the palace nor the parties seem to want to hand over the peace dividend to the other. Instead of trying to prevent each other from reaping the rewards of restoring peace, the palace, parties and the Maoists must now cobble together a compromise. They don't have to agree on everything from the start, but they could stop the violence, create the right conditions for the peace process to begin, and give longsuffering Nepalis a reason to hope.

The prize is peace. Let's all share it.

TEDHI — Village boundaries in the Kosi floodplains are fluid—they keep changing with the seasons. Living without a fixed address comes naturally to those who have to survive in the proximity of any primal force, be it ideological or natural.

BP Koirala spent the formative years of his life in one of these villages along the Kosi River. In his memoirs, Atmabrittanta, BP has fond memories of his childhood in this nondescript village, a settlement along one of the western tributaries of Kosi. He writes about the time he was spanked for speaking the truth while those who lied got away. "If one speaks the truth, one should be prepared to pay for it," BP concludes.

The moral foundations that guided BP in later life were laid here along the Nepal-India border where the Kosi flows by with a

A monsoon flood on this mighty river washed away the Tedhi that BP knew, and the town has now shifted to the road embankment further away. The Greek historian Herodotus said "all history must be treated geographically. and all geography must be studied historically." The Marxists, whose ideological meanderings are as fluid as the Kosi floodplain, regard all history as the history of class struggles. That is one way to look at it, but the very nature of class formation and struggle is largely geographical. The living condition of hill farmers was the precursor to the rise of the Gorkha Empire, as Fr Ludwig Stiller explains in The Silent Cry. And it is also in geographical conditions that we may have to seek some of the answers for why an armed insurgency is sweeping through the same hills nearly 300 years later.

What would have happened if BP Koirala rush. Renouncing violence induces withdrawal had spent his childhood in Dumja, Sindhulisymptoms. Instead of hectic political activity to keep his mind off the relatively easier option of the village where his father Krishna Prasad Koirala was born, instead of here in Tedhi? In relapsing to armed struggle, BP found himself an age of inter-disciplinary studies, it's quite in near-solitary confinement at Sundarijal. likely that the impact of geography on the BP's most trusted lieutenant Ganesh Man psychology of leadership has already been

foresaw then the choice before the Nepali Congress leadership: it was "between a slow death in India, and dramatic suicide in Nepal". King Birendra tried to induce "slow hypothesis: Hills make their inhabitants restless suicide" by putting BP Koirala in prison while simultaneously drumming up a clamour for his head. BP realised, quite accurately, that his mature river make people who live on its banks immediate fight was to save his own sanity. Prison diaries, as a genre, are testimony of the Tedhi. Then the Kosi's floods began to threaten power of a determined mind. When the entire country was one gargantuan prison, perhaps it was natural for BP and Ganesh Man to find themselves once again behind bars at Sundarijal. But while Ganesh Man tried to himself "calmly disturbed" and buffeted by the steel himself for failure, BP fought to keep the flames of freedom alive. It is an irony of history that it was Ganesh Man who lived to see that flame lit again in 1990.

Produced by his loyal acolytes, the feature film Bir Ganeshman effusively depicts the many exploits of its near-mythical hero. But the film fails to show us the fuel that fired his energy. It came from BP Koirala, who in turn had his destiny shaped by the currents of the Kosi here in Tedhi. When Ganesh Man refused the offer to be made premier in the 1990 interim government, the first interpretation was that he did so due to health reasons. That could be true.

The second inference was that he considered himself to be less worthy for the post than the man he proposed in his stead— K P Bhattarai. This couldn't be true, for any one who knew Ganesh Man would know that that he knew about Bhattarai's limitations more than any one else in the Nepali Congress. Could it be, then, that Ganesh Man's refusal to take up King Birendra's offer of premiership was a sincere tribute to his late leader? It may also have been a subtle snub to a well-meaning monarch who let Nepali history meander needlessly for so long.

As we live through another twist and turn in the flow of Nepali history, it makes sense to re-discover Ganesh Man, and re-read BP Koirala. In their lives, we see the reflection of our own aspirations and frustrations.



COMMENT

NATION

It isn't students who fail in SLC, it is the government school system that has failed.

Education for all, all for education

xing up politics with education is nothing new in Nepal. The Rana rulers understood very well that education would ultimately lead to their downfall. They made it difficult for Nepalis to attain any kind of formal education. During the Panchayat years we saw more emphasis on education, but we saw the syllabus and curriculum used flagrantly to propagate the non-party state.

In the past 12 years, the private sector stepped to fill the gap left by the government in the public's demand for quality and quantity of education. Education soon became an industry and

spurred by a huge demand went through a boom cycle. And as with all booms, came malpractice. Fly-by-night schools opened, and the unscrupulous had a field day in the absence of government and bureaucracy that failed to play a proper regulatory role. Unethical norms for enrolments, exorbitant fees and dubious deposits and charges were heaped on unsuspecting parents. We had the strange phenomenon of "day-boarding" schools, 12-hour schools, 7-day schools, uniforms requiring 3-year-olds to wear ties and "re-

admission fees". When the guilty got away without

punishment, the blatant daylight robbery in the name of education got progressively worse. Democraticallyelected governments and unstable coalitions were too busy ensuring their political survival, fighting each other or plundering the exchequer to devote much time to educational reform.

When they did speak up, the political parties made matters worse by threatening populist measures like nationalising education and ensuring free education. In the past decade education became a free-for-all as "boarding" schools sprang up like tea stalls, with some having as little space. Many school

nspectors and district education offices were hand-in-glove with school owners. On the other hand, we saw the total collapse of the government school system due to politicisation, low motivation, lack of training and budgetary cuts.

The result is there for all to see in the annual SLC results where government schools are lucky if 10 percent of their students pass the exams. Many schools have a zero percent pass rate. It isn't the students who have failed, it is the school system that has failed.

Is there nothing called shame, responsibility or guilt on the part of these school teachers and the district education office and board? Various half hearted efforts have been made to improve this situation, like the in-built system of punishment and reward for schools on the strength of their results, such as reducing government grants for poor results and giving more say to the management committees. But these efforts are half-hearted and worse, there is a danger that it will punish the already weak.

There are some 8,500 private schools in the country with a student strength of 1.5 million and approximately 700 establishments for higher secondary education. The government's effort to regulate the education sector has been restricted to maximising tax extraction from these schools. It has come out with a law which requires private schools to register themselves as a company or as a nonprofit trust. If they opt for the company they are to be taxed on the gross

revenue, which as they say, is not fair. Faced with Maoist threats to renew their campaign against schools from mid-Feburary, the government has come up with a list of reforms. The private schools body, PABSON, has made recommendations for slashing school fees. Private educators want the 30-year-old Education Act to be overhauled and a separate section added for private schools classifying them as "institutionalised organisations" and not as a private businesses. They have no problems with paying taxes on the profits founders take home, but say that institutional profit that is ploughed back into development and upgrading of school infrastructure should not be taxed.

Controversies regarding the ownership, classification and fee structure, and the proposed 1.5 percent tax on total income must be resolved as a matter of urgency. If this is delayed, schools that have been hard hit by threats, extortion and property damage by Maoists will simply shut down permanently. Already, schools in 10 districts have closed. School have been adversely affected in 25 districts.

Governments everywhere cannot afford to take up the sole burden of education, they delegate a part of that to the private sector. In Nepal, there is even less of a chance that the government can take up this responsibility. It cannot even manage basic primary education with the proper application of quality standards. How can it compete with the global trends in information technology and English language instruction?

Nepal is a long way from achieving the goal of universal free education for its citizens. There is no other way to fill the gap than to promote responsible and regulated private sector participation. And there is no reason why those who can afford it should not have access to world class education in their own country. Those who can't must be ensured good, balanced, and free education by the state so that they have the same opportunities to pursue higher education as graduates of private schools do. ♦

(Dhawal SJB Rana is the former UML mayor of Nepalganj.)

LETTERS

RICHARD VOKES n your interview, "Recovery ninges on peace" (#128) the ADB's Richard Vokes rightly states what donors want to see: An improved effectiveness of public expenditure. He assures us that monitoring of implementation on the basis of in house anti-corruption guidelines is scrupulously maintained. But there are still loopholes in procurement which gives the corrupt leeway. Both the banks need to look at the basic rate of niring experts which is multiplied by a certain overhead coefficient, usually 2.0 to 2.5 times. Shouldn't the basic rate be taken as actual expenditure

(national, "anti-national", or expat) in most cases never pay the stated basic rate declared in their proposal on which the cost of the project is based. Shouldn't the donor assisted by its auditor, the employer government agency together check the documents submitted by the consultant and monitor what goes on in practice? Ignoring this basic rule of transparency creates a vast resource of black money that government, politicos and influence peddlers can siphon off. The case with contractors for job procurement is another (longer)

D Gajraj, email



by the contractor. Consulting firms KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA

Thanks to Kasish Das Shrestha's "A day in the life of Patan's street children" (# 128) The article should open up the eyes of child rights activists, development workers and NGOs who are concerned with children issues. Even though there are a number of NGOs who claim to be working towards protecting child rights and survival, the article showed that the misery of street children remains same. The policies and commitment to guarantee the rights of children have yet to be translated into action and the children's participation in development

has been almost neglected. There is much that remains to be done to improve the lives of Nepali children who are poor and have no access to education, health care and social environment. The situation of street children, as Shrestha points out, is worsening. Government, civil society, families and communities need to chip in.

We have wasted enough

Jhabindra Bhandari NEPAN, Kathmandu

EDMUND HILLARY Beside being a first man to summit Mt Everest, Sir Edmund Hillary returned to Nepal to build schools and hospitals. He should be recognised as a national hero. So why is this hostility and sarcasm towards him in Arti Hamal's letter ("Sir Ed", # 127)? Besides, since when did Tenzing Norgay become a Nepali? Sorry, but he was a decorated and admired citizen of India. So, how is he, as Hamal puts it, "our own"? Unless she is saying that all of humanity is "our own". Ram Bahadur Nepal, USA

HEMLATA RAI I completely agree with Hemlata Rai ("Why can't 'manpower' agencies find jobs for women?", #127). Nepalis are migrating because there aren't enough jobs and opportunities at home. Nepali women have always taken care of their families, so why restrict their travel in search of work? The employment

limited. At a time when remittance from Nepali workers abroad has become a pillar of the national economy, the government has to be more serious on training and providing awareness facilities to

opportunities for Nepali women is

those willing to go abroad. Of course, the government and the job recruiters should be more careful to monitor abuse and exploitation. More importantly, Nepali consulates and organisations in the host countries should keep track of the workers—both men and women—so that they can

One other point, there are now about 8,000 Nepalis working in Japan. They send large amounts of money home through the *hundi* system. This is terrible loss to the country. Why doesn't the government finally act on regularising this remittance through official channels? Banks could do better business and the government could keep track of what's

help them in times of crises.

Kumar Basnet Sophia University, Tokyo

Finally a Nepali writer has done iustice to Samrat Upadhava ("I rely on the muse of hard work", #128). Manjushree Thapa's interview was highly introspective and good edutainment, though I am a stickler for the Naipulean edict "the author should never precede the work, let the work speak for itself". Keep it up Samrat and Manjushree, your recent writings speak well for many Nepali writers seeking literary exposure outside of Nepal. I hope Nepali Times will carry more pieces in the future on hidden Nepali talents in music, the arts and culture that otherwise escape our Nepali stereotyped image of fame and

Jack Prasai, Cape Town



CK LAL I have been reading the online edition of Nepali Times for a few years. I would like to congratulate CK Lal for his excellent analysis of various situations inside and outside Nepal. He has his detractors, and I personally may not agree with all of his views. but I do accept that his presentation is of high standard. The first thing I read in Nepali Times is his column. And one of the best aspects of his writing is that he tries to be fair and is an advocate of a more just society. University of Queensland

Bhesh Bhandari, Australia

 One reads CK Lal's columns week after week for neither intellectual edification, nor for intelligent commentary but for its intrinsic entertainment value, and here CK Lal hits a home run every week. "Have a Party" (#128) is no exception. He pulls no punches at am certain that CK Lal fits his own the object of his white-hot wrath and condescension: The great Nepali "elite" class. Whatever his definition du-jour of "elite" may be, CK Lal insinuates that they are

all of society's ills, all the while extremely loathe to get their own hands dirty. The implication being that either one supports the political parties whole-heartedly despite their mockery of the laws and the constitution (which ironically, they authored in partnership with the king) and a total betrayal of public trust, or one is judged to be against democracy and rights-for-all. He then goes on to make a giant leap of faith by equating party-building with nation-building. As any fairminded person will concur: While the political parties grew like wild mushrooms in the last 12 years, nation building and other matters of national priority affecting the majority of Nepali people, were

pro-king and therefore anti-

democracy, and are quick to

assign blame at the politicians for

relegated to the back-burner. Finally, I don't know if I fit CK Lal's definition of an "elite", but I profile. I don't know about "trueblue", or "with-it" (actually most "true-blue" are more likely to be "without-it" than "with-it"), but as a common Nepali who is invited on iunkets from Paris to Hyderabad, looks disdainfully at "beerguzzling" passengers on airplane flights, can boast his own one-onone sesions with His Majesty the King, and has his own weekly column in an influential newspaper to pontificate from a high horse to voice his weekly polemics against the "elite", qualifies in my book for the title of—you guessed it—an "elite". Bishwa Basnet, email

VIJAY KUMAR After I'd gone through the Scorpio and the 2 PM ads on your back page, I read the ad for Vijay Kumar ("Vijay Kumar's makeover", #128). Why do you squander valuable space on a person who thinks he is conducting the Nepali version of BBC's "Hard Talk"? Who does he think he is, the Tim Sebastian of Nepal? Vijay Kumar has always been blunt, unnecessarily aggressive, downright rude, very very personal (which he has no business to be) and last but not the least, the crudest of the crude. I really do no know (neither do I want to know) how many viewers he has put off over the

the moment his irritating face appears on screen.

years. I gradually lost all respect

for that man and switch channels

"better human being". In fact, I think he is as rude and brash as he always was. And why should he change? I think Vijay Kumar should continue being a brat, he should keep giving the high and the mighty a hard time on camera.

 It was refreshing to read an alternative opinion about Nepal's most-watched television anchor.



Amrit KC, Bishalnagar

 I don't believe that Vijay Kumar Panday has metamorphosed into a N Sharma, Dilli Bazar

Most of my friends who hate him

regarding the relatively successful socio-economic transformation of the neighbouring Indian state of Sikkim (vis-a-vis the economic stagnation in our country) I think that the bottomline lies largely on the difference of those responsible for conducting pubic policy. Development is regarded as a serious business requiring a sustained momentum in Sikkim. In Nepal, it is seen as a resort to fleece the public

of his shows. I personally never liked this ill-tempered, arrogant journalist but I must admit that today there is no one to match his persona on Nepali television. You rightly point out that in his Monday night show Vijay Kumar puts out an entirely different side of himself. It is good to know that finally Vijay Kumar understands that it is possible to be good human being and a brilliant

With reference to Kunda Dixit's

"Why Sikkim works" (#126)

KUNDA DIXIT

CORRECTIONS professional at the same time. Lal Deusa Rai, quoted in Asha Ram Shrestha,

Kalimati

the most do not miss a single one exchequer for personal

"Universal values" (Letters, #128) has written to say that the letter writer's reports of his demise are exaggerated. "I am still batting, and hope to continue to do so for some length of time," Rai told us. Lal Deusa Rai is now teaching iournalism at TU's masters program.

aggrandisement. The results are

there for all to see. Nepal's

ongoing civil war has further

inhibited prospects for progress

and prosperity. We can start by

Shyamal Krishna Shrestha

Institute of Social

Studies, The Hague

stopping this senseless war.

• Due to a translation inaccuracy in Dipak Gyawali's interview (From the Nepali Press, #128) the answer to the guestion "How do you analyse the Maoists' strategy of destruction?" should have read:

The error is regretted.

"The Marxists interpreted Hegelian philosophy upside down, and adopted the principle of destruction first, construction later..."





Is it really necessary for Nepal to go through what Sri Lanka did with 80,000 deaths in 20 years of war? No, says conflict resolution expert John Richardson (left) who has studied both countries.

SALLY ACHARYA

in WASINGTON DC t is sometimes said that everyone in a Nepali village knows who the Maoists are, except the soldiers. To John Richardson, that is no surprise. It is a pattern he has seen around the world.

One of his arguments is that a major failure of policy-makers and donors is to ignore two key but unfashionable factors community police and young men. Governments tend to pump money into armies that prop up a small nation's pride in peacetime, but can never address a 21st century crisis.

Meanwhile, donors ignore the needs of young men, who are most likely to turn their thwarted energies into violence. When ill-funded and dispirited police fail to stem a movement fueled by angry young men, armies are predictably called in, and just as predictably fail.

Richardson is a Sri Lanka specialist who has devoted over two decades to studying guerrilla conflict and trying to

HERE AND THERE

pinpoint the common factors in struggles that drag on until both sides come to a "hurting stalemate" and are weary

won by either insurgents or governments, notes man who teaches at the and who recently visited

world tend to be better armed, better motivated and even better trained than soldiers. Tamil Tigers, through the Yet even the Tigers, whom he

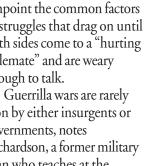
their goals through bloodshed.

enough to talk.

Richardson, a former military American University's School of International Service here,

They are often self-sustaining, through extortion, robbery, smuggling, drug running, and in the case of some, such as the deep pockets of the diaspora. calls "perhaps the most resilient and best-armed rebel army in the world", have failed to achieve

can be—to fight effectively



Insurgents around the

Meanwhile, armies aren't equipped—and perhaps never



against their own people, Richardson adds. Their training

prepares soldiers to fight an easily identified stranger, yet in modern times, virtually the only time a small country's army will be used is to fight its own population. A small, impoverished

country attacked by a major

power would win or lose based on its ability to find allies, not based on its own army, he argues. Costa Rica is one of the few countries without an army, shows that it is possible to have a nation without a military, and this could be a model for Nepal and Sri Lanka.

"The truth is, Nepal doesn't need an army at all," he says provocatively. "It may need a few people to guard the palace and for ceremonial duties, but what is the point of an army? To fight India and China? The

same is true in Sri Lanka. This

doesn't mean there is no need

for security. But in the budget process, the army gets preferential treatment over police."

And that, he says, is the mistake. If the goal is a secure life for the country's people, that would be better maintained by a professional police force that lives in the

The worst form of government, except all the others

here's an ill-wind blowing through the corridors of foreign policy in rich western countries. It has to do with democracy, and it illustrates the dilemma posed by the failures of development at every level in most nations in the world.

A Filipina-American academic, Amy Chua, has added great momentum to this trend with a book, World on Fire, in which she argues that liberal, free market and democracy systems imposed on largely feudal countries by wellmeaning donors are actually dangerous and often lead to economic decline and war. She used the example of her native Philippines, where she was born into the wealthy but subtly discriminated against Chinese community. The People Power revolution that swept Corazón Aquino to power in the 1980s, Chua says, was universally welcomed and supported by Western capitals, most of all in Washington which was growing steadily more humiliated and impatient at the excesses of its former client, the dictator, Ferdinand Marcos. The huge crowds of middle class Manila residents that surrounded Marcos'

palace, braving the tanks and riot police deployed to protect the autocrat, were rapturous when Aquino won the day. "Our Cory" they called her, making a play on words with her first name, which is Spanish for "heart". Over time, the "heart' of the middle classes, Chua explains, was somewhat of a disaster for the Philippines—a nation that had never quite recovered from centuries of colonial rule by Spain and the United States. She also relates how the market economy

> imposed as part of the democracy system empowered just a tiny sliver of Philippine society: her own Chinese community, and how that led to flaring resentments and

Chua (left) says democracy also ripped open ancient ethnic and religious divides in her native land, between Filipinos and the Chinese community, between Christians and Muslims, between settled citizens and the indigenous tribes of the jungle. Political parties played divide and rule, local identity mattered more than national and armed gangs mutated into liberation armies. The state of the Philippines today is testimony to the abject failure



of western-style democracy in a politically primitive land.

This book is causing great excitement, along with many others like it, among foreign policy makers, senior commentators and aid bureaucrats in America and Europe. In a way, I wonder if it isn't music to the ears of such people. Much was made in the 1990s of the triumph of liberal democracy and free markets everywhere. At one point, we were informed in breathless tones, only a few countries in Africa, China and Indonesia were still authoritarian states. Each new little colonial remnant that elected a long-suffering opposition leader as Prime Minister was hailed as "another triumph for democracy" by the likes of Bill

Two years after People Power II in the Philippines (left), debate on whether poor countries can afford democracy is on again.

Clinton and Tony Blair. Never mind that even the most well meaning dissident turned leader faced vast economic, ethnic and public health problems that would stymie the wealthiest of societies.

As Issac Newton knew, actions produce reactions and it became clear after Pervez Musharraf ended democracy in Pakistan in 1999 that the liberals in the West were changing their tune. In fact, so many of the "new democracies"— Indonesia, Zimbabwe, Argentina—were going sour, and the phrase of the moment became "I told you so" from those, like Chua, who argue that countries that aren't rich and well developed aren't ready for democracy. Or free market economics. I'm starting to hear people talk that way here in Nepal, amid the endless debate about the king's move of 4 October. "An unfortunate necessity" seemed to be the foreign view of the sacking of Sher Bahadur Deuba back then. Even now as autocratic smoke signals occasionally billow from the new corridors of power in Kathmandu, the murmur among aid donors and foreign political observers of Nepal is "pragmatism".

Whether Amy Chua's essay was intended to change the philosophy of Western engagement with the developing world is questionable. Everything she says about democracy in the Philippines is true. But one question remains there, and here, and that is: "What is the alternative to democracy"?

I'm pretty sure the answer is "nothing". Or at least "nothing that works any better". The sooner we realise that here in Nepal, the better.

World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability

by Amy Chua Doubleday 256 pages

NATION

community, knows its dynamics, and can identify a threat as it begins. "In Sri Lanka, and even more in Nepal, there has been a tendency to neglect the police force," he notes.

Police in both countries have been underpaid, have bad public relations, are poorly trained, poorly armed, politicised and placed in a position where bribery and corruption are tempting alternatives. So when the time comes to call them out to deal with a nascent movement, they don't get the support of the community. And they're likely to beat up on people who are opposed to the government,

but not really militants, and

are unwittingly serving as

paired with what, in colonial

terms, can be called the

recruiting agents.

create circumstances where they

An unpopular police force is

"outstation mentality" in which

civil servants and development

workers shy from living outside

the capital. "People will go, but

everybody is doing their best to

excluded rural commu

stay in the capital," he notes. "People in the outstations are under-funded, and may even be sent out there as punishment. Then, when trouble comes, they're called on to lay their lives on the line."

It doesn't work, and in time, the army is called to maintain security. But if security is defined as the right of ordinary people to live in safety, that means they're doing the job of police, he says.

And who are they fighting? In major part, disenchanted young men. Yet donors seem blind to this vast, hurting group until it's too late. It is only when enough of them join

an insurgency that donor-

shambles.

funded projects scurry away,

Add that to a lack of

see that total victory is

Agricultural Services Programme Adviser

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and accountable agricultural services to socially and economically

ementation of the Government of Nepal's Agricultural Perspectives

HMG Nepal Agricultural Perspectives Plan

for the sort of protracted,

urgency within governments,

and a refusal on both sides to

impossible, and the stage is set

winner-less conflicts seen in Sri

Lanka. The island nation was

leaving years of development in

wracked by two insurgencies: one a separatist civil war in the north waged by the Tamil Tigers, and the other the Maoist JVP uprising in the south. The Sri Lankan army and the Tamil Tigers reached a stalemate. Each side realised it couldn't win, and both were ready to try something else. What also helped was the post-11 September scenario, and the threat of being put on the terrorist list by the United States, Britain, Canada and Australia endangered the diaspora funding, which in turn forced the Tigers to look for an alternative. The Tigers are

currently engaged in peace

Sri Lanka, 1998

talks with the government

northeast has held for a year.

The JVP uprising was

quashed after top leaders were

rounded up and killed after an

parliament, with political clout

intelligence breakthrough in

1990. The JVP is now the

third largest party in

disproportionate to its

membership because it

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DFID has recently agreed a new programme of assistance to support the This is a pensionable, 3 year fixed term post and is subject to a six month

affects the livelihoods of rural people. Bringing an understanding of patterns $\Box \lor \lor \lor \bot \Box \Box \Box \Box$

and the ceasefire in the

controls the swing votes.

Richardson is currently completing a book on democratisation in South Asia and the political economy of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. His recent research and writing has focussed on the prevention, management and resolution of political conflicts in developing countries.

Is it really necessary for Nepal to go through what Sri Lanka went through for 20 vears with 80,000 deaths? The war can be much more destructive in Nepal because of the terrain, and also because it is already a much poorer country than Sri

Lanka. A recent visit to

Kathmandu did not leave

Richardson encouraged. The

missing element, he told us,

was a sense of urgency. And

without it, there is little to

stretching on for years—or

keep the violence from

even decades. •

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DOMESTIC BRIEFS

Charumati facelift Chabahil locals have formed a committee to restore the crumbling Charumati Stupa, which had developed cracks because of heavy vehicular

traffic on the nearby road. The 4th century stupa has relics dating from the Lichhavi period and is regarded as a site of great religious and archaeological importance, rivalling that of nearby Pashupati. What is unique here is that the impetus for restoration has come from the locals who have watched with dismay as the stupa was

overwhelmed by urban expansion, and last year actually started falling apar "Individual donors have come forward and we are even getting cash from devotees," says Rajendra Kumar Shrestha, secretary of the renovation committee. The estimated cost of Rs 600,000 is expected to go up since the construction required special bricks and traditional mortar. Because of the lack of money, only the upper part of the stupa is being rebuilt.

Priceless ancient artefacts, coins, and manuscripts have been found during the renovation work, and archaeologists say more could be found if the whole stupa could have been rebuilt. It has also been discovered that Charumati, like the rest of Kathmandu Valley shrines, have been reverred by both Hindus and Buddhists. Hindu deities like Bishnu and Narayan have been found among the Buddhist relics.

Refugees still on hunger strike

back the 100,000 of its nationals from camps in eastern Nepal, and are using an international donor meet in Geneva next month. "There's no other alternative but to internationalise the refugee issue," says Hiranya Lal

Shrestha of the Bhutanese Refugees Repatriation Support Group (BRRSG). "We've tried unsuccessfully to settle it bila terally." The group has been lobbying with western ambassadors accredited to Bhutan in New Delhi and with the Foreign Ministry in Kathmandu to solve the 12year-old refugee problem. BRRSG has once more stressed that India



needs to be involved in the process. Since 1991, more than 100,000 refuç have been languishing in refugee camps in eastern Nepal. A joint Bhutan-Nep refugee verification exercise interviewed 12,000 refugees from Khudunabari camp in Jhapa before the process broke down more than a year ago. BRRSG is visiting the refugees who have been on a relay hunger strike in the camp fo

Food insecurity

Bhokmari ko Mausam (Famine in the far west), a 25-minute documentary about a looming food crisis in Bajura premiered on Nepal Television on Tuesday. Produced and directed by journalist Mohan Mainali from the Centre for Investigative Journalism, it focuses on the food crisis in the remote Maoistaffected districts of the northwest. After the security forces pulled out, Maoists hit bridges, airports and roads last year making it hard to get rice and wheat into this chronically food-deficit area.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) last week issued a statement saying its survey showed reports of the food crisis were alarmist. But Mainali maintains things were already bad four months ago when he shot the film, and because no food has got into the area since then, he didn't believe it had got better. He told us: "I don't know why the ICRC is trying to underplay this crisis."

It takes seven days to walk from to Bajura from the nearest road in Doti, and no food has reached the district headquarters of Martadi since late last year. The Nepal Food Corporation (NFC) says it can only send food if there is

International meet on Nepal democracy

Science Baha is organising an international conference to discuss the matter of representation, pluralism and inclusion in Nepali democracy. 'The Agenda of Transformation: Inclusion in Nepali Democracy', is scheduled to be held 24-26 April. Says organiser Deepak Thapa, "While the Maoist insurgency creates the context, it has become necessary to look deeper and beyond it to address the need to create an inclusive, representative, participatory system of government." (www.himalassociation.org/baha/nepalidemocracy)

EASY TIMES

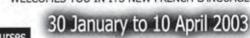
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SOMEWHERE IN NEPAL

against its fundamental interest?

"interest", shorn of its negative

connotation. Don't you think

instinctively inclined to reject

civilian control if they believe that

the democratically elected leadership

probably why in some countries the

constitution has assigned a certain

ensure law and order and the proper

Chavez's opponents continue to urge

the military to fulfil its obligation to

responsibility to the military to

functioning of state institutions.

There must be a reason why

Venezuelan President Hugo

defend the prerogatives of the

endangers the stability, health or

existence of the system they are

obligated to preserve? That's

military leaders would be

The operative word here is

Loyal Nepalese Army



Nepali Congress president Girija Prasad Koirala and Maoist upremo Prachanda have launched a int offensive to bring the army under the control of parliament. Their war aims are different, to be sure, but the tactical alliance remains firm for now. Koirala's quest evidently stems from the imperative

Costa Rica eliminated its military altogether, while Japan reduced a formidable imperial army into virtual insignificance. Where control of the security forces has been dispersed among local governments, they have acquired the benevolence of neighbourhood patrols.

These policy options contain little more than academic value in Nepal, unless you're prepared to ignore the army's contributions to the creation of the Nepali state. Some politicians believe the indoctrination of professional soldiers would work better to foster allegiance to the ideas

What if the army brass views ineffective civilian control as going against its fundamental interests?

of maintaining civilian control over the state's coercive force. The Maoists, for their part, are ideologically attuned to a people's army as an emblem of the dictatorship of the proletariat. They also see it as a good way of allowing the fighters to keep their jobs once peace is established. The RNA, for its part, feels it's being criticised for doing its job.

At least that's what stands out from the Defence Ministry's objections to news and views on troop deployments and acquisition of modern weaponry.

Democracies have tried different ways of diluting the political content of the state's armed capabilities.

and practices of democracy. Today's men in uniform, after all, were

civilians yesterday and would be so

again tomorrow. This argument, however, overlooks the military's sense of obligation to uphold its professional code. Under the constitution, as many of us know by heart now, the military can be mobilised after His Majesty's approval of the recommendation forwarded by the National Security Council (NSC), which comprises the prime minister, defence minister and the army chief. If the tradition of the prime minister retaining the defence portfolio ends up bolstering the army chief's

position in NSC deliberations, we

can't blame the Sahi Nepali Jangi Adda for that, can we?

Such misgivings have mangled our deliberations on civilian control of the military establishment. We in the media, still revelling in the publication of the Pentagon Papers in 1971, see uninhibited inquiry into the military's ways and means as a sign of press freedom. Reading from the same history books, however, our generals are inspired by the American media's nationalsecurity-induced vow of silence ahead of President John F Kennedy's Bay of Pigs operation against the Cuban regime a decade earlier. The publication of the flight path of the aircraft carrying those Belgian arms might have been less offensive to our top brass had we covered with equal ardour the twists and turns of the local equivalent of the Ho Chi Minh Trail sustaining the Maoists.

change of 1990. Fortunately, the

crisis sparked by then army chief

General Prajwalla SJB Rana's hard-

Shivapuri last year was defused in

General Rana's blistering attack on

country's mess and then fizzled. In

What if the military establishment

the exigency of the moment, we

glossed over a serious question.

views civilian control as going

elected leaders for creating the

time. The political outcry focused on

hitting convocation speech at

And we mustn't forget that former Chilean president General Although the deep psychological Augusto Pinochet has enjoyed gulf between military professionals immunity from prosecution in his and the civilian leadership has come capacity as a senator for life. to the fore more prominently in National disorder, civil strife, recent years, episodic outbursts have internal rebellion, political been apparent since the political

polarisation and deepening economic crisis all sound familiar to Nepalis today. A combination of these ills struck countries like Argentina, Brazil and Chile in the 1960s and 70s, resulting in the resurgence of the political right in uniform.

Granted, the world has come a long way since Latin America's "dirty wars". What's disturbing, though, is that the problems of those tumultuous decades half a world away have come closer home.



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ECONOMY

Japanese debt relief

The Japanese government has provided Nepal with a grant aid in debt relief worth Rs 540 million. Japan has extended grand aid for debt relief with the objective of assisting Nepal to procure commodities such as construction materials, fertilizer, petroleum products and medicines to carry out development activities since 1978.



Movers and shakers

Öne of the largest international manufacturers of earthmoving and construction equipment, EJCB, has opened up a dealership in Nepal and hopes to expand its presence in other South Asian countries as well.

EJCB has a strong presence in India and has appointed Morang Auto Works (MAW) as its Nepal representative. MAW

says it has a network of branches all over Nepal and is geared to offer a better range of construction equipment to Nepali clients. ECJB's managing director, Onkar Singh Sunar inaugurated the MAW showroom in Kathmandu this week, and welcomed its Nepali partner to the ECJB family. Said Sunar: "The expansion of our range is part of our continuing commitment to help in Nepal's crucial infrastructure development plans."

More mo-bikes

Ånother Chinese motorcycle maker is eyeing the growing market for two-wheelers in Nepal. Futong motorcylces are finding a growing market in south-east Asia and the Americas, and its manufacturers say the machines are well-suited for Nepal's roads and climate conditions. "We compare well in terms of durability and affordability," said Futong's chairman, Zu Chang on a visit here to promote his product. Futong's local handlers are Star International, which will be selling six models in the Rs 85,000-225,000 price range

Creating microwaves

When it comes to microwave transmission to the kitchen, it seems Samsung leads the way. Going by the high turnout at the free familiarisation with microwave cooking at the Hotel Radisson with executive chef, Nabhojit Ghosh, there is indeed great interest here in fast, clean cooking via microwave. Organised in collaboration with Samsung and its local distributors, Him Electronics, the microwave gastronomia produced mouthwatering recipes with little effort. Said Ghosh: "Microwave cooking is convenient, hygienic and healthy." Samsung hopes to hold more such programs in the future.

Just do IT

SRADDHA BASNYAT

formation Technology (IT) is the new buzzword, and mputer schools in Kathmandu are struggling to keep i

Classes are always full because of the rapid rate of IT evolution and the vastness of the area of study. For a student, choosing the right institute and finding one's computer niche can be quite a maze.

bank on the ignorance of students and get by providing shabby service. It's always a good idea to shop around. Fortunately the Computer Association of Nepal's (CAN) InfoTech fair starts this weekend and will be an excellent place to gawk at the latest gadgets. It is also a good opportunity to see what the

Valley's IT centres have to offer. 'Students often arrive without a clear aim," says Ganga Ram Manandhar at Pentasoft. Many are still in high school, or are working towards a bachelor's degree. So, Manandhar gives students a demonstration guide so they can decide according to

interest and aptitude. A popular method for the undecided is their knowledge of computers or to embark upon IT the introductory Gateway 2, a two-month basic platform covering eight applications.

"The tragedy here," says Manandhar, "is that students y start computers from class eight nine or ten. Then the method of teaching is very narrow." He believes in the importance of stressing conceptual processes that drive applications like MS Word so the students are not limited and are capable of exploring outside the norm.

It is not easy for IT schools to maintain a standard of excellence, because teaching IT well rests not only on good hardware like computers and classrooms, but also a great deal on the teachers. In the Valley the stress is on herding students through the course, leaving one to question the capabilities of the trainers. The instructor turnover rate is high in Kathmandu, affecting the quality of computer education.

Recently, Pentasoft invited Dhanjeet Shah, a Nepali

(www.arena-multimedia.com.np)

If you want to go to computer school, first separate the wheat from the chaff.

trainer certified in the UK for a seminar on Auto CAD, a software critical to building design, structure, internal The high concentration of IT schools in the Valley belies wiring, interior design and a requirement for engineers. the importance of computer literacy today, but far too many

Information sharing is paramount and the institute plans to take awareness programs to colleges. But the responsibility to lay strong IT foundations must be shared.

New Horizons is a franchise of a California-based computer training school ration, and places a premium on the capability of its trainers. "We have maintained a high

standard and are confident in our product because of our structors," says New Horizons' Rachana Khatri.

Five classrooms, each equipped with the latest Pentium IV computers, provide an nviting atmosphere for serious students. Candidates arrive at

careers. Counsellors or account executives talk to interested students, making them aware of what is available to them. They are encouraged to sit in on a class to assess for

New Horizons aim to tailor their facilities to the needs of Nepalis, providing the best training available at reasonable prices. Providing a 100 percent learning guarantee, they have a multi-dimensional approach. Students have access to "Online Anytime Learning", a webbased interactive training available 24 hours a day. With access to an online library, they have resources at the touch of a key. Skill assessments help students to identify and focus on areas requiring improvement. Slow learners may retake any class any number of times.

CAN Infotech 2003 at Birendra International Convention Centre from 23-28 January.

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ECONOMIC SENSE

Banking on bankers

Let's try something different for a change.

country with 23 million people

has big potential for consumer-

based banking, and there is an

the revenue perspective for

transactions to be legal.

incentive for the government from

ven from this far away, the Beed is intrigued that the balance heets of Nepali banks report good profits and generous dividends for shareholders. What's going on? Some accuse the banks of window

dressing accounts by not taking enough provisions on doubtful loans, but the bankers swear they don't cook the books. Banking plays a big role in ensuring economic activity even at depressing times. The fact that the Nepali economy is at present excessively monetised and banks have little share of the economy pie provides more opportunities. Perhaps, all bankers, together with the

"restructured" Rastra Bank need to be more adventurous and venture beyond traditional ways of managing liquidity or monetary policy. A stable foreign exchange rate and a dollar rallying behind other hard currency at present provide the right packdrop for taking some risks.

The banks need to get the liquidity out of their system knowing well that their margins may dwindle a bit in the short term. Lowering of interest rates is important to make money available for consumption or other investment. This would perhaps also lead to lowering of lending rates for the banks. Idle cash and low interest loans makes risk taking possible and perhaps the business community big and small would be happy to take the plunge.

The banking system needs to be

have to keep a watchful eye on the able to link up with the securities market to inject some new life to the stock market. Banks should be Banks also should explore allowed to establish or promote whether together they can help finance mutual or pension funds, as such larger infrastructure projects, be it institutional investment can only be hydropower plants or toll roads. These large outlays eases employment able to build a good foundation for the future of the stock market. A problems, and at the same time starts

> a hub for economic activities. The time has also come to question why Nepali banks or institutions are not allowed to invest outside the country. Since, there has been no way to control the informal

> > flight of capital, can't there be some pilot investments tried out? If the money in the country is lying idle, why not try invest in other countries and earn money for Nepali institutions? If full disclosure is naintained and dividend is repatriated, why should a Nepali institution or fund not be allowed to invest in a software facility in the

Philippines, the United States, or India? Banks could be allowed to float specific funds for such investments.

The idea is to find roles for the banks outside the small boxes that they have been confined to so far. There are many successful examples in other developing countries to learn from. Why not try something different for a change. At least it will be less boring. ♦

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



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cow but as a means of expanding the

tax net and increasing revenue?

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customer loyalty programs have

always provided the surge in



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long time it has been possible to

use Devanagari fonts for Sanskrit-

based languages on a variety of

platforms: Windows, Mac and

Unix/Linux. Developers across

South Asia and elsewhere have

currently used in a number of

environments, not least for word

processing and typesetting. Such

despite various efforts, one single

problem undermines all of this

standard for Devanagari which

meant that to read Kantipur,

Gorkhapatra and Himal

work to date: there was no

Nepal since the 1980s. Yet,

work has also been taking place in

produced attractive and

functioning fonts that are

espite a decade of talk about "leveling the playing field", allowing developing countries to "leapfrog into the information age" and "bridging the digital divide", advances in information technology haven't necessarily made the world a better place. In fact, the gap between the haves and the have nots has actually grown.

One problem has been the dominance of the English language that has put the technology out of reach for those societies that have a different language or script. Computers are not by definition monolingual, if they are only to understand the binary language of 0 and 1.

The dominance of English on our screens, on the LCD displays of pagers or the brightly-lit faces of ATMs is a cultural and political

phenomenon rather than a technological one. The American origins of the defining technologies can be seen in the names given to hardware and software. Despite the dreams of some enthusiasts, high-level programming languages are not likely to drop their English-based syntaxes for Sanskrit or Chinese.

Yet with the development, and now universal, reach of graphical (rather than text-based) interfaces, this need have no bearing on the end user. The potential for breaking down the language barrier and offering unlimited IT-based services in Nepali lies latent in all the underutilised computer equipment that we see around us.

The prospect of emailing, accounting, databasing and Internet-surfing in Nepali—and

Khabarpatrika online one has to thereby at a stroke opening a download and install all three world of opportunity to those outside the English-speaking separate fonts. upper middle classes—is no longer the stuff of dreams. For a

Without standard encoding for Devanagari (preferably combined with a standard keyboard layout to make learning to type simple) it is impossible to develop serious data processing and manipulation in Nepali. The knock-on effect on development planning in Nepal in opportunity loss is immense.

The Nepali Font Standardisation Committee that consisted of linguists, technicians, librarians, academics and media experts made a major effort in 1997 to find a common parameter. A document detailing the font standard was prepared. The standard specified what characters must be included in any Nepali



font, and how they were to be sorted. This standard was discussed during a workshop held during CAN Info Tech 1998, and given a final form. Unfortunately, the work couldn't progress ahead in the lack of technical expertise to implement it natively in computer systems.

Unicode is a standard developed for computers to store the character standards developed by a worldwide consortium. Unicode contains standard encoding for, among a wide range of scripts, Devanagari. Given global acceptance of the Unicode, the standard will be adopted uncritically by the vast majority of computer users as they upgrade to newer releases of different operating systems.

coffee shop, or from the airport. Now, imagine doing all these things easily, quickly and cheaply without getting all tangled in phone jacks and looking for the symbols scrawled on sidewalks wall socket. Welcome to the mark the location of the nearest world of Wi-Fi.

Wireless Fidelity allows you to connect to the internet from your couch at home, or from the South Col. Essentially, it marries the mobility of the cell phone with the portable PC. Wi-Fi enabled computers can send and receive data indoors and out without wires. And best of all: it is all several times faster than the

magine checking your emails and surfing the net while sitting in your own garden.

to your office network from a

fastest cable modem connection. Free networks are currently being installed across Europe and US based on Wi-Fis, where bureaucratic hurdles so we can access points are beingset up in the cities. Such networks can be arranged to form a continuous "cloud" of connectivity using free air waves, known as

"elektrosmog" in Europe Wi-Fi equipped laptops can automatically search and connect lines per 100,000 people, one of to this "cloud" within a 100 m

If, and only if, Unicode is implemented according to the needs of the Nepali people will they then be able to compute natively in their own languages. A UNDPsupported pilot project involving the Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya, the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Computer Association of Nepal are working on a pilot project to implement a workable and potentially universal font standard for Nepali. It overcame difficulties like the lack of a standard keyboard layout. An integral part of the objective was not only to find technical solutions, but to publicise them and provide the training and education necessary to ensure their widest possible adoption and exploitation.

will be made public on 24 January at the CAN InfoTech 2003, and tutorials will be held on 27 January. Software can be downloaded for free at the website www.mpp.org.np. Since bandwidth is a problem. there is also a CD which will be available at various stalls during the CAN Info-Tech, which can also be ordered at cost price through amar.gurung@info.com.np)

(Nepali Unicode fonts



Cableless and Imagine being able to connect

access point. Meanwhile, back in Nepal,

"Communications for national development" has been a slogan for so long that people have stopped taking it seriously. Yet, the role of information technology in leapfrogging development for a country like Nepal is not a slogan, it is real. In a country where copper wire technology has made it next to impossible to get a land line, wireless telephony and Wi-Fi offer a viable way to bypass

finally get on the information The number of people in Nepal who have applied for a telephone connection, but haven't yet got a line has now crossed the 300,000 mark. Nepal's teledensity is 1,446 the lowest in the world. The

this is that telecom infrastructure is capital-intensive. This is even more so for a country with rugged topography like Nepal.

This is why the best news to hit us in recent years is the rapid spread and increasing affordability of wireless communication.

Wireless overcomes the tedious, time consuming and costly process of laying cables within crowded metropolises or extensive cabling across the country. Wireless offers an alternative in developed and developing countries alike.

"Wireless gives us flexibility, it has tremendous potential for remote area telecom, for bringing urban areas into Wi-Fi networks, and with wired equivalent privacy so that it is secure," says Shree Ram Regmi, lecturer at the Institute of Engineering in Pulchowk. The technology has now arrived in



No messing around with wires anymore. Wi-Fi comes to Nepal

Kathmandu, it is still a bit expensive. But prices are dropping all the time.

Himalayan Technologies (www.himalayantech.com) is one of the companies dealing with Wi-Fi products in Nepal market with its Linksys wireless networks. The system operates at the 2.5 GHz Industrial Scientific and Medical (ISM) free frequency where the data transfer rate is 11Mbps. By the middle of this year, customers in Kathmandu can have high-speed wireless internet access to replace their wired LAN systems. Says Sumeru Shrestha of Himalayan Technologies, "Linksys delivers the freedom to configure your network your way. You can set up workstations in ways you never

thought possible: no cables to install mean less expense and less hassles." But isn't it going to be complicated and expensive? No, Shrestha says Wireless local area networks will in fact provide seamless roaming to your home server so you can check email from

anywhere. How about security, can hackers get into your server through wireless? Again, no worries. Wireless comes with advanced user authentication features. And the beauty of it is that it is plug-and-use with Windows-based diagnostics that keep you in control. Shrestha plans to show off his product at the CAN Info Tech 2003 starting this weekend. Wireless is the new freedom.



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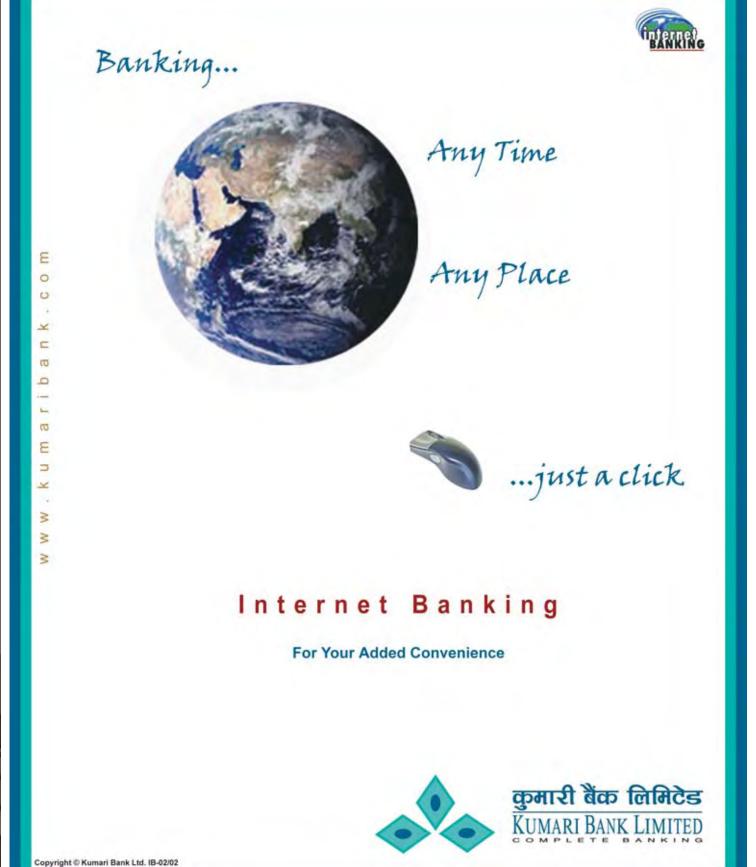
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MANILA—Donors are usually the ones who scrutinise the work of their aid

recipients, so they sat up when Filipino senator Aquilino Pimentel upset

seriously. Two years ago, he charged that a huge portion of aid meant for

this equation, and demanded full disclosure of the salaries of foreign

Pimentel, a veteran opposition senator, takes donor-bashing

development projects was being allotted for the salaries of foreign

consultants, most of whom were paid "outrageously huge fees". As a

and a bigger say in projects that receive counterpart funding from

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

result, the success of projects, some of them geared towards poverty

alleviation, have been greatly undermined. In recent years, more and

more developing countries have been demanding greater transparency

have been providing has been productive," said Stephen Browne of the

"We have to be humble as donors and accept that not a lot of aid we

Donor-bashing in the Philippines

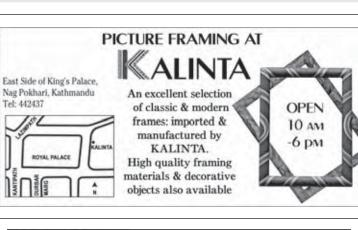
consultants working for the government.

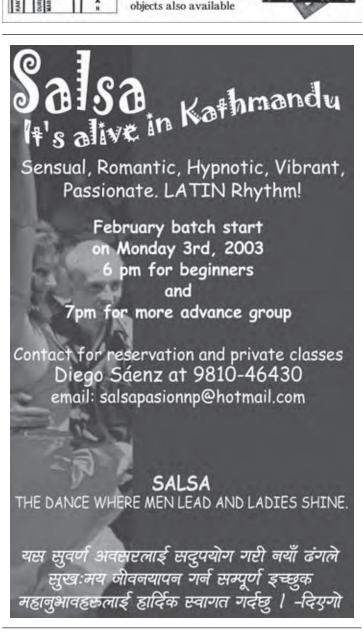
foreign donors.

No Clone

BELGRADE - The sensational announcement last month that a human clone is to be born in a private clinic by 15 January in Serbia caused an avalanche of denials by local experts and health ministry officials. In December, the Yugoslav Association for Fertility and Sterility hosted a symposium on the problems of artificial human reproduction, attended by more than 250 local and foreign experts. It was here that controversial Italian gynaecologist Severino Antinori announced "Serbia will be one of three countries which will go down in history" due to the assumed 15 January birth of a cloned baby.

Antinori's announcement came only days before the controversial Cloneaid group announced the birth of the first human clone by a mother in the US. An unprecedented media search for a place where the allegedly cloned baby would be born followed. More than 140 private gynaecologist practices around Serbia became the targets. Dr Drazen Milacic, head of the association, denied the rumours adding the symposium was "abused for sensation". The Serbian Health Ministry issued a decree banning any experiments that would lead to cloning of humans. The decree became an annex of the existing Law on Human Reproduction. (IPS)







Three views on

protectionism—and not just in agriculture—works to the opposite end? which proves the greater

Not-so-good

ow is it that people like

nyself, who have always

poverty and injustice, feel so distant

way to make the world more liveable

is not to stop globalisation, as you

You are right to denounce the

nequality of our age. But it seems

macroeconomic progress, producing

from the anti-globalisation

movement—indeed, feel that the

propose, but to accelerate and

growing social and economic

mpossible to deny that the

globalisation has brought real

wealth and reducing poverty in

much of the planet. True, there

can anyone seriously believe that

easier to fight poverty?

Among the scandalous

disparities that characterise the

North-South divide, there is a

phenomenon of breath-taking

pertinence: while hundreds of

day, every cow born between

Finland and the south of Italy

millions of people around the world

receives a daily subsidy of this same

amount from the European Union.

Could there be a more rousing call

myopia of European (and American)

leaders, who preach the expansion of

OPINION

to denounce the hypocrisy and

have to subsist on a mere dollar a

producing less wealth will make it

remain large areas of exclusion, but

onslaught of contemporary

sidered it a duty to fight

by Emma Bonino,

Euro MP and a

member of the

Italian Radical

Party

It will be interesting to see obstacle to globalisation: your opposition or the protectionist policies with which the North ontinues to asphyxiate key sectors of the economy of the South. Born and developed in the

North, the anti-globalisation movement claims to represent the dispossessed and to defend their interests. So how does it justify the presence at forefront of its ranks of someone like Jose Bove, champion of French and European agro-protectionism? And what about the Catholics who claim to practice "liberation theology" yet remain loyal to a church that (like Islam) blesses the demographic explosion and continues to forbid any sexual education and the use of condoms despite the ballooning pandemic of AIDS?

And what of the postcommunist leftists who demand extraordinary aid and debt forgiveness for the poorest countries but don't bat an eye when the leaders of these countries massacre their own people in devastating wars, as in Rwanda, Uganda, Ethiopia, and

The anti-global movement demands an immediate major transfer of resources from the North to the South yet overlooks a startling fact that is jeopardising the future of aid for development: four decades of development policy have failed

to lift a single country out of underdevelopment.

The movement also demands that the international community put an end to the "scandal of poverty", but it doesn't seem worried by the fact that these days the most efficient form of battling poverty is that practised by 150 million emigrants from about 30 countries of the South who, without waiting for World Bank programs, went to find work in the industrialised world. It is worth reflecting on the fact that in many countries remittances from these workers to their families have become the major source of

But not even these remittances are enough to kick-start the economies that receive them given the absence of even minimal democracy or rule of law.

Globalisation can multiply its benefits only if it manages to defeat its greatest enemies: the resistance of too many political leaders in the North to eliminating barriers to the free circulation of goods and peoples; and the resistance of too many political leaders in the South to granting their citizens fundamental political and economic freedoms, which are a necessary condition for development.

I would like to create an alternative movement to yours called "Globalisation? Yes please!". One of its goals would be to introduce among the priorities of globalisation—and therefore of international relations North and South—the worldwide promotion of rules and principles of the rule of law and democracy. As Churchill said: "It is the worst system of government known to man, except for the rest." ♦ (IPS) Not-so-bad by Supachai of the WTO

ultilateralism is the only sustainable way to secure our global future. At Doha in November 2001, in a climate of dangerous international uncertainty, World Trade Organisation (WTO) members showed the determination to make multilateralism work.

What the world needs today is a reaffirmation of this choice of multilateralism over unilateralism, of stability over uncertainty, consensus over conflict, and rules over power. Trade liberalisation is a powerful ally of sustainable development. Given that trade barriers harm the poorest, removing trade barriers helps alleviate poverty.

The World Bank's Global Economic Prospects 2002, estimates that abolishing all trade barriers could boost global income over a ten year period by \$2.8 trillion. Of this, developing countries stand to reap more than half, and an additional reduction in global poverty of 320 million people by 2015. Freer trade, accompanied by appropriate domestic macroeconomic policies and a sound legal framework, is vital in helping poor countries grow their way out of poverty and move on to the path of sustainable development.

The share of developing

globalisation

to around 30 percent and it could be made to grow even higher. One way to do this is by improving market access for products of particular interest to developing countries, such as agriculture goods and textiles. This one action will make a huge difference to the lives of millions.

We should also remember that trade is not a zero-sum game. Developed countries also stand to gain from trade liberalisation in these areas. For instance, agricultural support in developed countries, which comes close to \$1 billion every day, represents a significant cost to developed country

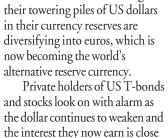
tax payers and consumers In preparation for the Fifth Not-so-smar Ministerial Conference, slated for 10-14 September in Cancun a by Hazel Henderson number of further deadlines have author of Beyond Globalisation, Building a Winbeen set which should bring a needed sense of urgency to the negotiations. Win World and The WTO has moved from the other books.

failure of Seattle to the success of Doha. Developing countries need to ensure through their positive engagement in the negotiations that they make the most of their opportunities. A strengthened multilateral trading system is in the interest of every country. ♦ (IPS)



worried about the US economy's fundamentals—historically high levels of corporate and consumer debt, over \$1 trillion of unfunded corporate pension liabilities in the ven though a welter of auto and other "Old Economy" evidence is now in indicting globalisation—from the 1997 sectors; a corporate crime wave that Asian meltdown to the default of continues to undermine confidence Russia and now Argentina—its in auditor's reports and stock apologists still promote this markets, the Bush foreign policy strategy of playing global policeman, preemptive strike plans on Iraq; ballooning deficits from the war on global terrorism; and the unsupportable US trade deficit.

It is only a matter of time pefore more private investors switch to euros, Swiss francs, and other investments with higher



These private investors are

US as well. Countries holding



interest rates and more

by JOHAN GALTUNG AND DIETRICH FISCHER

Korea's hawk-dove

NEW YORK - The 18th century German poet Johan Wolfgang Goethe once said: "People behave the way you treat them. If you treat someone like a gentlemen, he will behave like a gentleman. If you treat someone like ook he will behave like a crook '

To a large extent, this applies also in international relations. George W Bush's inclusion of North Korea with Iraq and Iran in the "axis of evil" in his January 2002 State of the Union address made North Korea more belligerent, as even the US government now seems to recognise.

As in South Korea and most other countries, there are hawks and doves at the top in North Korea, sometimes inside the same person. Hawks send ubmarines and attack; doves apologise.

Hawks abduct Japanese citizens; doves not only tell (part of) the story but send abductees to Japan for a reunion with their families. Hawks carry on with uranium enrichment; doves admit it (or confess, as it is called in the West). Hawks withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and threaten missile tests; doves say they do not want to develop nuclear weapons and seek talks with the US.

No doubt the hawk-dove dialectic is complex—"power struggle" is oo simplistic a model. Kim Jong-Il may feel a Confucian obligation to follow his Father, possibly for a decade or more. The hawk/dove balance in North Korea can be tilted by the hawk/dove balance exerted by the US, South Korea, Japan and China, and to some extent by Russia. Hawks breed hawks, doves breed doves, generally speaking. Rewarding North Korean dovishness will strengthen doves and possibly lead to soft regime change from the inside; punishing North Korean hawkishness will strengthen hawks and possibly lead to violent change or collapse.

Kim Dae-Jung's "Sunshine Policy" of engagement with North Korea (like West German Social Democratic Chancellor Willy Brandt's 'Ostpolitik") tilted the balance in favour of North Korean doves. There was equality politically, a major condition for peace. The cooperation was broad. After the June 15, 2000, summit in Pyongyang between Kim Dae-Jung and Kim Jong-Il a spirit of confederation was in the air, for one nation/two states, with North Korea on a reformist path. The narrow victory of President Roh Moo-Hyun over his hard-line rival assures that South Korea will continue with Sunshine Policy.

Treat someone like a crook and he'll behave like a crook.



Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to Pyongyang indicated that the sunshine had thawed even Japanese hearts. But not US hearts. After his (s)election, President Bush Jr ordered a "review" of North Korea policy (meaning procrastination). By including North Korea in the "axis of evil", he marked it for war/invasion if it refused to collapse.

The US decided to crush the Sunshine Policy by getting North Korea to admit/confess that it had not abandoned the uranium enrichment program. Yet Washington never admitted/confessed that it had not yet fulfilled its own part of the 1994 agreement (offering North Korea two civilian light-water reactors to replace the reactor Pyongyang agreed to shut down); nor that Japan's plutonium policy was the same as hawkish

dialectic

Recently the US took a very hawkish position, even stopping the flow of oil to North Korea at the beginning of winter. Later, the US reversed itself, saying it is ready to "talk" but not negotiate with North Korea, hinting at possible food and energy assistance if North Korea first dismantles its nuclear weapons program in a verifiable way. Interestingly, a majority in South Korea prefers to continue the Sunshine Policy, Japan a little less so, China more, and Russia possibly much more, eyeing Wonsan

The extent to which the US can make others toe their hard line, by stick or carrot policies, depends partly on whether North Korea will reward dovish policies by those four.

The following five steps can help ease tensions on the Korean Peninsula and build a better future for all:

1 A Continuation of Sunshine Policy; 2 A Regime change in North Korea, like in China, heading for more democracy and human rights and a mixed Capital-State

door open for full reunification in the future;

- 3 A One nation/two states Confederation on the Korean Peninsula, with no collapse, no take-over, but changes on all sides and without an allout sale of the North Korea economy to world capitalism, leaving a
- 4 A Conference for Security and Cooperation in Northeast Asia, similar to the 1973-75 Helsinki Conference that prepared the end of the Cold War in Europe, aiming for an organisation to handle security and cooperation problems;
- 5 As tensions are reduced, all foreign troops are withdrawn from the Korean Peninsula, as agreed (but not practiced by the US) for Austria

What helped end the cold war in Europe was a gradual mutual opening to the flow of ideas, goods and people. The same policy can work in Korea. ♦ (IPS)

(Johan Galtung is a Professor of Peace Studies and Director of TRANSCEND, a peace and development network. Dietrich Fischer is professor at Pace University)

pproach with the familiar cry: here Is No Alternative.

Now we are seeing the emergence of an even deeper set of contradictions generated by the strict regime of export-led GNPgrowth, open capital markets, convertible currencies, privatisation deregulation, and increasing

The US, globalisation's most fervent promoter, has up to now, reaped the greatest benefits, as the dollar—over-valued in the recent past by between 15-25 percent became the world's defacto reserve currency. This has led to soaring US trade deficits as US-based companies found it increasingly difficult to export.

But the United States' long ride on the over-valued dollar is now coming to an end as its trade deficits continue growing to unsustainable levels (some 4.5 percent of US GDP). Until recently, countries which export to the US (China, Taiwan, Japan, Mexico, and many others) kept accepting US dollars in payment and buying US Treasury bills for their currency reserves.

This system, with the United States absorbing so much of the world's exports and capital, trying to serve as the world's "locomotive" is now bogging down as a result of the weakening dollar, currently below the euro.

The US Federal Reserve has lowered interest rates to 1.25 percent, the lowest level in 40 years, to try to kickstart the domestic economy—so far with little success. The Japanese "deflation malaise" may be in store for the post-bubble

favourable fundamentals

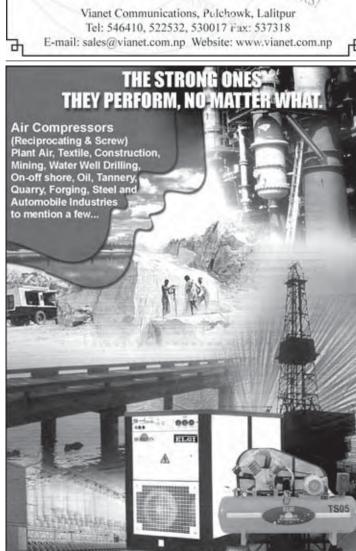
China is fast becoming the world's newest superpower. It already produces many of the world's goods—50 percent of cameras, 30 percent of air conditioners and TVs, 25 percent of the washing machines, 40 percent of all microwave ovens sold in Europe, and fast moving into computers, mobile phones, and DVD players.

Lower wages and cheap export platforms used in China and elsewhere by US multinationals were supposed to be the advantage of globalisation. Today, however, the United States fears global deflation, a danger the US Federal Reserve is bracing for while its main tool of choice—interest rate adjustments—has stripped the gears of monetary policy. Will the Fed fight deflation by "talking down" the dollar? Or another surprise, when China shifts to a convertible currency will the now undervalued Chinese yuan lead to the dollar's further devaluation?

The failure of the laissez faire orthodoxy to register alarm at the blow-back from "Washington Consensus" policies indicates a lack of systems thinking. As psychiatrists know, people who cannot conceive of any alternative to their current behaviour are deemed to be suffering from clinical depression.

And scientists note that it is illogical to imagine that repeating a similar experiment could lead to dissimilar results. Washington would do well to take note. ♦





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"We must trust the king"

Deshantar, 19 January Excerpts of interview with Chakra Prasad Bastola, Central Working Committee member of Nepali Congress and former Foreign Minister. He also represented the government in last year's peace

Do you think power plays by the political parties and the monarch has aggravated the political situation in the country? The political parties' behaviour is full of contradictions. They should have been prepared to prevent 4 October, or at least they should not have fostered mistrust between

themselves and His Majesty. They should have found common ground where both could work together and move forward. We failed to make our position clear to the

king on time. Protests came like an

afterthought, which didn't have the same impact had we been definite and clear at the right time. That became our [the political parties] biggest weakness.

How do you think a power balance is possible at this point of the time?

Girija Prasad Koirala's stand offers plenty of space for dialogue between the monarch and the Maoists but there has to be a positive response. The Nepali Congress is not against the constitutional monarchy, neither is it against democracy and the constitution. Of course it might oppose an individual trait in a king. If a king's personality and character is against the spirit of the constitution, the people will ask the monarchy to reform. There is always mistrust between the people, political parties and the monarchy. Perhaps the political parties might not have reacted with so much frenzy when the monarch became a little more active had it not been so. There are positive signs in recent political events, but these are all too often overshadowed by negative ones.

Is an absolute monarchy a possibility at present?

It is possible. What we should consider are people who do not support any political parties. They could be a political force in the future. If the existence of a parliament could not prevent the uprising of the Maoists, how can absolute monarchy prevent other groups from storming the political arena? While the parliament offered an outlet, an absolute monarchy will remove any such opportunities for dissatisfied sections of Nepali society.

Do you believe the monarchy is ruining the credibility of the parties to become more powerful?

Weakened political parties make the monarchy looked stronger and more active. The lack of a parliament leaves only one system still functioning-monarchy. The difference in attitudes between the late and the present king might have fanned people's suspicions about His Majesty deliberately trying to discredit political parties.

But I believe the king's next move will depend largely on how we perform. There is a political consensus about protecting the achievements of the 1990 People's Movement, but even key players like the Nepali Congress and the UML have failed to garner an agreement on how to go about it. If we cannot resolve this issue, we should not complain solely against the king.

In the event of any major political vacuum, the king will certainly step in. We must have enough faith in the constitution to use it more effectively. The UML have shied away from creating programs for us to work together, yet they demand an all-party government. We cannot risk demanding something not guaranteed by the constitution because it may force the monarchy into a corner. We should be confident in the king's assurances about his commitment to democracy and constitutional monarchy.

You represented the government in the failed peace talk with the Maoists. Why do you think they walked out of negotiations?

I think it was part of a cunning strategy to agree to talks and walk out before any resolution. The situation is totally different now. They have already achieved what they had wanted and what they could. I don't think they'll opt for a victory over Singha Darbar. If they are smart enough, they won't push for the supremacy of the downtrodden. In this situation, they don't have any other war to win.

Is there a chance they might talk directly with the king?

If that happens, I'd put it down as another strategy. Our stand should be one that seeks a solution, whoever they negotiate with. Babu Ram Bhattarai has demanded a roundtable talk between the king, the pro-parliament parties and the Maoists. In the last parliament we clung to power by whatever means necessary, which hampered the possibility of talks with the Maoists. If the king adopts the same attitude then all the old mistakes will be repeated.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

I travelled all over the world to spread a message of peace, but it hurts that my own country is suffering from violence and terror.

- Pushkar Shah, Nepali cyclist on a world tour for peace in Gorkhapatra on 22 January.



Signpost: 100 days Sacks: inauguration, endless speeches, empty promises Second cartwheel: five-point direction

राजधानी Rajdhani, 20 January

Our own Taliban

THIS PAGE CONTAINS MATERIAL SELECTED FROM THE NEPALI PRESS

Ghorahi, Dang - A group of Maoists chopped off the right hand of a class 10 student of Sarvodaya Secondary School in Sishaniya VDC in Dang on Friday night. The Maoists beat up Rakesh Chaudhary before cutting off his hand, local police said. On 14 January, the Maoists had abducted Chaudhary while he was playing football in Phalkapur village. They released him at his home in Sonpur after chopping off his hand at 10PM on Friday night, say family members. The severed hand with fingers have been put up for public display at at the local bus stop in Narthi. Chaudhary was taken to Nepalganj for treatment.

Helping dalit women

Nepal Samacharpatra, 18 January

Bishnumaya Pariyar was often looked down upon in school and despite being a good student, she never enjoyed the opportunities her classmates of higher castes did. But this did not deter her from coming to Kathmandu after completing SLC to pursue her higher studies. Today, from her base in the US she supports 200 Dalit students to go to school, and has helped more than 700 dalit women become economically self-sufficient.

"After completing my higher studies, I found work in an NGO and

country. I saw many dalits living in 18th century conditions. They weren't allowed to drink from the local tap or visit the temple. They were economically and socially oppressed and had no political power. I was greatly affected by what I saw, and promised that I would work for the upliftment of the dalit society."

Bishnumaya was born in a remote and deprived village of Taklung in Gorkha. She is learning from her past experience why projects for dalits never benefited them. Four years ago, she formed the Nepal Dalit Women's Upliftment Organisation and left for the US to study. Bishnumaya isn't associated with a particular organisation but she raises support from educated American friends to whom she tries to explain the concept of caste in Nepal. With individual donations, she is working to directly raise the educational, social and economic status of the dalit community in remote villages across Nepal, especially to

empower the women. "Compared to African Americans, the problems of the dalits here are negligible. Their movement is successful because they are united. Here, there is no unity," she says.

Programs run by Bishnumaya have helped more than 700 women in Taklung, Manakamana, Tanglichowk, Makaisingh, Budkot in Gorkha and Jhapa. The program provides women's groups with seed money of Rs 1,500 to start a fund. "Today, each group has collected and saved more than Rs 72,000. As they become financially independent, there is less oppression." While more than 200 children in

Gorkha have received scholarships, others whose parents are poor have been provided school uniforms. Ten college students have got scholarships and there are plans to increase the number. Bishnumaya is planning to train these students in health care so they can go back to the villages and help dalit women who normally have little access to health care. She believes the poor must be a priority if a country is to

Suicides

24 - 30 JANUARY 2003 **NEPALI TIMES #129**

Spacetime, 21 January स्पेसटाइम दैनिक

Dal Bahadur Shrestha was a teacher at the Surya Primary School in Pyuthan. He got so sick of armed Maoists coming to him to extort money and forcing him to feed them, that he committed suicide last week. Shrestha had started showing signs of mental stress and paranoia. He had even been taken to India for treatment of his mental condition and had just returned. But on Saturday, he ran away from home to a nearby school and hung himself.

Similarly, Dhana Bahadur Sarki, a dalit from Bijuli VDC was visited by the army last month and was interrogated. Ever since, he had been muttering to everyone that he was not a Maoist and showed signs of mentally instablity. Last week, after seeing an army patrol approaching his village again, he was overcome with anxiety and ran away. He was later found dead.

हिमाल

Strategic aid

Comparing Indian and Chinese aid to Nepal.

Mahendra P Lama in *Himal Khabarpatrika* 15-29 January



Foreign aid has played a major role in Nepal's development. But despite the humanitarian element of aid, there's always a hidden agenda. China had a hidden agenda when it gave aid to Burma, the US when it gave aid to Pakistan, and the Soviet Union when it gave aid to India.

By the 1980s, India was Nepal's largest donor. By the end of the third five-year plan, Nepal received bilateral aid from numerous countries. Of the Rs 1.26 billion Nepal received in international aid by its fourth plan, 83 percent accounted for bilateral and 16 percent accounted for multilateral aid. By the late 1990s, international aid increased to Rs 16.18 billion (including loans), 75 percent of which came from multilateral donors. This shows the changing nature of the donor community and Nepal's increasing dependence on foreign aid.

Aid from India and China have had a great impact on Nepal. What were the differences in objectives and the way India and China dispensed aid to Nepal? Were the two countries competing? Some say they were giving with one hand and taking away with another. Both concentrated on infrastructure: building bridges, roads, power plants.

An unbiased and appropriate study of international aid to Nepal remains to be done. It's becoming clear how aid has been profitable for the influential classes of Nepal. Misuse has resulted in corruption inefficiency and poverty

By 1984-85, India provided 30 percent of bilateral aid to Nepal, US 18 percent, China 12 percent and the UK 11 percent. India and China competed in providing aid to Nepal. After India built the 116 km Tribhuvan Highway in 1956, China built the 104 km Arniko Highway, connecting Kathmandu to India and China respectively. Despite the professed aim of developing Nepal, people still talk about the hidden agenda of the two countries. Later, India built the Siddhartha Highway, Kosi,



Gandaki and Trisuli hydro-projects, industrial areas in Patan, Nepalganj and Dharan. China, on the other hand, built the Prithvi Highway, Sunkosi hydropower project, the Kathmandu Valley Ring Road, the trolley bus network, the Pokahra-Baglung road and paper, leather, shoe and brick factories in the public sector.

India prevented China from entering the Nepali tarai for its infrastructure projects. On the pretext of preventing China from spreading communism to Nepal, it did not allow China to carry out agricultural projects. China, on the other hand, kept Nepal happy by offering show-case programs.

China and India sparred over building sections of the Mahendra east-west highway. China won the contract to build the Kohalpur-Banbasa sector with a low bid, but was blocked by India which later built the section. But the Chinese did manage to build the critical Gorkha-Narayangadh highway corridor, reducing the use of the Tribhuban highway.

Earlier, the operational styles of the Chinese and the Indians were very different. The Indians would form settlements near their projects and would hire Indian labourers. But the Chinese would operate from a single hut and employ Nepali labour. Things have changed, today the Chinese are not as altruistic as they used to be.

While the Indians built highways that hugged the hills and connected strategic areas, the Chinese built highways along the rivers, probably seeing it as being safer from air attacks. In time, India's threat perceptions have changed. In place of China, it now sees Pakistan's

intelligence service as a bigger threat. The Chinese now have access to development projects in the Nepal tarai. There is no doubt that donors have helped develop Nepal, but they have also used aid as a strategic weapon and made the country a playground to forward their national interest.

**Who wants to keep the king and the political parties apart?"



2 March, 1977

Not feeling well. Blood in the sputum, which I sent for culture. This persistent cough with blood which appears in the sputum occasionally is definitely not a good sign—more so when it is accompanied with night sweating. Didn't feel like doing anything.

In the forenoon the major came with the electrician and a carpenter—electrician for some repair work and the carpenter to take the measure of our windows and doors where they propose to fix wire netting to prevent flies, mosquitoes and insects from coming in. Why this concern for our comfort? We had asked for mosquito nets, as mosquitoes started appearing about three days ago. Rather than supply us with nets, they must have argued why not make a permanent arrangement with wire netting over all points of ingress of the room. Then we must start our guess work. What does it mean? Does it mean a prolonged period of detention? This is what GM

Day before GM asked the major if it would be

The newspapers are delivered to their cells, and BP Koirala and Ganesh Man Singh try to read between the lines of the Dhankuta Pancha Conference. BP thinks India looms large in manoeuvering to drive a wedge between the Nepali Congress and the Royal Palace. There are three days with no entries in these pages from BP's prison diary, and there is no explanation. But since he has been worried about his health, it could be he was indisposed again. possible for him to see his daughters through the chinks in the

main gate—a kind of regular interview. GM is concerned about them obviously, otherwise he wouldn't have made this request by way of a suggestion. I told him that it wasn't proper on his part to ask the major for that kind of irregular favour. Perhaps he has realized the mistake. The worst part of such a request is that while it has no chance of being granted, it creates an impression of our weak resolve. Moreover it is not in keeping with out dignity. I couldn't understand how GM could even think of such an idea he who is so particular about dignity and status. I have found him very understanding and conscious of his position as a leader. He cares for my dignity also. He doesn't like that I should be friendly with the officer here—I cannot adopt an attitude of superiority and aloofness with whoever comes in contact with me. This is my nature. But GM thinks that to preserve our standing with out own people and with our opponents we must be a little aloofish, more

In the evening medicines came—the worthwhile one is Avil cough expectorant—other medicines are tonics and vitamins.

3-5 March, 1977

6 March, 1977

We got two days' newspapers-ie, Saturday and Sunday Gorkhapatra and Rising Nepal today—they brought a flutter in our otherwise peaceful, almost dead, atmosphere by the proceedings of Dhankuta Pancha Conference which is published in them. Day before the papers had carried the news of the conference which was addressed by Tulsi Giri. Giri's statement didn't contain anything new so far as we are concerned except that law would take its own course and that the government wouldn't tolerate any attempt from any quarter to disturb the established political order and the values—whether such attempts were made by the people on them was on their instigation of any foreign power. What struck me of more important consequence in his statement was his obvious effort to convince the conference audience, or perhaps the people in general that the system was now too firmly entrenched to be shaken by such minor events as our return to Nepal and that the late king hadn't introduced this system as a stop-gap—interim—arrangement, and that no one should feel shaky about his position if he reposed full trust in the wisdom of the king

The telling fact about his statement is his arguments for convincing the audience about the stability of the system. Why is the need for this reiteration? Anyway, what created a flutter today were the statements of Surya B Thapa, Nageshwar Pd Singh, Peshal Pokhrel etc and a resolution adopted in the conference both condemning us in a most unrestrained language and suggesting maximum punishment to be given to us. Why this outburst of anger—simulated rage—against us? What is of importance to know is whether it is inspired by the king, who happened to be in Dhankuta, the venue of the conference. The one intriguing fact in this is the people who brought this resolution and spoke on it—they are all pro-Indian—on league with Surya Pd, particularly Thapa and Peshal. Why should the king be interested in making a political ballyhoo about us when we are at his disposal and our case is sub-judice? The one element which is apprehensive of an agreement between us and the king is India and the supporters of the resolution are particularly men of India. So my feeling is that it is a manoeuvre of India through Thapa. GM thinks that if the palace hadn't been interested, the resolution wouldn't have been passed by the conference. There is a point in his argument but I feel that it is a success of India's manoeuvre rather than the king's.

NEPALI DIASPORA

Khao Lak's Nepalis

"Good afternoon," he said to me in German, "please come in and look at our men's suits."

I was strolling from the main street to my beachfront hotel in Khao Lak, a burgeoning strip of a seaside town about an hour and a half north of Phuket, in Southern Thailand. The mustachioed young man standing in front of the Lucky Armani Tailors was clearly not Thai. For my part, somewhat taken aback by the invitation in German, a language in which I have hardly any competence, I instinctively replied in Nepali. Not because I thought he might be Nepali, but simply because of the linguistic confusion engendered by being addressed in German in my feeble, onenon-native-language-at-a-time mind.

"I don't speak German," I said, but the effect of this simple declaration in Nepali was electrifying. The young man almost collapsed in wonder. "Are you Gorkhali?" he asked, staring with intent disbelief at my kuire blue grey eyes.

Travel the US today and you'll find Nepalis everywhere-Sherpas and Mustangis working in health food stores in Manhattan, Gurung shepherds in the Wind River Range of Wyoming and Nepali software engineers of all background churning out code in the Silicon Valley and its offshoots. So there's really no reason that an American expat living in Nepal, originally a Pennsylvania boy, then turned Californian, someone who now calls himself a New Yorker, should have been surprised to encounter Nepalis in Southern Thailand. After all, Thailand is much more Nepal's "backyard". Still, at that moment, I was so shocked that you could have knocked both me and Moti Lal KC over with a feather.

Moti Lal and his many compatriots in Khao

Meet Moti Lal KC, proprietor of Lucky Armani Tailors in Phuket.



Lak, about 10 of whom I met later that day, are all Burmelis, Burmese Nepalis. Their ancestors, for the most part, went to Nepal with the great wave of British Gurkha troops sent there in the 1940s by the King Emperor to beat back the Japanese, who overran Burma in 1942. Many, like Moti Lal's grandfather (whose home village he knew only was somewhere in Eastern Nepal) stayed on in Burma and settled down in and around Mytikina, working as dairy farmers and gem miners. Although many Burmelis re-migrated back to Nepal after Ne Win came to power and confiscated their property, many stayed on. But times are rough in Burma and the meagre, but still relatively more attractive economic opportunities in Thailand have kept

many Burmelis on the

All the young Burmelis I met in Khao Lak worked in the tailoring business, some as actual tailors, and others, like Moti Lal, function as touts, standing outside the

13/14 Moo 7 Petchkasem Rd... T.kuk - kak T. Takuapr Phang Ngc 82190 shops drumming up tourist business with their smattering of German, Italian and English. Most are in Thailand without work visas, but one of the Nepalis I met said that he had been born in Bangkok and was a Thai citizen. To my untutored ear, his Thai sounded perfect and in appearance too he could easily have passed for a Thai. His

LUCKY ARMANI

BEST QUALTY WITH REASONABLE PRICE

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Suit, Thail silk, Punctuality

name was Dan Bahadur Subba and his shop was called "Don Berlin Tailors". Others sported Moti Lal's "Lucky Armani". Most of the Burmelis I met had Chhetri names and one even proudly pulled his *janai* out from his shirt to prove his twice-born status. This gesture immediately prompted assurances from all that "everybody drinks everyone else's water".

Neither Moti Lal nor any of the other Khao Lak Burmelis I met that day has ever been to Nepal. Yet all still spoke Nepali, albeit liberally mixed with Hindi, as their first language and one or more of the languages of Burma. For the most part, they were only dimly aware that Nepal is embroiled in a brutal armed conflict, but they all

appeared to cherish a lesire to someday see the Motherland. When I left them, I said that I hoped that someday, they would have a darshan of Pashupati. Yes, they said Tel. 09 - 7245442 Tel Fax. (076) 420760 wistfully, but in the meantime, the

Nepali community of Southern Thailand, they told me with pride, had already built a temple in Phuket that is modeled on the great shrine by the Bagmati. Perhaps the next time I'm in Phuket, I'll put on my Lucky Armani coat and see if I can get in.♦

(Mike Gill is a resident of Patan.)

Green Bar of the month

K A T H M A N D U **REV**\$\square\$\text{LVING}

Restaurant

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ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ Seeing the unseen: The Kathmandu Valley as Chakrasamvara Mandal by Dina Bangdel at
- ❖ Poetry of Abstraction Exhibition by Uttam Nepali at Siddhartha Art Gallery till 9 February. Baber Mahal Revisted. 218048
- ❖ Koshi Tappu Migratory Birds Festival 2 February, Wetlands Day. Contact Nepal Tourism Board. 256909/229
- ❖ Impressionist Photography by Sandy Shum and Paintings by Ed Van Der Kooy. Café Mitra, Thamel. 259015

- **CAN Info-Tech 2003** 23-28 January 2003 at Birendra International Convention Centre, New Baneswor. Bookings: www.can.org.np
- * K Study Centre Weekly dialogues on life and living. Borrow books and audiotapes. Dhyankuti, Swoyambhu. Saturdays from 2-6 PM. Contact Kumar at 279712.
- Lok Tarang Folk dances from Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh presented by the Embassy of India and ICCR. 4.45 PM on 25 January at Royal Nepal Academy Hall.
- Australian Film Roadshow at the Russian Cultural centre from 25-26 January. Tickets Rs 50. Available at the Radisson Hotel and the Australian Embassy.

- ❖ Sur Sudha live and CD launch Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. Dinner included. Rs 999. 6PM on 28 January. Sangeeta Thapa 411122/ 438979. Sursudhat@hotmail.com
- Live music by Catch 22, Friday nights at the 40,000 ½ ft Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, Thamel. 414336 Rusty Nails presents their blues, jazz and beyond, 7.30 PM every Friday at The Fusion, Dwarika's
- Hotel, Battisputali, 479488 * Friday Nites at Jatra. Featuring "The Strings". Free entry. Thamel
- Gaines Traditional Nepali music every night at Kantipur Restaurant, Club Himalaya Nagarkot Resort. 680083/80

DRINKS

- * Kiwi Sensations Cocktails, mocktails and desserts made with organic kiwis 11AM till midnight daily at The Piano Lounge and Bar, Hotel Yak & Yeti. 248999
- ❖ Paddy Foley's Irish Pub A wide range of drinks and food. Live music on Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday nights. 416096.
- Rang Mahal Buy one drink and get one free from the house of Seagrams and Carlsberg Beer. Dinner
- and performances by Kathmandu's top dancers. 7-10PM, Hotel Vaishali. 413968/ 423878 The Injuns and Abhaya at The Red Onion Bar, Lazimpat every Friday from 7-11PM. The Strings every Saturday from 7-11PM, 416071

FOOD

- ❖ Patan Museum Café Mixed menu, traditional Nepali thali lunch, garden seating. 11AM-4PM. 25 percent off for Summit Club Members. 526271
- Chinese food Le Meridien, Gokarna Forest Golf and Spa Resort till 26 January. Set menus with a free beer or soft drink from Rs 325-450.
- talian cuisine The Coffee Shop's live pasta station for particular palates. Rs 350+tax with a free beer. Till 31 January at Hotel de l'Annapurna.
- Newari Bhoj Traditional snacks, drinks and meals, outdoors or indoor, in a restaurant designed by Bhaktapur artisans. Lajana Restaurant. Lazimpat. 413874
- Oriental Express Fiery Thai Cuisine to subtle Japanese. Wednesday nights at The Sunrise Café, Hotel Yak & Yeti. 248999 Rox Restaurant Italian cuisine on Sundays. Antipasti, main course, pizzas and a dessert buffet. Hyatt
- Regency, Kathmandu. 491234 * Taste of Beijing Roast duck and other Chinese delicacies. Beijing Roast Duck Restaurant, Birendra
- International Convention Centre. 468589
- ❖ Toran Multicuisine restaurant at Dwarika's Hotel offers all new menu. 479488
- ❖ Vegetarian specialties and clay oven pizza at Stupa View Restaurant and Terrace, Boudha. 480262
- Saturday BBQ Lunch at Club Himalaya Nagarkot. Rs 500 per person. 680083/80

- * Tea House Combo Room, breakfast, Nepali thali dinner, swimming, jacuzzi. Rs 700 per head on twin sharing for Nepalis and expats, Tea House Inn, Nagarkot. 410432
- * TGIF Package Friday package for local residents \$111+tax double, \$85+ tax single. Includes Friday BBQ and breakfast. Dwarika's Hotel. 479488
- The Great Godavari Getaway Special weekend packages including room with breakfast and dinner. Godavari Village Resort, 560675

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

NEPALI WEATHER VIS-22-01-2003 04:00 GMT

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The thick fog cover over the Indo-Gangetic plains visible in this satellite picture taken on Wednesday morning is now into its tenth week, creating havoc in the tarai. Just to show you how anomalous this situation is, Tuesday's maximum temperature in Jumla (3,000m) was 12 C while in Nepalganj (160m) it was 10 C! However, the warmer sun is going to burn off the fog as the days go by, and the arrival of a low pressure zone riding a westerly front. The hills will see more hazy sunshine next week, with fastmoving clouds which will bring down the maximum temperature slightly.

KATHMANDU VALLEY











As Climbing Leader of the famed 1996 IMAX expedition, the author followed the footsteps of

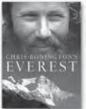
his legendary father, Tenzing Norgay Sherpa. The foreword is by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Touching my father's soul: A Sherpa's journey to the top of Everest Jamling Tenzing Norgay with Broughton Coburn Harper San Francisco, 2001 Norgay's story is one of adventure that entwines the lives of a family, a mountain and a people.

Nepalese Climbers on Mount Everest Ang Phurba Sherpa, Ramesh Raj Kunwar Pemba Chhamji Sherpa, 2002 Rs 1,100

The authors highlight the importance of Nepali summiters of Everest, especially Sherpas who were all too often dismissed with oral appreciation and negligible tips. This book seeks to redress that balance by highlighting the contributions of the unsung heroes and heroines of Nepali mountaineering.





Chris Bonigton's Everest Weidenfeld & Nicolson Rs 1,600

To mark the 50th anniversary of the first ascent of the mountain, this book draws on volumes published earlier. Bonigton writes an absorbing first-hand account of his experiences illustrated by remarkable photographs of his adventures. Britain's best-known climber has made four

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

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Saathiya takes a new look at marital life showcasing its ups and downs. The small day to day fights, ego clashes, and most of all, the expectations for everything to be as beautiful and dreamy as it was before marriage. As a director, Shaad Ali could not have asked for a better opportunity or cast for his debut, a remake of the Mani Ratnam's Tamil Alaipayuthey. Saathiya stars Vivek Oberoi and Rani Mukherjee and features Sandhya Mridul, Tanuja, Satish Shah, Sharat Saxena, Shahrukh Khan and Tabu in supporting roles. A R Rahman's music and score is fantastic as is Anil Mehta's cinematography.





B B C on FM 102.4 0615-0645 BBC World Today 0615-0645 **BBC Reporting Religion** Sun 0615-0645 BBC Agenda Daily 2045-2115 BBC नेपाली सेवा Daily 2245-2300 BBC नेपाली सेवा Sun-Fri 0740-0800 एकैछिन् (रेडियो पत्रिका) 0800- 0830 डबली (विषयगत अन्तरिक्रया) Sun-Fr आजका कुरा (समसामयिक विषयमा बहस) Sun-Fri 2000- 2030 Sat 0800-0830 शान्ति अभियान Sat 1930- 2000 आचार विचार (भ्रष्टाचारविरुद्ध सहकार्य) 2000-2030 कुटनीतिक मञ्च

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24 - 30 JANUARY 2003 **NEPALI TIMES #129 FESTIVALS**

The Ozzies are **MANJUSHREE THAPA**



SRADDHA BASNYAT

U E > ⊻

he innovative and exciting, sometimes wacky world of Australian cinema comes alive at the Australian Film Roadshow this weekend in Kathmandu.

Though distinctly Australian in flavour, the Australian Film commission has prepared a selection of unique contemporary films that have global appeal. Building on the success of last year's festival here, the Film Roadshow aims to provide an insight into Australia, its landscape and multi-culturalism, lifestyle, culture and politics.

This is also the first film festival in Kathmandu that had to go through the Ministry of Information's recentlyannounced regulations on censorship of festival films. The embassy had to pay Rs 10,000 per film for the privilege of having it viewed by censors. The rule has drawn howls of protests from other festival organisers. "Nowhere in the world are festival films censored. If this rule is not scrapped, we are not going to organise any film festivals in Nepal," an official of another Kathmandu-based embassy told us.

The Dish, starring Sam Neill, is a gentle comedy about Australia's small, but critical role in the first landing of a man on the moon. The film has one of the highest grossing box offices in Australia. Radiance stars indigenous women actors. The film explores powerful emotional separation three daughters meet with the death of their mother.

three of Australia's rising territory when after a long Rachel Griffiths stars in *Amy*, a boldly offbeat film about a girl so traumatised by something she witnesses at the age of four she can no longer speak or hear.

Back by popular demand, Children of the Revolution and The Sum of Us are making a reappearance in this year's festival. Children of the Revolution is an avant-garde film about the fictitious life of Joan Fraser, a young, spirited woman who dreamt of nothing but a worker's revolution. Her stream of letters to her idol, Stalin, do not go unnoticed and after a brief affair, Joan returns to Australia carrying his child. Young Joe is Joan's hope for the future of Australia and worker's liberation. Ever the domineering and controlling

All screenings at the Russian Cultural Center, 25-26 January.

Tickets, Rs 50 per screening are available at the Radisson

Hotel and the Australian Embassy in Bansbari.

More information: www.afc.gov.au

Amy

The Sum of Us

Show Time

4.30 PM

11.00 AM

mother, Joan stage crafts young Joe's life, taking him along to the political demonstrations of the day and riding high on his arrests and periodic imprisonment. But children have wills of

their own, and when Young Joe takes another path, Joan can do nothing. Parallel with disappointments in Joan's personal life, the communist movement unravels. Young Joe has gone over to the establishment and evolves eerily into a replica of his father. Joan becomes more volatile and more desperate as her ideals disintegrate. Children of the Revolution stars Sam Neill (Jurassic Park), Academy Award winning actor, Geoffery Rush (Shine, Elizabeth) and Judy Davis, (see pic, top) who Woody Allen call "probably the greatest movie actress of her generation" and who recently received an AFI award for best actress for her portrayal of Judy Garland. The Sum of Us is the

poignant tale of a father and his son. Harry is a widower and lives with his 20-something son, Jeff. Both are looking for love. Harry searches for his life partner through a computer-dating agency. Jeff searches for the love of his life in the gay pubs of Sydney. In an endearing display of fatherly love, Harry accepts his son's sexuality—to the point of being meddlesome in his son's love affairs. With the backdrop of the famous Gay Mardi Gras in Sydney, Jeff falls in love. Harry too, but with a woman who does not share Harry's qualities of tolerance and understanding. In one of his first films, Russel Crowe displays his impressive thespian range in his portraval of the easy going, warm-hearted Jeff who faces tragedy with a strength and selflessness that is the core of his being. Veteran Australian actor, Jack Thompson, conveys the loneliness that lies beneath the surface of Harry's energy and optimism. Sydney's gay culture is portrayed with sensitivity and clarity, and shows us that the acceptance of homosexuality is simply an act of love. •

Monastic School in Lo Monthang drew outlines on the floor of the Ambassador Hotel's conference room in Kathmandu. They framed the sand *mandala*, offered amid prayers, which they were to destroy in the course of three

> immense beauty that was to Bent over for hours, their sure, steady hands powdering the floor with brilliantly dyed ground marble, the monks filled in a mandala that became increasingly exquisite

worldly surroundings, the

with each passing moment. What emerged from their effort was the Kuenrig Kiylkhor *mandala*, which adorns the Jhamba Gompa in Lo Monthang, dating back to the 15th century. The mandala depicts the home of Vairochana, the Buddha who dispels ignorance through the mirror-like wisdom of ether. Vairochana's place was a raised white circle at the center.

This circle was surrounded by the seats of the four remaining Enlightened Buddhas, facing the four directions. To the east, in blue, was the seat of Akshobhya, the Buddha who eliminates anger through the all-encompassing wisdom of space. To the north, in green, was the seat of Amoghasiddhi, the Buddha who cuts jealousy with the all-encompassing wisdom of air. To the west was the seat of Amitabha, in red, who cuts attachment with the discriminating wisdom of fire. To the south, in yellow, was the seat of Ratnasambhava, the Buddha who eliminates pride using the equanimity of earth. Those familiar with Buddhist iconography could contemplate these five

deities, who transform the mind's mental poisons into perfect wisdoms. On the final day, Sunday, Khenpo Tashi Tenzing, the Abbot of Lo Monthang's Chhoede Monastery, which houses the monastic school, led his students in a prayer as the *mandala* came to completion. The mandala was ringed by the outer walls of the protective deities, and with a ring of flowers and offerings of water, butter lamps, incense and torma (a decorative sacrificial cake).

The worldly conference hall transformed into a sacred space as the monks finished their prayers, holding *mudras* with the *vaira*, symbolising the indestructible state of the enlightened mind, and ringing bells that symbolized the perfection of



The luminous colours, when mixed together, turned ashen as this vivid teaching on impermanence came to an end

wisdom. Then the offerings beside the mandala were removed, and two monks, briskly—without any cherishing—swept up the entire mandala as the audience looked on.

The luminous colors, when mixed together, turned ashen as this vivid teaching on impermanence came to an end. The dust would be immersed in the Kali Gandaki river as the monks returned home at the end of the winter.

More than one demonstration of Buddhist ethics had taken place in the making of this sand mandala. When Khenpo Tashi Tenzing first decided to open the Great Compassion Monastic School in 1993, his idea had sounded frankly improbable. The Chhoede Gompa, housing 80 monks at the time, could not afford teachers for secular classes. Nor did it have rooms for dormitories or classes.

Undaunted, the Khenpo gathered funds privately and from the Annapurna Conservation Area Project, building a few classrooms and hiring a teacher from Kathmandu, a rongba who to the amazement of the monks was a devout Buddhist practitioner. In the subsequent years the monastic school attracted funding from the American Himalayan Foundation, the Australian government, and from other private funders within and outside of Nepal. The school now houses and educates 55 boys and young men, instructing them not only in dharma but also in secular subjects, making it among the best schools in Mustang District.

What began as a dream in Khenpo Tashi Tenzing's mind has turned into a thriving school, ten years later. To all those present, the sand mandala was thus also an instruction, on the Khenpo's part, that we must undertake right action, though we know our lives will end in dust.





Date

25 Jan

26 Jan



<u>○</u> ○ E > ⊻



Under My Hat

Calling a spade a shovel

n the process of uncapping the fountainheads of development in this country through speeches and exhortations, our leaders should not forget to partake of the folk wisdom contained in our proverbs.

It is indeed a sad fact of life that one of the side-effects of Economic Globalisation is that our proverbs are disappearing at an alarming rate. At this pace, according to World Bank estimates, proverbs will be eradicated from Nepal by the year 2007. Although we shouldn't count our chicken before they are hatched, it is a fact that an omelet cannot be made breaking all our eggs in one basket.

It is also incumbent upon every man, woman and child to rescue and conserve every proverb that they come across in day-to-day life. If you see a sleeping dog, for instance, you shouldn't let it just lie there, since its bark may be

worse than its bite and, what's more, we may still be able to teach it new tricks. After all, every one of those dogs has his day.

You may well ask, how can we as a nation learn from our proverbs before they become extinct? Good question. And if I knew the answer to that one, I wouldn't be here wasting your time and mine writing a weekly column like an ass that likes to hear himself bray. I would be out there: an early bird that knows fully well that a worm in the hand is worth two in the bush, who flocks with others of a feather and who, in turn, tries to make sure that two of us are not hit by the same stone, especially since what is sauce for the gander is also sauce for the goose that lays golden eggs.

And our leaders should do well to remember that since brevity is the soul of wit, they must call a spade a shovel. Rome, as we know, was not built in a day, but all roads lead to it so when we get there we must do as the Romans do: give long speeches with a lot of obscene hand gestures.

Let me add here that when it comes to proverbs, Nepal is second to none. Our proverbs carry the accumulated common sense and wisdom of our ancestors and which they passed down from generation to generation through hand-tomouth. For some reason, a lot of Nepali proverbs are about crows, monkeys and

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facial hair. Let's translate some of them and provide accompanying examples that illustrate their exact meaning:

Khane mukh lai junga le chhekdaina.

Translation: A moustache shouldn't come in the way of a tax official. Example: Even though he's had numerous visits from the vice squad, Phanindra's whiskers haven't been a hindrance to collecting a small facilitation fee from every truck that passes his border checkpost.

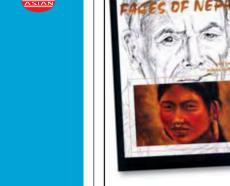
Chauta khana gayeko budi, jhol ma dubera mari.

Translation: The greedy drown in gravy. Example: Ram wanted so badly to remain prime minister that he tried to postpone elections by a year-and-half, so the king sacked him.

Raja ko kam, kahile jala gham.

Translation: Hey, aren't we off yet? Example: After a hundred days of being in office, Shyam can now tell instinctively that it's time to go home when the peon wakes him up with a clatter





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