





Nepali Times is published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd, Chief Editor: Kunda Dixit...

STATE OF THE STATE

by CK LAL

Misunderestimating Merton



A society that doesn't celebrate the rise of a genius, or refuses to mark the passing away of one, isn't prepared to produce one of its own.

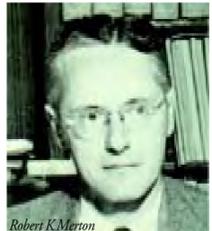
By having nothing to do with the behind-the-scenes negotiations between the emissaries of the palace and the insurgents...

Nepali newspaper took notice. We were obsessed with the showdown between the Bulldog of Baghdad and the Texan Terrier.

so noble about obtaining a Green Card that those who stay back must put up with their consistent outburst of off-shore patriotism?

Merton's ideas survived Vietnam, Gulf War I and they will take on a universal meaning in the globalised world. That is one reason to go back to his work.

Robert King Merton will remain a cherished "role model" of many aspiring sociologists the world over for years to come.



Robert K Merton

TERRORISM VS TOURISM

In the five months after the Bali bombing, Indonesia made some pretty smart moves. It didn't waste money on publicity in Australia, Europe and North America.

Whenever we talk to tourism officials—both private sector and government—everyone has excuses. Oh, it's the IC 814 hijacking, the Hritik Roshan riots, or the royal massacre, they tell us.

The problem is that very few Nepalis seem to say "we need tourists", they say "I need tourists". So, our promotional campaigns are ad hoc and lack staying power.

Terrorists directly and deliberately killed tourists in Bali, Egypt and Kenya, but all three are regenerating the industry. There is no reason why Nepal can't do it.

In contrast, our policy still seems to be to make it as difficult as possible for tourists to obtain information about Nepal, find flights, and get cheap direct connections.

And while we are on the subject, we want to add our voice to the strong calls by the Indonesians, Thais and Malaysians to the alarmist, thoughtless and ineffective travel advisories posted by the governments of Australia, European countries, the Nordics and the United States cautioning travellers to our countries.



The government of royal nominees has run into its own conundrum: it is facing the unforeseen and unintended consequences of trying to run the administration by whimsical fiat.

The phrases used above ("self-fulfilling prophecy", "focus group", "role model") have crept into everyday language from some of the pioneering works in the science of sociology by Robert K Merton.

Merton was one of the most influential sociologists of the 20th century. Sadly, when he passed away last week at 92, no

LETTERS

NEPALINESS

"The celestial duo looks Nepali because Shiva hung out in the Himalaya and Parvati is rightly sung of in Nepal as Himala ki chhori. So, the poster by artist Subhas Rai depicts a very hill-ethnic Shiva, and sitting by his side on a chautari pedestal is a Chhetri-looking Parvati (tilahari, chaubandi-cholo, rhododendron in hand)."

Your blurb for the poster ("Shivaratri", #134) has made me realise that we have a long way to go and much to demystify about Nepali nationalism. What is "Nepali looking" anyway? If "hill-ethnic" is indeed more like "Nepali-looking," then, pray tell us, what is hill-ethnic in the first place? Are Rai-Limbu-Tamang-Magar and other such nationalities the same

hill-ethnic as the so-called Upadhyaha Bahun in looks? Phenotypically speaking, where do the Chhetris belong? More like the Rai-Limbu-Magar, etc or more like the Upadhyaha Bahuns? If Chhetris and Upadhyaha Bahuns look Nepali, then you can find millions of such "Nepali-looking" people in every high caste (Rajput-Brahman-Bhumihar) village in North India from Uttar Pradesh to Bihar and Bengal. But if Rai-Limbu-phenotype is "Nepali-looking," then what name should we give to people in North-Eastern Indian states—the Manipuris, the Khasis of Meghalaya, and the Bodos of Assam, etc who may "look" Nepali (whatever that means) but have nothing to do with Nepal in dress, languages or ancestry?

There is no such thing as Nepali-looking or Indian-looking or Pakistani-looking or Bangladeshi-looking, or Bhutani-looking or Sinhalese-looking, phenotypically speaking. These myths are circulated by the dominant group to perpetuate its hegemony over the institutions of the nation-state. To equate nationhood with phenotype is the most dangerous myth of racial stereotyping that is mostly propagated by the ruling class ideology. And it has caused much suffering and bloodshed in many parts of the world.

It is true that dress codes, cuisine, cultural specificities are regional and local but these should never be identified with the very political idea of the entire nation. This is not only blatantly false but quite

dangerous. As Christ and Mary become black in African and African American churches and blond in Scandinavia, as the Buddha looks more like a brother to Confucius in China and other parts of South-East Asia (all results of a cultural imagining of the deity of reverence), as Hindu gods and goddesses look different in the temples of Angkor Wat in Cambodia from how they look in many parts of India, it is perfectly common that a painter or a sculptor would realise the image of Shiva-Parvati according to his or her ethnic conceptual framework. But such realisation has nothing to do with nationality or nationhood—that is, Nepali looks. Nepalis look different in different or even the same part of the political boundary called

OPINION

by DHAWAL SJB RANA



Preventing Peoples' War II

The Maoists must realise now that power is attained by winning the hearts and minds of the people, not by killing them.

It is secondary who will be prime minister or hold the home ministry portfolio. The primary aim should be to stand united so we can restore the main achievements of the 1990 Peoples' Movement.

Multiparty democracy is not just about freedom, it is also about political responsibility: taking responsibility for our actions, as well as our inaction. It is about sharing power and jointly carrying the burden of governance.

Here, the media and the "intellectuals" who pontificate in it must hold a moratorium on cynicism and self-fulfilling prophecies of doom. Please hold your poison pens until this situation is resolved, then you can go back to the careless cheering and

biased banter of your lazy opinions. It has been said many times before, and there is no harm in repeating it: we will not resolve the insurgency just by stopping the violence. In the long term we have to address the root causes buried in political, social and economic inequities in society.

We may not be able to have socio-economic equality overnight, but it is the state's responsibility to begin to create equal opportunities. The result of development efforts take time to manifest itself, and we have wasted too much time and money in ad hoc trial-and-error.

In the last 12 years we had hit upon one fundamental truth: it is grassroots democracy that will ensure development. Giving people the political opportunity at the local level is the surest way to ensure that the people are guaranteed basic services. True economic decentralisation, political devolution and self-governance are the answers, and the

mechanism to get there is multiparty democracy all the way from the ward level to municipality to national parliament, where all communities, marginalised geographical and social groupings have their say. All it needs is a sense of integrity, accountability and good management skills among elected leaders.

We don't have to wait for full peace to be restored to start working on education, land reform, tourism, taxation, domestic and international investment, employment and income generation. And let's not hear complaints about "lack of resources". A nation can put itself on the correct path by enacting pro-poor, pro-development and pro-progress laws and be serious about implementing them. A leadership so addicted to donor aid, and so lacking in self-esteem will never be able to pull itself (and the people it rules over) out of the morass.

For the Maoists, this is just about the last opportunity they will get to make a safe landing and lead this country out of the ruin of conflict. We Nepalis have a forgiving nature, and if the Maoists truly give up their

armed struggle, shun the brutal campaign of assassinations, stop extortion and intimidation, and join the mainstream of democratic politics, the people will still accept them as the parliamentary entity they once were.

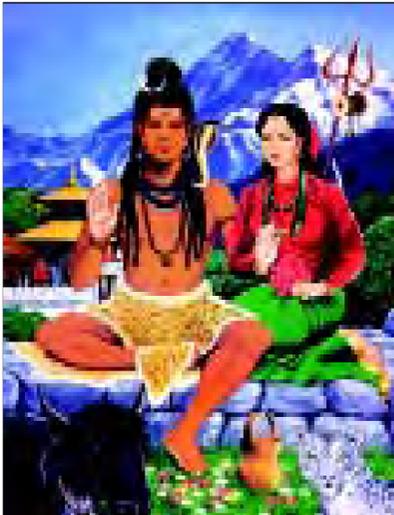
But the patience of this brave, peace-loving nation is wearing thin. And the sooner the Maoists realise this, the better it will be for them. If they decide to break the ceasefire and sabotage the peace process like they did in November 2001, then the consequences will be too horrendous to contemplate. There is no victory at the end of that road. There is only more ruin.

A code of conduct that is currently being negotiated needs to go into force immediately so it doesn't derail the truce. The Maoist leadership must steer its cadre away from the culture of arms to one of competitive politics, where power is gained by winning the hearts and minds of the people, not by killing them. And as the peace process begins, there will be bargaining about disarmament, induction of the Maoist militia into the state's security apparatus and a redesign of the political process under a reformed constitution.

We can understand that the initial contacts between the government and the Maoists needed to be discreet. But the peace process must necessarily be transparent. The people must have a say, or at least be informed, about what is being negotiated on their behalf. They need to know the compromises being made since they will be the ones most directly affected.

It does not matter to the people who is negotiating with whom, or who is getting the credit and who is losing out. We, the people, demand that our leaders stand united, remain above petty personal and party interest and for once rise to the occasion in the interest of the nation.

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



NEPALINESS

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Nepal, which used to be Kathmandu Valley anyway not too long ago.

Pramod K Mishra, Augustana College, Illinois, USA

PEACE NOW

The peace process has been welcomed by all as the most positive initiative to restore security and development ("Peace now, talks later", #134). This process should be allowed to move ahead in a positive direction. The nation cannot shoulder the burden of conflict any longer. The main priority of the Nepali people is peace, and all parties need to understand and respond to this popular will. The role of the monarchy is a crucial and important one to ensure trust and goodwill. The political parties need to be proactive

and work towards resolving the political, social, cultural factors that underlie the conflict so that the ceasefire can be turned into lasting peace. The role of the major political parties is essential to effect this process. Likewise, civil society needs to manage conflict and work on national reconciliation. It is very important for all sides to be present strongly and actively with honesty to take responsibility so that the peace process is not derailed. Civil society needs to do its homework to make the upcoming dialogue successful. This is a great opportunity to re-establish peace, prosperity, civil liberties and sustainable development on the basis of a national consensus. Khagendra Bhattarai,

Tara Nath Dahal, Ramesh Nath Dhunge, Madan Krishna Shrestha, Hari Bansa Acharya, Sundar Mani Dixit, Trilokya Nath Upreti, Sindhu Nath Pyakurel, Rajendra Khetan, Shambu Shrestha, Dev Prakash Tripathi

DIGITAL DIVIDE

If we want to stop the widening digital divide in Nepali society ("Nepal's digital divide", #133), the first thing to do is to ensure that quality education is provided in schools: private as well as public. Without quality education for all, the digital divide will widen. Bhumika Ghimire, Kathmandu

SANGRAULA'S MOTHER

When I finished reading

Khagendra Sangraula's story translated by Manjushree Thapa (Nepal literature, #134) I could see the face of "yamadoot" in the accompanying photo. How can a person make joke about his own mother like that? It is correct that a mother's name seldom comes in official documents but how can a person forget his mother's name? Things would have been different if he could not remember his mother's nwaran name. In some cases, the relationship between mother and son can sour. There are so many topics Sangraula could write about that Manjushree could translate. Why does he chose to make fun about his mother? Shame on him. Sudhamshu KC, Chiba, Japan

TARAI

CK Lal has raised important points about the exclusion of tarai people in "Tarai cauldron" (#134). I want to add two more to his list: the Royal Nepali Army which does not have any senior officers of tarai origin. Also, very few tarai people can be found in the foreign service. Mr Lal should discuss these gaps in future columns. M Mangal, email

KUNDA DIXIT

You readers just don't get it. I don't understand how you don't understand Kunda Dixit's Under My Hat columns (Letters, "Not really funny", #132). For me, Dixit's mocking satire carry deep meaning and great entertainment value. If you analyse them from a literary point of view, the columns have figurative

language, there is irony and satire, we can find allegory, allusion, aphorism, farce, sarcasm, euphemism, comedy, tragi-comedy. And there is a lot of pure nonsense, which is the best part. Just read between the lines, and you see he also reflects the pathetic situation in the country. His columns make me want to laugh and weep at the same time. Gaurav KC, Battispatali

Is that a cigarette hanging down Kunda Dixit's lips? (Under My Hat, #134) Sure hope not. Nepali Times sets examples, leads, urges and advocates. Please don't take smoking lightly. Not even in a satire column. You'll really be sending the wrong signals. Rupa Joshi, Mumbai

# “Differences between the palace, the government and political parties threaten to undermine the chance for dialogue that the ceasefire provides...”

In a speech that is seen as a significant statement of current US government thinking on Nepal, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Donald Camp told a conference in Washington last week that “from a humanitarian standpoint alone, the US does not wish to see (the Maoists) prevail”. He was speaking at a 1½ hour meeting in Washington DC on 28 February titled “Preventing a Communist Overthrow of Nepal” organised by the conservative think tank, Heritage Foundation. The panel also had Dinesh Bhattarai of the Royal Nepali Embassy and Chitra Tiwari, who recently interviewed Baburam Bhattarai for the rightwing Washington Times newspaper. In a statement to media, the Maoists reacted strongly to Camp’s reference to the Khmer Rouge, saying it was “motivated and ill-intentioned”. Significantly, Camp twice draws attention to the fact that Washington is coordinating its Nepal policy with New Delhi.



“US concern with events in Nepal has increased over the past couple of years, and our assistance levels have gone up accordingly. In January 1951, we became Nepal’s first bilateral donor. Since then we have contributed more than \$1 billion bilaterally and multilaterally to Nepal. Over the decades we have helped to

dominated society into a budding democracy, open to the world. Unfortunately, as we all know, the Maoist insurgency that has plagued Nepal for the past seven years threatens to destroy so much of this progress.

We welcome the announcement of the ceasefire, which we hope will lead to the peace that all Nepalis desperately want and need.

The Maoist insurgents in Nepal have ruthlessly shattered security throughout the country—particularly in the countryside. In their attempt to overthrow the government and replace it with an autocratic, single-party state, the insurgents have destroyed schools, tortured and killed civilians, bombed buildings, looted food from humanitarian aid projects, devastated infrastructure and forcibly conscripted children. An estimated 40 percent of rural government infrastructure has been destroyed. Last month’s ceasefire is a big step in the right direction, but we must remain on guard—after all, the Maoists broke a similar ceasefire in November 2001. From a humanitarian standpoint alone, the US does not wish to see these insurgents prevail.

But the Maoists threaten US interests for other reasons as well. The leadership has made clear that it seeks to replace the constitutional monarchy with an absolutist communist regime—one that would be overtly hostile to the United States. Recent

Maoist statements defending the Khmer Rouge give one indication of the kind of instability and humanitarian catastrophe that might follow a takeover. Such a development could destabilise the wider region, and Nepal could quite easily turn into a failed state, a potential haven for terrorists like that which we have transformed in Afghanistan. This possibility is made more acute by Maoist statements expressing common cause with other South Asian extremist groups sharing similarly violent agendas.

We are meeting this challenge with an integrated strategy that involves a number of elements. On the assistance side, we are increasing our development aid to Nepal, in an effort to alleviate the legitimate grievances that helped give rise to the Maoist insurgency in the first place. At the same time, we have begun supplying the government with security aid intended to give the Royal Nepal Army the ability to contain the Maoist threat—including rifles, basic equipment, and military training. This combined

assistance strategy, along with our political and diplomatic efforts, is designed to help create a more secure environment in which Nepal can continue its badly-needed socio-economic development, as well as to stave off a Maoist victory, convince the insurgents that they cannot win militarily and pave the way for a political settlement. The economic development



Dinesh Bhattarai of the Royal Nepali Embassy in Washington DC, Donald Camp and Chitra Tiwari at the Heritage Foundation meeting last week.

element of our strategy is crucial. The insurgency is fueled by grievances over corruption, vast inequalities in opportunity, access to government services, and poverty, and any real solution must address these problems. In FY 2002 and 2003, we will provide Nepal with over \$70 million in development assistance, a portion of which will support local development to create needed employment. Engaging Nepalis at this level helps to inculcate democratic norms and ensure that our money is getting to the people who need it most. Another portion of our development assistance will support the government’s efforts to reassert its authority in rural areas, allowing NGOs to work more effectively.

While the development aid is the greater part of our assistance program, it is our security assistance that has received the most attention lately. The Royal Nepal Army is a dedicated, professional fighting force, but is sorely under-equipped and in need of specific training. In coordination with other donor countries, including India and the UK, we have begun helping the RNA to meet its critical basic needs. The US military assistance budget to Nepal is \$14 million for FY 2002, aid that will help the government reestablish control in the countryside and persuade the Maoists to lay down their weapons and work peacefully toward a political solution.

Connected to this aid are steps that encourage human rights improvements among the security forces. We have unfortunately seen an unacceptable number of abuses over the last year—on both sides. The US has successfully pushed for the establishment of a human rights cell within the RNA, and all of our joint exercises undergo comprehensive human rights vetting before they can take place. At the same time, the training we provide to the military and civil police includes a human rights component.

Behind our development and economic assistance programs lies a diplomatic and political strategy designed to keep the Maoists and the government talking. Unfortunately, differences between the palace, the interim government and the political parties threaten to undermine the chance for dialogue that the ceasefire provides. The dangerous situation facing Nepal is no time to let such differences prevent a unified front. We are encouraging all sides that support multiparty democracy and the constitutional monarchy to work together, for the good of the nation.

We have other political instruments at our disposal as well. So far, the US government has not included the insurgents on any of its terrorism designations, but we have made clear that we reserve the right to do so. In addition, we are coordinating our political and

aid efforts with other donor countries. Our diplomatic personnel in Kathmandu have taken the lead in intensive dialogue with their counterparts from India and the UK, and in regular consultations with other missions. Indeed, it has been said that Nepal is one part of the world in which Indian, Chinese and American interests are in almost perfect consonance. Our complementary policies will encourage a political settlement, assist in alleviating the root causes of the insurgency and help bring peace to Nepal. The United States unambiguously supports a political solution to the crisis in Nepal.

We believe that the recent Maoist decision to talk, rather than fight, is a tangible demonstration of our policy success. A number of elements undoubtedly informed the decision to suspend hostilities, but we believe that the international community’s support for the government—including our own security assistance—played a key role. We will continue to help Nepal defend itself, and will maintain our assistance programs to ensure that the Maoists remain convinced that violence is not the answer. Whether or not this ceasefire holds, we will support the government in its efforts to retain control of the country and protect the Nepali people.

The Maoist insurgency has seriously exacerbated the tremendous challenges Nepal already faces in strengthening its young democracy and developing economically. The United States faces a number of foreign policy challenges around the world, and Nepal is on this list. We keep our eyes on the situation daily, and work constantly to ensure that our policies pursue US national interests and the interests of the Nepali people.

In close coordination with India and Britain, we plan to continue our efforts to help Nepal right itself, end the violence, and return to the path of peace and democracy.”

## DOMESTIC BRIEFS

### New CEOs

Mohan Prasad Khanal (top), director of the Corporate and Marketing Division of the Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation (RNAC) has been appointed acting general manager of the national flag carrier. He replaces KB Poudel. Khanal brings with him 25 years of experience working in the state-owned airline that may come handy in its possible new avatar as a public limited company. Meanwhile, Tek Bahadur Dangi (below) has been appointed new Chief Executive Officer of Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) and succeeds Pradeep Raj Pandey. Dangi joined NTB when it was established in January 1999 as director for tourism and marketing promotion. NTB selected Dangi after an intensive selection process.



Meanwhile, Royal Nepal Airlines has introduced an on-board lottery scheme to entice more Indian tourists to visit Nepal. Passengers on flights to and from India can win free flights and holidays in Nepal. On a recent flight from Bangalore, however, a Nepali passenger on seat 11-A was the lucky winner. Indian tourists registered a 40 percent increase in February compared to last February, as Nepal’s tourism industry continues to rebound.

### Choppers here

Two Russian-built Mi-17 transport helicopters bought by the British government for the Nepali government arrived in Kathmandu last weekend. The British Embassy in Kathmandu said the government had agreed to restrict its use to logistical, medical and humanitarian purposes only. The assistance comes under the British government’s Global Conflict Prevention Fund. The allocations to Nepal under the fund this financial year alone were £ 6.5 million.

### Nepali Napster?

The web-savvy can download free Nepali music at gorkhali.com. Gorkhali Network Inc, a US-based initiative by young Nepalis, has launched a new beta version of nepalisong.com, with the largest collection of Nepali songs on the web. The website aims at promoting Nepali music, culture and literature. It has thousands of Nepali songs of different genres ranging from religious bhajans, movies and folk to Adhunik and Nepali pop. For now copyright does not seem to be a problem.

### Poor clinic

The second dispensary of Eco Himal-Society for Ecological Cooperation Alps-Himalaya opened on Tuesday at the premises of Shahid Gangalal National Heart Center at Bansbari in Kathmandu. Dr Gerda Rath, an Austrian physician who has worked as medical consultant for Eco Himal for six years, will head the dispensary. It will provide free medicine to poor patients who need to be referred there by their doctors.

### Enough!

A peace march organised by the Nepal chapter of the Youth Initiative for Peace (YIP) wound its way from Patan Darbar Square to Kathmandu Darbar Square on 2 March to protest the prospect of a US-led war against Iraq and to support the ceasefire between the government and the Maoist forces. Two hundred students from local schools laid out oil lamps at Hanuman Dhoka at dusk while Salil Subedi played the didgeridoo to chants for shanti and Shishir Yogi sang Nepali peace songs.

### Increase in infant mortality

There is not much to celebrate for Nepal’s health sector when it comes to child mortality. Safe Motherhood Network, a consortium of governmental and non-governmental organisations, said infant mortality rate has significantly increased recently. According to the network, 39 infants per 1000 birth die within 28 days of their birth, which is the third highest in the world. Nepal also has one of the highest rates for underweight babies. Out of 2.8 million infants born annually, 27 percent are underweight.

## HERE AND THERE

# Even hawks are squirming

by DANIEL LAK



What’s most terrifying about the coming attack on Iraq is not the fact that it’s happening at all. The ideological case for forcing Saddam Hussein out of power is a strong one. Of all the evil leaders coveting on the world stage, Saddam is one of the worst. It’s hard to find even a neutral thing to say about him. If you don’t believe me, ask a Kurd or an Iraqi who survives in exile. This is the man—don’t forget—who has invaded two of his neighbours and used poison gas against his own people. Iraq would be a better place without him. So would West Asia and the rest of the world. Anyone who doesn’t believe that is either blind or gets envelopes of oil money from the nearest Iraqi embassy.

No, it’s not the fact of the war that’s making so many people uncomfortable around the world. It’s the sheer political and diplomatic incompetence on display in Washington, almost since the day that the Bush II administration was sworn in. Thomas Friedman of the New York Times, who’s been among those most loudly blowing war trumpets, has confessed that even he feels great unease at the solid opposition to war shown by America’s once-staunch friends like Germany, and by the people on the streets of the world last month. Friedman blames the Bush White House, citing its immense disregard for the feelings of others outside the United States, and points out that much of the support for America shown after 11 September has been squandered, or at very least, not taken advantage of.

Friedman—and I quote him here because he is no peacenik or visceral opponent of war as a matter of principal—finds a dozen areas where the Bush administration has shown contempt for international feelings. Scrapping the Kyoto accord, failing to fund energy conservation in the United States, spurning the International Court of Justice, riding roughshod over Russian objections to Donald Rumsfeld’s long-cherished dream of space-based missile defence, Friedman lists all of these. He also questions the financial acumen of a presidency that both cuts taxes and hugely inflates military and security spending, driving a once buoyant and prudently run economy into deficits for the foreseeable future.



Friedman concludes that he still favours an attack on Iraq, but he worries deeply about its aftermath and the damage done to international relations.

Well, yes, perhaps. But there’s also a strong possibility that things could be much worse. Has anyone asked an American official how an all-out assault on a weak, economically devastated Iraq is going to play in the “war against terror”? More excuses for al-Qaeda and its clones, I dare say. Has anyone checked the opinions of Iraqi opposition groups lately? They’re overjoyed that America may be about to get rid of the hated Saddam Hussein, but they don’t want American troops remaining on their soil for any longer than

## The Bush administration’s inner core is incompetent and ill-suited to the complexities of imperial diplomacy and global leadership.

the task takes.

Ahmed Chhalbi, the likely leader of a post-Saddam Iraq, has written as much in *The Wall Street Journal*. Then there’s the Turkish parliament’s vote against allowing American troops to use Turkey’s military bases. And don’t forget those leaders who are supporting George W Bush, men like Tony Blair, Jose Maria Aznar of Spain and Australia’s John Howard. All three have never been so unpopular with their electorates, again not because of opposition to war per se, but because the Spanish, British and Australian public despise and distrust President Bush and his nest of hawks. Again, it’s because the administration’s inner core—excepting perhaps Colin Powell—is seen as incompetent and ill-suited to the complexities of imperial diplomacy and global leadership.

America can rid the world of Saddam Hussein, with a small amount of help from a few other countries. That’s not in question. But how much damage will be done to international diplomatic currents, the already battered image of Washington and the West, and the global economy? These are questions that remain unanswered and that amounts to uncertainty that should have been settled months before war was ever a serious option. We are about to live in even more interesting times. ♦

### VSO Job Opportunity

VSO is an international development agency that works through volunteers. We aim to tackle disadvantage and prejudice through partnerships with HMG and NGOs in 15 districts of Nepal.

As part of our rapidly developing programme, we are searching for a new PROGRAMME OFFICER to join the team. He/she will have:

- a strong ability to work in a culturally, socially and geographically diverse environment
- a good understanding of development issues and a belief in the values of VSO, including equal opportunities for all
- an ability to be positive and proactive in establishing links with individuals and groups at different levels and from different backgrounds
- excellent verbal & written English language skills

**The successful applicant will:**

- work as an integral member of a newly evolving team
- develop strategic partnerships with local Government and NGOs in line with VSO’s programme goals
- professionally engage volunteers as part of the development process, providing a wide range of support
- cope with a heavy workload of documentation and administration, working to strict deadlines.
- liaise with Government, NGO and donor agencies as part of our ongoing commitment to ensure VSO is accountable and relevant as a development agency
- work in Kathmandu for about 60% of the year with frequent travel to rural locations

We believe in equal opportunities and particularly welcome applications from marginalised groups.

Contact VSO for information & an application pack at: VSO, Balaupatar, PO Box 207, Kathmandu. Tel: +10606413519; Email: vsonepa@vsoint.org

Completed applications Interview days 21 March closing date mid-April

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### HIMAL

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SOMEWHERE IN NEPAL

# The good baddies

by PUSKAR BHUSAL



Good thing *Nepali Times'* Nepalnews.com opinion poll on US plans to attack Iraq turned out to be wrong, otherwise it would have strongly rocked my belief in Nepali pacifism. So, it turns out that 71.5 percent of the 963 respondents actually said the US is wrong in insisting on war against Iraq despite UN weapons inspections (#134).

We may need to consider what marks some of the more virulent strains of anti-Americanism today. Extrapolate human nature to the

international security system and you will discover how easily power seeks to match power. If the US wants to tower over the world, it must contend with the combined challenge mounted by envious allies and angry adversaries. China and Russia have struck a "strategic partnership" against the sole superpower.

France has christened the US a "hyperpuissance". The European Union has pledged to field its own intervention force to keep the

Americans at bay.

Such complexes don't grip Nepal because we are fatalistically resigned to our frailty, you might argue. While that may be true, we also understand that the US is a good baddy for many of its critics. When Slobodan Milosevic had to be clobbered before Kosovo set off a continental conflagration, the Europeans knew they could count on the behemoth across the Atlantic. North Korea can afford to play the nuclear ante because of the carrots it sees behind the American

sticks.

The Kremlin's pronouncements are laced with the injured pride of a former superpower. The remnants of the once-formidable communist party know they will need US approval for an International Monetary Fund bail out should the rouble happen to crash again. China would love to see the Yankees get out of the Pacific, but they can't overlook their \$100 billion trade-surplus with the US, which in its own way limits China's foreign policy options.

With more and more Nepalis winning Diversity Visa lotteries, the US allure continues to grow. The succession of national tragedies, Samrat Upadhyay's prose and Subash Gurung's exposure of airport-security lapses have evidently played a part in raising the Nepali profile. (*The Washington Post* ran an 800-word story on the Maoist national convention last July.)

The process actually began during the second-last Rana prime minister's rule. In a decision that stunned many, Padma Sumshere instructed Babar Sumshere, Kiran Sumshere and Ekraj Sumshere, who led the Gurkha contingent in the World War II victory parade in London in 1946, to go on to the US and send a personal letter for President Harry S Truman.

The Rana cousins appear to have impressed the US government

enough to get an invitation to remain as official guests for a week. The trio, for their part, invited the Americans to visit Nepal and to establish diplomatic relations. One thing led to another. By 24 May 1949, ties were so cordial that *The New York Times* had this editorial pitch for Nepal's application for United Nations membership:

"The Nepalis have given a century of demonstration of their sturdiness, independence and valour. They want now to join with

hijackers came from Osama's native Saudi Arabia, Washington's closest Arab ally, you can grasp the depth of the distress.

Sher Bahadur Deuba's critics made a monumental misjudgement in mocking his largely-symbolic decision to open Nepali airspace and facilities to the American-led warriors on their way to Afghanistan last year. Secretary of State Colin Powell's deliberations at Army HQ ostensibly paved the way for

## Extrapolate human nature to the international security system and you will discover how easily power seeks to match power.

the rest of the world in developing political institutions. We should be recreant, indeed, if we turn a deaf ear to such an application."

That nearly one-third of Nepalis in last week's opinion poll seemed to favour Uncle Sam giving Saddam another bloody nose reflected a certain, shall we say, breadth of our worldview. There is some realisation that the scale of the devastation in downtown Manhattan on 11 September 2001 was enough for many Americans to pre-empt a Saddam-Bin Laden link.

When you recall that 15 of the 19

President George Bush's White House meeting with Deuba. The \$20 million Bush had proposed may have been whittled down to \$12 million, but the substance of the partnership remains its shine.

So, did the arrival of American military trainers activate the government-Maoist peace process? Behind their verbose prose, the Maoists are saying so. They are too smart, after all, to miss the great technological leap the Pentagon's fire-power has acquired since the Vietnam quagmire. ♦



by ARTHA BEED



# "The government has no business taxing the bereaved."



**BC Sharma is the CEO of the Nepal Life Insurance Company (NLIC) and a veteran in the insurance business. After working at the Life Insurance Company of India for more than 30 years, he has returned to Nepal to start his private sector company. He spoke to *Nepali Times* and said the number one challenge is to change the peoples' mindset about insurance. Excerpts:**

### How would you assess the present life insurance market in Nepal?

Life insurance depends on two basic factors—the purchasing capacity of people and penetration of the insurers' message. About 40 percent of the population in Nepal lives below poverty and nearly 16 percent is above 60 years of age, making those segments technically uninsurable. That leaves us with 44 percent of the population. Of this, 17-18 percent are children below 6-7 years of age. This narrows our demographic to 20-25 percent of the population. The five life insurance companies cover only 1.5-1.7 percent of the total population in the country.

### That is a very narrow base, are you trying to diversify the services you offer?

We have an endowment policy that provides risk coverage for people between 15 and 50 years of age. Our second product is a money-back scheme called "Dhana Barsha". Two terms, one for 15 years and another for 20, are available but the policy age limit for entry and exit are the same. We recently launched two types of policies for children that insures the father as well.

### How have you fared so far?

Nepal Life Insurance Company is a new entrant. The promoters are renowned business people and our workforce is primarily local. We've done well from the outset, especially after issuing company shares last August. The entire process for listing our shares on the Nepal Stock Exchange has been completed. Rastriya Beema Sansthan (RBS) is the market leader in life insurance, but among the three new entrants—ALICO, LIC and NLIC—we are in the lead with a market share of 18-20 percent. To date, we have issued 16,500 policies and the premium collection is also on the higher side. Our average per policy premium collection is Rs 6,000, which is good in comparison to other SAARC countries.

### How has the conflict impacted business?

I cannot speak for others, but it had no effect on us. We have received 13 death claims so far from which only two appeared to be insurgency related. The rest were natural deaths. Of course, people in the worst Maoist insurgency affected areas did not have access to life insurance services.

All around the world life insurance acts as social security. If a certain individual is insured with us, the insured amount will go to the family. If the breadwinner mortgages the house and dies, the insurance mortgage policy can pay off the loan so the family continues to

have a roof over their heads. If HMG desires, national life insurance companies can develop products that are within the reach of all sections of Nepali society.

### What role does the Beema Samiti play in the market?

The Beema Samiti (Insurance Board) and the operators work together. Specifically, the consumer education must come from them, increasing the market for everyone. The insurers, on their part, must take advantage of consumer education. It is their responsibility to create new products tailored to the needs of their consumers.

To be honest, I have reservations about the government's tax policies. If you treat life insurance as a social security net, then you have no right to tax the bereaved after the claim is settled. There are certain types of expense that are not tax deductible from income. Secondly, all over the world life insurance companies are taxed after the actuarial valuation and we should follow set standards here in Nepal.

### Are you aware of Indian life insurers operating illegally in the tarai?

In fact, we have given this in writing to the Beema Samiti and the Department of Inland Revenue. We estimate approximately Rs 3 billion may have been siphoned off from the tarai in the last five years. Most people get duped with these policies. We are already focusing on these areas. About 60 percent of our policies are sold in the tarai.

### What challenges do you see for the insurance business in Nepal?

The number one challenge is changing the mindset of the people. That can happen only through consumer education. The other thing that must be redressed is agents taking licenses from many life insurers. This makes him less committed to any company, and the feeling of ownership is missing.

At the directive of the regulator, an investment committee is constituted comprising all five life insurers. We have to invest 75 percent of the surplus fund in government bonds or designated banks. 10 percent in finance companies and 15 percent towards company development to maintain liquidity. Since bank interest rates are dropping, we want to invest in long-term projects, say related to infrastructure development. We have already conveyed this to the government. I think the life insurance companies operating today can now pull in Rs 2 billion for long-term investment.

ECONOMIC SENSE

# Waronomics

**Wars don't revive economies, they ruin them. Gulf War II will be bad news for us.**

While vast sections of the US public are taking to the streets in anti-war demonstrations and protests, a few economists are crunching numbers. The pundits are busy predicting the cost of a war with Iraq. Their estimates range from \$25 billion to over \$100 billion. To the Beed these disparate sums represent one concrete fact—war is cost money. And the economy is more likely to buckle than thrive under the financial strain.

Experts who point to the last Gulf war as an example of the US economy's resilience forget one fact: that was then and this is now. Gulf War I came at a time when the economy was on the upswing. It cost the US led allies \$25 billion to \$60 billion, most of which—some reports say 80 percent—the US government squeezed from its allies, reducing the net impact for that war on the home economy. The remainder was absorbed easily enough by the \$8 trillion GDP of the early 90s boom.

The cost of a new war is definitely going to be higher. To begin with there is the preparatory cost before the war actually takes place, followed by the actual cost of war plus the not inconsiderable expenses of reconstructing Iraq should the US succeed in implementing the "regime change" that President Bush is aiming for.

With over 200,000 forces now at the ready to go to war for peace, the costs are already sky-rocketing. As an example of conjuring numbers here's a

Beed offering: with a per capita per day expenditure of \$1,000, the daily costs for the deployed troops could be \$200 million, amounting to a monthly bill of \$6 billion—four times the annual budget of the United Nations. Now factor in the cost of equipment and other capital to watch the sum go through the roof. Concede that the cost of the fighter planes or other pieces of equipment that are not specifically produced for this war should not be included and we still end up with a massive bill. Of course there is no guarantee that the war will end quickly or decisively.



The bad news for the US if they are unable to gather enough allies is they face the rather unhappy prospect of footing a large part of the bill on their own. This would be less than welcome with a \$300 billion budget for 2003. An already sluggish economy, slumping stock markets and unemployment will not be jumpstarted by war. As far as dipping into the coffers of allies ago, the Beed

would point out neither the UK nor Spain are enjoying a season of surplus.

Shouldering the responsibility of reconstruction could be a heavy financial burden. International aid agencies are strongly advocating against war with various governments on a level they are bound to listen. This is about real money and governments who can label human deaths as collaterals of war tend to be less dismissive when it comes down to the dollar.

The Beed realises all this conjecture is solely from the perspective of the US and its allies but the rumbles of war will ripple through the world and affect our frail economies. Travel advisories to South Asia will once more get strict, leading to a decline in tourism. Foreign investment already at a low will not recover as regional risks for operations remains high. The price of oil will become even more volatile, which will affect the ailing Nepal Oil Corporation and that will send industry and commerce tumbling like dominoes. It is time for our government to look ahead. We need to draw up contingency plans for the war in the gulf whether it concerns evacuating the Nepali labour force from the Middle East or the procurement of crude oil. War is bad news for Nepal—even if that war is being fought thousands of miles away over the oilfields of Iraq. ♦

Readers can post their comments or suggestions to arthabeed@yahoo.com

## IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF CHILDREN

*An open appeal for Children's Rights*

We, the undersigned, welcome the recently announced ceasefire and its attendant measures: the people and leaders of Nepal are to be commended for taking the first steps on the road to peace, reconciliation and renewal.

At this critical time, we therefore call, on all duty bearers to remember their duty to one group that has, so far, had no voice: children.

We note that the conflict in Nepal has had, as elsewhere in the world, a profound impact on children direct and indirect, such as:

- ➔ The loss of education through disruption and destruction
- ➔ The trauma from witnessing acts of violence
- ➔ The pain of losing family and friends
- ➔ The wrenching effects of displacement and separation from families
- ➔ The ever present unease and fear that eats away at hope
- ➔ Injury and death

We strongly support the recent calls by civil society leaders as well as others including children in Nepal, for schools and children to become zones of peace.

We emphasize, that such an initiative, to be effective, must be under-girded by commonly accepted codes of conduct, such as:

- ➔ No political activities in school
- ➔ No disruption and closure of schools
- ➔ No harassment of teachers
- ➔ No intimidation of students
- ➔ No recruitment of children in armed formations in support or any other roles
- ➔ No bearing of weapons in/near schools

We urge that children issues and rights be central to the peace process - not subsidiary.

We the undersigned, representing national & international NGOs as well as special agencies of the UN, also pledge to play our parts to support the national vision for peace, reconciliation and renewal.

Antim Aid Nepal	CARE	Children NGO Federation	Community Radio Madhyapahar, Palpa	DCRDC, Baglung	Educate the Children	Equity Development Centre, Dadi	Group for Transnational Relationship (GRT)	Hohetas	
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Save the Children US	Shikhartha Sanjhar Bikash Kendra (ESDC, Espirita)	SKV, Nepal	UNDP	UNICEF	United Mission to Nepal	Water Aid	World Education	World Neighbors	WWF

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Located within the very heart of 'Baber Mahal Revisited'

# Our reason for bean

Wherever the aromatic beverage has tickled a nose, there is a frenzy for that perfect cup of steamy brew—now, right here in Kathmandu.



Chikusa's coffee jars all in a row

restless who come in late afternoons for their blended vanilla mocha or double skinny tall fix. Java brews 100 percent arabica green beans and uses only fresh grounds of the day.

Knowing the importance of a good roast, Chikusa Coffee Shop in Thamel takes pride in roasting the organically grown beans from Palpa themselves. "We serve real coffee brewed from Nepali beans, freshly ground," says Bishnu from behind the bar. The Japanese owned coffee shop is clean and cozy. It is popular with Japanese tourists, who much to their delight, find a small yet authentic Japanese menu which includes maki-zushi, onigiri and Japanese green teas. Fresh milk, from which homemade yoghurt is prepared right at the café, comes all the way from Bhaktapur.

For those who put a premium on homemade, Kunal Lama's jewel of a place, Café Mitra in Thamel offers a parade of delicious desserts to accompany a snappy shot of espresso. Indulge your sweet tooth and up the sugar rush with a caffeine high within the warm coral walls surrounded by stunning works of art on display after exhibitions at the Siddhartha Art Gallery.

At Via Via in Paknajol, a Belgian based international chain, Phillip Henderickx takes his coffee seriously. For a superb South American blend, he uses a percolator designed to release a full-bodied flavour using steam. Via Via's delightful espresso drinks are slowly gathering a following among the art-loving coffee drinkers. The café operates as a platform for Nepali artists to showcase their talent and, because the café is part of a chain, the artists receive international exposure for their work, which travels around the globe.

Through Himalatte Specialty Coffee and Cuisine's window to the world, one can spend time musing over the hustle and bustle of Thamel. Rest assured the American menu is not accompanied by infamous American "coffee"—reheated instant grey slush on a plate warmer. A big coffee machine, imported with special care from Canada, churns out a whizz of various coffee drinks.

For a hot beverage with a cyber twist, Nanglo's Cyber Kitchen in Jawalakhel will serve a range of coffees. Pranavesh, the resident computer whiz, has set up a program to order food and drinks from each computer station. Though Shyam Kakshapati's brew of choice is a regular old drip, the CEO of Nanglo International intends to add some pizzazz to Palpa grown beans with different flavours to meet consumer demands. "Before we only knew instant coffee but now the public's

## It boils down to quality



Where it's at...Java

Fresh drip

Most novices to the cult of coffee are confused by the esoteric jargon surrounding it. Fundamental to ordering the right cuppa is being able to tell swirl from superb, and what it boils down to is quality.

There are at least 24 varieties of coffee, but the two names to remember are arabica and robusta. About two-thirds of the world's coffee market is dominated by *Coffea arabica*, shrubs that thrive at a higher elevation in a cooler and drier climate to produce a superior quality bean, more flavorful and complex than the robusta trees. *Coffea canephora* or the hardier robusta trees produce more fruits than arabica and have twice the caffeine buzz. Robusta makes a bitter brew with a musty flavour and is often used for instant coffee as well as in supermarket-grade blends. Arabica is favoured by the gourmet coffee drinker and any café worth their beans will swear to using nothing else.

Nepal grows both robusta and arabica. The former thrives in the tarai but most coffee plantations stick to high altitude arabica beans that command a better price on the international market.

knowledge of the brew has grown," he says.

Alan Rudderham's Lazimpat Gallery Café doubles as an art gallery where patrons encounter fine art and the fine art of coffee together. With its tiny outdoor seating area and blackboard menu, the place has all the charm of a street side café. As a man with his finger in many pies, Alan found he could combine varied interests like education and promoting art through his gallery café. And with laughing irreverence Alan quips, "Art is anything that makes the place interesting."

If the French Bohemians invented café culture then the Italians perfected it. At the Espresso Bar at La Dolce Vita in Thamel, life is sweet indeed with a trained barista who turns out superb lattes, espressos, cappuccinos and mochachinos made from fine Italian arabica beans to accompany perhaps the best tiramisu in town. After 14 years in the business, Chandan Kayestha's restaurant has a patronage that has increased by word-of-mouth among tourists and discerning locals.

An Italian aria is the perfect aural backdrop to the delicious scent of pizza and aromatic coffee that perfumes Fire and Ice in Thamel. In the past eight years, Italian-born Anna Marie Forgiione-Wiseman has seen her Nepali clientele for coffee grow. She points proudly at a La Cimbali machine that turns out delicious espresso-based drinks from a South American blend imported from Thailand. Filtered Nepali coffee is available but Anna Marie laments the pick of the crop rarely sees the domestic market.

What makes Jivin' Joes in Kupondole stand out is its firm no smoking policy—not even if you lean out of the third floor window to blow smoke. "A coffee house can be a unique location for the young where they can study and get together, that is not in a smoky bar with a drink in hand," says Rajan Shahi. On Friday nights live music brings in the punters who lounge around with coffee brewed from Nepali beans. "Growing coffee is expensive because it takes at least five years before the first harvest and roasting is an expensive process for most Nepalis. With our own trademark we can promote export quality Nepali coffee."

So, in a strange turn of events an imported coffee culture will probably one day result in the export of Nepali coffee abroad, to sit beside beans from Colombia, Vietnam and Kenya. ♦

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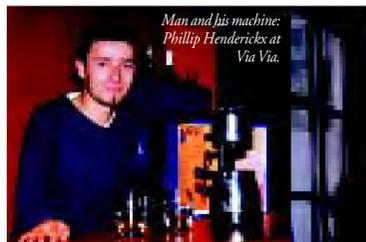
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Man and his machine: Phillip Henderickx at Via Via.



Caroline Sengupta outside Chez Caroline.

Espresso desires at Himalatte.

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BAR INDRAWATI

... AFTER MIDNIGHT,  
waiting for the sunrise ...

**SRADDHA BASNYAT**

Thousands of miles east of the Seine, the romance of café culture is seducing Nepalis who have caught on to a global trend—the joy of a perfect cup of coffee, sipped in the company of friends or in solitude with a book as a prop over which to watch the world whirl by. The Americans call it "down time" and in truth, the social coffee drinker today belongs to a lifestyle common to millions of people around the world. Central to this tableau is a little bean that has sent the world spinning ever since the Ethiopian goatherd Kaldi caught his flock frolicking among the coffee trees. Nursing a warm cup of french-press Nepali coffee in the dappled sunshine of Chez Caroline in a

quiet corner of Baber Mahal Revisited feels almost Mediterranean. It is exactly this ambience that French-bom Caroline Sengupta strove to create. "People come, read, have a coffee, a cake and people meet," she says. "For me you cannot have a French place without good coffee."

Good coffee is central to café culture but it's not enough. Gagan Pradhan, the owner of the Valley's most popular caffeine joint Himalayan Java, adds two c's to complete the trinity of what defines a true coffeehouse: conversation and community. "And it is happening here," acknowledges Gagan. "Folks come in for a cup of coffee, meet people, converse and then form a community." Java has a devout clientele, mostly the young and

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# Cralsberg

**Love thy neighbour**

OTTAWA - When the chief spokesperson for Canada's prime minister called US President George W Bush a "moron" in November, polls showed that about one-half of people here agreed with her.

"I hate those bastards," added Carolyn Parrish, an MP in Prime Minister Jean Chretien's Liberal Party critical of US plans to attack Iraq. Have Canadians become anti-American?

The anger, say experts, is based on politics. Relations between the governments of the two countries have fluctuated in the past 50 years, reaching a low point during the Vietnam War when US President Nixon was caught on tape calling Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau "that asshole". Economics could be fuelling some Canadian anger. Washington recently refused to lift a punishing tariff on Canadian lumber, imposed at the insistence of US companies, which has caused huge job losses in rural and northern parts of Canada.

Author and former journalist Lawrence Martin believes the tension is a result of a clash between US neo-conservatism and Canadian liberalism. Martin says Canada's Liberal government is under pressure to follow Washington's policies "because (a) they're our 'best friends' and (b) they're going to retaliate against Canadian trade". (IPS)

**Tug of war**

BERLIN - The plan for peaceful disarmament of Iraq, submitted by France, Germany and Russia to the UN Security Council Monday, is in tune with 80 percent of German citizens' opposition to a second Gulf war.

After consultations with German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, French President Jacques Chirac announced that the plan aimed at a step-by-step by disarmament of Iraq over at least the next five months.

Reports said China had also expressed support for the proposal. The move runs counter to a proposal, also forwarded to the UN Security Council by the United States, Britain and Spain seeking approval for military action against Iraq.

Schroeder agreed with Chirac that all means of peaceful disarmament had not been exhausted. While they reinforced their opposition to a US-led war on Iraq, observers said they must have been conscious that time was rapidly running out. The chances of resolving the crisis peacefully appeared meagre. Germany fears a war will lead to instability in the whole of the Islamic world, and that a pre-emptive strike by the Americans, far from creating the conditions for a lasting peace, could fuel hatred of the western world in the region, and lead to stepped up terrorist acts. (IPS)

**RANJIT DEVRAJ in NEW DELHI**

No sporting event can better prove the Orwellian thesis that games between national teams are a "continuation of war by other means" than a clash on the cricket pitch between eternal rivals India and Pakistan.

"We did what we could not do on the battlefield," Suheil Seth, advertising whiz and commentator on public affairs, said, summing up the public mood in India following Saturday's sizzling Cricket World Cup encounter at Centurion Park, South Africa, in which India convincingly outplayed Pakistan.

From Islamabad, Pakistan's disappointment was reflected in the lament by college student Zehra Ali: "We always hate losing to India, but this time the media made it seem like we were definitely going to win and this has caused much of the heart burning."

Saturday's encounter, closely watched in India and Pakistan, was the first meeting of the South Asian rivals in nearly three years. After Pakistan's loss, there were dark allegations that the Pakistan cricket team had been paid money by bookies to lose the match to India.

Protesters in Rawalpindi city,

# Cricket is war

**Eyeball-to-eyeball, Indians and Pakistanis saw the cricket pitch in South Africa as the Line of Control.**



sister city to the capital Islamabad, demanded that the team members be instantly hanged on return. Spectator passions ran high partly because the nuclear-armed neighbours spent most of last year with their troops, totalling a million men and their deadly toys, in an "eyeball-to-eyeball" confrontation on their common border. Subsequently, they were persuaded to stand down by top-level shuttle diplomacy led by US Secretary of State Colin Powell.

Considering the violent incidents involving ordinary civilians that erupted on the border soon after the results of the cricket match became known, it is just as well that the troops

demobilised, and the warships and fighters returned to peacetime locations late last year.

At the Husseinivala border post, several people were reported injured on both sides on Saturday as Pakistanis and Indians who had come to watch the retreat ceremony by border troops resorted to pelting each other with stones.

The daily retreat ceremonies by Pakistani Rangers and India's para-military Border Security Force (BSF) at border posts, particularly at the Atari-Wagah crossing, regularly draw hundreds of spectators who cheer their respective sides on as they go through an exaggerated and elaborately choreographed

military ritual complete with mock ferocity and anger.

Selected for their height, men from either side snort, stamp their boots and glare at each other menacingly with hands on their hips, before finally flinging open the gates or slamming them shut with as much violence as they can muster—symbolising the hostility that spills into the sports arena and everywhere else.

Last month, the border guards watched as the top envoys of each country drove overland back home after being expelled—the two countries have banned overflights by each other's civilian aircraft.

In February 1999, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari

# by other means

Vajpayee symbolically crossed the border in a bus to sign the Lahore Declaration with then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif pledging to "intensify efforts to resolve all issues, including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir" and also to "refrain from intervention and interference in each other's internal affairs".

The ink had hardly dried on the document when the Pakistani army, displeased with the deal, opened up armed hostilities on the border at Kargil, leading to an undeclared but full-scale war that stopped only on the intervention of then US President Bill Clinton.

By October 1999, Sharif was ousted in a military coup led by Gen Pervez Musharraf. Relations with India deteriorated so much so that the two countries refused to meet each other even on the cricket field, much to the disappointment of promoters who see dollars in the rivalry.

Crowd-pulling test matches between the two countries, revived after a 10-year gap as a gesture conducive to the success of Vajpayee's Lahore initiative, were again withdrawn. In 2001, India banned matches with Pakistan, wrecking commercial prospects at such "neutral" venues as Singapore, Sharjah and Toronto. It has also

banned its team from playing in Pakistan.

The promoters hype up the rivalry. Some years ago, the sports channel Star-ESPN billed a planned match in Australia between the two countries as "qayamat", which roughly translates from Urdu and Hindi as "apocalypse".

At home, Vajpayee's BJP had to take notice of the sentiments of its fanatic supporters such as the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra state, where it has taken to ripping up cricket pitches to stop Pakistani teams from playing. Saturday's win was described by young New Delhi cricket fan Malini Dutt as "sweet revenge" for a Pakistani win over India in the June 2000 Asia Cup tournament in Bangladesh.

That was the last occasion when the two teams actually got to meet each other in between diplomatic impasses and open warfare.

According to cricket icon-turned-politician Imran Khan, who led Pakistan to World Cup victory in 1992, the game itself has suffered because of the years that have gone by without the two sides getting to play each other.

Khan, in India over the weekend, told a television interviewer from Star News channel that it would be better



for the two countries to release "pent-up feelings on the cricket field rather than on the battle field". Although people like Khan would like to see politics stay away from cricket, both countries have for decades used withdrawal of permission for tours to score political points often on the specious grounds of security for their teams.

Khan called the tit-for-tat refusal by governments to play cricket "childish" and said the game could be used to mend bilateral ties rather than add to the tension between them. But any game between Pakistan and India, including hockey at which both once excelled, is so riddled with historical and

religious sub-texts that spectators in each country worry more about not losing to the "enemy" country than winning the tournaments themselves.

Pakistan was created in 1947 as a homeland for the sub-continent's Muslims by departing British colonials who, often accused of exacerbating religious strife through a divide-and-rule policy, also left behind the cricket legacy.

Ramesh Malhotra, whose parents fled what became Pakistan during the traumatic 1947 partition argues: "Who cares about winning the World Cup? What is important is that India has maintained its record of always thrashing Pakistan in a World Cup meet." (IPS)

**With a pinch of salt**

NEW DELHI - An international campaign to get the Indian government to re-introduce a ban on non-iodised salt is going nowhere, thanks mainly to stiff opposition from groups that say the compulsory iodisation of salt benefits large-scale manufacturers of packaged salt and can actually be harmful for some people.

India has seen a see-saw battle between the pro and anti-iodisation lobbies since the early 1950s. The pro-iodisation lobby won a major concession in January 1998 when the central government banned the sale of common salt altogether and instead made it compulsory for all groceries to stock only iodised salt.

Two years later, the anti-iodisation lobby struck back, forcing the government to lift the ban and leave it to consumers to decide what they wanted to buy. Voluntary groups like the Narmada Action Group oppose iodisation saying it takes away the livelihoods of thousands of poor people who depend on making salt from sea water and selling it.

Reaction to lifting the ban came not only from the Indian medical establishment, but also from such groups as the Geneva-based International Council of Nurses, the Hague-based International Pharmaceutical Federation, and the World Medical Association headquartered in France. (IPS)

**Exotic pets**

TOKYO - New domestic regulations may finally convince consumers of the urgent need to curb their appetite for exotic and endangered animal species. Japan continues to be one of the biggest markets for illegally trafficked wildlife: one estimate places the lucrative Japanese pet that includes iguanas, fish and rare spiders market, at around \$58 billion. But after years of uncontrolled purchase of endangered animals and products derived from them, the threat now comes from within.

Recent reports of outbreaks of foreign diseases and environmental destruction linked to imported fauna have led the Health, Welfare and Labour Ministry to draw up new regulations to restrict imports of species linked to certain diseases. These could include raising fines, requiring ownership to be registered, longer quarantine periods, and closer monitoring of pet shops, and are scheduled to come into effect by end-2004. A list compiled by the Ecological Society of Japan contains more than a hundred species of foreign fauna and flora that are already affecting Japan's environment. For activists in Japan who have struggled for years to prod the government into a position of more responsibility about its role on wildlife imports, the measures may be too little, and hopefully not too late. (IPS)



# Bali rebounds



**JOHANNA SON IN BALI**

Nearly five months after the Bali bombing, the site of the blasts is curiously clean, areas of emptiness in stark contrast to the maze of stores, cafes and hotels that have long marked Indonesia's idyllic—and now wounded—haven for tourists.

Green sheets of galvanised iron fence off what was once the Sari Club, which was packed with mostly Australian tourists when the bombs went off on 12 October in Kuta district and killed 202 people from 20 countries. The area across the Sari Club, once Paddy's Bar, is empty too, save for young banana trees, planted, locals say, to ease the victims' entry into the next life.

A few tourists stop by the site, peering at the messages scrawled on a white cloth put up on the green fence. "Indonesians love peace," one of them

says. Some half-wilted flower offerings for the dead lie against the fence.

"The tragedy," one Balinese calls it. "The bomb," says another. "That incident," others say. But whatever they call it, the October attacks remain very much with Bali, a majority-Hindu island of 3.4 million people off the eastern end of Java island in this predominantly Muslim country. Until the blasts, Bali had considered itself free from the violence that has hit other parts of Indonesia in the post-Suharto era.

Tourism is the most obvious casualty, with serious economic implications for an island that is heavily dependent on tourism and gets 1 million visitors a year. Bali accounts for 40 percent of Indonesia's more than 5 billion US dollar earnings from tourism a year. Now the streets of Kuta, a crowded hub of beaches, hotels and bars, are quieter, almost like a sleepy Sunday morning. Tourists from Europe and Asia do come to towns like Sanur and Ubud—Indonesian statistics say that in January, the largest group of tourists was Japanese, followed by Taiwanese and then Singaporeans, and Australians who brave the travel warnings.

But it is just not the same, sigh vendors of handicrafts, wood carvings, native "batik" textiles and other items. "It's been two weeks and I have not been able to sell anything," says Christine, who has had to take a pay cut in the last few months. "My boss, he is angry at me because I have no sales." And when the vendors at Ubud central market do make sales, these days they seem to take more seriously the traditional ritual they make for better business—they tap the bills they receive on their goods for a longer time than they used to. "For good luck," they explain, "for good luck."

Hotels like the Bali Hyatt in Sanur have had to lay off more than 100 staff, about a quarter of its employees. Some wings of the hotel have been closed. "Thirty percent occupancy is a very, very good rate at this time," says a hotel manager in the

area. "Some have 20 percent, some have no guests." Efforts are underway, from neighbouring Asian countries like Singapore and Australia, to jumpstart tourism. Since October, Bali has been visited by several South-east Asian leaders in solidarity with Indonesia, and has hosted a range of international meetings and seminars.

Tourist arrivals dropped by at least 60 percent—some say 90 percent—after the blasts, but Indonesian officials said arrivals have started to pick up early this year. "Maybe Asian tourists are braver than westerners," remarked a vendor at the Ubud market. "The owners of these places (bars and cafes) do not know what they have to do to bring back the trust of tourists," a local journalist, Amul Huzmi, wrote in the *Bali Today*.

Asked if Bali's tourism can go back to what it was before, taxi driver Nyoman Sudarman says, "It will take time." But even time is going by fast, says Rucina Ballinger, a US-born dancer who now gives educational tours in Bali and has lived here for two decades. "There is a social bomb about to happen (if things do not improve economically)," says Ballinger, who is married to a Balinese and has taken Indonesian citizenship.

Many are giving the economy a three-to-six-month space to recover after the blasts, and it is nearing the end of this period. Because Bali depends heavily on tourism, there is not much by way of an alternative to this trade. There is a bit of exports of furniture and wood products and textiles, but otherwise other people are in semi-subsistence agriculture.

Tourism also supports many small businesses, down to the production of flower garlands that adorn hotels to the taxi drivers who drive visitors around. Hotel and guesthouse employees rely more on the tips they get instead of their salaries. Ballinger says these contribute to the income they use for their families, or to carry out rituals that are so much a part of daily life in Balinese Hinduism—and have

**The Bali bombers are going on trial and the island is still recovering.**

helped preserve a large part of the local culture in the face of mass tourism.

The damage to tourism in the wake of the October attacks has raised questions about over-dependence on one industry and worries about the future. "Maybe we have too much of this, but right now I don't know what we are to do," comments a local resident, who did not want to be named.

Many Balinese have reacted not so much with anger at the bombers, which authorities put at 15 and say belong to radical Islamic groups from Java. But Ballinger says, "We looked inside and asked if we have too much tourism, and drugs and prostitution."

Perhaps part of their reaction to the wound caused by the October attacks has been to draw a clearer line between local Balinese and non-Balinese, especially those from the main island of Java. For instance, asked if there is prostitution, a sales clerk said, "Yes, but the prostitutes are mostly from Java."

As Bali authorities prepare for the trial of the suspects in the bombings, a report last week from *The Jakarta Post* newspaper said: "There has been tension in predominantly Hindu Bali toward the suspects and their lawyers, as most blame the bombing, which has crippled the economy, on Javanese Muslims."

Bali officials are keeping an eye on the suspicious entry of non-Balinese for fear of groups disrupting the trial, expected to start this month. Some 3,000 police officers, supported by the military and traditional Balinese security guards, are expected to provide security during the trial. (IPS)

**Winrock International**  
*Putting Ideas to Work*

**Announcement for travel and field research grants: Summer Session 2003**

Winrock International Nepal, is pleased to assist promising young Nepalese scholars by providing them with partial research and travel grants. The research grant is for students to carry out field research related to Masters/Ph.D. degree, whereas the travel grant is for researchers to present research papers at international conferences. **The grant program will exclusively cover aspects of equity and environmental justice in management of natural resources.** Therefore, applications for both types of grants should clearly state how the outcome of the research contributes to the enhancement of socio-economic equity and how it benefits the disadvantaged and marginalized groups of people in the society. Acknowledging the particular importance of women professionals in promoting sustainability in the natural resource management sector, 50% of the total number of grants i.e. both travel and research will be allocated to women candidates.

**Conditions for the grants:**

**A) Eligibility:** Applicants who have completed their Bachelor's degree in natural resource management fields viz. land, water, energy, environment, forest etc. and are actively engaged in research or in a graduate academic program are eligible to apply. Research proposals as well as conference papers must have adopted social science research methodology rather than natural science or technical research.

**B) Types and amount of grants:** In order to support as many scholars as possible with a limited amount of funds, the program is strictly confined to partial support only. The maximum support for Ph.D. and Master research will be 50,000 and 40,000 Nepali Rupees respectively. In case of travel grant the amount will be up to Rs.50,000. However, in all cases, priority will be given to cost effective applications.

**C) Announcement of the award winner:** The research grants applicants will be informed (by telephone, email or post) about the status of his/ her application within 4 weeks of the last date of submission of applications. However, in the case of travel grants, evaluation of the application will be made every month. The applications for the Summer Session research grants should reach Winrock by May 31, 2003. The applications for travel grants for the same period should reach Winrock by August 31, 2003.

Application should be mailed to:  
Application for Research/Travel Grant  
**Winrock International**  
P.O. Box: 1312, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Tel: 467087, 472839  
Email: rshrestha@winrock.org.np

**Note:** Electronic application including the proposal/ paper is also acceptable. Please contact Winrock International for the grants application form and other detailed information.

**\$7.6 million solar project for India**

A new project announced this week between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and two of India's largest banking groups will help 18,000 southern Indian households finance clean and reliable electricity from solar power.

In the southern Indian state of Karnataka, Syndicate Bank and Canara Bank have begun offering new loans in which UNEP is "buying down" the financing cost of photovoltaic solar home systems. In effect, Indian households will be able to purchase systems at an interest rate 5 percent—compared to the normal consumer lending rates of 11-12 percent. The UNEP programme is made possible with support from the United Nations Foundation (UNF) and Shell Foundation.

"This initiative helps to meet both environmental and development objectives by overcoming a major barrier to increasing the use of renewable energy's access to finance," says UNEP Executive Director Klaus Toepfer. (UNEP)

*The Coffee House*

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# Swiss interlude

Shyam Shrestha in Mulyankan, February-March 2003

In the beautiful Swiss village of Montezion on the border with France, 20 Nepali participants took part in an important seminar. Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) had brought together a group of Nepali political and human rights activists, intellectuals, businessmen, professionals as well as two leaders of the CPN (Maoist) who did not want to be identified. Spokesman of the Nepali Congress Arjun Narsingh KC, UML leader JN Khanal, Prem Suwal of NWPP, Sarita Giri of NSP, Bimalendra Nidhi of NC (Democratic), Krishna Khanal, Devendra Raj Pandey, Prakash Sharan Mahat, Sindhu Nath Pyakurel, Padma Jyoti, Shanta Thapaliya and myself were present. The main presentations were on lessons that could be learned from conflict resolution in South Africa and Switzerland's multiethnic, multicultural society. Some of the lessons from South Africa:

- If the main parties in the conflict don't have the "irresistible urge" to sit for negotiations honestly, wait. Don't begin talks in a hurry.
- It is a matter of urgency to develop mutual trust between the negotiators to resolve the conflict. Honouring commitments made during negotiations are important, and even minor violations can result in a breach of trust.
- A series of informal talks will have to take place in which both sides learn of the real intentions, fears and minimum point of flexibility of the other side. Long-term resolution is possible after the real intentions and misgivings of either side are identified and addressed.
- The chances for results that are productive and acceptable to all sides is higher if conflicting parties whose interests are at risk are incorporated in the process of negotiations. The ownership of all the sides in the negotiation process is indispensable.
- Talks can succeed only when the concerned parties stand to benefit.
- Always hold negotiations with authorised personnel, not with the messenger.

At the special request by the Nepali delegates, the organisers agreed to hold a special session on Nepal in which the Maoist representatives replied to the queries of participants attending the seminar. They made three important statements:

- If the parliamentary parties agree to step up to the Maoist demand for holding elections for a constituent assembly, the rebels will participate in the parliamentary process.
- The Maoists are ready to accept the results of a constituent assembly.
- If the king agrees to keep the army under parliament and fulfil his role as a constitutional king, the Maoists won't have any reservations in providing an honourable place for the monarchy.

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"The monarchy is not only the symbol of unity for Nepal, but also is the symbol of independence. Monarchy has played a vital role in keeping Nepal's independence."

-Keshar Jung Rayamajhi, former chairman of the Raj Parishad standing committee in *Jana Astha*, 5 March.



Title: Tomorrow's dream...  
Banner: Every Nepali a Maobadi, every Maobadi a Nepali  
Street sign: Prachanda Road  
Hoardings: Peoples' War Boxing Association, Baburam Restaurant and Great-Leap-Forward Plaza

*Nepal Samacharpatra*, 2 March

# Great grief finds no solace in tears

Mohan Mainali in *Kantipur*, 3 March

कान्तिपुर

It is a four-hour walk to Majhimtar Bazar for 60-year old Gun Bahadur Praja and Shankha Bahadur Gurung. They came to collect a donation—Rs 3,200 to each family that had lost a member a year ago at Kalikot airport when security forces killed labourers thinking they were Maoists. The money came from Nepalis living in the US and we were there to distribute it.

The two elderly men were among the first to gather at Majhimtar on the morning of 23 February. The crowd grew with parents who had lost their sons, fatherless children and widows. They came dressed in their best but some, like Gun Bahadur, wore threadbare clothes. Man Kumar BK and his brother Gyan Bahadur from remote Thansigh were the last to arrive. "Why do tears fall on all our meetings? Today I would like to greet you with a smile," Man Kumar says, although his eyes are moist with unshed tears.

It's been a long time since any of them have genuinely smiled. Perhaps it was after learning that the Radio Nepal report of 17 "terrorists" killed in Kalikot referred to their loved ones. All of them came to know the true circumstances 19 days later.

After the media made their story public, Nepalis and foreigners sent gifts of cash and kind to the bereaved families. They don't seem to have come to term with their loss. Many of them were closed off in their grief—only after repeatedly calling their names do they come forward to collect the money.

Many had not eaten since early morning so everyone was offered tea and biscuits at a nearby teashop. The biscuits arrived before the tea and some of them, hungry as they were, put the biscuits into their pockets or gave it to their wives for safekeeping. "The dead are gone, but the little ones at home will enjoy eating



Gyan Bahadur and Budhisara Biswakarma lost two sons in the Kalikot incident.

these biscuits," one of them says.

The teashop didn't have enough glasses for 26 people, so some people waited while the others sipped the hot tea. Dhan Maya, Bhim Bahadur Thapa's mother, says quietly, "I worked so hard ever since my son was a baby so that he would have enough to eat and now..." There are no tears, but the sorrow in her voice is heartwrenching. They say great grief finds no solace in tears. Everyone seems to instinctively understand why Dhan Maya does not weep.

The death of a loved one is a tragedy for anyone but where bereavement to natural death will heal with time, unjust deaths sow the seeds of further injustice and revenge. If the families of those lost in Kalikot are not heard, their pain will one day erupt into anger. Their grief must be acknowledged, and their pain alleviated.

## Status quo

Deshaunter, 2 March

देशान्तर

Excerpts of an interview with former chief of the Royal Nepal Army, Satchit Shumsher JB Rana.

### Can the ceasefire be turned into lasting peace?

There must be give and take for the ceasefire to become lasting peace. His Majesty's Government and the Maoists can't lead the talks to a logical conclusion by themselves. Political parties, social and human rights organisations should all be taken on board. It is very sad to see major political parties talking contradictorily regarding the peace talks.

### How big an army does Nepal need?

The strength of Bangladesh's

army is nearly 125,000 while its area is roughly equal to ours. Sri Lanka now has an army of 150,000. The number of soldiers in Nepal is only around 50,000. Given our geographical conditions, Nepal needs to raise the strength of its army to around 125,000. In that situation, problems like the Maoist insurgency can be prevented from happening again. A nation's security is as essential as education, health and development.

### Who should control the army?

It's our good fortune the army was not politicised and has His Majesty as the supreme commander. Otherwise, its fate would have been similar to that of the bureaucracy, police and intelligence sectors. If the army had been politicised, the Maoists would be ruling the country today.

### What about putting the army under the control of the parliament?

The king has kept the army in order. If it is controlled by the parliament, the army can't serve the nation properly. There should be a unitary command and the army must remain under the head of the state.

## Rajapur

Nepal Samacharpatra, 4 March

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

Rajapur, the Maoist affected island in the Karnali, which has worn a deserted look as Maoists targeted families of security forces and stopped harvests, seems to be recovering after the ceasefire. Transport and electricity disrupted by Maoist attacks have resumed. After rebels destroyed the pontoon bridge last year, 11 VDCs in Rajapur have been cut off from the rest of the nation. But now, thanks to the new found sense of security, most VDC secretaries have reported back to their offices even though

most official buildings are destroyed. Administrative Officer in Bardiya, Bhim Prasad Tiwari, says that the government was planning to repair and maintain destroyed infrastructure. If the peace holds, Rajapur will return to normalcy. Officials at the Mid-Western regional office of Nepal Telecommunications Corporation (NTC) said that they have already despatched a team to survey the damage and install services within a few weeks.

## Armies on Everest

Jana Astha, 5 March

आस्था

A joint team of the Royal Nepal Army and the Indian Army will make a bid on Mt Everest. The RNA will take care of managing the entire 30-member team, which is being organised to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first ascent on the highest peak of the world. Nepali soldiers, who have undergone training at the Mountain Warfare High Altitude Training Centre at Kerung in Mustang will be part of the Nepali team. The RNA has organised similar joint expeditions with the US army in the past.

## Porters for peace

Tara Aryal in *Rajdhami*, 6 March

राजधानी

High altitude porters made an appeal to both the government and the Maoist rebels to restore peace so they can earn a living. "We are not demanding much, we just want our right to work to be restored," they said at a program called "Porters' Voice for Peace in Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal".

Porters said they lost their source of livelihood because of the drop in tourism caused by the security situation. They say the number of trekkers has decreased by 28 percent compared to the same season a year ago. "Without security and peace, the tourists will not come. If they don't come, how can we earn enough to

support our families?" asks Bishnu Aryal, member of Porters Development Nepal (PDN). The last six weeks have been very difficult because work is rare. As the main breadwinners for their families, the porters say they cannot afford to go home with empty pockets.

Nuru Sherpa, a member of PDN, said the conflict had threatened their future. Pasang Tamang and Nima Lama said porters are often mistreated along trekking routes by locals who refuse to even give them shelter.

The Trekking Association of Nepal has fixed daily wages between Rs 160-200 along with food and lodging, but the porters say there is no uniformity in what they get paid. In Solukhumbu porters are paid Rs 400 a day and in the Annapurna area the going rate is Rs 300 without food. The sum is pitifully inadequate when a single meal in some trekking areas costs up to Rs 250. "The rates fixed by TAAN are too low even to sustain ourselves. How would they expect us to save for our families?" asks Arjun Prasad Chakuli, general secretary of PDN.

The lack of insurance is another pressing concern of the porters gathered in Kathmandu. They accused employers of often trying to avoid paying their life insurance. PDN says four of its members have died this year alone.



## Back at Sundarijal >29

# "Waiting and waiting and nothing happens..."

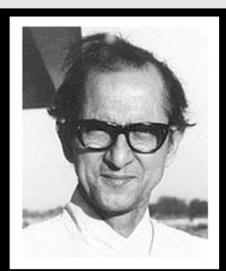
14 March 1977

Sundarijal

Didn't have good sleep at night, emotionally disturbed. Since the morning I am again gripped by anxiety. The wave of anxiety lasted the whole day. Everything is seemingly all right—my health is normally good, the political situation has at least not worsened and we don't find any fault in our analysis or any cause for regret for the decision to return to Nepal, and I don't see why family affairs can't continue to be as they used to be before. Everything appears to be normal, except the state of my mind. This is inexplicable. If this state continues for long, I may even lose my mind. There is almost a manic seizure—of melancholic hypochondria—a suffocating dark despair. It has nothing to do with reality, nothing to do with reason or the situation, only a dark upsurge from the innermost recesses of my psychology which suddenly envelopes my whole being. This is perhaps how the mind starts to fail. I wanted to do some mechanical work to keep me busy and away from this desperate mood. I faired out a few pages of my prepared statement to the court if and when I would be brought before it. But I soon got tired of it, and also I found that the mechanical job of preparing a fair copy of the statement was too tiring and psychologically unrewarding. It only added to my sense of frustration and worthlessness. The mind doesn't get serenity by doing mechanical work. Unless it is exercised, its restlessness is not calmed. And I am not in a fit state of mind to exercise it meaningfully. What a vicious cycle! In order to conquer the present mental depression, the mind has to be creatively exercised, and it can't be so exercised unless depression is removed, and depression can't be removed unless the mind is creatively exercised. This is the situation.

We got four days worth of newspapers today. The king has cryptically replied to a question pertaining our return to Nepal. Put to him by Ramesh Pande (the question itself was in part in the nature of condemnation of our previous activities: destructive, violent and anti-national and was suggestive of the success of the Panchayat System and hence our frustration leading to the direction we took, etc etc.) the question should be addressed to the people in general and the Panchas in particular whose opinion finds reflection in the system. The king doesn't want to answer to this question of a political nature and hence refers the correspondent to the [...] of the Panchas.

**BP Koirala is getting more and more worried that he is losing his mind. He is taking tranquilisers, and wonders whether he and Ganesh Man Singh made the right decision about returning to Nepal to be incarcerated. Ganesh Man assures him it was the right decision under the circumstances. The fact that they are kept in isolation, Ganesh Man thinks, is an indication that King Birendra hasn't made up his mind what to do with them.**



On the basis of this, GM feels the king hasn't made up his mind one way or the other about us. He therefore feels that we will continue to be imprisoned in the present condition for some more time.

## 15 March

Sundarijal

Waiting, waiting and waiting and nothing happens.

## 16-17 March

[No entry]

## 18 March

Sundarijal

I had a good sleep last night and I got up as usual at 4 in a good mood. In the morning immediately after I woke up, even before I sit up in bed, I see my face in the mirror. The face is generally flushed and lips are unusually bright and red and the capillaries in the eyes are also red. I don't know what this is due to. I use a low pillow to ease the cervical pain as recommended by doctors, and moreover I can't be comfortable with a high pillow. I will have to send for a doctor to find out the condition of my heart. The authorities here are so reluctant to get doctors for us quickly that I don't feel like asking them for one. But I think I must speak to them about my condition and ask them to get me a doctor. But in the morning I was psychologically all right—normal—which is what is not happening to me since my arrival here. But again this

emptiness didn't last long. As long as it lasts I feel greatly relieved. I washed some clothes and pressed them. I have discarded my woollen pajamas as the temperature is warm enough for cotton, started using cottons and kurta, which again reminds me of Varamasi and Sushila and the others. The design for my kurta and pajama was made by Sushila who thinks that this suits me the most along with Nepali clothes. I have started using only one light quilt at night, which means from today I am celebrating the advent of the warm season. I took 1/2 a tablet of tranquiliser (Valium) to soothe my nerves. It is with most reluctance that I took it. It did me some good [...] I had taken 1/2 tablet the day before without much effect. That I am reduced to taking tranquilisers is an indication of the state of my mind. I don't understand what is happening to me. I try to analyse, try to fight against the onset of depression but to no avail. Is it some psychological breakdown? Some awareness deep in the psychology that the decision has been wrong—decision to return. Even if the decision is wrong, why this speedy psychological breakdown? In politics of the nature that we pursue, such decisions have to be taken. Again, in order to find out from GM if he too has second thoughts about our decision, I ask him about it. He is calm and perfectly certain that ours was the only decision in the present circumstance. He also feels more emphatically that our present condition of isolation would be lifted soon after the king makes up his mind about us. He feels our isolation is an indication that the king has not yet made up his mind.

## 19-21 March

[No entries]

## BOOK REVIEW

# Sixteen opinions on the state of the nation

by MARK TURIN



*Recipe:* Take 16 of the most articulate and incisive Nepali minds, give each of them around 20 pages to tell their story, stir very little and publish immediately.

*Result:* An exquisite book. It rather leaves one wondering why nobody tried it before. *State of Nepal* (and explicitly not *The State of Nepal*), is an important collection of essays, some previously published, others lightly reworked, but primarily new submissions which "try and explain contemporary Nepal to the world, particularly its evolution over the last dozen years of democracy" (Preface).

It kicks off with **Rajendra Pradhan's** discussion of "ethnicity, caste and a plural society". One of Pradhan's main points is that Hindu caste provides the organising framework for the Nepali polity, and he offers good historical and anthropological data to support his argument. Pradhan has a knack for tidy and succinct description.

**Sudhindra Sharma** offers an intellectually rigorous history of Hinduism in Nepal.

Pointing out that the core Hindu institution in the nation is actually the Crown, he posits that modern Nepali Hinduism is inherently syncretic, and in many ways closer to folk religions such as shamanism and animism than it is to north Indian Hinduism.

**Sanjay Upadhyaya** contributes a lucid overview of Nepali democracy after 1990. He writes, King Birendra's surprising popularity after the 1990 People's Movement was in large part thanks to the "distance he maintained from the political process". Upadhyaya says the Maoists' outsider status guaranteed them the early support they needed to get their movement off the ground.

**Kanak Mani Dixit** deals with Nepali kingship. Dixit suggests that while Nepal is "robust enough a structure" to carry on without one, the nation is nevertheless fortunate to have a king. Dixit offers "a constitutional king need not be a passive king" because in trying times the nation "requires a proactive institution".

**Deepak Thapa's** essay on the Maoist insurgency is heavy on fact and cautious in its analysis. He focuses on the Maoist decision to tap into *janajati* discontent by "taking advantage of the perceived correlation between ethnicity and poverty", and Thapa goes on to show how this "gesture" amounts to little more than an expedient and "tactically motivated insertion" by the leaders of the movement.

**CK Lal** devotes his chapter to a topic close to his heart: the relationship of the tarai to the body politic of Nepal. Lal suggests, in his characteristically pithy manner, that Nepali identity was "built around the Parbatiya ethos of the Gorkhali conquerors", which in part helped to form the perception that the "people of the hills were rulers while those of tarai origin belonged to the subject race".

Nepal has "no policy regarding Nepali-speakers living outside the country", according

to **Professor Tanka Bahadur Subba**. For most Indian Nepalis, he argues, Nepal is "politically as distant as Bhutan or Bangladesh", and these citizens make every effort to search for an identity within India. Subba's discerning analysis makes this required reading for anyone travelling to Darjeeling or Sikkim.

**Saubhagya Shah's** highly intellectual essay offers a critique of the burgeoning NGO sector in democratic Nepal. While somewhat over-reliant on American academic terminology, Shah's contribution is nevertheless insightful. It notes both government and non-governmental sectors are competing for the same resources and NGOs have begun to resemble HMG in both form and content.

In her contribution on Nepali women, **Siera Tamang** takes issue with the effective denial of the "heterogeneity of women's lived experience" by development discourses. Tamang pulls no punches as she rightly challenges the ability of "upper-class Hindu women", the usual "native informants" for foreign projects, to accurately represent the reality of women's lives in Nepal.

**Sujev Shakya's** charted accountant by training, offers a useful overview of the Nepali economy. He presents a clear narrative of the cluttered policies of successive governments. We learn that increased liberalisation meant local businesses would "have to compete with international companies both in quality and price" so they chose the quick fix of "protectionism by influencing politicians".

**Shanta Dixit's** chapter on Nepali education illustrates how "each and every malaise that the country is saddled with today harks back to the poor quality of schooling". Dixit argues that the system needs a dramatic shake up and a realignment to reflect "child-centred education" and "community participation".

**Dipak Gyawali** assesses the history of technology in Nepal from a geo-historical

## As State of Nepal goes into its third reprint less than a year after its release, Mark Turin reviews the book that has become essential reading for everyone interested and involved in Nepal.

perspective. Arguing that Nepal's encounter with technology has been enacted largely through development, the "new *dharma* of our times", Gyawali describes the time lag in the nation's "embryonic encounter" with modern tools, machines and processes.

**Bhim Subba's** contribution on "Water, Nepal and India" is replete with hard facts about the energy and water needs of the two nations he describes, and is unrelenting in its critique of the present policy. Subba argues that India should ask Nepal to store water rather than generate hydropower, and that Nepal must become strong enough to put a "monetary value on such stored water".

We have come a long way, argues **Pratyoosh Onta**, from the days when print media in Nepal amounted to *Gorkhapatra* and *The Rising Nepal*. The growth in all forms of media since 1990s, he suggests, has been qualitative as well as quantitative but investigative reporting is still sorely lacking.

**Manjushree Thapa** offers a discerning introduction to Nepali literature. She writes of the "hostile" conditions in which local literature is being produced: far less than half the total population is functionally literate in the national language. More problematic still, Thapa suggests, is that Nepali poets and writers are isolated from the rest of the world.

The final contribution in the volume, by co-editor **Shastri Ramachandran**, is a little slow moving. He relays the presentation and representation of Nepal and her citizens in India, but the result is more of a 22-page

history of Indo-Nepal political agreements and disagreements. "India overwhelms the Nepali landscape as well as mindscape," writes Ramachandran.

The high-brow English and frequent references to Western academic literature mean that *State of Nepal* is inherently more geared towards informing expatriates about the nation than it is its own citizens. As "donor education", the collection is second to none. Perhaps it will be made required reading for development *wallahs* before they descend upon Nepal and start dispensing their advice. But it is as important to have Nepali government bureaucrats read this book.

*State of Nepal* aims high and also delivers. Some compilations suffer from superficiality, since they sacrifice depth for breadth. The present volume succeeds not because of any unity of voice, since many of the contributors probably disagree with one another, but rather because each article is well-written, carefully edited and clear in its objectives. Let's hope that they're planning a sequel to be released in five years: *Return of the State of Nepal*.

*State of Nepal*. Kanak Mani Dixit, Shastri Ramachandran (ed). Himal Books, 2002. Rs 490.

(Mark Turin is preparing a grammar and lexicon of the *Thangmi language of Dolakha and Sindhupalchok districts, and is currently with the Department of Social Anthropology at University of Cambridge.*)

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ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Tibetan authentic paintings, furniture and ritual objects** at Pathibhara Thangka Art Gallery, Thamel till 10 March. 256004
- ❖ **Mapping of Modernity in Nepal** 5-18 March at Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal. [wavetex@wlink.com.np](mailto:wavetex@wlink.com.np) for details.
- ❖ **Cycling for Peace** by Pushkar Shah at Lazimpat Gallery Café from 2-8 March.
- ❖ **Shufti Photographs** by Tashi Ghale at Via Via Travelers Café, Thamel. [www.viaviacafe.com](http://www.viaviacafe.com)
- ❖ **Kathmandu Valley through the ages** Paintings by Hari Prasad Sharma organised by Eco Himal. 5-18 March at Yala Maya Kendra at Baggikhanna, Patan Dhoka.
- ❖ **Explorations of the Magical Realm** Etchings by Seema Sharma Shah 3-21 March, Siddhartha Art Gallery. 411122
- ❖ **Images from Ground Zero** Photographs by Joel Meyerowitz till 14 March. Central Library, Tribhuvan University. 415845
- ❖ **Themes in Jewellery** by Angela Dodson Soulier 8-18 March at Indigo Gallery. 413580

EVENTS

- ❖ **Sundar Shanta Nepal**: Shanti Sangeet Yatra 2059, 8 March Saturday 4 PM, Basantapur Kathmandu concert. Rs 10 Entry. Organised by Himal Association 542544, managed by event nepal-1aya 537799.
- ❖ **Jazzmandu 2003** jazz till 15 March. Tickets: Upstairs Jazz Bar. 410436
- ❖ **House of Noise** at The Atrium on 7 March with DJ Chris David, Hotel Yak & Yeti. 248999
- ❖ **Peace Ride 2003** by The Himalayan Enfielders Join in an 800km ride over 4 days. Details: 428650/ 981050432



MUSIC

- ❖ **Live music** every Friday at 5PM. Movie every Saturday at 4.30 PM. Jivin' Joe's Restaurant, Kuponole. 539909
- ❖ **The Steam Injuns** with Abhaya on Friday, **The Strings** on Saturday at The Red Onion Bar, Lazimpat. 416071
- ❖ **Live music** by Catch 22, Friday nights at the 40,000 1/2 ft Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, Thamel. 414336
- ❖ **Rusty Nails** 7.30 PM on Friday at The Fusion, Dwarika's Hotel. 479488
- ❖ **Friday Nites** at Jatra with The Strings. Free entry, Thamel
- ❖ **Gaines** every night at Kantipur Restaurant, Club Himalaya Nagarkot Resort. 680083

FOOD

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- ❖ **Kilroy's at 1905** in Kantipath offers great breakfast, lunch and drinks deals in March. 225272
- ❖ **Traditional Nepali Thali Lunch** at Patan Museum Café 11AM-4PM. 526271
- ❖ **Saturday BBQ Lunch** at Club Himalaya Nagarkot. Rs 500 per person. 680083/ 80
- ❖ **Sekuwa Saanjh** Friday BBQ for Rs 555 pp plus tax. Dwarika's Hotel. 479488

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**NEPALI WEATHER** by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

VIS-06-03-2003 03:00 GMT

This satellite picture taken early Thursday shows thick haze cover in the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Indus plains, with the lower Himalaya etched as a dark arc. The inversion phenomenon of winter is now being replaced by wind-blown sand from the desert. Luckily for us, the wind till the weekend will be from the northwest which means the dust will stay over the plains. But by next week expect visibility to drop with the onset of more typical spring dust in the air. Clear days will mean steady rise in daytime temperature with moderate to strong afternoon westerly wind but night temperature will remain in the single digits. Above 3,000m the minimum temperature is still below freezing with plenty of snow still unmelted in the high passes.

**KATHMANDU VALLEY**

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
26-07	27-06	27-07	28-06	24-07

BOOKWORM

**FOREIGN AID AND POLITICS IN NEPAL** Foreign aid and politics in Nepal: A case study Eugene Bramer Mihaly Himal Books, 2002 Rs 460

First published in 1965, this book has now become a recognised classic on the subject. The author discovered there was good reason to doubt the 'revolution of rising expectations' and reached the startling conclusion that foreign aid had probably harmed, rather than furthered, Nepal's long-term economic growth.

**Democracy, pluralism and change: An inquiry in the Nepalese context** Sanjaya Serchan Chhye Pappupe, 2001 Rs 200

The author submits that no matter what type of political system prevails, there is a triangular interconnection between knowledge, power and interest. He applies this theory to Nepal's socio-cultural milieu that is dominated by Bahun-Chhetri Hindu males who speak khas-Nepali and live in Kathmandu Valley.

**The People's War in Nepal: Left perspectives** Arjun Karki, David Seddon (ed) Adroit publishers, 2003 Rs 960

This book aims to provide readers with an introduction to the Maoist insurgency in Nepal through a unique collection of documents, statements and analyses by the Maoist leadership as well as political analysts and activists from the left. Contributors include Prachanda, Baburam Bhattarai, Govinda Neupane and Sujita Shakya.

Courtesy: Mandala Book Point, Kantipath, 227711, [mandala@csl.com.np](mailto:mandala@csl.com.np)

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Those who missed *Titanic* the first time around now have a chance to witness director James Cameron's spectacle. Although the romance between Jack Dawson (Leonardo Di Caprio) and Rose DeWitt Bukater (Kate Winslet) dominates the movie, *Titanic* is great in terms of action, effects and visuals. It also provides an excellent commentary on the issue of class struggle through the poor-boy-rich-girl theme. The dialogue is witty and brilliant. Cameron takes his time telling the story. He could've skimped on dialogue, cinematography, effects or authenticity and still come out with a great movie, but he doesn't. He sticks to the formula that has worked in other great epic movies, and he pulls it off one hundred percent.

**TITANIC**

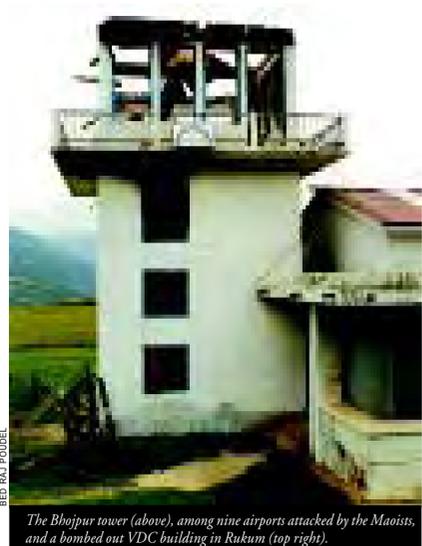
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Sun-Fri	2000- 2030	आजका कुरा (समसामयिक विषयमा बहस)
Sat	0800- 0830	शान्ति अभियान
Sat	1930- 2000	आचार विचार (धार्मिक/विश्व सहकार्य)
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# Waiting for the peace dividend



The Bhojpur tower (above), among nine airports attacked by the Maoists, and a bombed out VDC building in Rukum (top right).

from p1

"Of course, we will mobilise our own resources but that will not be sufficient," adds Sharma. "So, we are working out the estimated shortfall and will be requesting development partners to chip in."

Nepal's donors have already started making their own assessment of how much help may be needed and where. The United Nations with aid agencies from Norway and Germany have been discussing plans to rehabilitate people displaced from their villages, and to immediately revive their "Food For Work" programs.

Danish charge d'affaires Gert Meinecke has just returned from Achham and Jumla after inspecting damage caused to the district headquarters in Maoist raids last year. Meinecke's field trip comes amid growing interest among the Europeans to support the peace process and rehabilitation.

Multilateral agencies like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have also said they will support specific government projects for reconstruction and rehabilitation. A meeting of Nepal Donor Group last month immediately after the ceasefire announcement discussed this issue and gave it top priority.

However, there is still concern in some quarters about the fragility of the peace process with particular worry about the continued lack of involvement of the political parties. Many also think that more than rehabilitation, the government in Kathmandu needs to make up for the neglect of development due to mal-governance in the past six years. "In most parts of the country there hasn't been any construction, so it doesn't make any sense to talk about reconstruction," says one Nepali staffer at a donor agency. Even so,



Wood added.

However, the government still lacks the institutional and political mechanism to move faster, even for the urgently required humanitarian relief. As thousands of people who had left their villages over the last few months gradually return to their villages in western Nepal, a massive humanitarian assistance package needs to be launched immediately.

"People are still scared to go to villages and are worried that they don't have any means to support themselves," said Prakash Jwala, former UML MP from Salyan who returned to the capital this week after touring his constituency. "There is a need to provide immediate relief to the affected people and engage them in income generating activities which could also help in the reconstruction of the destroyed infrastructure."

UN agencies are said to be interested in coordinating the reconstruction and rehabilitation programs, but are waiting for an exact assessment of the damage, a concrete blueprint for aid and a projection for the required funding. But time is running out, they say, and how fast the relief moves may also determine the direction of the peace process. ♦

The United States and Britain have been in the news for high-profile military support for the Royal Nepal Army. They, too, have pledged increased funds for development. Speaking in Washington last week, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Donald Camp said that the US government would provide over \$70 million in aid this year in addition to \$14 million military assistance for fiscal year 2002. (See page 4-5).

Britain last week appointed Sir Jeffery James as its special representative to Nepal to coordinate international efforts to restore peace. James arrives in Kathmandu 16 March and will be visiting the mid-western districts to assess Nepal's needs in a post-conflict scenario.

The donor community had been urging consolidated efforts from within the country to turn the ceasefire into permanent peace, and open dialogue between the monarch and parliamentary parties. But the continued political mess isn't helping matters. Donors are most worried about the vacuum at the village and district levels after the dissolution of local elected bodies. They have urgently called for local elections to be held so that local leaders can guide the peace dividend.

"We think that putting in place a committee comprising all sides having interests in reconstruction and rehabilitation at the district level would help," David Wood, of the British aid agency DfID told us, adding that there was an urgent need, particularly in the mid-west and far-west, for food and for cash in the form of employment. "We are interested in providing support to programs which would do all of these things and do them quickly because the peace process can't wait for things to happen now,"



# Let a thousand newspapers bloom



**Chinese media is moving towards freedom, if for no other reason than that the authorities now recognise economic development will falter without it.**

in industry, we must overcome other obstacles. Official pressure remains enormous. Information that should be public is not available. Key officials reject requests to be interviewed without explanation. Some listed companies try to prevent us from publishing stories by appealing to government agencies.

In China, where there are no laws protecting the media or freedom of speech, companies who don't like our reports can sue us for allegedly damaging their reputations. More often than not, they win.

There are also internal obstacles to a free, independent press. China boasts 7,000 newspapers and 8,000 magazines, but the government controls free access to the media market by issuing special licenses. Only high-ranking state-owned organisations are qualified to hold these licenses, which grant the ability to publish. Those outside the industry, including readers, are unaware of this closed market structure.

Despite these obstacles, I am optimistic that the media will become a viable monitor of Chinese industry, if for no other reason than that most authorities recognise by now that economic development will falter without it. As the public becomes familiar with *Caijing's* brand of journalism, it is sure to raise demand for more tough-minded and scrupulous reporting in general, not only on markets, but also on developments in people's communities and governments. Thousands of important stories remain to be told in China. *Caijing* is but one voice struggling to tell them. ♦ (© Project Syndicate)

*(Hu Shuli is the founder and managing editor of China's premier business magazine, Caijing.)*



China's A share market in 2000, posted a falsified claim of 700 million renmenbi (\$87 million) in profits online. Within hours of publication, the company was suspended from trading, and within a week security regulators had launched an investigation. Despite these successes, establishing independent media in China remains a daunting task. In addition to criticism from people

Whenever I tell foreigners what I do for a living, many are doubtful. "Is there such a thing as a free press in China?" they ask. "Are there really independent journalists?" The answer is yes and no.

Ever since Deng Xiaoping launched his reforms in 1978, China has been moving from a planned economy to the free market. Its media industry is undergoing a transition equally as wrenching. It is also a more complicated process, because the state, which embraces economic reform wholeheartedly, is not certain about how much media reform to tolerate.

Yet the government's attitude to the press is not one of constant suspicion. After it (belatedly) recognised the importance of transparency in capital markets, journalists gained greater freedom to pursue investigative journalism. So, while the line between the permissible and the prohibited has

shifted, it still exists. Some of us walk right up to the line, even nudging it every once in a while. Crossing it, however, remains another matter.

All the same, journalists and editors like myself are increasingly confident in our role as economic watchdogs. In its first issue in April 1998, the magazine that I edit, *Caijing* (*Business and Finance Review*), published a cover story on Qiong Min Yuan, a little-known real estate company whose share prices skyrocketed by 400 percent. The company's stock was suspended from trading in 1997, after it was charged with overstating profits. A few insiders were tipped off beforehand and unloaded their shares, while 50,000 individual investors lost millions of dollars.

Although everyone knew what happened, no one dared publish details of the inflated profits or the tip-off until we broke the silence. Our article—"Who is Responsible for Qiong Min Yuan?"—offered no

investigative scoops or new information. By simply reporting the story and pointing out places where the system failed to protect small investors, we incited a stir. Government watchdogs immediately criticised *Caijing*.

Our recent focus has been on securities markets. In October 2000, we published a groundbreaking article called "The Inside Story of Fund Management," which disclosed a previously suppressed Shanghai Stock Exchange analysis that showed that most of China's fledgling investment-fund-management companies were trading illegally and irregularly on the securities market. By publishing that article, our magazine became the first serious publication ever to report criticism of the fund-management sector and the stock market.

The ten government-affiliated companies mentioned

in the report threatened to sue us. But our readers came to our defense, while the prominent Chinese economist Wu Jinglian supported our report in an interview on Central Chinese Television, China's main officially sponsored statewide broadcast network.

In many ways, the fund management story was a watershed moment for *Caijing* and for the Chinese press in general. The government left us entirely alone, neither banning nor criticizing our report. In a speech around that time, the chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission, Zhou Xiaochuan, announced that the securities market welcomed media criticism and supervision.

Since then, China's financial media has become bolder. We've exposed cases involving price manipulation and falsified profits. Last August we reported that Yinguang Xia Holdings, the second largest listed company in



SEIRA TAMANG

Motorcycles in Nepal are no longer limited to scooters that look like armadillos on wheels. With the entrance of cheap Chinese motorbikes, there is much variety to choose from. In the face of competition, advertisements for motorbikes are hard to miss. And increasingly harder to ignore has been the gendered form that these ads have taken in Kathmandu. Lifen has an ad for its equivalent to the Honda Street Smart, a smaller bike, with 100cc power. While all Lifen ads carry the strapline "Difference ho, Power Engine ko", this ad is framed in pink with the words "Romancing with Power". Last you miss the intended audience, a young woman in jeans and t-shirt with a handbag is posted on the

right side glancing at the reader. The message: this bike is meant for girls. Luckily, the market for manly bikes is, if one goes by ads, chock full of choice. We have the Suzuki ad that is fit for any mechanics' workshop: two non-Nepali women in tight, golden dresses with plunging cleavages, posing around and leaning on the bikes. Yamaha shows its bike with a view on the side of two pairs of legs—one in a short skirt with boots (where are the fashion police?) and the other in jeans and cowboy boots. You really sort of want both pairs of legs to belong to gay men, which would make the ads so much cooler, but alas the Yamaha ad that used to run in Jai Nepal with a luscious girl in flowing hair clasping the manly man in front says it all.

# Motorcycle masculinity

Nepali contextualising would of course require woman in back to have hair firmly covered with helmet and the man in chappals, but that would take away the original, intended effect. The most mesmerising ad is the one for Pulsar: next to the logo written in a jagged font are the words DEFINITELY MALE in all caps. In various places, "solid muscles" and "looks like the male of the species has finally arrived" can also be found. Indeed, the bike does look muscular and it comes in 150cc and 180cc. Up until about mid-September 2002 ads ran the slogans with the bike picture underneath in magazines. After this date, until about January 2003, underneath the main slogan a new subtitle "Born in a Gym" was added and in the background of the bike, a photo of the back of a very muscular man tying a string around his head was added.

The fact that this is Hollywood's Rambo makes him all the more interesting. The fact that this form of masculinity is now passe in Hollywood (we now have the sensitive virile types, who while certainly trim and muscled, are also caring, thinking and articulate like Tom Cruise in various roles) raises some questions. To begin with, it really is not clear whether the manufacturers thought Nepali men to be dumber and in need of additional pictures to underscore the "maleness" of the bike. Secondly, how exactly have they imagined "Nepali masculinity" that they thought Rambo would help sell bikes? This

question becomes all the more pertinent when perusing through the ads for Pulsar in India during the same time period in India Today. One sees that it is the gas mileage benefits that is highlighted with only the "definitely male" slogan. Wait, are our men so Neanderthal that they can relate only to images of virility and not economic benefit? And are our men not masculine enough that they need to acquire it through material

purchases? The recent shift in Pulsar ads in Nepali media to the emphasis on "horsepower" with accompanying action photo of horse racing, while better, still hints at an underlying message that our men need pictures of muscle before they will get the message. Dumb but vigorously masculine Nepali men should buy these machines? ♦

*(Seira Tamang is a social science researcher in Kathmandu.)*

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