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“Nepal needs a supportive international environment.”



MIN. BIJUPACHARYA

The Indian ambassador to Nepal, Shyam Saran, spoke to Nepali Times on Tuesday on a wide range of issues, including the Maoist insurgency, bilateral relations, trade and hydropower. He emphasised that the Maoist insurgency was not just a threat to the security of Nepal, but also to the security of India. The ambassador also reports progress on bilateral issues like trade, transportation and the Birganj dry port railway agreement.

Nepali Times: After many years of somewhat strained relations, we in Nepal sense a slight relaxation in Nepal-India ties. Are we imagining it, or is it for real?
Shyam Saran: I am at a disadvantage because I don't know whether the relationship before was lacking in trust. My general impression is that there has all along been a very easy relationship between our leaders, even at times when there were differences on certain issues. There is very easy communication between our leaders, which continues to this day.

Currently the relationship is more relaxed, because there is greater understanding between the two countries. It may be partly because Nepal has been going through a certain crisis. India has responded to this particular crisis by extending whatever support it can whether it is providing training to security forces, being part of a supportive international environment in which the government of Nepal can deal with these issues. Perhaps allaying some of the fears about India may have helped in the matter.

But despite this understanding between senior leadership, things seem to get stuck at the bureaucratic or state government level...
 I think that perception is perhaps not entirely accurate. There is such a range of interaction between India and Nepal that I

wouldn't be surprised that every now and then some issues crop up. But sitting here in Kathmandu or even in Delhi, we see that all the good things that are happening don't make news. Say, the boundary pillar issue. For the last few years, we have been working very smoothly repairing border pillars, correcting whatever distortions may have come into the demarcation. But that doesn't make news. Somebody raises one issue about one pillar in one particular sector in this long border, and this gives the impression that everything has fallen apart.

We ought to be a little careful in making assessments about India-Nepal relations. Take the trade treaty. Every one agrees that the 1996 trade treaty was very favourable to Nepal. It still remains a favourable treaty. I always say Nepal should look at India as an opportunity because which other smaller country has such a huge growing market right at its doorstep, to which it has virtually duty free access? Of course, problems do arise like the problem of vanaspati ghee or acrylic fibre. The important thing is whether we have a mechanism in place where such issues can be dealt with successfully. The temptation to politicise each such issue and make it the sum total of our relationship has to be avoided.

continued → p4-5

Times nepalnews.com Weekly Internet Poll # 76

Q. Which of the following would break the current political deadlock: Reinstate parliament, All-party interim government, Keep Chand gov't till next polls, None of above/don't know

Total votes: 917

Weekly Internet Poll # 77. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. Should the main political parties extend more support to the peace process?

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BHAGIRATH YOGI

Narayan Singh Pun's career, like the helicopters he pilots, was a vertical takeoff. In less than ten years he has gone from being an army pilot, to MP, to aviation tycoon, to minister, to forming his own political party, to being the only man King Gyanendra trusted to handle peace overtures with the Maoists.

Even his critics will admit with a lot of envy that they admire Pun's meteoric rise up the political ladder. The retired Lt-Colonel has always shown a knack for being at the right place at the right time to make the right move.

As the government's chief negotiator, Pun carried out top secret negotiations in Nepal's leaky political milieu for two months before the truce was finally announced on 29 January. In private conversations, Pun uses aviation jargon to dismiss concerns that the peace process is in jeopardy. "It is normal to encounter some turbulence, but we are on autopilot." He was able to finalise a 22-point code of conduct during the peace process, made public on Thursday, which will hopefully ensure that violations do not take place and both sides scale back deployment.

Born in Myagdi, son of an ex-Indian Gurkha soldier, Pun joined the Royal Nepali Army as an officer cadet soon after completing college in Deharadun. He went on to Sandhurst, learned to fly at the Indian Air Force Academy and got helicopter training with the French Air Force. Even in France, his colleagues recall, Pun was used to a flamboyant lifestyle driving fast expensive cars. In 1985, Pun was appointed helicopter wing commander and chief training officer until he voluntarily retired from the Royal Nepali Army in 1993.

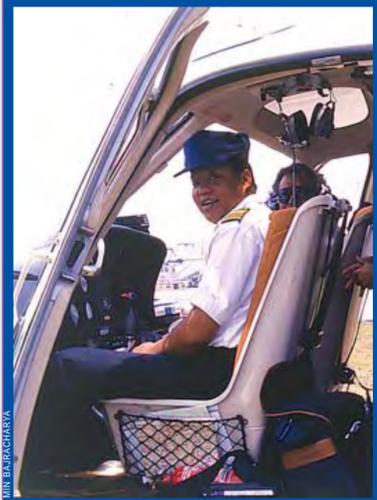
He then joined the Nepali Congress in 1999 and was elected MP from Myagdi. Pun had unprecedented access to Girija Prasad Koirala's inner circle, and himself piloted Koirala during his whirlwind election all over Nepal. Koirala rewarded Pun by making him assistant tourism minister.

A member of the Foreign Relations and Human Rights Committee in parliament, Pun was seen as a studious and hard-working lawmaker. He reads a lot, ordering books on diplomacy, parliamentary practices, international relations, leadership and management. When few MPs would dare defend Koirala during the Lauda controversy, Pun stood staunchly by his mentor's side saying there was nothing wrong with the deal. Insiders tell us it was in fact Koirala who pulled strings to allow Pun to retire from the army, since the military did not want to lose such a senior instructor pilot. Pun dabbled with other private helicopter companies before setting up his own outfit: Karnali Air which now has a fleet of six helicopters.

When most private companies were too scared to transport policemen in their choppers, Karnali did so.

Narayan Singh PUN

Is this helicopter pilot the best man to steer the peace process? His supporters think so.



MIN. BIJUPACHARYA

Pun was also close to Koirala's home minister, Govinda Raj Joshi, and Karnali's choppers clocked a lot of hours. When his insurers asked him why he was taking the risk (one of Pun's Ecureils was destroyed by the Maoists in Khotang last year) his standard reply was, "The nation is in crisis and this is my duty to offer my service."

Pun proved to be a wily politician. When Koirala was ousted he joined the Deuba faction, and even accompanied the prime minister on his high-profile visit to the US and Britain "at my own expense". Pun advised Deuba on the Royal Nepali Army's hardware needs. And when things got too hot for Deuba, Pun knew which way the wind was blowing and quickly formed his own Samata Party.

The 54-year-old soldier-turned-politician who lives with his fourth wife at Dhumbarahi, is completing his BA and plans to go to do a masters in economics. He is a good tennis player and has recently taken up golf.

"Pun is a very articulate, very polished, very informative and a very hard-working individual," says a well-placed Nepali Congress activist. "He was amazingly close to Girijababu but never too close to Deuba."

After King Gyanendra sacked Deuba, Pun cleverly gained the trust of the palace and got appointed minister for physical planning, promising not to contest elections. When he was appointed chief government negotiator, it caused envy among his own cabinet colleagues who saw the ambitious and charismatic Pun as a threat to themselves.

Pun speaks French and has good rapport with Kathmandu-based diplomats. "It was a brilliant move," says one diplomat about Pun's appointment as coordinator. Indeed, having for the first time a politician from an ethnic background, who understands military issues, and who has an electoral constituency behind him was a masterstroke.

"Politics is a game of coordination and Pun is trying to master in it," says DR Lamichhane, a leftist journalist and one of Pun's contacts with the Maoists. "He works very hard and is honest." In the past weeks Pun has been to his home district and Gorkha to address huge rallies. His entry is always dramatic: in a flurry of dust as his helicopter settles in a nearby field. The crowd is enthusiastic about what he has to say, his peace and development efforts, and his promise that no one Nepali will be excluded. The janjati, dalit, royalists and disenfranchised democrats are all flocking to Pun.

"It is likely that the Samata Party will emerge as a loose confederate of political forces that would profess democratic radicalism while actually being conservative," says another political analyst we interviewed. "Pun flew helicopters for 25 years, if he engineers a safe landing for the peace talks then he's home." ♦





GIVE PEACE A CHANCE

The most bizarre aspect of the present period of national deadlock is that our political forces are fighting over the spoils of peace even before peace returns.

Whatever goes on behind closed doors in their meetings with King Gyanendra, they cannot control themselves from posturing and bravado when they come out.

There has never been a time in Nepal's history when the Nepali people had so little trust in the individuals and institutions who purport to rule over them.

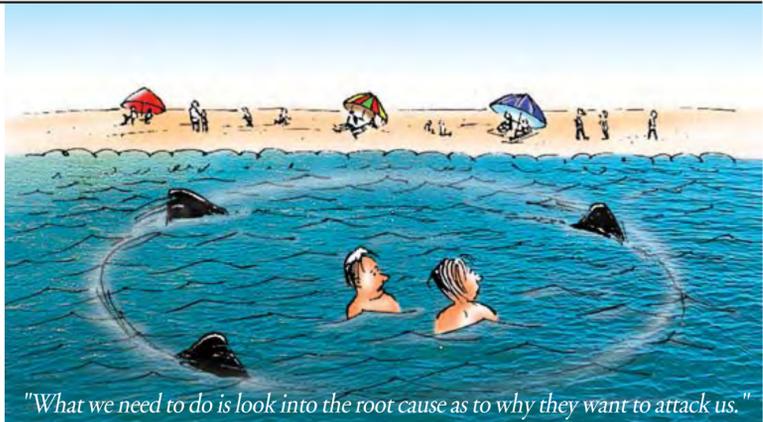
Still, the palace and the parties must patch up. There is no other way. And if it needs the party leaders collectively meeting the king, there is no reason such a meeting can't be arranged before King Gyanendra embarks on his pilgrimage tour to holy sites in India.

When a group of musicians decided to do a peace roadshow this month, the organisers were surprised by the unexpectedly large turnout.

The Nepali people are so down they need a break. They deserve a break. The economy needs a break. Tourism needs it, too. And development needs a breakthrough.



MIN. BAURACHARVA



"What we need to do is look into the root cause as to why they want to attack us."

STATE OF THE STATE

by CK LAL

We Nepalis How to make Nepali more inclusive.

Sometime ago, King Gyanendra said that every Nepali should rise above "I" and begin to think as "We" instead.

This certainty about the self is so ingrained in the social elite of Nepal that no questions are entertained about the basis of the definition.

The problem with the idea of an imagined community, however, is that it must have the "other" to assert itself. There is no "us" without "them".

That seems to be what is happening in Nepal as a resurgent cultural nationalism begins to displace the Nepali political identity.

The idea of Nepali isn't new. It dates as far back as the reign of King Prithvi Narayan Shah who had to invent an identity for a country that he united.

Between these two fixed boundaries to the north and the south King Prithvi

Narayan thought he was free to move towards east and west. Thus, The Great Gorkha Emperor himself delineated the spatial features of his ambitions—mountains, hills and valleys.

The third dimension of this new identity—Gorkha Bhasa—emerged almost automatically as the nobles from the Gorkha court began to displace the Newar aristocracy from the positions of state power in Kathmandu.

The People's Movement tried to tinker with this, but even the constitution that made Nepali citizens sovereign for the first time in their history refrained from reframing the Nepali identity.

If a class war in the name of the Maoist insurgency hadn't begun when it did, perhaps a communal confrontation between

the aspiring population group and the entrenched power elite would have been inevitable. As it happened, the Maoists appropriated the agenda of cultural pluralism and may have helped avert an even more calamitous conflict.

A plural political identity has to be based on the supremacy of the constitution with a secular state and multi-lingual society as its two other nodes.

So, when Subhas Rai portrays Parbati as a coy Chhetri damsel, and represents Shiva as a confident, muscular and sun-burnished Magar chieftain that is just a minor diversion.

The goals were adopted by 189 nations at the Millennium Development Assembly in New York in September 2000 based on the realisation that an unequal and divided world as we have it now can simply not



NICH. DOWNER/PROJECT

COMMENT

Participation=democracy=development

by HENNING KARCHER



Peace and development are two sides of the same brick. But how are we going to attain them?

I found a survey among all women and men of Nepal asking them the question, "What are the two highest priorities for you personally and for the nation," the vast majority would probably say "peace and development".

Apart from the undeniable political and ideological causes of the current conflict, there are legitimate grievances of the poor and excluded. They feel that they have hardly tasted the fruits of development and have lost hope and confidence in the capacity of the existing system to deliver services and provide them with the basic elements of a dignified life.

UNDP's Human Development Report 2001 draws attention to governance as the "missing link" in the current development situation of Nepal. Unless management of the development process becomes truly participatory at all levels, until those who are to deliver services are held accountable by those who are to be served, little progress will be made.

A democratic state with all its checks and balances enshrined in the constitution needs the support of civil society institutions to promote the value of transparency and accountability—and development—and individual rights.

We in the United Nations believe that our Millennium Development Goals have the potential to transform the world. It's an idea whose time has come. They can also in a very direct way change the social, economic and political face of Nepal including addressing the root causes of conflict.

The goals were adopted by 189 nations at the Millennium Development Assembly in New York in September 2000 based on the realisation that an unequal and divided world as we have it now can simply not

survive. The continuous denial of a dignified life free from fear and want to the majority of people on this earth will continue to breed tension and conflicts that do not stop at the borders of industrialised nations.

Out of the Millennium Development Summit and the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development a new global consensus has emerged demanding mutual commitments are matched by mutual accountability: a political bargain has been built around a partnership of self-interest between the countries of North and South.

The Millennium Development Goals campaign in Nepal has at its core eight simple targets that are of direct relevance to the lives of every Nepali. These represent the ultimate bottom-up grassroots pocket-book development agenda, they are firmly focussed on the bread and butter issues everywhere and one certainly does not need a PhD in economics to participate in the debate.

Already, the National Planning Commission has decided to reflect these goals in the government's planning process and annual budgets. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) will in its final form contain specific measurable targets and indicators in line with the goals. Even more important is the translation of these goals into concrete tangible sub-goals targets and indicators at the local level.

The benchmark of whether policies are working will be: Are more children in school? Is maternal mortality declining? Is poverty dropping? Are we making progress on HIV/AIDS?

If in the final report the answer is "no" to all these questions then it clearly points to the need of change in policies. If it is "yes" then it provides a powerful vindication of current strategies. The Millennium reports are a real time accountability framework tracking year by year what is working and what isn't.

All over the world, the Millennium Development Goals have electrified the development community by connecting them to real public opinion. Donors are realigning their support around the reports, development agencies are doing the same and so is much of civil society.

Monitoring the performance of politicians and bureaucrats in the realisation of development is of vital importance to the nation. Decentralisation and social mobilisation are critical elements in a workable management and monitoring system.



MIN. BAURACHARVA

Millenium Development Goals for Nepal

- Goal 1 - Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Goal 2 - Achieve universal primary education
- Goal 3 - Promote gender equality and empower women
- Goal 4 - Reduce child mortality
- Goal 5 - Improve maternal health
- Goal 6 - Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Goal 7 - Ensure environmental sustainability

Ultimately, these will only yield results if citizens of all caste and creed, women, men and children stand up and hold elected and appointed leaders responsible for the realisation of agreed targets.

(Henning Karcher is the UN Resident Coordinator in Kathmandu and this comment is adapted from his statement at the National Convention of the NGO Federation of Nepal in Pokhara on Wednesday).

LETTERS

MADHESIS I agree with CK Lal's assertion in "The tarai cauldron" (#134) about the lack of representation of people from the tarai. But I don't believe in how he is presenting the problem.

way he could help other madhesi become writers like him, even though the editors in Nepali media are mostly Bahuns.

DONALD CAMP The speech by US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Donald Camps (#135) would be amusing if it were not so scary. For Camp to claim that the current ceasefire is "a tangible signal of our (US) policy success" is untrue, arrogant and risks derailing carefully negotiated peace talks before they have begun.

Great Britain, India and China risks escalating and internationalising a domestic conflict whilst plainly demonstrating US naivety in thinking that such an internal conflict can be resolved militarily rather than through dialogue. It would appear that the US fails to recognise that the injustices perpetrated by successive so-called democratic elected governments in Nepal, supported by US foreign policy, are the direct cause of the current conflict and the significant level of popular support that the Maoists enjoy within the country.

government and media to ensure that these misconceptions are corrected before they can do lasting damage.

WHAT? At the risk of being mocked by all those in the know, what exactly is a "constituent assembly"? I am pretty certain there are other ignoramuses like myself but we are hesitant to ask about the differences between what we have now and what "they" want. The devil is in the details. So, how about a column next week from a political pundit to give us a primer? Everything you wanted to know about the constituent assembly but were afraid to be smirked at. You'd be contributing a lot to the education of the well-read but

politically deficient section of the Nepali diaspora.

T Sherpa, Bellevue, Washington, USA

VISAS AND ADVISORIES I have just spent a wonderful month touring Nepal, seeing Pokhara, the Annapurnas, and Royal Bardia and Chitwan

National Parks. Apart from the scenery, I think the most special aspect of your country is the forbearance of the Nepali people. Even though the hotel businesses are nearly collapsing in Pokhara, the staff still have a ready warm smile when they greet their guests. Even though the hotels in



Royal Bardia National Park have to pay "protection money" to the army (under threats from the local Major) the lodge owners still greeted me warmly. Despite the political disturbances and uncertainties in Kathmandu, all the restaurant and hotel staff still seemed positive. I would like to wish the prospects for peace in this great country.

Chris Lebonne, Switzerland

I don't mean to play spoilsport in this great effort everyone, especially in the tourism industry, is making to loosen visa regulations to allow people from abroad visit more easily. I realise the great contribution visitors make to our impoverished economy. But it is only me who realises the total contempt with which we Nepalis are treated

when we try and apply for entry into one of their countries? Every one of us who tries to apply is treated like a prospective illegal immigrant no matter what our credentials are. At least visas are granted for our country on payment of the said amount. And in their currency I don't think it is much at all compared to the visa fees we have to pay for their countries. I know I can be debated by someone else's view of the "economics" rationale and that of ground reality but I do think there also exists this small aspect of 'national dignity'.

C Nawang, by email

It was high time someone said something about the travel advisories issued by foreign embassies about Nepal. I'm glad that you have picked up this sore

point in your hard-hitting editorial ("Tourism vs Terrorism", #135). The terrorists have won if we punish the tourism industries of our countries. The advisories serve no purpose other than to prevent the governments of some countries from being sued by their citizens. They aren't effective against terrorists, because let's face it, they can strike just about anywhere. They just spread panic. Meanwhile, the economies of countries that depend on tourism are devastated, pushing them further into poverty, thus aggravating the very problem that probably triggered terrorism in the first place.

Can these countries be slightly more intelligent about advisories? **Kalden Lama, Thamel**

ALL THAT JAZZ Perhaps, Nepal's politicians too could play some jazz and learn from the organizers of Jazzmandu. Gijirja Prasad on vocals, Madhav Kumar on harmonica, Lokendra Babahdur on cymbals, while "Peaceinik" Pun could go on sax. And they could just keep on improvising.

Jack Prasai, Cape Town

DHAWAL RANA Mr Dhawal S Rana seems to be one of the few sane voices in the rank and file of the political parties ("Preventing Peoples' War II", #135). If the rest of the parties thought like him wouldn't this crisis be resolved sooner? The headline stance taken by Mr Rana's own party hierarchy is confusing, it lacks long-term thinking about the national interest, and even long-

term thinking about its own party interest. What we need is a compromise between the parties and His Majesty with the country's interest foremost in their minds. And the country's interest at the present time can only be to restore law and order and make the peace process successful. Other things will come later. But this endless quarrelling between the parties and His Majesty isn't helping matters. The parties say the king has to "correct his mistake". What mistake? They are making another

bigger blunder by insisting on a showdown with the king who is busy trying to start a peace process with the Maoists. For once, the political parties have to look beyond their narrow political power games, beyond competing for mastership portfolios in the new all-party government, and start cooperating. I am sure there are more people like Mr Rana in the other political parties as well, they should speak up.

Sarita Neupane, email



SARITA NEUPANE

“The Maoist insurgency is not only a threat to the security of Nepal, but also a threat to the security of India.”

↳ from p1

Once more, the issue of inundation has arisen. Why do these things keep happening?

We have a Standing Committee on inundation problems. It is headed by a Director General on the Nepali side and the Commissioner of the Ganga Water Commission on the Indian side. Given that we have this long border and so many rivers, there will be issues of inundation because of the structures built on the Indian side and its impact on the Nepali side and vice versa. By the way, there are also issues we have with the Nepali side; in the last meeting, there were about 20 or 21 inundation issues raised by the Nepali side, but there were 16 similar issues raised by the Indian side. The important thing to remember is, with population pressure many of the previously uninhabited riverine areas in both countries are affected by flooding. The only way to deal with it is to sit down and see what we can do to minimise the problem. We have a mechanism in place. It is important that the mechanism works and that the people who know the subject verify what the problem is and find how we can deal with it in everyone's interest.

There is a general belief in Nepal that the Maoists agreed to the ceasefire because New Delhi leaned on them, and raided their hideouts. To what extent was this a factor, and will this pressure mount?

We don't have any contacts with the Maoists. We regard the Maoist insurgency not only as a threat to the security of Nepal, but also a threat to the security of India. Why? Because this particular group also has links with insurgent groups in India like MCC and PWG. We know they have worked and trained together, and so right from the start, we have extended all possible cooperation to the Nepali side in dealing with this. We shared intelligence with the Nepali authorities and handed over some people who were apprehended on our side. If this has been a factor in convincing the Maoists that they must come to terms with the government of Nepal, we are very happy. As you know in the last few months, we have also strengthened our own security presence at the border by deploying some of the Special Security Bureau forces so cross border movement can be monitored. Maybe that too has helped.

There is also a feeling that perhaps India in the past had not done enough to control Maoist activities on its territory even though their hideouts were known, and this despite the danger of a spill over of the insurgency.

People in Nepal forget that India is a huge country with over one billion people and in order to apprehend, or to have any kind of control over the kind of presence you are talking about requires very good intelligence. It is not enough to say that the Maoists held a meeting at a certain place or that a Maoist leader was giving an interview somewhere else. Unless you have a very good and real-time intelligence exchange it is like looking for a needle in a haystack. And, sometimes it is said that if Indian agencies had wanted to apprehend the Maoists they could have done so easily. That is a very childish way of looking at things because if the Indian intelligence agencies were so efficient then why would we have insurgencies in India at all? Within Nepal itself, have you been able to find exactly where they are? One should not be unfair about allegations, people should realise what the ground realities are.

But you agree that this is a conflict with trans-boundary ramifications?

When you have such an open border, and where there are thousands of people going back and forth that some people slip across, then it is imminently possible that some guns slip through. But we have to try to see how we can deal with it. The way to deal with it is through much better cooperation. And cooperation between the security forces of both sides has increased. As the problem became more acute over time, we made assessments and devised cooperative measures to deal with it more effectively.

Post-11 September, we see increased Western interest in the region, and in the conflict in Nepal as well. We have heard senior Indian officials cautioning Western governments about the lethal military support to Nepal. What level of coordination is here between New Delhi and Western governments vis-à-vis Nepal?

Certainly, both the US and the UK are good friends of Nepal as is India. We have a common interest in making sure that Nepal continues to be a country with political stability and economic prosperity. To that end an exchange of information and assessment, which is quite normal, has been taking place. We are very happy to see that they are consulting us on the evolving situation, and whenever we have been asked we have shared our perceptions with them.

Does that include military hardware assistance as well?

We have conveyed to the government of Nepal that we will take care of its requirement in terms of its military and security forces to a certain extent on a concessional basis. If the US or the UK supplies those items or provides training in certain areas—that is always welcome. Most importantly, the major role that can be played by Western countries is to focus their attention on the developmental requirements of Nepal because that is where the real crux will lie for the future of this peace process.

Your government has been fairly direct in stating its preference for the political parties to be a part of the peace process. What role do you see them playing? And, how do you view the crisis of confidence between the monarchy and the mainstream political parties at the moment?

We can only share our assessment with the political leaders here and the other important segments of society. But ultimately it is the political parties, perhaps the monarchy and others who have to decide how they would like to deal with this issue. Whether before the ceasefire or after, we are convinced that for the future of Nepal, being a parliamentary democracy, it is important for the monarchy and the political parties to work together. Cooperation is something they have to work out themselves. Our job as a friend is to point out how we see the situation but only if we are asked for advice or assessment. It is for the political forces here to decide how they move forward.

Recent Nepal-India talks on the transport and railways treaty have been inconclusive. What is holding things up?

What unfortunately emerges from the coverage of these meetings does not reflect reality. For example, on the railway agreement we actually managed



N. B. BHANDARI

“You can't put both the sides on the same level because the Maoists have used violence, while the government is a legitimate representative of the people.”

to thrash out all the pending issues except for a couple of technical ones because they were raised during the meeting and we had to consult our authorities in order to come to a solution. That has been more or less completed and fairly soon we should be concluding the agreement. Many people do not realise that India itself constructed the railway line under a grant. If we were not interested in the ICD [Inland Container Depot] project why would we have contributed? Secondly, the customs procedures that have been worked out are virtually the same as it is for any importer in India with only one exception—that the importer has to put in a declaration regarding the content of the container. There will be a seal, which will be put in Kolkata and if that seal is there it will get through the border without further checks.

The paper work too has been drastically reduced. If customs procedures are simplified, both sides benefit. Our efforts have been to negotiate a win-win situation for all concerned.

HERE AND THERE

by DANIEL LAK

WalMart vs Iraq



spoiled, petulant, rich child.

To add a little more perspective, even Nepal, one of the world's poorest countries by any measure, has a GDP approaching \$34 billion. That's with all our problems—depressed tourism, non-existent foreign investment, rampant tax dodging by the business class, bad governance and so on. Do I really have to point out that we don't have any oil? And we still come close to Iraq, that anchor of the axis of evil.

Or how about this? Most American states have far bigger economies than Iraq. Hell, California is richer than Britain, as rich as France. If California seceded from George Bush's America tomorrow, and you can't rule that out, it'd be the world's sixth largest economy. California alone has the military and economic might to crush half the Middle East. They can certainly baffle them

A largely innumerate correspondent gives economic pointers on a future war in Iraq.

with psychobabble while some LA gang members sneak up behind the opposing forces and frighten them into surrendering.

Another point to consider. Wal Mart, the World's Biggest Retailer, sold \$250 billion—250,000,000,000—worth of widgets and groceries last year. Almost five times the total economic activity of Saddam's Iraq. Wal Mart could beat the Iraqis. But there'd be no need to. The good people of Baghdad would shop 'til they dropped at the nearest whiff of the consumer cornucopia in a Wal Mart. And they could have their cars serviced at the same time by on-site mechanic. Most major American companies, most major western companies and many in India and China, tower economically over Iraq even in bad years.

Finally, how about this? Don't forget that Iraqi GDP of \$57 billion. Have you seen what the latest estimates are for the cost of the war? Best case scenario? Two or three weeks of relatively "clean" military activity and easy victory in Baghdad...\$95 billion tops. That's an American government estimate, probably on the low side and based on assumptions impossible to confirm in advance. But be on this: the US taxpayer will spend far more than the GDP of Iraq to give the place a new government.

That's what I call bad economics. And someone, somewhere is telling damned lies. ♦

But there seems to be extreme sensitivity on some issues like the proposed transport agreement and the extradition treaty.

Regarding the transport agreement, the Nepali side had raised the issue that they would have a problem including cargo vehicles in the transport agreement because there are transport interests here who feel threatened by unlimited opening to cargo vehicles coming in from India. So, we said OK, let's put it aside for the time being. Despite that there were people making statements about Indian transport entrepreneurs taking over the transport sector, etc. With the other part of the agreement that is related to the movement of passenger vehicles, we want to achieve as easy a movement between India and Nepal as possible. There are thousands of Nepali and Indians visiting each other's countries, this would make their travel easy. At a time when you are trying to promote tourism by organising road shows in India, the transport agreement should reflect that. The reports that India refused to give routes to Patna and Delhi are not true. All we said was since these two routes were raised during the meeting itself, we would have to consult the concerned state governments.

We have no problem with that. That's just a formality.

On extradition, there are certain aspects of the treaty that are standard in other extradition treaties around the world. The model treaty that the UN has does not exclude the extradition of third country nationals. Even before the discussions started newspapers started talking about no third country nationals being included. This can't be done. The fact is, if Nepal says that its territory will never be used for any hostile activity against any neighbour, how can you exclude a third country national? Indeed, we are still in the process of negotiation. It is something that takes time. We can't negotiate through the media. It is not accurate to say that there is an impasse.

There have been reports of Indian interests in hydropower sites in western Nepal. How concrete are these plans, and do you see the climate now more conducive to push through bilateral hydro projects?

We are always ready. The question is whether or not we are ready to focus attention on economic viability of certain projects. Politics can come later. India doesn't expect Nepal to subsidise power for India.

Also, India can't pay more than what it pays others for power from alternate sources. So, we have to work out between the two countries whether it is viable. If it is, let's go ahead. But if right from the beginning it is entangled in political problems how can we move? Given the fact that India has a very large and growing need for energy we are interested in purchase of power from Nepal. But it has to be done on the basis of very cool, calm and economic assessment. Both countries should benefit.

You have gone on record saying that India would not like to mediate on the peace talks between His Majesty's Government of Nepal and the Maoist rebels. Would India accept any third party mediation or facilitation in this context?

Let me clarify. This is really a matter to be decided by Nepal. My point was very clear: Nepal needs a supportive international environment. If you have a third party mediator, he will have to take a neutral stance between the two sides. We do not wish to see a violent insurgency and an established government put on the same footing. The third party may also inject its own agenda into the negotiations. There may be temptation for a donor to use aid as leverage in the process and this may be not in the best interest of Nepal. But this again, is a matter for Nepal to decide.

Is there a possibility for a new wave of Indian investment in Nepal?

There is tremendous opportunity for Nepal to attract foreign investment. Nepal's proximity to a large and growing market next door, its tariff free entry into this market, lower wage rates and a less congested infrastructure are advantageous. Nepal can certainly capitalise on these aspects. We get a lot of queries from Indian companies who want to invest in Nepal despite the insurgency. But you need to create the right investment climate and fiscal incentives.

The interest is there, that I can vouch for. What we need is to sit down together and see how we can remove some of the deterrents. In tourism, some five million Indian tourists go abroad every year. But Nepal hasn't been able to attract even a fraction of that. During the entire summer Nepal is like a hill station for the whole of north India. So, you need to be more pro-active and send the right message.

DOMESTIC BRIEFS

Nepali art exhibit in New Delhi

Siddhartha Art Gallery is organising the first-ever exhibition of Nepali art in India by taking the works of six contemporary artists to New Delhi next week. Himalayan Expression 2003 will feature 30 works by Uttam Nepali, Shashi Bickram Shah, Batsa Gopal Vaidya, Shashikala Tiwari, Kiran Manandhar and Ragini Upadhyaya (l to r in pic).

The exhibition will be opened by Royal Nepali Ambassador in New Delhi, Bhekh Bahadur Thapa on 11 March at New Delhi's Habitat Centre's Habart Foundation. "We've always wanted to do a show in India, and we are really excited about this opportunity to show contemporary Nepali art to the Indian public at such a prestigious venue," says Sangeeta Thapa of Siddhartha. The exhibition will go on till 20 March.



Japanese hope ceasefire will hold

The Japan Nepal Society held a seminar in Tokyo on 8 March on "Peace-building Nepal" in which Japanese academics, students, environmentalists and activists hoped that the current ceasefire would lead to lasting peace so that they could visit their "second home".

Speaking fluently in Nepali, Dr Abe Yasuo of NPO Kathmandu said, "We must all work together for peace to be restored. The Maoist violence has brought nothing but horror to the villages." The seminar was also attended by Sudip Pathak of the Human Rights Organisation of Nepal (HURON) who gave a brief history of the roots of the conflict. "People are still sceptical about permanent peace, but the ceasefire will hold this time," Pathak told the audience. Tanaka Toshiyuki of the Institute of Himalayan Conservation said things were getting better after the ceasefire and that his group's activities could now begin anew.

Hageshita Toshiyuki, a former JICA volunteer called on the Maoists to stop their extortion drives, and the civil service should be less corrupt. Okura Yoshitomi of Japan Alpine Club said that Nepal has always been a safe destination and the ceasefire had made it even safer. Yoshitomi was more worried about the recovery of the Nepali economy. Takaoka Shuncho condemned the destruction by the Maoists of the Mahendra Sanskrit Library and compared it to the destruction of the Bamian Buddha by the Taleban. (from Kumar Basnet in Tokyo)

Disappeared Nepalis

A report of the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to the forthcoming UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva contains serious allegations of violations. The report covers the activities of the Working Group during 2002 and concludes that the highest number of cases of disappearances in the world during 2002 occurred in Nepal (28) and Colombia (14). It has also reminded the Nepali government of its responsibility to take effective measures to prevent and terminate acts of disappearances and of its responsibility to conduct thorough and impartial investigations "for as long as the fate of the victim of enforced disappearance remains unclarified" and to bring perpetrators to justice. (<http://www.unhcr.ch/pdf/cnr/59/70AV.pdf>)

Vacancy Announcement

Nepal Swiss Community Forestry Project (NSCFP)

NSCFP/intercooperation is seeking to employ **District Project Coordinator (DPC) In Okhaldhunga district**

The NSCFP is a SDC funded project being implemented and managed by Inter-Cooperation. The NSCFP has been in operation since 1990 and is in its fourth phase. The Project supports District Forest Offices and non-governmental partner institutions in Dolakha, Ramechhap and Okhaldhunga districts for the implementation of Community Forestry Programme.

Position summary:
The DPC will be responsible for the following:
Technical, administrative and managerial work in the District Project Unit; Co-ordination of district level activities such as District Forest Office support, micro projects, and Participatory Action Research; Coordination and facilitation to achieve the goal of improved peoples' livelihoods and the improved position of women and disadvantaged group of people at the Forest User Group and organizational levels.

Qualifications and working experiences:

- Bachelor degree in forestry or natural resource management, and Masters Degree either in forestry or natural resource management or Social Science of Public Administration and Management.
- Proven working experience in Community Forestry or Community Development or Natural Resource Management Sector.
- Sound working experiences in administrative and managerial tasks;
- Experience of working with government and non-governmental institutions

Job Information:

- Duty station is Okhaldhunga
- Salary and benefits according to SDC/intercooperation norms;
- This post is for an initial one year but may be subject to renewal .

Further requirements:

- Below 40 years of age;
- Permanent government employee require to submit "No objection letter" and should resign if appointed in the post.
- Excellent command of English and Nepali both spoken and written;
- Excellent facilitation and report writing skill;
- Good command in computer skills;

Candidates only fulfilling all requirements are invited to send their application, including a full CV with the names of two referee, candidates' contact address with home & office telephone numbers in the following address:
Administrative Manager, NSCFP, PO Box 113, Kathmandu OR Fax No. 551701 OR email: adm@nscfp.org.np
Only short listed candidates will be contacted for written exams, interview and field exercises. Phone call will not be entertained.
Women are encouraged to apply.

Deadline for receipt of application is, March 27, 2003 (Chaitra 13, 2050)

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SOMEWHERE IN NEPAL



Concerns that a Maoist victory in Nepal would trigger a Khmer Rouge-type genocide here have always sounded scandalous to our comrades. So portions of US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Donald Camp's remarks at a conference in Washington DC earlier this month were bound to provoke rancour in rebel ranks. ("Motivated and ill-intentioned"? What did our comrades expect from a conservative think-tank's initiative titled "Preventing A Communist Takeover in Nepal"?)

For years, Maoist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai has been equating such apprehensions with a lack of awareness of either movement. "First, there is no independent and authentic account of events in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge available so far," he said in an interview with *The Washington Times* late last year.

"Whatever is emanating from the Western media appears to be highly exaggerated to us." That kind of candour with an avowedly right-wing publication was more than enough to rattle the neo-conservative flank of the Bush administration.

The Maoists' real objection seems to be to the aspersions such parallels cast on Prachanda Path. "We are no Khmer Rouge but the CPN (Maoist), who believe in no blind sping of anybody but in the creative application of the universal law of development of nature and society as embodied in Marxism-Leninism-Maoism to the concrete conditions of Nepal," Bhattarai added in the interview.

The Maoists' ire is evidently aimed at the messenger as well. The debate over whether the Khmer Rouge's brutality was the result of America's massive "secret" bombings to eliminate North

Vietnamese sanctuaries in Cambodia is still raging in the United States. For those who survived the legacy of American policies, the argument on the left went, the awesome task was to transform accumulated bitterness and suffering into impetus for socio-economic reconstruction of the country.

Champions of the Nixon-Kissinger policy on Cambodia continue to remind the Chomskyites that the Khmer Rouge was carrying out its totalitarian practices in areas it controlled from early 1972, three years before it overran Phnom Penh. So the "killing fields" had to be part of a deliberate policy.

Even if our comrades were to concede that the Khmer Rouge's record was so repulsive, they wouldn't run out of complaints. The Cambodian holocaust, the dispersal of rural populations,

Kampuchea on our minds

You can't compare apples and oranges just because they are painted red.

destruction of local religious practices and family structures, forced collectivisation of agriculture, torture and executions that claimed at least 1.7 million lives happened under a movement in full control of the country. You can't compare oranges with apples just because they happen to be painted red, right?

For years, the Khmer Rouge had Norodom Sihanouk at its head in order to burnish its international image. It was only after the Reds, overconfident in their invincibility, put the prince under house arrest that the "free world" began to hound them in earnest. Bhattarai's recent exegeses about how his movement is the first to have amalgamated the imperatives of the palace's nationalism and the political parties' democracy have an ominous ring. Those intent on preventing history from repeating itself as a curse can't afford to laugh off the slightest peril.

Nepal may be divided between two armies and two states, but only one can claim legitimacy in what is

still a unipolar world. Our internal combustibility, too, raises anxiety levels everywhere. (Here, too, the Cambodian parallel is striking. Rumours that a Thai actress had suggested that the famous temple complex at Angkor Wat in Cambodia should be handed to Thailand—a charge she denies—sparked anti-Thai riots in Phnom Penh in January.)

The Maoists' political commissars say they have gauged the influence of foreign forces on Nepal's internal political dynamics and don't want to see the country sucked into the vortex of a larger international conflict. If that's really what spurred the peace process, then it's just a few more leaps to the safest landing. Just look at Prime Minister Hun Sen and his band of ex-Khmer Rouge revolutionaries who are today the trustees of Cambodian democracy.

Nepal may be divided between two armies and two states, but only one can claim legitimacy in what is



by PUSKAR BHUSAL

BIZ NEWS

Business connect

Small Industries Promotion Programme (SIP-P), funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC), has started a campaign to inform Nepali entrepreneurs about the relevance of business services and to encourage them to buy them. The program was introduced to fulfill the need of expert manpower in the fields of management, market promotion and financial management for small and medium-sized industries, said Leon Heudret, project manager at SIP-P. "The program would provide a regular forum for conducting seminars and interactions between the sellers and buyers, apart from other promotional programs," said Nabin Dahal, program officer at SIP-P. He added that the forum would also conduct visiting-card exchanges between service-seekers and service-providers to help in building direct contact.

Nepal does the Dew

The much contested cola market is expanding to accommodate another contender. Varun Beverages (Nepal) will market and distribute Mountain Dew, a new citrus soda manufactured by Pepsi Cola. Mountain Dew is the third largest soft drink brand in the US, and is being promoted in the subcontinent as an "energy and exhilarating" drink and is the first-of-its-kind in Nepal. The brand will initially be launched in 500 ml PET bottles priced at Rs 25, followed by a unique smaller bottle of 200 ml costing Rs 9.

King-Size Yamaha

Morang Auto Works, distributor for Yamaha motorcycles for Nepal, is going to introduce its latest model, Libero, to offer customers more choice. Libero is not only fuel efficient at 85km per litre but also has more heft. The King-size Yamaha has been awarded the Most Exciting New Bike of the Year Award by *Overdrive* magazine. Available in four colors, Libero will be sold from 22 branches and sub dealers of Morang Auto Works throughout the country at an introductory price of Rs 99,990.



Here comes Mama

Fast Foods (Nepal), a subsidiary of the Chaudhary Group, has introduced yet another instant noodle, Mama100, to the Nepali market. Available with four seasoning spices, the company claims it also has nutritional value along with more noodles. Assistant brand manager Kumar Dipendra Sagar, says: "Consumers can now get more for less, a bargain that should entice most Nepalis."

Wanted: Nepali Managers

It's cheaper to hire (and fire) bideshi managers.

Ever wonder why there is a shortage of Nepali managers at the top, decision-making levels in many Nepali-owned big business houses?

You may say, rather uncharitably, that most Nepali managers are not good at managing their own careers. They tend to jump back and forth between the same old companies without ever acquiring depth or a track record. Or you may add that most seem to lack the quiet aggression, the polished professionalism, the business know-how and even relevant social networks to be the kind of profit-spotting managers that today's competitive marketplace demands.

You may further conclude that since almost all big business houses are run by old-line families anyway, there's no point for other Nepalis to aspire to top positions as long as the families boast of "command-and-control" sons (and increasingly, daughters and relatives) who are more comfortable working with non-Nepalis who they can shout at than with Nepalis who may be seen as internal rivals or even eventual spies for competitors.

Nepal's set of rigid labour laws that have been stuck in a time-warp since 1992—refined with further socialist hues in 1997—also slows down Nepali managers. As a result it's cheaper and even easier to hire, retain and fire non-Nepali managers on renewable contracts for seven years than develop Nepali employees into trustworthy long-term staff.

Take, for instance, the legally mandated hiring practice. The laws instruct Nepali businesses to automatically make new hires permanent after only eight months on the job. Such employees are further entitled to annual incremental salaries and perks, regardless of how their own firms fare in the marketplace. If profits go down, the already struggling businesses pays generous compensations to employees they let go. As lawyer Tanka Dulal of Institute of Law and Development in Anamnagar says, "Much of business strategy in Nepal is centered on tiptoeing around the labour laws to hire and fire people without incurring legal troubles."

Anything less, and the trade unions start raising hell, further damaging the bottom-line. Faced

with such unprofitable prospects and a legal system that spells out instructions in excruciatingly prescriptive detail, is it any wonder that most Nepali big business houses prefer to give the laws a short shrift and continue to bring in non-Nepali managers and get on with business as usual?

The spirit of the labour laws is to protect workers and employees. But as those laws stand in Nepal today, they serve neither party's interests. However you look at it, it's clear that for bodies such as the Management Association of Nepal (MAN) nurture and develop enabling conditions for Nepali managers, the work ahead can only be started by making Nepal's labour laws friendly to the market conditions. Who knows, one pleasant consequence could well be that more and more Nepalis may find it easier to climb up the corporate ladder through results that are awarded by the market than play the usual union politics on the shop floor.

(Readers can post their comments and suggestions to ashutosh_tiwari@yahoo.com)

"Nepalis have to take leadership."

How is DfID going to respond to Nepalis call for reconstruction and rehabilitation assistance?

Our overall objective of the program here is to do what we can to support the process of bringing about peace and security to this country. The conflict is the major obstacle to poverty reduction, which is our mandate. We are extremely positive about recent developments and we want to give them whatever support we can and in whatever way we can. We believe the development experience in this country has been deficient. It has not delivered to enough poor people in various parts of the country. The conflict and peace process now is an opportunity to correct that. What we want to do is to support the government to deliver visible and tangible benefits to these communities that have been ignored for too long. We have been working on various ideas for elements for RRR (reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation).

Is immediate humanitarian assistance on the agenda?

There is a very, very urgent need, particularly in the mid-west and far west, for food and cash through employment. In addition, work needs to be done to repair infrastructure and to support or restore—and in some cases, introduce basic services—to rural communities. So we are interested in providing support to programs that would do all of these things and do them quickly because the peace process can't wait for things to happen.

How about long-term partnership with the government on issues like poverty and unemployment? When do you think that can resume?

The conflict has forced us to re-examine the ways we were working in support of development in this country. It stressed the importance of making sure that development is actually delivered to people at the grassroots. That is what the government has to do. This is where we can help the government to address these fundamental issues. Addressing issues of inequality, caste discrimination, the position of women and the fact that a part of this country has been left out of the development process are our objective. The other thing, which really matters, is the issue of governance. We really would like to see and provide support to the government to take a much more effective position in relation to corruption and social exclusion.

Do you think the absence of elected local bodies will hamper implementation?

I think the government needs to put in place a committee at the district level that represents all elements of the community in order to implement programs in ways that are seen to be transparent and fair. Once the condition allows for it, we hope the government will re-introduce local elections.

How are you positioning yourself to help with the peace process itself?

The key thing is the responsibility of the peace process rests with the parties in the conflict. We would support this process in whatever way we can, but the leadership has to be taken by the people of Nepal. In other cases, development assistance has been useful in providing benefit to people that have shown the benefits of peace. We are also talking about providing short-term peace dividends. We would be happy to make available to Nepal expertise from other parts of the world.

What is the rationale behind the appointment of Sir Jeffery as special representative?

The mandate of Sir Jeffery James is to help coordinate the response by the international community to the situation here. He is a high-level official who will ensure Nepal receives sufficient priority in London and other world capitals, and he will be able to ensure that the British government's efforts [to restore peace in Nepal] are well coordinated and well targeted. We regard it as extremely important that the country comes together to support the peace process. We would very much like to see the political parties working with the government to restore peace in Nepal.

How badly has the insurgency of the past seven years affected development aid policy?

I don't believe that the problem here is lack of resources. The problem is ensuring that the government provides the right kind of leadership in order to attract resources from the international community. What the government has to do is to demonstrate its commitment on two things: firstly, to help the poor people of this country and secondly, come up with effective reforms to deal with obstacles in terms of poverty reduction. If the government is able to do that, it will unlock a much larger flow of foreign assistance to this country. I don't believe the problem is money. The problem is the evidence of serious commitment to reforms and poverty reduction. We want to see the government providing leadership around which the whole international community can come together to support them.

Have you seen this commitment after the 4 October move?

Yes, there have been some positive developments. We see a commitment to reform on the part of this administration, which we strongly support. The government has made some good official appointments, it confirmed the new management arrangement of the state-owned bank. It announced plan for privatisation of some key enterprises. It is looking for ways to do a short-term program of development assistance in the rural communities. All of these things will help alleviate poverty and we support them. We also support the action being taken by the CIAA to deal with corruption. We want to see more of it. We want these efforts to be continued and strengthened.

How serious is corruption as an impediment to development?

It's a major problem because it erodes both the people's confidence in the government and the government's reputation. It's part of the frustration that many people feel about the government and development in Nepal. It simply must be addressed not only by prosecuting people but also by improving the system that leads to corruption. There must be preventive actions.

DfID has pushed the privatisation process in Nepal. Has it been worth it?

We are considering further support in this area. I would be the first to acknowledge that our previous support was not successful. In the past, the primary obstacle to privatisation was political. There was no serious commitment at the political level for reform. I think the situation is different now. The ADB is supporting a program that will involve the privatisation and liquidation of certain public enterprises. We are considering supporting a few should the present government display a stronger commitment to privatisation.



Nepali Times interviewed David Wood, head of the DfID (Department for International Development) of the British government in Nepal. He spoke about foreign aid, corruption, reconstruction and the recent appointment of Sir Jeffery James as Britain's special representative to Nepal.

DfID itself is said to be top heavy, and uses old and inefficient models of aid.

You can hardly expect me to agree with that. I believe we are trying to change the way of our operations. For example, we have appointed a whole team of Nepali advisers for the first time and we no longer use the expertise of our UK-based advisers. We are also going to be more transparent. We are going to have better communication about what we do in Nepal. We have an enormously strong track record of what we have done and what we have achieved in this country and helped others to achieve similar goals. I do acknowledge the fact that people have not known what we did in the past. I want to address that and also want to diversify our staff in the office. We are in a much better position now to understand developments—both political and social—in Nepal.

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The lying Dutchman

MARIAN AARTS in AMSTERDAM

A court in the Netherlands on Wednesday heard the tape of a walkie talkie conversation in which Dutch climber Bart Vos admits he never reached the summit on 8 October 1984.

After his climb, Vos had become a national hero and was offered a job by IBM. But his success was always in doubt and became a full-blown controversy when his climbing colleague, Mariska Mourik, wrote a book called *One Meter Everest* in 1999 saying Vos never reached the summit. The controversy was taken to court, and a long-lost tape of the radio appears to have finally clinched the issue.

Vos is clearly heard saying on the tape: "We reached the south summit, but the saddle to the main summit was partly collapsed, so we went down in a hurry because time was running out." Vos' later ascent of Dhaulagiri in 1996 is also doubted.

In an investigative piece titled "Deceit of a mountaineer" published three years ago, journalist Milja de Zwart wrote that accounts of other mountaineers proved that Vos never made it to the top of Mt Everest in 1984. She also investigated the 1996 Dhaulagiri expedition and pieced together evidence from Austrian and Russian climbers who were also on the mountain with the account of the Nepali liaison officer to conclude that Dhaulagiri was also a hoax. "In fact Austrian Edi Koblmuller is quoted as saying, "The Netherland-man got a new nickname among climbers on Dhaulagiri as Neverland-man."

Vos always stuck to his story, saying Mourik was making up her allegations so her book would sell more copies. Mourik says she had suspicions all along about Vos' Everest climb, but she started investigating it after

In a dramatic court revelation, a Dutch climber's claim that he reached the top of Everest has been disproved nearly 20 years after the event.

similar allegations surfaced after the Dhaulagiri expedition. The Russians on Dhaulagiri, which included climber Anatoly Moshnikov, apparently declared Vos a "persona non-grata". On Everest, Vos says his guide, Ganesh Gurlung, waved at him from the South Summit when he was on the main summit. But many climbers later said this was nonsense because the main summit is not visible from the south summit. Vos also claims he did not see a teddy bear and a blue oxygen cylinder left by an earlier expedition even though climbers the next day saw it there. He did say that the Chinese tripod was gone, but he could have got this information from earlier expeditions.



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Far and away

Here, where arid hills stagger toward the Tibetan Plateau, the girth of the Kali Gandaki Valley widens. And along the deepest gorge in the world is enchanting Jomsom.

SRADDHA BASNYAT IN JOMSOM

The high mountains around Jomsom are redolent with myth and legend that have interwoven with the lives of ordinary people. The residents talk about Manang where the poet-saint Milarepa once rested his weary body. They speak of Tilcho Tal further northwest that blazes turquoise in the sunlight where, according to the Skand Purana, Sita spent a part of her exile.

Legends also say that more recent legends like Bob Marley and Jimi Hendrix came their way in the heyday of hippie culture (see box). Jomsom is a 20-minute flight from Pokhara—depending on the whims of the weather, or the fancies of RNAC. Private airlines Cosmic Air and Gorkha Airlines also fly the route which is one of the most spectacular flights on earth. The Dornier steers northwest and threads past Annapurna South, just grazing the top of Ghorepani pass so close to the treetops that you can see trekkers waving at you from Poon Hill. Through the pilot's windshield you can see the looming presence of Dhaulagiri. Then a sharp right turn to follow the Kali Gandaki past the snowcovered lower ridges of Nilgiri.

The number of visitors to Jomsom decreased by over 30 percent between 2000 and 2002, but it remains the most popular mountain destination in the ACAP area and is second only to Solu Khumbu.

Jomsom has the newest and best domestic airport in Nepal. When you get out of the terminal



The Pokhara-Jomsom flight is one of the most spectacular on earth.

you are on Main Street which is dotted with hotels, lodges—no prior reservations necessary. And there is something to suit every wallet. At the end of the main strip Sushila Gauchand has a lodge above her shop, Gauchand stores. Although tourism is not exactly enjoying a renaissance here, she continues to charge a standard Rs 150 for a double room. "We hope things will improve and I'll name the guesthouse after my daughter," she says as she deftly tosses buckwheat pancakes from a hot gridle.

Just next door is a Jomsom institution—Om's Home. Twenty years it was the first registered guesthouse. Soak in some sunshine in the courtyard where owner Bishnu Raj Hirachand remembers the salt traders who used to come down the traditional salt route along the Thak Khola Valley. They used to stop here for butter tea, later Peace Corps volunteers came. But it was only after 1976, as trekking took off that Om (and Jomsom with it) became so popular.

The price of rooms at Om's Home ranges from \$5-20, and each room has a colour TV and phone. Every two rooms share a bathroom that has running solar-heated water, a luxury after a few days on the trail. To heat the sauna, Bishnu uses Shaligram rocks, or ammonite.

The entire river is full of ammonite, proof that this land was

formed at the bottom of a prehistoric ocean. Globetrotters who want luxe will not be disappointed at the eco-friendly Jomsom Mountain Resort. Captain RP Pradhan's 102-room palatial resort dominates the hill overlooking the town. It may be large and expensive, but this is an eco-friendly place. Guests dine on homegrown organic vegetables fertilised by treated wastewater. The resort, with 70 percent of local staff, utilises local materials for the interior and offers local produce on the menu. The general manager Samanta Tuladhar sees a definite advantage in promoting the entire region and working together with the people of Jomsom.

In the spirit of co-operative growth, Jomsom hoteliers and Cosmic Air have devised a scheme where any flight into Jomsom on the carrier entitles the passenger to a free night stay in any participating hotel. With 20,000 coupons at the ready, Jomsom is ready to lure tourists back. "People come to Nepal to see the mountains so this is an ideal destination because we have it all here—natural beauty, ethnic diversity and all the facilities travellers today seek," says Tuladhar. And now it is all very accessible from Kathmandu and

Pokhara on Cosmic's fast planes. Jomsom is savvy to the needs of travellers. They have safe drinking water stations (to discourage bottled mineral water), police and ACAP check posts, telephone and radio communication, a post office, banking and money changer service, porters and ponies at negotiable rates and airline offices. And Jomsom is so clean you have a feeling you are in Zermatt or Murren in the Swiss Alps.

The main reason for Nepalis to go to Jomsom is because it is a stopover on the Muktinath pilgrimage. A two-and-a-half-hour walk along the Kali Gandaki with the legendary winds pushing you from behind brings you to Kagbeni. Overnight in this medieval town takes you back centuries. Next morning take the long climb up to Muktinath, admiring the awesome views of Tukucho Peak and Dhaulagiri to the west. And to the north is arid, mysterious and mystic Mustang. For anyone who has ventured so far, the magic of Mustang beckons—even with a hefty \$700 ten-day permit and an additional \$70 daily levy. Then there is Thorung La above Muktinath which is the hard and steep way to Manang and a solid one-day near-vertical climb to the 5,400 m pass.

For those who can't afford Mustang, the mountains around Jomsom have plenty of short day hikes with breathtaking views. Afternoons are best spent indoors, out of lashing winds that sweep



RUPA JOSHI IN JOMSOM
 Following the contour of the river bed, and perilously close to the cliffs on either side, the aircraft flies over the towns of Lete, Tukucho and Marpha. The plane's shadow skims swiftly over apple orchards, terraces of pink buckwheat, across the sandy banks of the Kali Gandaki. A tight bank on finals brings the swirling grey waters over the left window and deep blue sky out the right, then we are bouncing on Jomsom's recently-asphalted runway and roaring to a stop.

Outside, the clean and crisp mountain air seems vacuum-cleaned. Nilgiri's fluted ridges of ice tower over the deep green conifers at its base. In the morning, the sun shines from behind the mountain, giving it a hazy hue. But as the day wears on the mountain plain fertilised by the clouds, and finally when the sun dips behind the tall himals to the west Nilgiri reflects its rosy light.

Life bustles around Jomsom airport in the mornings. Farmers from neighbouring villages sell apples and vegetables to the locals and to passengers flying out to Pokhara. Porters mill about hoping to find prospective clients. And then there are the locals, who just come to watch who comes and who goes. Jomsom-based civil servants throng to the airport terminal catching up on Kathmandu newspapers that come on the morning flight. By mid-morning, the legendary Kali Gandaki wind tunnel starts to show what it can do. The planes stop flying, the sand starts flying and people huddle inside homes and hotels.

A signboard at the airport alerts everyone that Mustang is a no-polythene bag district. In fact, alert

through the hills. The introduction of eight noisy tractors and a few motorbikes occasionally breaks up the serenity of the recently stone paved Jomsom Bazar. It is an unnerving if apt reminder that Jomsom, for all its legends and myths, is real, accessible and really not all that far away anymore.

They were here...

IF I DON'T SEE YOU IN THIS WORLD I'll SEE YOU IN THE NEXT ONE DON'T BE LATE

In the hippie heydays everyone came to Nepal in search of Nirvana. Even wannabe hippies. Bob Marley is said to have visited Muktinath in the 70s, undoubtedly aided by some prime regional hash. Today, just past the temple of the eternal flame is his shrine—the Bob Marley Restaurant. A sign in Old Jomsom says guitar god Jimi Hendrix stopped there for a rest. And in a restaurant named after him is a marble plaque marking the exact spot where Jimi sat.

Wild and free in Jomsom

Spring is here, and this is the time to visit the gateway to Mustang.

police men and women in Pokhara airport will frisk and remove any plastic bags still in your possession. The streets in and around Jomsom are clean and litter free. The Mustangs' bid to free their district of the plastic menace that is plaguing the rest of the country has been assisted by the various organisations working in the area.

Every tree in and around Jomsom is heavy with red and yellow apples ripening gently under the balmy autumn sun. Exorbitant air freight costs, and the punishing mile ride to the road-head means that most of the fruits in the Kali Gandaki valley get either desiccated and candied or metamorphose into cider, brandy and wine.

The Kali Gandaki cuts the world's deepest gorge between Annapurna and Dhaulagiri. Geologists say the river is older than the mountains and sliced through the Himalaya as it lifted. The gorge is a funnel linking the Tibetan plateau with the Gangetic plains to the south, and this is the reason for the fierce winds. The prevailing wind means the trees all lean northwards, with their branches pointing towards Tibet. From time to time, the "wrong" winds blow in from the plateau and that is when the elders in Thini take it as a bad omen and gather at a special *chhorten* above the village to pacify the wind spirits with special offerings.

Flights out of Jomsom all depend on the wind gods. The first question in everyone's mind in Jomsom every morning is: "Will the planes come in today?" Sometimes you have to wait a week, as turbulence over the Kali Gandaki, clouds or snow cancel flights. Pokhara is a 3-4 day trek away along some of the most rugged terrain on earth. But there is always the view.

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Water for all

GENEVA - Privatisation of water services has had negative consequences in many countries, says the environmental network Friends of the Earth International (FOEI), which urges global resistance to the commercialisation and commodification of this essential resource.

The FOEI report "Water Justice For All: Global and local resistance to the control and commodification of water" released on Monday in which it outlines the precedents and outlook for the 3rd World Water Forum, to meet in the southwestern Japanese city of Kyoto from 16-23 March.

The water question is centred on its scarcity in many parts of the world, a situation aggravated by human activities that contaminate or degrade the water sources. FOEI said international financial institutions, along with multinational water corporations, "are paving the way" towards privatisation by making it a condition for granting loans to poor countries.

They are developing a global campaign for justice in access to water to protect water from privatisation and propose new models for ownership and management, based on collective or community systems that respond to the specific needs of the population. Other campaigns are focused on reducing consumption, expanding the re-utilisation of water, and restoring rivers and wetlands. (IPS)

Sexploitation of immigrants

MADRID - Although the European Union has given women access to spaces that they were previously denied, not everyone is reaping the benefits. Many of the excluded are undocumented immigrants who are marginalised, mistreated and sexually exploited.

There were a million prostituted women in Europe in 1997, according to the Transnational AIDS/STD Prevention among Migrant Prostitutes in Europe Project (TAMPEP). That figure has not been updated, but experts agree that the total grows dramatically each year. Every year, some 100,000 women from Eastern Europe, mostly under 18, end up as prostitutes in the EU, according to the intergovernmental International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

Most sex workers in Spain come from Eastern Europe, Colombia, Ecuador and Brazil, and are lured by false promises of jobs. When they reach their destination, traffickers take their identification documents, and in most cases rape the women before forcing them into prostitution.

TAMPEP detailed the proportion of immigrant women among prostitutes in several European countries (in descending order): 90 percent in Italy, 85 percent in Austria, 68 percent in the Netherlands, 62 percent in northern Germany, 50 percent in Spain, 45 percent in Belgium, 32 percent in southern Germany and 25 percent in Norway and Sweden. (IPS)

ANALYSIS

The Bubble of



As American and British troops prepare to invade Iraq, public opinion in these countries does not support war without UN authorisation. The rest of the world is overwhelmingly opposed to war. Yet Saddam Hussein is regarded as a tyrant who needs to be disarmed, and the UN Security Council unanimously passed resolution 1441, which demanded that Saddam destroy his weapons of mass-destruction. What caused this disconnect?

Iraq is the first instance when the Bush doctrine is being applied and it is provoking an allergic reaction. The Bush doctrine is built on two pillars: first, the US will do everything in its power to maintain its unquestioned military supremacy and, second, the US arrogates the right to pre-emptive action.

These pillars support two classes of sovereignty: American sovereignty, which takes precedence over international treaties and obligations, and the sovereignty of all other states. This is reminiscent of George Orwell's Animal Farm—all animals are equal but some animals are more equal than

others. To be sure, the Bush doctrine is not stated starkly. It is buried in Orwellian doublespeak. The doublespeak is needed because the doctrine contradicts American values.

The Bush administration believes that international relations are relations of power: legality and legitimacy are mere decorations. This belief is not false but it exaggerates one aspect of reality to the exclusion of others. The aspect it stresses is military power. But no empire could ever be held together by military power alone. Yet that belief guides the Bush

administration. Prime Minister Sharon of Israel shares the same belief and look where that has led. The idea that might is right cannot be reconciled with the idea of an open society. Hence the need for Orwellian doublespeak.

But nobody is in possession of the ultimate truth. Those who make such claims are bound to be wrong at times, and so can enforce their claims only by coercion and repression. Bush makes no allowance for the possibility that he may be wrong, and he tolerates no dissent. If you are not with us,

you are with the terrorists, he proclaims.

Of course, the presence of extremist views in the executive branch does not make America a totalitarian state. The principles of open society are enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and the institutions of American democracy are protected by the Constitution. There are checks and balances, and the President must obtain the support of the people. Nevertheless, the Bush doctrine could do untold harm before it is abandoned—as eventually it will be.

American supremacy

by GEORGE SOROS



Removing Saddam is a good thing yet the way President Bush is going about it must be opposed.

I see parallels between the Bush administration's pursuit of American supremacy and a boom-bust process or bubble in the stock market. Bubbles do not arise out of thin air. They have a solid basis in reality, but misconception distorts reality. Here, the dominant position of the US is the reality, the pursuit of American supremacy the misconception.

For a while, reality reinforces the misconception, but eventually the gap between reality and its false interpretation becomes unsustainable. During the self-reinforcing phase, the misconception may be tested and when a test is successful the misconception is reinforced. This widens the gap, leading to an eventual reversal. The later it comes, the more devastating the consequences.

There seems to be an inexorable quality about this, but a boom-bust process can be aborted at any stage. Most stock

market booms are aborted long before the extremes reached by the recent bull market. The sooner this happens, the better. That is how I view the Bush administration's pursuit of American supremacy.

The Bush administration came into office with an ideology based on market fundamentalism and military supremacy. Prior to 11 September, it could not make much headway in implementing its ideology because it lacked a clear mandate and defined enemy. Terrorism provided the ideal enemy because it is invisible and never disappears. By declaring war on terrorism, President Bush gained the domestic mandate he lacked.

But his policies have already caused severe unintended consequences. The EU and NATO are divided. The US is perceived as a giant bully throwing its weight

around. Afghanistan has been liberated, but law and order

has not been established beyond Kabul. Indeed, President Karzai must be protected by American bodyguards. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict festers.

Beyond Iraq an even more dangerous threat looms in North Korea—a crisis precipitated by President Bush in his eagerness to break with what he deemed to be Clinton's appeasement. Bush repudiated the sunshine policy introduced by President Kim Dae Jung of South Korea and included North Korea in the axis of evil.

Rapid victory in Iraq with little loss of life could bring about a dramatic change in the overall situation. Oil prices could fall, stock markets could celebrate, consumers could resume spending, and business could step up capital expenditures. America would end its dependency on Saudi oil, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could become more tractable and negotiations could start with North Korea without loss of face. That is what Bush counts on. But military victory in Iraq is the easy part. It is what comes after that gives pause. In a boom-bust process, passing an early test tends to

reinforce the misconception that gave rise to it. That is to be feared here.

It is not too late to prevent the boom-bust process from getting out of hand. The UN could accede to Chief Inspector Blix's request for several months to complete his inspections. America's military presence in the region could be reduced, but it could be beefed up again if Iraq balks. Invasion could take place at summer's end. This would be a victory for the UN and for the US whose prodding made the Security Council act resolutely. That is what the French propose, but that is not what is going to happen. President Bush has practically declared war.

It is to be hoped that Iraq's conquest will be swift and relatively painless. Removing Saddam is a good thing; yet the way President Bush is going about it must be opposed. In the long run, open society cannot survive unless the people who live in it believe in it.

(George Soros is Chairman of Soros Fund Management and the Open Society Institute.)

(George Soros is Chairman of Soros Fund Management and the Open Society Institute.)

OPINION

by DEEPAK CHOPRA



10 ways to avoid war

CALIFORNIA - It is simple to see that war is always a failure, a perilous risk that leads to immense misery, and to be belligerent in the name of peace is a form of war. Recently I was caught by surprise when a newspaper reporter in Memphis said to me, "You have stated that there is a creative solution to every problem. What's the creative solution to prevent the bombing of Iraq?"

My answer caused a minor stir—both of outrage and support—

because I suggested that if Pope John Paul, Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Dalai Lama, Nobel Peace Laureates and other luminaries went to Baghdad, bombing would be impossible. My hope was that symbols of peace might be a startling reminder, if they physically travelled to Iraq, that humans exist for a purpose higher than war.

The war mentality is blinded by fear, which fuels aggression and violence. The other rationales are pointless, and when we obsess over them—whether the US is acting as saviour, imperialist, world policeman or cynical oil power—the net effect is to forget that war is

The choice to change history or become its next victim faces us right here, right now.

about fear and using violence to "solve" it.

If you step out of the war mentality, there are more than a few creative ways to avoid an invasion of Iraq. There are dozens, in fact. If every person who doesn't want war sent in his or her suggestion, tens of thousands would materialise. Of these I'm sure that five or six would be completely workable. Let me mention ten to begin with:

- 1. Congratulate President Bush on already succeeding. Saddam's bluff has been called. Disarmament has begun. If pressure is kept on with US military presence, without dropping bombs, further progress will occur.
2. Assign prominent figures of peace to be in Iraq constantly, along with UN inspectors. Let them address the world every day on the value of peace.
3. Ask 100,000 international well-wishers to bring aid to Iraq's children in person to Baghdad.
4. Start a global Peace Corps of volunteers who will go to Iraq to fulfill any humanitarian need.
5. Offer MTV, CNN and Nickelodeon free to any Iraqi household with a TV to make them feel like part of the world.
6. Sponsor 25,000 Iraqi high schoolers to live for a year in

- Europe or the US.
7. Keep tenfold the current number of UN weapons inspectors on the ground in Iraq and have them report every two weeks.
8. Teach American students the pros and cons of globalisation, instead of instilling the false belief that nationalism is the answer. War is a logical and horrendous extension of nationalism.
9. Withdraw US troops from regions where seeing an American army uniform inflames hatred.
10. Open a Disney World somewhere in the Middle East. Half the population is under the age of 15 and in danger of cultural isolation. Find a way to expose American children to the children of the world.

Whatever you think of these particular suggestions, the most obvious thing is how easily they arise once you stop being infected by the war mentality. Weapons of mass destruction are disposed of when they are seen as irrelevant. The choice to change history or become its next victim faces us right here, right now. (IPS)

(Deepak Chopra, founder of the Chopra Centre, is a board member of the Alliance for the New Humanity and an author.)

COMMENT

by NINA KRUSHCHEVA



Stalin and memory

"The duty we owe to history is to rewrite it," said Oscar Wilde. As a Russian, I am familiar with rewriting history. The Soviet Union spent a century touching up the warts on Lenin's nose, revising harvest statistics and making the dying Yuri Andropov look less cadaverous. But in dealing with Stalin—dead 50 years this week—most of us now rewrite history by pretending that a chunk of it never happened.

Don't get me wrong: Stalin has not disappeared like people sent to the gulag. He has not been blotted from our memories the way Trotsky and Bukharin were cropped out of official photographs. Once, as I was getting out of a Moscow taxicab, the driver lifted his scarf to show a Stalin photograph pinned to his jacket. I thought about this silly gesture. He seemed to represent a true underground, someone who felt shocked and betrayed by the world that arose out of Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika.

But clinging to the past uncritically is probably better than allowing the past to dominate the present. After all, it was history that incited Yugoslavs to turn their corner of Europe into a medieval slaughterhouse of rape, pillage, and siege. On 28 June 1989, St Vitus' Day, while most Eastern Europeans were daring to dream of a non-communist future, a million Serbs prepared to leap into the past with Slobodan Milosevic, descending on the Field of Blackbirds in Kosovo to mark the 600th anniversary of Serbia's defeat by the Turks.

History, of course, is not some medicine with a label cautioning about the proper dosage. History is what gives nations their character, their institutions, their identity. It can be misread or misused, but never rationed. Milosevic did not give the Serbs an overdose of history; he simply administered it as they imagined it, undiluted by criticism.

Plainly, the best thing is to confront history—and oneself—forthrightly, and to draw the most honest conclusions. But what are the right conclusions when you are dealing with history as bloodstained and corrupting as Stalin's era? Some are ready to look at the past with an open mind, in pursuit, if only, of self-improvement. Others are more concerned to use it to justify failure or even aggression; this is history as self-pity. Still others indulge in simple self-delusion.

Russia has alternated between rampant discussion or absolute silence and self-deception about Stalin.



Self-improvers are the rarest. Recently, only Germany, or rather West Germany, unambiguously confronted its past in order to remake itself. It took the enormity of the Holocaust to bring about the necessary self-examination. Anything less terrible might not have been enough.

For Russians, long split between Slavophiles and westernisers, victimhood vies against self-examination where history is concerned. In 1989 and 1990, as communism collapsed and glasnost took hold, many Russians hungrily sought the "facts." What caused the famines of the 1930s and were they planned? How many people died in the purges? What did Khrushchev actually say about Stalin in his secret speech of 1956? Historical facts became front-page news.

For others, the demise of the political system meant the end not merely of the only historical narrative they knew, but of an empire and a sense of national identity as well. Into that void stepped right-wing

politicians and historians portraying Russians as the victims of a "false culture," with foreigners responsible for all problems. Many now find it difficult to know what to make of seven decades of communism. More have given up trying.

It will never be easy to produce a version of Russian history that all Russians agree on; competing conceptions of national identity militate against it. But some other countries sloughing off the skin of communism are only too ready to adopt a new history—even one based on fancy and invention—to suit current needs.

Ukraine provides an example of this. Does Ukraine have a history? Well, the place certainly does, but is the place a country? Ukraine means, literally, "on the edge." It is more a frontier than a region, let alone a country. So it is well suited to an invented history—and who better to supply it than a Ukrainian Diaspora eager to boost the land of their forefathers? It may be no accident that independent Ukraine's first history textbook was written in Toronto, not Kiev.

So far, Russia, a country of little moderation, has alternated between rampant discussion or absolute silence and self-deception about Stalin. These swings keep many people (not only the elderly) voting communist. German Gref, Russia's young minister of Trade and Economics, responded to a sympathetic question about his parents being prisoners in the Gulag by saying, "So what, all were prisoners then."

In truth, few people other than the Germans are ready to be honest in their Vergangenheitsbewältigung, their coming to terms with the past. Most others dwell on the laudable, suppress the ignominious, and embellish the rest—or else pretend that the past doesn't exist at all.

Before succumbing to pessimism, however, there is something else to consider. Although it is impossible to have too much history, it is possible to spend too much time looking into it. For like the past, the future also needs to be written. If Russians are silent about Stalin, it may be because we are busy writing that history of the future. (Project Syndicate)

(Nina Krushcheva, the grand-daughter of Nikita Khrushchev, teaches history and international relations at the New School University and Columbia University.)

Lion's share

SYDNEY - The Australian government is denying claims that it bullied East Timor to grab a large slice of a \$48 billion gas and oil deal signed between the two countries recently. The Australian Senate passed the Timor Sea Treaty (TST) after intense debate but Greens leader Bob Brown accused the Australian Prime Minister John Howard of "blackmailing" the Timorese prime minister, by insisting that if the deal was not signed in Dili, the Australian parliament would delay the ratification of the treaty.

Prime Minister Howard called the claims of blackmail "totally false", although leaked documents showed contentious discussions between Canberra and Dili. Timorese Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri told the Australian Broadcasting Corp (ABC) that "a lot of pressure was done from the Australian government, which was not helpful for the whole process."

Under the Australia-East Timor agreement, at the first slated project at the Bayu-Undan field, East Timor will get 90 percent of the revenue and Australia 10 percent. The conflict arises with the neighbouring Greater Sunrise field, which Australia claims falls 80 percent within Australian waters. East Timor would be entitled to only 20 percent of the revenue from this venture. (IPS)

Renewed fears

MANILA - Insecurity and fears of renewed and intensified conflict in the Philippines' restive south are rising, a week after the 4 March bombing outside an international airport there.

Government officials are blaming the biggest Muslim separatist group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) but MILF spokesman Ed Kabalu denied involvement in the attack, which he called "barbaric". On Monday, Defence Secretary Angelo Reyes said MILF may be classified a terrorist group. Before the blast, the Philippine government was working on a draft peace agreement with the MILF with the support of Malaysia and Libya. The bombing also occurred just as the Philippines and the United States worked on a plan to hold "military exercises" in Jolo, Sulu and Mindanao, where all Muslim rebel groups have a presence. After the bombing, President Gloria Arroyo asked Congress to pass an anti-terror bill that allows warrantless arrests and searches.

The incident, which killed 23 people and injured more than 130 others, damaged not just the economy of Mindanao, where the airport at Davao City is located, but also the rest of the country. The Philippine peso plummeted to its lowest level in history on Thursday, hitting 54.85 to a US dollar. (IPS)

Weak support for public health

NEW DELHI - India's continued lack of commitment toward public health is reflected in the government's latest budget, which public health experts and funders say is pushing it deeper into the privatisation of services that overlook the needs of the poor.

India's National Health Policy of 2002 acknowledged that public health investment in the country had actually declined from 1.3 percent in 1990 to 0.9 percent in 1999, the decade in which it undertook a program of liberalisation and structural adjustment. But where the policy had called for "the injection of substantial resources into the health sector from the central budget," the 2003-2004 outlay on the sector has actually been pared down even further. The figure may be closer to 0.8 percent of GDP after the current budget, according to initial assessments by Ravi Duggal of the NGO Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes (CEHAT).

But private healthcare providers were delighted by income tax and customs concessions to the rapidly expanding hospital industry, which caters to the well-to-do, with a view to making the country a "global health care destination". (IPS)

Salsa It's alive in Kathmandu Sensual, Romantic, Hypnotic, Vibrant, Passionate. LATIN Rhythm! April batch start on Tuesday 1st, 2003 6 pm for beginners and 7pm for more advance group at Hotel Shangrila Contact for reservation and private classes Diego Sáenz at 9810-46430 email: salsapasionnp@hotmail.com SALSA THE DANCE WHERE MEN LEAD AND LADIES SHINE Come enjoy the Salsa Cabana Night at Hotel Shangrila Date: 28 March 2003 Entrance Free

The grandsons also rise

Himal Khabarpatrika, 28 Feb-14Mar 2003

हिमाल

Nirvan has been learning the ropes as a management trainee at the international department of Chaudhary Group for the last few months. He knows this will give him an advantage as he works his way up the ladder—right to the top. Nirvan is Binod Chaudhary's son, and grandson to Lunakaran Das.

The third generation of Nepal's business houses are turning their lucrative family operated businesses into corporate empires. The leadership of business groups like Soalte, Jyoti, Chaudhary and Golchha are gradually being handed over to the next generation which is bringing with it youthful exuberance and new management techniques. This could be viewed as a natural progression—children falling into the family business—except the "family businesses" are massive conglomerates and the "children" are often foreign-educated ambitious youngsters with fresh ideas and strategies that often don't sit well with their elders.

Nirvan says a certain amount of tension with his seniors is natural. "The difference in approach between my father and me is obvious in activities like dealing with employees and in marketing style," he said. The young entrepreneurs admit that they often have differences of opinion either due to a generation gap or simply different perspectives. Some of them have even gone into new spheres of business, not their families' traditional ones.

Sanjaya Golchha had to wait for several years before getting permission to float IT Nepal, a private information technology company. He believes the young generation is

more aggressive and must acknowledge in good humour the advice from older members in the business.

Rajendra Khetan, the son of Mohan Gopal Khetan who heads the Khetan Group, admits he has been at loggerheads with his father at times. Vice chairman and spokesman of the FNCCI, the media savvy Rajendra says "When I joined the business, our group had diverse interests. I insisted on running the show alone by doing away with partners but my father wanted to keep the status quo." With the entry of Rajendra and his brothers to the family business, the Khetan portfolio has diversified to include beer, noodles and finance.

Pravin had no plans of returning home after earning his degree in the US. The son of Shyam Bahadur Pandey of Shangri-la Hotel, Pravin changed his mind and came home at age 24. Within six years, he had developed a reputation as an efficient hotel entrepreneur. Pravin became the youngest person ever to head the travel forum when he was elected chairman of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA).

Rajan Shakya, 28, has also stepped into the footsteps of his versatile father, Karna Shakya. Rajan is now running the legendary Kathmandu Guest House in Thamel. After taking over as chairman of the renowned Soalte Group from his father, Prabhakar Shumsher, Siddhartha has also been actively engaged in diversifying his group into dynamic areas like hydropower and textiles.

Saurav Jyoti takes calculated risks. He would rather have his existing businesses run professionally than diversify into new fields. The grandson of Mani Harsha and son of Padma

Jyoti, Saurav assists his businessman-cum-academic father and also heads several enterprises under the Jyoti Group including the Philips account, the Himal Iron and Steel and Honda.

Shekhar Golchha joined the Golchha Organisation, set up by his grandfather Ram Lal Golchha, 14 years ago with a management degree from the UK. Today he is considered a major entrepreneur as the managing director of Him Electronics, where he has 300 employees and oversees a business worth Rs 1 billion annually.

At the Chaudhary Group office that overlooks the capital, Nirvan's cousin Megha is dividing her time between studies and business. A student of commerce at Poona in India, Megha is a "trainee director" at Norvic hospital that offers state-of-the arts services to heart patients. Megha may soon be the first woman to head a Nepali business house.

It is easy to dismiss these scions of business. After all, they were all born with silver spoons in their mouths. But their birth did not guarantee a berth in the upper echelons of their family businesses, they had to earn it like everyone else through hard work, attention to detail and by being street-smart. "The Golchha organisation is a platform rather than a paternal gift," says Sanjaya Golchha, who worked his way up from the accounts department through marketing and operations at Hulas Steel. No one cut him any slack just because he was the boss' son, he says. While in London, Nirvan Chaudhary worked as a waiter in a Nepali restaurant for experience. Pravin Pandey still has the £24 that he earned at the Nepal-run Montis Restaurant.



CP Khetan



Saurav Jyoti



Shekhar Golchha



Nirvan Chaudhary



Sanjaya Golchha

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"If the king had made a well-planned move, a republican state might have been established in 1991."

-Shailaja Acharya of the Nepali Congress in Kantipur on 11 March.



Balloon: "Shall we eat it or not...!"
Basket: Talks

स्वस्वस्वस्व टैमिक Spacetime, 9 March

Minor marriages

Dinesh Gaule,
Himalaya Times, 11 March

Kasai Gau in Ramechhap stands as a challenge for the Ministry of Health, which has been trying to raise the age for marriage among girls. According to VDC documents almost 95 percent of the girls are married off by their parents before they turn 14. According to Bhim Bahadur Kasai, parents arrange early marriages for their girls because they believe that they will gain karmic merit if a girl is offered in a marriage before she gets her first periods. Kasai's neighbours say there is little benefit in educating daughters, and so they choose to relieve themselves from familial responsibility towards daughters who are often viewed as a burden. In Kasai Gau even the boys marry early—by 16 most of them have tied the knot. Seventy-year-old Kali Maya says a lot has changed since her time when she became a bride at seven years of age. Kasai Gau is close to district headquarters and the nearest school is a 15-minute walk. None of the girls have ever been enrolled. "The development slogans haveno effect on these villagers," says Sudarshan Rava, a local. The eldest daughter of Man Maya nearly died in childbirth last year at age 14. This year, her younger sister, only 13, will be married. Their mother, Man Maya, says she cannot defy tradition.

Talks soon

Budhabar, 13 March

Interview with Dina Nath Sharma, Politburo member of the CPN (Maoist) after a joint meeting between 11 leftist parties on 11 March.

How did the meeting go?

It was a goodwill meeting, we did not decide on anything concrete. We agreed to launch a movement against the king's move.

What kind of movement is this going to be?

We will work towards a peaceful resolution, that is why we agreed on a ceasefire. But we are concerned the government has not been able to create a conducive environment for talks. Internal difficulties may have prevented them from announcing a code of conduct.

How do you think this meeting will effect the proposed peace talks?

This meeting will have a very positive effect on the peace talks. We believe it will help the country move to a forward-looking political solution.

Are you willing to talk with the Chand government?

We never said we would talk with the Chand government. All we agreed to was to open doors to communication with the present regime. We are talking about a dialogue between the old and the new regime. The current ceasefire is between two armies.

When do you think the peace talk will happen?

We don't know the exact date, but we hope it will be soon. We are ready to sit for negotiations as soon as the government makes an atmosphere that will foster peace talks.



Holy cow!

Animal rights in Nepal?

I'll never forget learning how to ride a motorcycle in Nepal just months ago, and realising that there are more hazards here than one would expect—me coming from the West and all. For example, I never thought I would be negotiating two-ton bulls on my daily commute to work in Lalitpur. Not to mention goats, chickens and the menagerie of street animals found between work and Boudha.

All this was exciting until I found out the fines involved when a white boy hits a cow on a motorbike, and that literally herds of cows wander the streets of Kathmandu unchecked, and for the most part unowned. Legend has it that the male of the bovine species is left to wander as a "holy cow" should. I remember thinking, "How exotic...how Asian..."

And then I met Parvati. Parvati is one of many cows at the SPVCAN (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals—Nepal) shelter. Parvati was found on the streets of our fair city blind, diseased and pregnant. She had been hit by a vehicle and had survived as so many cows do here, eating trash out of the

gutter—one of the many "street-cleaners" of Kathmandu. She is now an icon at the shelter, her and her calf, who sits in the sun munching hay, awaiting adoption. On the day I met Parvati I met another of her kind: dead legs protruding from a plastic tarp.

All of this was a bit shocking to say the least, coming from a country where there are leash laws for smaller four-legged creatures, and cows are relegated, fairly or not, to pastures with fences to keep them out of traffic and harms way. But isn't it for "shock" that foreigners come to Nepal? Yet yesterday morning the shock of seeing a just-beheaded goat still baying with its last breath was a bit much right before breakfast. And right there on a city street, where one might expect a sidewalk to be. Still, I am a student of world religions, and I deeply respect the cultures of others, even if that culture includes what seems to this alien resident, as cruel and unusual punishment to animals considered sacred and not.

My experience here in Nepal has given me pause for reflection

on animal care and animal rights, something that back in the West was not much of a priority for me because animal slaughter there is done clandestinely behind barbed wire fences. Most meat sold in stores come with all traces of animal features like feet and head removed. There are probably more shelters erected for homeless dogs and cats than homeless people each year and the expression "kicking the dog" is just a metaphor, and not a way of life: as I witness almost everyday in the shadow of the monastery of my new neighborhood. No, in some of the more developed countries, the evidence of cruelty is more hidden, covert and perhaps "under control".

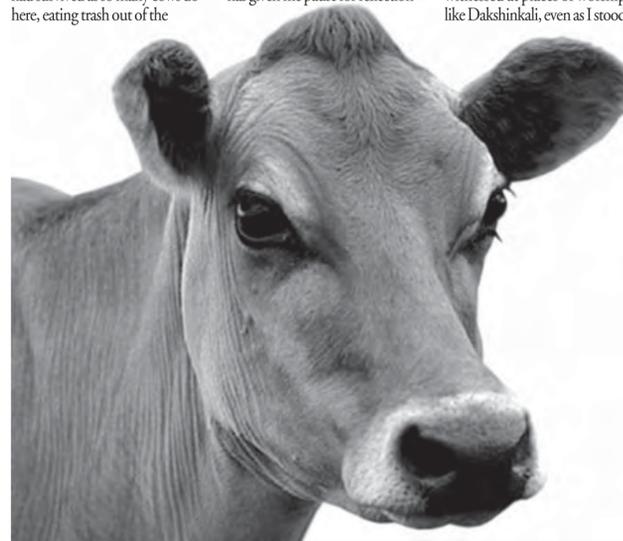
So what can a visitor do in this land of so much beauty? So much wisdom and culture stems from sincere devotion to the gods, even if the blood spilled stains the opinion of visiting travellers. Well I, for one, am not about to go on record (along with thousands of others who have) as an anti-sacrifice activist. I will never forget the devotion and faith I witnessed at places of worship like Dakshinkali, even as I stood

toe-deep in pooled animal blood pooled. I can't deny what happens there is worthy of respect. Yet on the other hand, after seeing a Nepali TV broadcast on the last Gadimai Mela in the Bara district where thousands of buffaloes are sacrificed, I must say I have questions. But these are questions for my Nepali friends to answer, not for my kind as these issues are deeply imbedded in faith and the religious traditions of Nepal.

I'll never forget growing up Irish in a Greek orthodox neighborhood. As a young seven-year-old, I became fast friends over a period of months with a goat tied in the neighbour's yard, only to find out on Easter afternoon that my friend was on the dinner table as the centre of edification. Did I craft a sign and head for a picket line? No, I just began questioning my mother's stew, which I still relish and appreciate even today after decades of being a vegetarian.

Now, after living in Nepal for a year or so, I look optimistically into the future for balanced animal-rights laws, perhaps a "lease" law for all roaming city animals and while I'm daydreaming, perhaps the "dog-tagging" of licensed pets to curb rabies. One must applaud what's already being done: the new Meat Act in Nepal and the efforts of SPVCAN, who is ready to open another shelter in Siphel this month—a larger facility to help homeless and sick street animals, as well as an adoption and relocation centre. These are all steps to enrich an already rich culture without undermining religious ritual. ♦

(Jigme Gatton is the pen name for an aid worker in Nepal, who is now skilled at cow-dodging Kathmandu city streets and can be found occasionally giving fresh hay to Parvati, the blind homeless cow at the SPVCAN Shelter, 467953. www.fospcan.com.np)



In the March Himal

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GOVINDA BARTAMAN: POEM FOR PEACE

Govinda Bartaman's poetic voice is gaining strength with experience. The poem below was written during the darkest hours of the emergency, and in it he speaks as finely as any Nepali poet has done on the pain and destruction wrought by the insurgency and counterinsurgency.



DISPLACEMENT

Melancholy marches like policemen
Peals of silence resonate in
the obscene remoteness
Letters nod off on sheets of paper
The snow-peaks, mountains and valleys
mind over the harvests of the dead

Days are lost unheeded
The evening lamps slowly burn out
There are no newborn babies' cries anywhere
nor their mothers' voices
A cold wind blows
Tree branches and branch leaves tremble in the dark
There is no rustle of squirrels
The cats sit with eyes aglow
There is a fluttering of bats but no cocks' crows
Moments pass There is no sign of light

Progressively the jails widen
Their walls grow tall
Prisoners cackle in their sleep
The guards are busy issuing warnings
Fleeing from the feathers of pheasants
colors take refuge in history
No painter sweeps a brush through this drab world
The face of time glimmers on the canvases
It has eyes and the nightmares of millions
Not water but fire rages in the river
The color of snow has blackened
as of the souls of the constitution and law

As though all this were not of earth but of heaven
as though water were melting
and mountains solidifying
as though by killing the poor
the country could all at once become rich
as though the ruins of the future
were scattered over the lap of the present time
like an unconvincing fairytale that
grandfather used to tell long ago
sitting on the side of a courtyard
or like the dreams of a madman
the displacement of hearts from people
the displacement of touch from awareness
the displacement of screams from suffering
the displacement of the waking state from the waking state

How elaborate a thing is this? How unkind?
Over and over the questions come
Over and over the answers run away

As preparations for the peace talks get underway, Bartaman's poem can remind us to remember what is at stake for us personally and collectively, should Nepali society have to return to the nightmare of the past year.

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ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Mapping of Modernity in Nepal** 5-18 March at Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal. wavetex@wlink.com.np for details.
- ❖ **Tribal/Village Rugs and Kilims from West Asia.** Exhibition and sale on 23 March from 11AM-6PM at Sammelan Hall, Shangri-La Hotel, Lazimpat. 432830
- ❖ **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.
- ❖ **Francophony Festival** showing young Nepali artists from 17-21 March at Alliance Francaise.

EVENTS

- ❖ **Grand Finale of Jazzmandu 2003** at Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu 8PM on 15 March. Ralph Thomas, Afro Dizzi Act, Natalie Williams. Entry Rs 500. 491234
- ❖ **Ideas of March with DJ Soykom** from Belgium at Via Via Travelers Café, Paknaji 9PM onwards on 14 March
- ❖ **Mountain biking** Nagarkot to Shankhu on 15 March. \$20 pp with Scott Mountain Bike, guide, lunch, support vehicle, helmet and first aid. Kathmandu Mountain Bikes 539900/ 545990
- ❖ **Ex AVM party** at AVM 1PM on 29 March Tickets Rs 300 single, Rs 500 couple. Contact AVM School
- ❖ **Rhapsody an evening with Sukmit Gurung** presented by Himalayan Enfielders and Himalayan Classic Motorcycle Club. 6.30 PM on 17 March at Shangri-la Village, Pokhara.
- ❖ **Annual KVPT Fund-Raiser Dinner 2003** at Soaltee Crowne Plaza on 27 March. Tickets Rs 2000 pp. Available at KVPT patan (546055), Soaltee Crowne Plaza (272555), Chez Caroline (263070)
- ❖ **Reiki Level 1 Healing Workshop.** Himal Books, Baber Mahal. 17-18 March. 541613

DRINK

- ❖ **Splash Bar & Grill** Exotic cocktails, panoramic view. Happy hour 5:30-7PM. Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu. 411818
- ❖ **St Patrick's Day Celebrations** at Paddy Foley's Irish Pub, Thamel on 17 March. Live music, malt whisky, prizes. 416096
- ❖ **St Patrick's Day** Noon till late 17 March. Thomas Kilroy at 1905, Kantipath. 225272

MUSIC

- ❖ **Live music** at Jivin' Joe's Restaurant, Kupondole, every Friday at 5.30 PM. Movie every Saturday at 4.30 PM. 539909
- ❖ **The Steam** Injuns with Abhaya on Friday, The Strings on Saturday at The Red Onion Bar, Lazimpat. 416071
- ❖ **Friday Nites** at Jatra with The Strings. Free entry, Thamel

FOOD

- ❖ **Wood fired pizzas** on the terrace. 15 percent off beer. Rum Doodle, Thamel. 443208
- ❖ **Breakfast deal** Smoked Salmon Scrambled Eggs and Filtered Coffee Rs 100. Weekends in March. 9-11AM. Thomas Kilroy at 1905, Kantipath. 225272
- ❖ **Chez Caroline**, Baber Mahal Revisited. Weekend designer brunch. 263070/264187
- ❖ **Celebrate womanhood** 50 percent discount for ladies on Wednesday at Olive Garden. Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu. 411818
- ❖ **Dwarika's Hotel** 40 percent discount in March at Krishnarpan.Pool open. 479488
- ❖ **Saturday Asian Brunch** at The Café, **Sunday European Lunch** at Rox Restaurant. Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 491234
- ❖ **Great Value Lunches** at the China Garden. **Pizza Promotion** at the Alfresco. Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 273999
- ❖ **Café Mitra goes Chinese** Wednesday with guest chef Ranjana Yonzone from 5 March. 259015
- ❖ **Traditional favourites** at The Sunrise Café for breakfast and lunch. Hotel Yak & Yeti. 248999
- ❖ **Traditional Nepali Thali Lunch** at Patan Museum Café 11AM-4PM. 526271
- ❖ **Saturday BBQ Lunch** at Club Himalaya Nagarkot. Rs 500 per person. 680083/ 80

GETAWAYS

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NEPALI WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

VIS-12-03-2003 04:00 GMT

The low pressure system this week has moved on, but another pattern is approaching over Pakistan as seen in this satellite picture taken on Wednesday morning. Also take a look at that cyclone in the southern Indian Ocean approaching Mauritius, a more perfectly formed spiral storm is hard to find. Back in the subcontinent, look for cloud cover in the lower Himalaya early next week when moisture arrives on the next system. As the temperature rises, we will also see more convection storms in the afternoons along the foothills and especially in the high mountain valleys. Maximum temperature continues to climb.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
27-09	25-09	26-10	27-10	27-10

BOOKWORM

Regional planning and development Jibar Joshi (PhD)
Lajmana Joshi, 2003
Rs 285

This book is a revisit to basic concepts and some of the theories of regional planning. It urges planners to make use of regional planning which has otherwise remained partial and diverse in nature. The author argues that the present global economy is influenced more by regional theories than any other.

Poverty migration and HIV/AIDS in Dadehdhura district (Nepal)
Dr Giorgi Pkhakadze
ILO and HMG Ministry of Health, 2002
Rs 150

AIDS affects workers in their productive prime, and the communities and enterprises who depend on them: it is a workplace issue and a development crisis. The author attempts to demonstrate the complexity of the links between poverty, labour migration and HIV/AIDS in the far western district of Dadehdhura.

Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara and his symbolic mantra "Om Mani Padme Hum"
Ranjana Bajracharya (PhD)
Bhakta Nanda Bajracharya, 2003
Rs 200

Avalokitesvara is the most popular Bodhisattva figure in Mahayana Buddhism for his universal love and compassion. The book deals with his charismatic ideals, versatile characters and forms. It also describes the symbolic meaning and meritorious virtues of his mantra.

Courtesy: Mandala Book Point, Kantipath, 227711, 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 and 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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Sat	0615-0645	BBC Reporting Religion
Sun	0615-0645	BBC Agenda
Daily	2045-2115	BBC नेपाली सेवा
Daily	2245-2300	BBC नेपाली सेवा
Sun-Fri	0740-0800	एकैछिन् (रेडियो पत्रिका)
Sun-Fri	0800-0830	डबली (विषयगत अन्तरक्रिया)
Sun-Fri	2000-2030	आजका कुरा (समसामयिक विषयमा बहस)
Sat	0800-0830	शान्ति अधियान
Sat	1930-2000	आचार विचार (अष्टाचारविरोध सहकार्य)
Sat	2000-2030	कटनीतिक सञ्च

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EVENT



ALL PICS: HIMALAYAN ENFIELDERS

Bullets for peace

Vrrrooom. Make way for the Himalayan Enfielders.

SIDDARTH LAMA

The lure of the open road is irresistible for people who combine wanderlust with a love for machines. Not just any machine will do, and in our corner of the world the true biker opts for the Bullet. Just ask the Himalayan Enfielders whose rallying point is a workshop in Lazimpat set up by six Bullet enthusiasts. They come here to discuss the finer points of their machine, tune up their "babies" and

find ways to share experiences through their common passion for riding. The Peace Ride 2003, an event that combines all those elements for Enfielders, will set off 15-18 March on an 800km tour across the country, riding for peace. A bike tour may not hasten peace in the country, but the spirit that exists amongst Enfield riders—they number over 100—is the biggest motivation behind this event. They believe that if a group of people brought together by a common

passion can make an effort for peace, then it cannot go to waste however small the effect on the larger scheme of things. Proceeds of this event will be donated to charity and the bikers hope to raise enough to make a positive impact from doing something they enjoy. The appeal of the Bullet lies not only in its reliability and robustness, but also largely part in its aesthetic appeal and uniqueness. Originally manufactured by the British company Enfield, the design of the Bullet has not changed much since the first of its kind rolled out of the factory in Chennai nearly half a century ago. Since then there have been minor modifications and improvements to its design, but its heart, a rock solid 350cc four-stroke engine (with later 500cc and 535cc variations) has remained the same.

Proving its robustness and reliability in driving conditions in the Indian subcontinent, it has a following unmatched by any other motorcycle in South Asia. The looks are retro-cool, like something out of an old Marlon Brando movie. The Bullet predates



aerodynamic engineering, and one look at the generously curved bodies explains why their owners have given so many bikes feminine personas. Its distinctive sound ranges from a reassuring thump while idling to a powerful animal roar while accelerating and the ride quality is different from any other modern motorcycle. It's a bike with character, and sets against the other slick and standardised motorcycles in the Nepali market—with names ranging from the familiar to the largely unpronounceable—one can begin to understand the appeal of a Bullet. Enfield enthusiasts say the pleasure of a Bullet is not about commuting, convenience or fuel efficiency—it's about an experience once had is always appreciated.

Being a unique it attracts an interesting breed of riders. Past events organised by the Himalayan Enfielders have seen noticeable camaraderie between riders despite their varied professional and personal backgrounds. With an attitude geared towards sharing, the bikers are far removed from the stereotypical outlaw biker gangs. Family members will go along for the Peace Ride and the event is open to anyone who wishes to join. The bikers will be the outlanders for a group of dedicated VW Beetle drivers who will also be taking part in a parallel event on the same route. So if you see a posse of bikers cutting a swathe through the Pokhara highway early next week, be sure to give a wave and honk. ♦

(To join call the Himalayan Enfielders at 428650 and 981050432.)

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Carlsberg



Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Here are the main points again

And for those of you who have just tuned in, here are today's main headlines once again:

Ghode Jatra staring committee formed

KATHMANDU - The Ministry of Housing Around has formed a 108-member Staring Committee to organise this year's Ghode Jatra on Tundikhel which, in the interest of the government's general policy of austerity and belt-tightening, will be combined with Gai Jatra, reports RSS.

"The idea is to start lumping our festivals together since there are too many of them anyway," one of the 14 vice-chairmen of the publicity

subcommittee whose name begins with "P" said under condition of complete animosity. Addressing a press interaction program at the Reporters' Club, he said several bulls, which had registered their names for the equestrian events and vice-versa, had been disqualified for having fake birth certificates, and would be charge-sheeted in due course. The interaction program was chaired by Rishi Dharmala.

Instead of the cavalry making gravity-defying jumps over Maruti Gypsies in the Obstacles Event, participating cows this year would be required to take part in a paragliding contest by jumping off a Skytruck flying at 9,000 ft above Tundikhel.



Nepal wins Submerging Nations Cup

BY OUR ULTRA-NATIONALIST UNSPORTSMANLIKE COMMENTATOR KIRTIPUR - Nepal has won the Submerging Nation Cup by thrashing the living daylights out of Maldives and Bhutan. Nyah-nahna-nyahnyah.

Puny Maldives could only muster a measly 34 runs in 23 overs (Harharharhar! So funny, yar!) while brave and patriotic Nepal made a fitting and easy reply by reaching a glorious 35 runs in just 7 overs with no loss (Hallelujah! Jubilation and Exultation! Long Live the Motherland!). Some of the members of the Nepali squad wanted to

symbolically nip off the noses and ears of the vanquished teams as souvenirs, but were dissuaded from doing so by the umpires. "I know this is a tradition in these parts, but ICC rules don't allow it," the umpire said afterwards. "It's just not cricket."

In its second game against tiny Bhutan, splendid Nepal posted its highest-ever international total of 397 (Take that, you fellow-SAARC Member!) and beat Bhutan by 353 runs (And that!). One keen observer of the sports scene who did not want to be named because he is, in fact, this scribe, observed keenly: "Finally, Nepal has emerged as a submerging nation."

Nepal Issues Travel Advisories

BY OUR COMPLETELY UNDIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

KATHMANDU - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of His Majesty's Government has issued travel advisories to Nepalis to defer all travel for the unforeseeable future because of an uncertain international situation caused by the lack of passports. All non-essential travel has therefore been suspended unless such travel is absolutely essential for purposes of illegally overstaying.

Nepalis who just really have to go, must exercise maximum restraint when visiting inner city Chicago, south-

central Los Angeles, Miami, Brixton and parts of Copenhagen. The ministry says that although there are no instances of Nepalis being specifically targeted by heavily-armed street gangs, visitors are nevertheless warned to exercise extreme caution in those cities, and register with the nearest Royal Nepali Honorary Consul General in case emergency evacuation is required. The ministry has also warned visitors to wash their socks regularly while travelling in these uncertain times, since they will be required to take them off at security checks and malodorous socks may set off the smoke alarm.

NEPALI SOCIETY

Yogi's Sarangi



Shishir Yogi's music can be best described as "Modern Nepali folk-gazal". That automatically puts his music above the pop audience, but going by the reception to his debut album "Pahichan" it looks like Nepali folk gazal (a genre that traces its roots back to Narayan Gopal and Bhakta Raj Acharya) is finding new lyrics and music to suit the times.

The sombre texture and pathos of gazal goes well with the general down mood in the country caused by violence and conflict. Sarangi

is a poem written by poet laureate Madhab Prasad Ghimire 40 years ago, but its words ("We won't know the murderer, because he doesn't have blood on his hands") set into music by Shakti Ballab have a haunting resonance today.

The second track uses a poem by Kshetra Pratap Adhikari penned after the royal massacre ("We did not believe it, we thought it wasn't true, we thought it was a rumour, now will this wound ever heal?"). Its dusky slow-paced gazal arrangement with music by new-comer Suresh Adhikari, evokes a spine-

tingling mood that takes us back to that night of 1 June 2001.

Shishir Yogi was introduced to music by his mother, who was the most sought-after singer in his home village in Dang every Teej festival. "I used to be a cry baby," Yogi recalls, "And my mother says I always stopped crying when she sang to me." Music came naturally to him, but Yogi still needed a guru. So, when he got to Kathmandu he pestered a reluctant Ambar Gurung for two years until he agreed to take him on as a student. "If there is one person in the world I am terrified of, it is Ambar dai," Shishir admitted during the launch of Pahichan last week.

Pahichan (Recognition) has come out under the Music Nepal label and has a surprising maturity, elegance and professionalism for a debut album which has won it critical acclaim.



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