

**NAVIN SINGH KHADKA** 

he ceasefire has held for nearly

appointed government was

four months, the royal

specifically mandated to streamline

development, the country is cash-

rich. Yet, everything is at a standstill.

With only six weeks to go till the end of

the fiscal year, 30 percent of the development

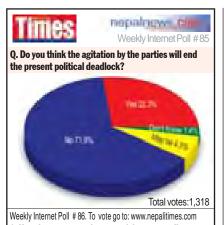
budget is unspent. Donors, who foot three-

quarters of this money, are getting worried

about the government's inability to spend

the bureaucracy and deliver



















extended the opening hours of the Patan Museum Cafe. From 1030 - 1930 hrs For reservations and more information



OE>Y

Development expenditure (agriculture,

money when the need is so great. "There is an extreme lack of urgency in Kathmandu," said one donor agency representative in the capital. "If a crisis like nis doesn't get people going, you wonder what will."

Infrastructure destroyed by the Maoists need to be rebuilt, entire districts in the midwest require basic services, and all over the country development projects which have languished for the past five years have to be kick-started again. But Kathmandu is paralysed by inaction.

The irony is that the country's macroeconomic situation has never looked better. Buoyed by remittances from Nepalis abroad, our foreign currency coffers are enough to pay for 11 months of imports. Liquidity grew by six percent compared to last year. The government's cash savings have gone up from Rs 740 million overdraft last year to a surplus of Rs 1 billion. Remittances have more than made up for the fall in tourism receipts and export.

transportation, health and education) is down, but regular expenditure (salaries, civil service, overheads) is up by Rs 3 billion from last year. Defence spending is up by Rs 1 billion to to more than Rs 7 billion this year.

As happens at the end of every fiscal year, the development section of the Finance Ministry is a busy place these days. Up to Rs 700 million is being released every week as various agencies try to beat the deadline to prevent their allocation from lapsing. So how come we are cash-rich, but development-poor?

Despite the ceasefire, the ground situation in the districts is still far from normal. (See report from Salyan District, page 4-5.) Mobile health clinics and government teams have been prevented from entering Maoist-controlled areas. Extortion, intimidation, especially at schools, is still rife. Even aid agencies are reluctant to send their staff to outlying areas.

And then there is the absence of locally elected bodies. Ever since elected village and district councils were dissolved by the Deuba government in July 2002, there has been a development vacuum at the grassroots. In the next phase of the agitation against the royal move, the five main political parties want to re-occupy them.

"The lack of development is not caused by the security situation, the real reason is that there are no peoples' representatives at the district and village level," says Krishna Sapkota of the Federation of District Development Committees. Without the local councils, no one is accountable to the people and there is no one to push the development agenda, he adds.

The Kabhre DDC, for instance, hasn't yet received a Rs 3 million allocation for rural

The Khlanaga VDC building in Jajarkot burnt down by Maoists and never rebuilt.

roads the government had promised earlier this year. The reason? "Since we are not there to push, no one takes any notice," Sapkota says.

At the VDCs, most secretaries are absent. Officials from line ministries don't venture beyond the district headquarters. "Money is being spent on paying salaries not to fund development projects," says economist Dilli Ra Khanal. "These bureaucrats simply have no interest in doing anything to help the village because they are not accountable to the people.

While the peace talks go into the third round, it is clear that neither side is really interested in development, reconstruction and rehabilitation. The Maoists want political issues resolved first, and development figures even less in the agenda by the political parties.

Donors are taking time to wait and watch whether the present peace will last. They want to be sure that the country doesn't go back to war, and also who will implement the projects in the absence of local representatives.

Richard Vokes, country director of the Asian Development Bank sums it up: "People are not willing to go to the rural areas because the situation is not normal yet, and there are no local bodies to implement projects."

**Nepal is awash in** 

cash, but we can't seem to spend it on rebuilding the country.

The civil service, too, doesn't want to take any chances as long as there is no peace agreement in black and white. With officialdom taking a laid back attitude, there isn't much the aid agencies can do.

"There is certainly a bottleneck there," says Gert Meinecke, the Danish Charge d'Affaires. "There has to be a political solution so that the

**Editorial** representatives who are accountable to Party time their communities can do the job."

Prakash Jwala p4-5 Ground realities The National Planning Commission estimates that Rs 2 billion will be needed for reconstruction of

OENY

infrastructure destroyed by the Maoists. "Some donors are ready to foot the bill, but they want this separated from the usual development budget," Shankar Sharma of the NPC told us. ♦



EDITORIAL

STATE OF THE STATE Reconciliation roadmap
King Gyanendra must trust the mainstream parties and get them to imagine a New Nepal.

It bears remembering that the army still

hasn't recovered the bulk of the arms that

was looted from its Dang barracks. The

as a deterrent to remind the public and

the Maoists about its strength and

armed forces under control.

battle readiness.

army uses its programs on state television

post-conflict society, it is essential that a

legitimate, civilian government keep its

Unfortunately, the government of king's

nominees is neither representative nor

accountable. For Lokendra Bahadur

Chand, King Gyanendra's word is his

command. That is his job description.

#### PARTY TIME ne look at the war-torn streets near Ratna Park, the pitch batles between riot police and protesters, and it may seem like we have jumped from the frying pan into the fire. A vivid present always distorts a hazy past, and we only need to look back at headlines in this paper from one year ago to remind ourselves of the

worries about the future. It's getting ugly out there. When you see riot police running amok, cars being smashed and universities closed, it is natural to wonder where we're headed this time. The pessimism comes from the seemingly-intractable polarisation between the palace and parties. The name-calling has started crossing civilised norms, the king gives serial interviews to senior editors, and even the military drags itself into the fray. The two constitutional forces that logically should be on the same side to counter

dark days of blind slaughter that this nation suffered. Today, we are blasé about

the absence of violence, as headline-grabbing street confrontations create new

the forces of extremism are on a confrontation course that threatens to undermine This is a totally unnecessary dispute. It benefits no one. And there is a solution within easy reach. If two groups that have butchered each other for seven years can be seen sitting together and smiling away at Shanker Hotel, then there is no reason why seemingly-responsible political parties and a constitutional monarch cannot do the same. The real problem here seems to be a communication gap and a total breakdown

of trust between the parties and palace which neither is doing anything to redress. A government of national unity made up of the main parliamentary parties and even Maoist representatives may not be able to resolve the country's longterm problems. But it can be the first step in leading us towards necessary constitutional reforms and elections. Will the current agitation of the political parties help us to move in that direction? Not likely. In fact, it is looking more and more like an agitation that is fueled by a desperate realisation that the people don't care much for People's Movement II. Yes, Nepalis are desperate, jobless and hopeless, but they don't see the political parties as offering a solution. They don't want to rock the boat for fear that the ceasefire will break down. They see through the pro-democracy slogans, and are convinced that it is just a code-word for the parties to resume their feeding frenzy of the past 12 years.

The public opinion is also against a return to absolute monarchy. In his meetings with editors, King Gyanendra wondered why no one believes him when he keeps saying he doesn't want absolute power. Maybe it is a problem of perception, and more needs to be done to take that message to the public.

It is good to see that the political parties finally have the unity that eluded them in the past 12 years. But it is an alliance of convenience borne out of self-preservation, not geared to untangling the political stalemate. It is the unity of the left-out. If there was proof that the political parties now have a new vision to carry out a great leap forward, if there were glints of statesmanship and accountability then there may have been more people out on the streets. But no such luck. The more things change, the more they remain the same.

That is the central tragedy: this country needs more democracy, not less. The solution to this stalemate is a sovereign and empowered citizenry that can force the parties, the palace and the comrades not to hold the Nepali people hostage to their whims.

he cease-fire between the Maoists and the government still holds, and it could be because it benefits the rebels. While the Royal Nepali Army has been confined to within 5 km of barracks, fully armed Maoist cadres roam the countryside unhindered.

The government has released almost all Maoist detainees, but the insurgents haven't stopped abducting and extorting ordinary citizens. Off the record, government ministers claim that they are footing the bill for feeding the Maoist militia. Yet, the Maoist fund raising

> The nominated government lacks the moral authority to keep the army and the police within constitutional limits. Last week, the Royal Nepali Army went after the political parties with a thinlyveiled threat. The armed forces should not be dragged into day-to-day politics, but there was a hint of helplessness in the army's press statement. The Defence Ministry (whoever it takes its order from in the present context) must refrain from using the coercive forces of the state in settling political scores. The Royal Nepali Army can do with a little less controversy over its role and reliability.

Apart from the armed forces, the armed insurgents and the government, other important players on the national scene need to get their act together. The immediate challenge is to restore peace, but institutionalising peace is going to be much more complex than that. If some of the vexing social issues of common concern being voiced by Matrika Yadav and Deb Gurung aren't addressed satisfactorily, any pact between Baburam Bhattarai and Badri Prasad Mandal will be meaning-

Mainstream political parties must begin by accepting that they have completely failed in creating the necessary condition for democratic evolution and social inclusion. Calling for another People's Movement is all very well, but how does "sovereignty of the people"

ensure justice for the historically excluded? Neither the Nepali Congress nor UML, two large parties of the fiveparty coalition running the political struggle against October Fourth has enunciated its vision for the future.

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King Gyanendra appears to want an enhanced role in the affairs of the state, During the democratic transition of a if possible within the ambit of a constitutional monarchy. We also know what the Maoists want: a roundtable, an interim government, and a constituent assembly to lead to their ultimate goal of establishing a people's republic and the dictatorship of the proletariat. But what do Messrs Girija Koirala and Madhab Nepal want after either reinstatement of the house or the formation of an all-party government?

> Do Girijababu and Comrade Madhab seriously think that their agenda of bringing the institution of monarchy, and its faithful instrument, the Royal Nepali Army, under parliamentary control is possible under the present highly-skewed balance of power? Perhaps they need a reality check. Mere tinkering with the constitution can't shake the hold of an entrenched power elite if the ground reality itself isn't fundamentally altered Mainstream parties must incorporate the aspirations of the marginalised majority if they are to challenge the traditional ruling classes in Kathmandu

The privilege of making the first move towards national reconciliation still rests with the king. Students throwing stones and breaking window panes may get more attention, but it is the other multitude quietly doing homework or playing in the streets that determine the future of society. Maoists have had their moment. King Gyanendra must trust the mainstreamers and inspire them to imagine a more inclusive, more just, and a truly democratic Nepal. Only such a society can continue to honour constitutional monarchy as its cultural icon and a symbol of national unity.

OPINION

**NATION** 

The great game espite the ceasefire, there is a sense that war clouds have been gathering over Nepal again. This is not a war where bullets will fly, but it does look like a fight to the finish. The battle lines have been drawn between the king and five political parties. The state is now using unnecessary force to suppress peaceful demonstrations by the five political parties. In Kathmandu and in the Districts, political leaders and cadre have been beaten and bruised by the police. In some places the army is goading them on. Both are over-reacting against the burning of the effigy of regression, which they mistake for an effigy of someone else.

For their part, the political parties are

constitutional limits of monarchical powers.

They think King Gyanendra has gone back

revolution by getting actively involved in day-to-day politics. They are threatening to

find common cause with republican-minded

Both sides have to share the blame for

misconduct as elected leaders for the past 12

years. They made such a mess of it that the

King Gyanendra, on the other hand, has

made the parties' malgovernance an excuse

to stage an undeclared coup, once again

bringing the monarchy back into active

the present impasse: the political parties for

forces and push for a constituent assembly

accusing the palace of crossing the

on the understanding of the 1990

if the king does not correct his

mismanagement of the country and

people started having doubts about

"regressive" step.

mocracy itself.

In places like Nepalganj the attack on peaceful demonstrators has been brutal, and it is clear that this will lead to more resentment and anger. The agitation will now go to the grassroots, as the dissolved local government units are re-occupied.

It is true, King Gyanendra appointed this government and he can change the prime minister and the cabinet with the snap of his fingers. Meanwhile, the Maoists are sitting on the fence and will likely throw in their lot with whichever side is likely to come out on top in this struggle.

At stake is real political power which the parliamentary parties lost since the October Fourth royal sacking of an elected prime minister. Since then, the country is being ruled by the palace through a puppet government consisting mainly of Panchayatera throwbacks who will never do anything without the palace's express command.

It is indeed a great tragedy for the nation the constitutional forces that should be on the same side are at each others' throats. Both the parties and the palace say they support parliamentary democracy and a constitutional monarchy. Logically, they should be pitted against the group that doesn't believe in either: the Maoists.

This wasteful bickering has further ruined an economy that is already in shambles. Narayanhiti and Baluwatar are hell-bent on demeaning and insulting the political parties, and they are trying to portray all the leaders as self-centered and corrupt, out to loot the nation. They threaten to use the property declaration files to throw more leaders into jail for the abuse of authority and amassing ill-gotten wealth in the last twelve years.

The king and political parties are fighting for the hearts and minds of the Nepali people. **neither if they** keep fighting.

process. The Indian media has been giving some unsolicited advice to the king, citing other countries where monarchs have

abdicated. This is a bit far-fetched for Nepal, but the message is clear: a king in 21st century politics should remain above the fray. The field of politics should be left to democratically elected people's representatives, however incompetent. The process of democracy has an in-built capacity to sort out the mess. If it was not for the ongoing peace

politics thereby undermining the democratic

process with the Maoists, the political parties would have gone on the offensive earlier. They just did not want to be blamed for derailing it. For their part, the Maoists now seem to have reconciled themselves to a constitutional monarchy, so it should not be too difficult for all three forces to come to an understanding. The Nepali people do not need this kind of a showdown. We need both

by DHAWAL SJB RANA

16 - 22 MAY 2003 **NEPALI TIMES #145** 



the monarchy and the parliamentary parties, but in this current fight we will have only one victor.

Another point of disagreement is over command of the armed forces, which our constitution has left to the king. This has traditionally given the monarch leverage over the use of the military. In all other constitutional monarchies in the world, the army is under command of elected civilian leadership.

All is yet not lost, and it is not too late to change things. This crisis can be an opportunity for true reform in our political structures. The following step-by-step measures could be taken by all three political forces if we genuinely want to get out of the current quagmire:

- 1. The king should invite all the major political parties including the Maoists to form an all party national government and get them to sit around the much-alluded roundtable' for talks towards a peaceful solution to the Maoist insurgency, resulting in free and fair elections at the earliest possible time, so as to bring back the derailed democratic process on track.
- 2. The political parties and their leaders must act and speak in a responsible manner, adhering to the constitution and making amendments to it, so as to accommodate and mollify the sentiments of the minorities.
- 3. The Maoists must not miss this opportunity to convert the ceasefire into permanent peace, for which there is an overwhelming public desire. This will springboard them into mainstream politics, since the people are ready to reward any force that ends the conflict. We are forgiving people and may be willing to overlook—just for this once—all the bloodshed, misery and bereavement their revolution has caused. If the Maoists wait too long, it may be their turn to miss the bus.

The current movement launched by the five parties could be the impetus for the palace, parties and rebels to steer country back on track to progress, inclusion and social justice. ♦

(Dhawal SJB Rana, PhD, is the former UML mayor of Nepalgani.)

#### LETTERS

through compulsory donations at

Despite a relative calm in the

mid-western mountains (see page 4-5),

the risk of resumption of violence by the

ended on an optimistic note, there is no

guarantee that the Maoists will not go

back to the jungles. When Maoists

withdrew from negotiations in

November 2001, the very first

target was the Royal Nepali Army.

Maoists still exists. Even though the

second round of talks between the

government and the insurgents has

fixed rates goes on.

POWER PLAY 'The price we pay for power' (#142) by Navin Singh Khadka gave a clear picture of the internal economic transition within the NEA and the companies selling "white coal" to it. That's half the job done. Now you should clarify why we pay among the highest per unit price for electricity in the world. It seems odd that a country so rich in hydro potential has not made that a primary source of energy but imports costlier petroleum products. If we use our abundant resources carefully, the student protests and political harangues could be avoided. We need not pander to the conditions set by 'donors' like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. Hydropower should take a page from the community forest program. The government must encourage the participation of local people.

Abhas Parajuli, Kathmandu.

Times of India carried the piece 'Wanted: US Role in Nepal, Sri Lanka'. It says, "Clearly neither country seems to have what it takes to tackle the situation on its own." It further goes on to declare that "the US needs to exert more overt pressure to get both parties back on the track". This is a direct warning for us to shape up, or else. It seems the Indian intelligentsia has already formed a sends out a veiled threat that it clear opinion of the inability of our could use this connection for own politicians and leaders to clean up the mess created in the past decades of stagnation and corruption. Rationally one cannot blame the Indian media for such comments. In the present day of international brotherhood and

global policing, it means the big

younger brothers squabbling,

down the doomsday path. Either

brothers have to end their

The 6 May edition of The

even if there is nothing to gain from it. Either our leaders lack even this much vision to see that India has changed its foreign policy doctrine, or they are knowingly leading our country

way, they are making a grave

AT Sama, India The rebuttle by Todd Carter of Panda Energy (Feedback, #144) to your article on Bhote Kosi sidesteps the issue of the company using pressure tactics through Congressmen close to President Bush's Texan constituency. In fact, Carter future trade and quota retaliation. If Panda has never requested payment for the extra energy, then why the pressure on NEA?

N Thapa, Kathmandu

**MANIFESTO** Having read 'Maoist Manifesto' (#142), I am truly amazed at the lack of vision of the leadership. Their populist call to end recruitment of Gorkha soldiers in the British and Indian armies highlights their short-sightedness. Unemployment is growing thanks to a shattered economy, which, by the way is a direct result of the

power, they would have to perform or face the wrath of the masses. How are they going to accomplish their lofty ideals to provide opportunity, equality and freedom to the peasants, proletariats or disenfranchised? The answer lies in employment. Hopefully, the Maoists will learn from the mistakes made in the former Soviet Union, China. Cambodia and Nicaragua. Collectivism and nationalisation

> only contributes to inefficiency, a bumbling bureaucracy and inertia. We had enough of that with the ancien regime

during the Panchayat years. If insurgency. If the Maoists came to the Maoists are serious then they need to shed their propaganda and become more pragmatic. Idealism may rally demonstrations, but it cannot win revolutions. Only a tiny percentage of Nepalis are considered rich or bourgeois. Confiscating all their wealth and levying taxes will not suffice to feed the vast majority. Our comrades need to modify their political philosophy. Propaganda for the sake of propaganda will only lead to shallow victories. SN Singh, Kathmandu

LAK THAT I agree with Daniel Lak's remarks in 'So far so good...' (#143) on the current role of political parties in our kingdom. Whether directly or indirectly, they are solely responsible for the mess we find ourselves in. We have already witnessed them squabbling over tax-free vehicles, telephone lines and government house. We can not expect anything better from

has arrived to find alternatives. Surya Bhattarai, by email

 Daniel Lak's article 'Closure is a good thing' (#142) is not "disappointing", as Cherry Bird states in Letters (#144). The near total failure of the INGO and NGO system is a shame in itself. Nearly two decades after watching Nepal, the current state of the nation is an underachievement. A private company survives on results. In the development sector, people are paid irrespective of results, and SUVs, conferences and meetings are billed to the office. I wish there were more public discussions on development. Lak's column is late in the coming but welcome nevertheless. Thank you for publishing such "disappointing. simplistic ... irresponsible" articles. Keep them coming. Navyo Eller, Kathmandu

**CLASS ACT** 

It was ironic that in the picture accompanying 'Class of 1970'

'extreme left' and Upendra Devkota 'second to the right'. With that picture we didn't even need the article. Bhattarai has shown us that a good student doesn't make a good leader. Nepalis frustrated with 12 years of thugocracy want change, any change. But the action of Maoists in the last 7 years, especially the execution of community leaders and teachers because they were suspected of being spies, is inexcusable. It is clear that the 'people's war' was just another tactic for power. The life of the common man will not change, that will come from institutionalising people's rights and a different attitude. The grassroots have to be involved, and threats, intimidation, kidnapping and murder cannot usher in Bhattarai's vision for a modern Nepal. As for Upendra Devkota, he has drifted to the right. However, if he does have

the ear of the king, he needs to

dissuade the monarch from

veering too far away from

(#142) Baburam Bhattarai is on

themselves. Gone are the days of authoritarian monarchy Prakash Bhandari, by email.

system may have to be repaired

but the people are able to govern

**JUST UGLY** Thanks to Navin Singh Khadka for "The good, bad and ugly" (#143). At last someone has spoken out against the ugly hoardings mushrooming all over Kathmandu. Crossing the Bagmati Bridge in Thapathali to Patan is especially disgusting. The recently constructed welcome gate at the Lalitpur end is overshadowed by these outrageous advertisements Crossing the same bridge going north, the majestic Himalaya are blocked from view. Is there no one else besides Renchin Yonjan who cares—or dares? If New Delhi can ban these unsightly billboards, why can't we? Betty Woodsend, Tahachal

**NOT SKEPTICAL** 

Hemlata Rai quotes me in 'More power to the villages' (#144) as

electrification. Nothing could be further from the truth. I am a member of Nepal Electricity Authority's Board of Directors and I am a very active member of the team spearheading to communitise rural electrification. We are working on formulating a policy and necessary legal framework for the purpose. I actually told your reporter how enthused we were by the response of various communities in this respect, including

sayıng that i am skepticai about

community involvement in rural

Ratna Sansar Shrestha, Arkansas, USA

mobilising investment from the

community itself.

Editor's Note: We apologise for the editing error that led the article to imply that Ratna Sansar Shrestha is skeptical about community electrification. His quote in the same paragraph shows that he was talking in the context of NEA pricing for rural power.

#### **DIRECTIONS**

On 28 April, another Nepal bandh, a woman was crying for help on the Gaushala-Chabahil road, carrying her baby son who was suffering from pneumonia. No one went to her aid. This incident may sound fictitious to most people who have been fortunate enough to be spared such ordeals. The impact of these bandhs are severe Rickshaws, porters and footpath vendors are only secondary beneficiaries, the primary reapers—the politicians—go blithely on even though the majority consider bandhs disruptive. A private hospital in the Valley revealed that even emergency patient rates drop by at least by 80 percent during bandhs. Where do the patients go? The answer lies with that mother holding her Seeing the educational sector being made a

victim is depressing. On the 29 April bandh, a cab was set ablaze by a petrol bomb. The passengers were students on their way to their examinations. Although they suffered only minor

physical injuries, we can hardly fathom the psychological damage. These sorts of incidents only serve to shed bad light on the already unpopular political leaders who are adding fuel to the fire of students' riots.

The paradox is that almost all political parties agree that bandhs badly affect the country's economy. They even make promises not to call



for them at seminars and symposiums—all lip service. This behaviour compels us to ask if these parties are the advocates for our rights or its greatest violators. It makes any sane man laugh when they hail the 'success' of bandhs. Success can be claimed only if the problem that led to the bandh is solved because of that measure. We can find no such example in the history of Nepal. Bandhs are fast becoming a token of anarchy, hooliganism and a medium to intimidate the people, of course well within democratic practices guaranteed by our constitution. Political parties say they act on behalf of the poor, but ironically the first victims of the bandhs are daily wage earners. It is high time our leaders apologised publicly.

Victor Pasha, Tilganga

he code of conduct signed between the government and the rebels has no currency in the Rapti. It received little publicity and even less respect. None of the signatories initiated a monitoring body for the region and it's business as usual for the Maoists. Extortion in the name

HERE AND THERE

of 'donations' and free food and lodging are still demanded from the people. The locals are compelled to present themselves at Maoist mass meetings and prevented from attending the activities organised by other political parties. Those who fled at the height of the insurgency have been unable to return

#### The revolution and the witch

The Maoists' "new regime" is not very different from the old one in its treatment towards women. Bharat Thapa and his wife Kalasa Thapa of Iriwang, Rolpa are political activists. When the rebels failed to gain their sympathy, Kalasa was declared a witch. They instigated a local woman to claim that she fell ill after after Kalasa ate a frog in an occult ritual. Three village jana-sarkar heads officially heard the complaint filed by the woman on 23 March. The judges had her arrested although Kalasa pleaded innocent to the charges. When we visited Iriwang she was serving a prison sentence for practicing

Former UML MP from Salyan, Prakash Jwala, travelled to the midwest to assess the lives of his constituents after the ceasefire.

The Maoist militia strut llong the village streets, displaying weapons conspicuously. The government gencies violate the code of onduct too. They have failed to make public the details of those that are missing and have not sought the release of those still in custody. Travellers are still frisked and their belongings rifled through at every checkpoint. The army and the police have not let up their patrols and recently began erecting new posts.

It is an uneasy peace that has returned to the villages of the Rapti after the ceasefire. Violence, terror and destruction don't shadow the streets and the villagers are hopeful that the talks will usher in a lasting peace. But into the second round of the peace talks, it is plain that the Maoist rebels still have a hold over this corner of Nepal. Ironically, the comrades in the Rapti are eager for the success of the talks. A regional level Maoist cadre declares, "The peace talks must succeed no matter what the cost, we

accurately—it could either be a ruse to mask other intentions or a genuinely felt sentiment.

The disillusionment with

will not let anything stall the

process." His eagerness is

difficult to interpret

living underground as fugitives in the jungle is clear among the Maoists that have returned to the villages. In conversations with several Maoists, there was a palpable sense of weariness with the path of the gun. Some are ready to permanently lay down their weapons, turn to peaceful politics and start afresh in their villages. There have been those among them that have done exactly that, leaving the revolutionary path for the road home. The villagers, however, are

wary and suspicious of the Maoists' intention to turn a new leaf: "They are too used to getting what they want through the power of intimidation...they will find the life of an ordinary farmer too difficult ... they are accustomed to the luxury of power," are comments that are made out of Maoist earshot.

In the meantime, the rebels are working at convincing the people that their path was justified. On the one hand, they use all party 'roundtable' meetings as forums for them to publicise their agenda. They justify their activities as a commitment toward a 'political solution'. In an attempt to come across as the pro-peace group, the Maoists have begun a negative campaign against the Nepali Congress and the UML,



Clockwise from left: Bishnu Prakash Giri's family are still waiting for him five years after Maoists abducted him from his home in Kalagaun, Salyan. The ruins of the Agriculture Service Centre and Animal Health Post in Tharmare, Salyan. The Maoists gutted Nepali Congress worker Bikram Singh Rathor's house in Badagaun, Salyan, after the ceasefire was declared. Durga Bahadur Khatri finally on the road to recovery at Bir Hospital. Nar Bir BK of Kholagaun, Rukum has not been heard of since security forces arrested him two years ago.

portraying them as obstacles in the peace negotiations. On the other, they have not slowed their recruitment campaigns in the villages. Although the Maoists have been demanding a merger between the Royal Nepali Army and their 'people's army' for the creation of a united national army, they continue to hold advanced guerilla training. The trained guerillas from the west are being transferred to the east hills, which proves they are keen to

develop military capabilities in

the east that equals their advantage in the west. If the villagers are to be believed, their drive to recruit young people has accelerated.

Despite the huge public interest their leaders attract in urban areas, the Maoist cadres in rural Nepal have long fallen from their pedestals. Survival is key, and the people in the Rapti have learned to stay neutral or keep their distance. The one section who are unafraid to raise their voices are the victims of war. They demand compensa-

Two years ago, in a similar

took away Nar Bir BK of

known of his whereabouts.

Despite the ceasefire, the

Maoists are still keeping

case, security forces came and

Ratamata, Rukum. Nothing is

dozens of other people captive

in jails and labour camps. The

tion regardless of which side year long civil war. Bishnu Prakash Giri, a their perpetrators belonged to, a statement of public remorse farmer of Kalagaun, Salyan was abducted by the Maoists from the state and the rebels, education for their children, five years ago. His family has not heard of him since. "If medical care for the wounded, and rehabilitation and they killed him, they should have said so," says his wife Dila Giri. "At least I could have performed his last rites."

employment for families. While those who have proof of death could gain a small measure of comfort from closure, far too many families are caught in a grey area. Their loved ones, those classified 'missing'—neither the government nor the rebels have disclosed details about those who have been missing in the duration of this eight-

Mandala House

Luxury Aportments

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**NATION** 

fighting may have ended for the moment but stray sniper bullets and landmines still kill the innocent. The hills that were booby-trapped by rebels and security forces to decimate each other have now begun to reap another harvest among the innocent.

Durga Bahadur Khatri of Lekhpokhara was lucky to escape with his life when a booby trap explosive went off while he was ploughing his field. The 54-year-old fell unconscious after losing his right hand and the skin on his face was torn to ribbons. Khatri was brought in a critical condition to Kathmandu's Bir Hospital.

The Maoists destroyed the airport towers at Chaurihari and Salle, ruined the Dang-Salyan road, set fire to countless government and VDC offices, uprooted trail bridges, telephone and electricity towers. They continue to destroy and attack private property: the Maoists are not honouring their commitment to the ceasefire. •

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DOMESTIC BRIEFS

#### **Great expectations**

Climbers who timed their ascent for 29 May to coincide with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay Sherpa's achievement, were beaten down the mountain by bad weather this week. Storms and blizzards forced many members of the 23 expeditions back to base camp, according to Tourism Ministry officials. A cyclone in the bay of Bengal

threatens more stormy weather on the mountain over the weekend. Meanwhile, in

the lower altitudes of the capital, Everest climbers and mountain tourism entrepreneurs are set to

raise many toasts to the highest peak later this month. Unfortunately the expected flood of tourists to celebrate the Everest Golden Jubilee is more like a Organisers had hoped that the event

would be a crowd-puller, considering that nearly 30 percent of all tourists who come to Nepal are either trekkers or mountaineers. Sadly, the turn out has been disappointing confesses Suman Pandey, President of the Trekking Agents Association Nepal (TAAN) While more than 200 international

Everest climbers have already confirmed their participation in a formal celebration of the event in Kathmandu, many chose to stay away. The SARS epidemic in Southeast Asia is partially to blame many infected cities are transit points to Kathmandu. "The disease has hampered the event and compromised our

business," says Pandey, Tourist arrivals that had reached a record 500,000 in 1999 has waned in recent years. Last year, the figure dropped by almost 30

16 - 22 MAY 2003 NEPALI TIMES #145

#### Freedom pending

The law regarding abortion is clear but it fails to decriminalise those already incarcerated. Now, the government is finally moving towards the release of women imprisoned on the charges of abortion, which was conditionally legalised in March last year along with amendments to the Civil Code.

The new law made it legal to terminate an unwanted pregnancy of up to 12 weeks. The stipulation for pregnancies resulting from rape or incest was set at 18 weeks and no limit is attached if the woman's life, metal or physical heath is in danger. The abortion of a deformed foetus was also

On 16 January, the Prime Minister's office issued a directive to the Home Ministry urging it to release women imprisoned on the charges of abortion. Official sources say there are about 7,000 prisoners in Nepal's jails, 17 percent of who are women. A 1997 study conducted by the Forum for Women, Development and Law (FWLD) showed one in five women in Nepali jails was imprisoned on charges of abortion. At present, the 73 jails across the country are preparing a list for the Department of Jail Administration (DJA) in Kathmandu. "We expect to receive all information by the end of May," says DJA Director General Yubraj Pandey. The DJA, however, has not decided on the modality it will adopt for their release once the statistics come in.



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# Foreign intervention

humbing through some dog-eared but still rather wonderful back issues of the older version of Himal magazine, I found yet more evidence that history repeats itself. One of the abiding themes of that excellent and late-lamented magazine was the impact of foreign intervention in Nepal. Dipak Giyawali.

Now by that I don't mean the conspiracy theorists' fears of strangers with dark bandannas sneaking around by night and fomenting trouble. I refer to the playground that this country is for people like me, our own little Shangri La theme park of mysticism, trekking and polite, happy people.

Anyway, my point is this: for a long time now the enlightened in Nepal have been concerned about the high degree of influence from outside sources, input that is unaccountable and not always in the best interests of the Nepali people. As judged by those people themselves, not by the likes of me. Aid and development spending are the most obvious examples. Much has been written about the subject, in this space and elsewhere, and will continue to be column fodder because there never is a satisfactory response from that community to any criticism or comment that I venture.

Lo and behold, what do I find in *Himal* Vol 3 No 3 from September of 1990 but a letter that could have been sent just yesterday to the Nepali Times in response to yet another uppity piece

from Lak, Lal, Pitamber Sharma, Seira Tamang, Devendra Raj Pandey, Kanak Mani Dixit and others. (That's one reason I keep questioning the development community—I'm in excellent company when I do so.) Anyway, this particular letter was from one G Campbell-Reynolds responding to a piece by one of our leading thinkers on development, Minister Giyawali, as he is now, was in those days defending the

gains of the People's Movement and writing the epitaph for feudalism. We can argue in future whether he may have been a little premature, given current events. But in his 1990 article, he wrote that development agencies and diplomats have a great deal to answer for the 30 years of Panchayat stagnation that came before the Jana Andolan. This is one point among many, and he is equally unsparing

to just about every force in Nepali society that had a stake in the process of change.

But what do we hear from Campbell-Reynolds? Why, surprise, surprise: patronising gobbledy-gook, dressed up as a dressing down to Gyawali who is 'taking a shot at the expatriate community because they are an easy target". Trust us, is the tone of the letter, we support your quaint little democracy movement because "Nepal is now ready for it". There's more of the same in issue after issue. Cogent and valid criticisms met with rancour and resentment. It's what I almost see in the letters responding to my own forays into**Instead of honest debate offended parties** serve up a tone of "how dare you".

gasp—questioning the antics of our "experts. Not honest debate or information served up to counter my mistaken notions, but a broadside of vitriol, a tone of "how dare you".

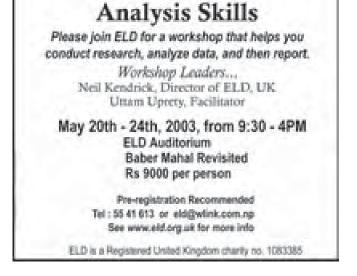
And do you know what I'm beginning to feel, with dread, is the truth? I'm wondering about that Shangri La business. Yes, it's an old chestnut, nothing new under the sun, and all that. Again, I turn to the pages of the old Himal. Vol 3 No 1 from January 1990 dedicates a whole issue to Shangri La. In the spirit of journalism and fairness, it looks at both sides of the sacred valley business, and lets the reader draw a conclusion. But I know how the editors of the magazine feel about such things because I feel the same. We detest the notion.

I don't think there's another country on the planet where foreign residents, long-term or contractual, whether here to do business, development or anthropology, whether they follow Buddha or Mammon, feel so proprietorial about their personal Shangri La, the place they mistake for Nepal. Nor do they actually like the real Nepal very much. I read it in recent history brought alive through Himal, I hear it in various watering holes and party venues, I know it in my heart

Now let's try to have a debate about this. Or, if you choose, you can simply accuse me of ranting. You'd be repeating history, if that's any

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**ELD Nepal** 

Data Gathering



the day in either country, Nepalis

for submerging tracts of the tarai

the Indians couldn't afford that.

There must be a reason why the

Indians declared the Maoists

are going to continue blaming India

each year. Subconsciously, we know

terrorists before we did and continue

to do so. If things get out of hand,

hassles. (Provided we still have the

1950 treaty intact, of course.) The

existence or to the bravery many of

us carry as the middle name can be

borne with the knowledge that most

former Indian prime minister HD

And speaking of ex-premiers,

let's not forget that our own Mohan

Sumshere Jung Bahadur Rana and

Tulsi Giri opted for post-retirement

contemplation in the sanctuary of

Bangalore. We haven't ignored the

reader. We've put it in a different

league precisely because it is far

more serious and self-interested.

meddling from the south, dear

Nepalis speak better Hindi than

Deve Gowda does.

we can always hope to cross the

border with fewer immigration

taunts relating to our alpine

we cannot go down the drain because

# Love thy neighbour

Most Nepalis speak better Hindi than former Indian prime minister HD Deve Gowda.

s a foreigner living here, I don't understand why the Nepali intellectuals, including Bhusal, see foreign interference coming only from the West when the meddling from the South appears to be far more serious and self-interested," a reader lamented last week in Letters (#144).

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That perception must have come as news to South Block satraps at Lainchour, but it's one that prevails. We must address it by acknowledging

TYALON

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the innate Nepali tendency to compartmentalise our external outlook. Tourism and trade statisticians aren't the only people here who think in terms of India and third countries. There has been a perceptible division of labour in the media along the lines of language. The vernacular press mostly deals with the meddling from the south, while English-language publications tend to take on the West

There is a more profound reason

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for this distinction. The muglan connection is an intrinsic part of our history of isolation. Our contempt for the south's nosiness is bred by familiarity. The disdain is deepened by our obsession with who we don't want to be recognised as. It must have been difficult for our forebears to preserve their independence during the colonialist onslaught in the region. Things acquire a different perspective altogether when we realise who didn't get the railway, bureaucracy and hill

For the uninitiated, there are genuine concerns. If Lesotho, which is surrounded by South Africa, can maintain its identity as a modified constitutional monarchy, why must Nepal, which has one non-Indian flank, succumb to a siege mentality? In the blame game, the political class is

castigated for being unduly obsequious to everyone across the vast open frontier. It's useless to go after a fraternity that has thrived on the mediation, arbitration or facilitation from the south ever since the Sugauli Treaty. To understand our political evolution, we must remember that the Koiralas and Adhikarys had to help evict the British colonialists from the region before they could embark on overthrowing the Rana oligarchy back home. It's equally futile to expect the younger leaders to forget ties forged

during education and exile. The panchas didn't have to do too much to gain the south's attention, except veer a little closer to the north when the occasion demanded. They, too, chose to play their cards carefully. Otherwise, our logical response to India's objections to the import of

Chinese weapons would have focused on why New Delhi never consulted us before finalising the Bofors deal. We began accusing Rajiv Gandhi's government of mposing a blockade on Nepal when t had left open Jogbani and Raxaul instead of one transit point it could easily have gotten away with. From that precise moment, we knew that internationalisation of the dispute was a non-starter. (The panchas were better at making the most from compromises, though. The Kalapani capitulation of the 1960s led up to Nepal's election to the UN Security Council, a trade-off that strengthened our sovereignty, if you ask me.) Despite all the political

posturing over real and perceived persecution, Nepalis recognise India is a neighbour we must learn to live with. No amount of development dollars or third-country instigation is going to change that. Take the cerebral inquest a step further. What would the dynamics have been today if all our rivers flowed north and the Himalaya fortified our southern frontier?

Regardless of the government of

**ECONOMY** 16 - 22 MAY 2003 **NEPALI TIMES #145** 

BIZ NEWS

#### **Counter charge**

À few months after a former finance minister blamed the World Bank of ignoring Nepal's remote areas, a senior official of the multilateral agency has passed the buck back to the government. Chief Economist and Senior Vice President of the bank Nicholas Stern critcised what he called the centralised development activities in urban areas including Kathmandu.

During a recent interaction in the capital, he pointed out that almost half of the 86 percent of the rural population lived below the poverty line compared to only 23 percent of poor people in urban areas. Stern attributed rural poverty to the lack of basic needs such as drinking water, electricity, health and roads.

In a discussion program organised by the World Bank a couple of months ago, former finance minister and Nepali Congress senior leader Ram Sharan Mahat accused the international financial institution of initially rejecting the idea of rural development. In response, a World Bank official in Kathmandu countercharged that ministers were more interested in the procurement aspects of projects that bureaucrats are

During the recent interaction, Stern said conflict and political instability scares away foreign investors. His suggestions included opening up the service sector, maintenance of fiscal stability, development of competitive market, good governance, administrative reforms and infrastructure development.

#### **Honouring women**

Laxmi Bank that began operations a year ago recently awarded Hajuri Bista as the "woman entrepreneur of the year". Bista is the head of HK Food Product Industry whose Navaras brand of pickles and candies are popular among consumers in the kingdom. This housewife-turned-businesswoman is considered a pioneer in the bottling and commercial marketing of homemade products in Nepal. The award was part of the Celebrating Womanhood 2003 event. Laxmi Bank thought it necessary to recognise and applaud the contribution made by Nepali women in the economic landscape.

#### **Exports up**

The initiative to boost economic growth in LDCs by giving duty-free and quota-free access to exports proposed during the June 2002 G8 Summit in Alberta, Canada came into writing this week with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the governments of Nepal and Canada.

Lava Kumar Devkota from the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies and Peter Sutherland, Canadian ambassador to Nepal signed the MoU giving Nepali garments duty-free access to Canadian markets. The understanding has been effective since 1 January, 2003.

About a quarter of total textile exports from Nepal reach Canada, Garments and other textiles exported to Canada must still comply with provisions set by the rules of origin. The Garment Association of Nepal recorded exports worth \$400 thousand in the first four months of this year alone, compared to \$500,000 for

#### Slippery issue

COMMENT

Indian ghee manufacturers are up against their Nepali competitors once again. This time they seem to be winning the battle with a case filed that stopped the import of Nepali ghee into the Indian market. The Central Warehousing Corporation is being blamed for issuing no objection letters to Nepali ghee exports, which Indian manufacturers claim has hampered businesses, especially in eastern India. A bilateral agreement between Nepal and India allows 100 thousand tons of Nepali ghee duty free access

to the Indian market. Now, thanks to the legal tangle, Nepali ghee exporters cannot use the quota set aside by the Indian government.

**ECONOMIC SENSE** 

## Bipalis Who head for greener bidhesi pastures

he goings-on at Tribhuban International Airport form the backbone for the Beed's column this week. It is of considerable irony that in recent times, the number of tourists flying into the kingdom has dwindled while the Nepalis seeking foreign employment leave in droves. In the Golden Years of Tourism, airport conversations with visitors revolved around treks, tours and how not to get ripped off. Now, with the mass exodus of our Nepali brethren, hings are different.

For many it is their first trip on an aeroplane. As they go through the long queues at the baggage security, they start eyeing the check-in counters. Each counter is a possible obstacle in their quest for a 'foreign' job that pays in 'foreign' currency. The sight of security or immigration officials make them shrink into themselves—they are so self-effacing to render themselves invisible. They are afraid of interrogations, of being sent back from international airports. They have all heard those stories, usually from manpower agencies that exaggerate to nighlight their own competitive idvantage.

The Bipalis know that if there is any glitch at the airport they are on their own. They do not request window or aisle seats: the very act of being issued a boarding pass is the first hurdle overcome. The men huddle together, anxiously scanning their passes to reassure themselves that they have not been handed fakes.

At the immigration counter, they line up, rewriting the departure card several times with fierce concentration,

as they would in a school exam. Those friends who are bound by the same who got through their SLC help the others. Immigration officials know buying adjacent plots of land in a there is nothing to extract from these Kathmandu suburb, even the same people, and let them through after asking standard questions for which hey receive the standard answers. homewards. They speak loudly of a Once past immigration as far as these cousin, a neighbour, a friend who Bipalis are concerned, they have

check is their undoing. A weary airport official who processes nearly four hundred Bipalis a day, told the Beed that in their excitement of boarding the plane, many leave their bags in the x-ray machines, some even forget passports and valuable documents. TIA authorities are changing tactics to serve these Bipalis, their newest and most consistent customers on a one way ticket out of here. The workers are our new air travellers, and there is a tacit understanding that they should have the chance to exploit the opportunity

crossed the main hurdle in Nepal. All

too often the final routine security

to better their lives. At the point of no return the Bipalis hug each other—new-found

circumstances—as they dream aloud of make in motorcycles. They are heading out but their goals are already turned sends money home for his family, who returned laden with gifts, gold, a big music system and American dollars. The next breed of the Nepali consumer is in the making.

by **ARTHA BEED** 

As political parties repeat their rhetoric, hundreds of Nepalis leave for bidhes. Their remuneration lubricates an economy that is otherwise close to a standstill. While countries around us develop strong internal economic structures, Nepal's myopia continues to rely on tenuous external links. Our only competitive and comparative advantage is exporting cheap labour. The lahures of the last century are the Bipalis of this one. •

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

## Why do we need tanks?

ANALYSIS by KANAK MANI DIXIT

he Procurement Office of the Master General of Ordnance of the Royal Nepali Army (RNA) has sought applications from agents of international firms wishing to be included in a list of companies to supply hardware. The notice, published in the Gorkhapatra of 14 May, provides the description of the "equipment to be supplied", which include "different kinds of arms, accessories, spare parts, ammunition", as well as radio sets, jamming devices, satellite phones, mine detectors, bomb disposal suits, and night

Doubtless, the army needs to modernise after years of stagnant idget. But how is one to react to the requirement of tanks and

farmoured gunship helicopter/aircraft", as stated in the notice? The country seems to be caught in a headlong rush

towards an unsupervised, unrestricted military buildup that it can ill afford. One wonders if there is proper discussion even within the military command about the need for and implications of adding tanks, helicopter gunships or bombers to the arsenal. An attempt last year to import two used Russian-

made Mi-24 gunships via Australia was scrapped, because better sense prevailed. But it looks like the army hasn't given up.

मानाई राक्त सकितिह ।

Are these weapons appropriate, and can we afford them? The national budget can't, so which foreign source is pulling out the checkbook? Could it be the Indian military, whose COAS was in Kathmandu recently indicating a willingness to add another billion rupees to the significant support already provided. Since the British are already committed to "non-lethal support" when it comes to helicopter assistance, would it be the United States that is making the

What seems to be a deliberate plan to acquire such weaponry must be questioned primarily because of their lethal internal consequences, both in military terms and the larger inter-institutional

Long-range weapons will increase the destructive power of army units, and the chances of added victimising of hapless civilians, which was a factor in the latest bout with the Maoists. Further, the ability to call in the gunships is liable to make commanders lax about on-the-ground intelligence gathering and improvement of the ability to fight 'clean'.

If the army is to be an effective fighting force it surely needs to

#### Nepal does not need, nor can it afford, to buy tanks and helicopter gunships.

increase capacity at the personnel level, it does need better transport and logistics, and it requires more officers per soldiers so that there is better command and control and less civilian 'collateral damage'. The army will also require weaponry suited to Nepal's terrain and the nature of the enemy. Helicopter gunships and tanks are not appropriate weapons.

> latest technology, and the display of high-end firepower during the latest Iraq war has only increased these desires the world over. But will the enemy the army expects to fight have armor, installations and encampments of the sort that requires gunships and tanks?

recruitment drive to add thousands more soldiers.

becomes clear that the Nepali military is fast acquiring a position in national affairs that it has never had in the modern era. Further, and ominously, the RNA seems willing to descend to the political playing field as evident in its pronouncements against the political parties on behalf of the king. How will domestic politics and the peace process be affected by the acquisition of these weapons?

Money matters



Is India ready for full currency convertibility?



Is India ready for full ince 1991 India has been travelling on a path from rupee devaluation to full convertibility, with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) relaxing a range of foreign-exchange controls. Resident Indians can now maintain a foreigncurrency account and invest in shares of foreign companies, while nonresident Indians can repatriate legacy/ inheritance assets. Indian companies listed abroad can buy property in foreign countries, and resident firms will be allowed to pre-pay external commercial debt up to \$100 million.

Limits on exporters' foreign-currency

accounts will be removed, and banks

may invest in overseas money and

debt markets.

convertibility? The government is still lagging on its domestic economic reforms. Structural reform and privatisation have slowed, eroding investors' confidence. But failure to address structural problems could expose the economy to external shocks in the long term.

It would be premature for India to open up its capital account immediately. Exchange rate stability is the key anchor when a country's reform process is underway. With capital-account convertibility, the rupee's exchange rate will be determined more by capital flows than by inflation differentials, as India's inflation rate remains broadly could be some pressure on the rupee following any negative shock. Although monetary growth is more than twice the rate of real GDP growth, the inflationary risk is probably low because substantial excess capacity exists. Indeed, throughout the 1990s, despite rising output, deflation occurred, which means that India's potential output is expanding. The moves towards full capital-

in line with the OECD average of

around 3 percent. Because India is

still running a trade deficit, there

account convertibility have proceeded in step with impressive growth in India's foreign-currency reserves. As a result of a current-account surplus and an interest-rate differential of 3-4 percent, foreign reserves reached \$70.3 billion by the end of 2002 up from \$4 billion in 1990.

Following the 1991 balance of payments crisis, the rupee's exchange rate was devalued around 20 percent. This was subsequently replaced with a two-tier exchange-rate system making the rupee partially convertible—60 percent of export earnings could be converted at the market exchange rate, and the rest at

the RBI's fixed rate. The two-tier exchange-rate system

acted as an export tax, but it did not survive for long, giving way to a unified exchange rate on the trade account. Full convertibility on the current account followed in August 1994. The policy debate then turned to capital-account convertibility, with the IMF and the World Bank strongly in favour. In May 1997, the Tarapore Committee on Capital Account Convertibility charted a liberalisation process to be completed by 1999-2000, with an accompanying emphasis on fiscal consolidation, a mandated inflation target, and a strong financial system.

The East Asian currency crisis put further action on hold and raised serious questions about when—and whether—to proceed. The sudden meltdown of apparently healthy economies served as a stark reminder that strong external liquidity should not be the driving force towards full convertibility. The downside risk of capital-account liberalisation, after all, is higher exchange-rate volatility, and even countries with sound liquidity positions could not prevent a run on their reserves.

In the event of a domestic or external shock, full convertibility could prove to be a costly, short-lived experiment. It is vital for India to increase the inward flow of long-terr capital, regardless of whether the capital account is

closed or open. It is noteworthy that China, with a

closed capital account, has foreignexchange reserves of \$286 billion, four times that of India, though China's economy is only double India's size. China attracted foreign direct investment inflows (FDI) of \$52.7 billion in 2002—the largest in the world. India needs to attract higher FDI inflows to help soak up the economy's excess capacity. This underscores the importance for India's financial stability of successful

management of the capital account (monitoring inflows and outflows) following any move toward full convertibility. But, in the near term, full capital account convertibility is not in India's interest. ♦ (© Project Syndicate) (Sushanta Mallick is Research Fellow in

the International Economics Program at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London.)



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# All militaries want the

(क) विभिन्न विशिक्षण ताल-वीतवार, एकंकीन, जर्गदा पार्टपुल, शानी सहश्च र विश्वतिक प्रार्थ ।

(ND APC, Task, आमंद्र गामसेक शेलकाटर एकरकावर, एकर्नाट्स र अमेदा पार्टवृजी ।

(R) RIMER TREATM (Radio Set, Jamesming Devices, Direction finders, Sat Phones etc.), critaling is (III) Afficiant program (Surveillence Equipment, Night-Vision Devices, Day/Night-Scope etc.), ejimfraj (E) STATE PREFERS (Mine detectors, Borels disposal suit, Scarring monitors etc.), casaling a लगक पाइपूरत । जन्म वस विकास मुखलु परेमा साम्यारकी विकास (प्राप्त), साही नेपाली जहाँगे जहहासा बायांतव समर्थातत

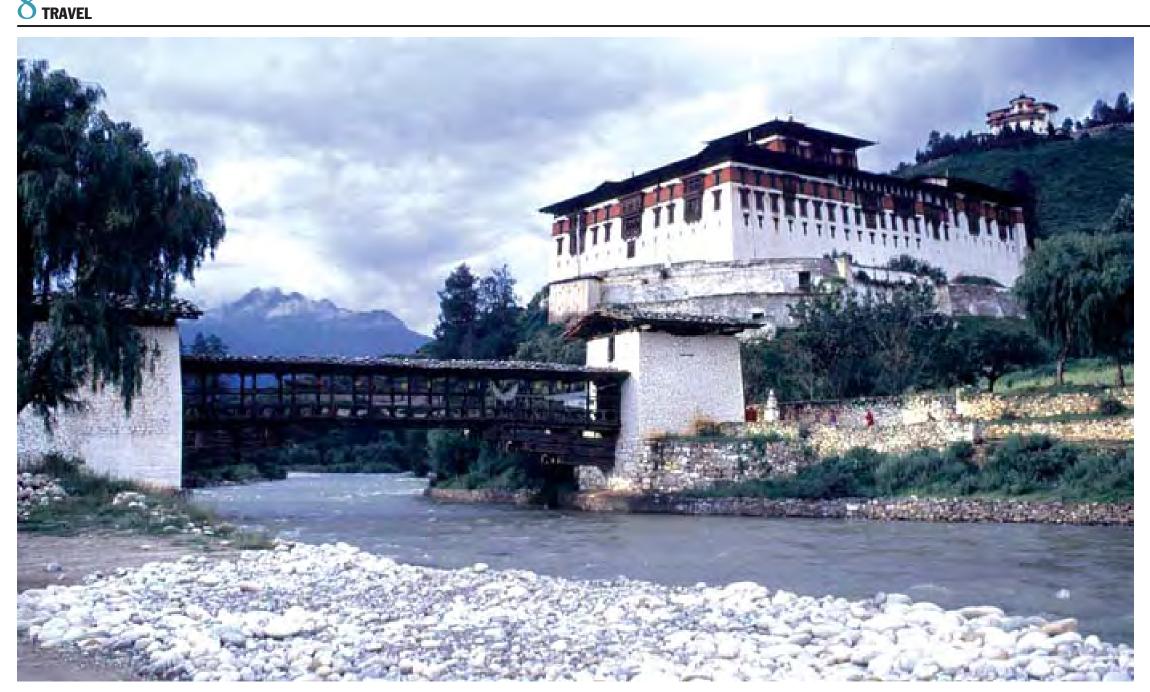
> There are other questions of a more political nature. Will such extra-lethal hardware make the centralised state more powerful? In the period after the People's Movement the cap in the RNA's budget affected the army's fighting capability and operational strength. But the last year has been a different story, with a doubling in size of its air wing, and its battlefield capability reinforced with the arrival of Belgian Minimi belt-driven guns and US M-16 rifles. There has also been an active

With its enhanced firepower and countrywide deployment, it

The expenditure of this money should be made with civilian oversight and some measure of debate among experts who can consider the merits and evaluate the rationale of tanks and helicopter

(Kanak Mani Dixit is the editor of *Himal South Asian*.)

ON NEWSTANDS





escribing his arrival in Earl of Ronaldshay wrote: With our passage through the bridge, behold a curious transformation. For just as Alice, when she walked through the looking-glass, found herself in a new and whimsical world, so we,

Hunca Hass

when we crossed the Pachhu, found ourselves, as though caught up on some magic time machine fitted fantastically with a reverse, flung back across the centuries into the feudalism of a medieval age.

Bhutan is not an ordinary place. It has one foot in the past and one modern technology. You'll find in the future. Its far-sighted leaders



recognise the necessity of being part a visit to the country is a splendid of the modern world, but they realise adventure. English is widely spoken, that once their forests and culture and you can easily converse with are destroyed, they can never be recovered. They have maintained their traditional culture, yet they have adapted what they need from monks transcribing ancient Buddhist how you live.

## Watering holes

traditionally dressed archers using the most modern high-tech bows

Bhutan is a country of rolling

hills and towering crags, with only

compared to Switzerland, not only

because they are similar in size,

but also because many parts of

Bhutan look like the Swiss Alps,

like chalets and snow peaks

school children and many other

people. The Bhutanese are very

curious about life outside their

mountain kingdom and are eager to

hear stories about your country and

sticking out of nowhere.

little deforestation. It is often

and arrows.

Thimphu is not noted for its restaurants, but there is decent food to be found in most hotels, especially when there is a tour group in residence and they lay on an extensive buffet of Western and Bhutanese dishes. texts into computers and

For early entertainment visit Mila restaurant, which showcases young Bhutanese performers starting about 6PM. The food is basic, which is fine with the almost-exclusively local crowd. The music is often excellent. It's mostly Dzongkha folk music and modern love songs with occasional interludes from a Dzongkha comedian

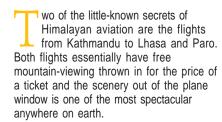
Thimphu's shops close about 8PM and by 9PM the town seems

deserted, yet there's plenty small patches of cultivation and very of life in the downtown area Check with owner-host Anuj at Benez for the latest update on Thimphu's nightlife. While you're there, try his collection of spiced rums and his specialty of spicy with green hills, houses that look spare ribs. Walk up the hil the new Lava Lounge in the Bhutan holds many surprises and



basement of Galingkha hotel, just below the Swiss Bakery. Friday is karaoke night in the mod bar at the Druk Hotel, but the singing is often less than professional.

The disco scene thrives, but starts late. Many people hang out at the small SNS restaurant waiting for the crowd to gather at All Stars disco. which does not "happen" until after 11PM on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights. Sooner or later everyone comes by Jojo's entertainment complex, which now boasts two pool parlours. The younger crowd patronises HQ, while the professionals prefer the new, well-furnished Rumours. Upstairs is Om Bar (see pic, top), Thimphu's largest, where a diverse collection of expats, locals and government officials can be found from 10PM until the early hours of the next morning.



The Lhasa flight on the China Southwest Airlines' 757 is dramatic because it flies through the Arun Valley gap between Makalu and Kangchendzonga and offers great views from both sides. The Kathmandu-Paro flight, meanwhile, is on a high-wing BAe 146 aircraft and flies along the eastern Himalaya past five of the world's highest mountains. The views are from the left hand window seats on the flights to Paro

and on the right on the flight back. Avoid

the centre of the aircraft where the engines of the Rolwaling in Nepal. Then, the block the view.

Soon after takeoff from Kathmandu, as Flight 205 circles over Kathmandu Valley, one gets great views of the city and the mountains beyond. The jet flies slower and for a view ahead: with the looming hulk of lower than larger airliners, so you get more time amidst the mountains while you aren't flying too high for the mountains to be

Soon, you are flying shoulder-toshoulder with Gauri Shankar which may not be an eight thousander but makes up for it passengers are craning their necks on the by being a strikingly pretty mountain with its fluted ridges and its double summit, which seem to rotate as we fly past.

The mountains slither past like beauty queens on a cat walk. Melungtse is next, a dazzling peak wholly within China with abundant snow, peeping over lesser peaks

biggies arrive: Cho Oyu, Sagarmatha, Lhotse and Makalu. By now, the plane is at cruising altitude, and if it isn't too bumpy the captain may invite you to the cockpit

Kangchendzonga in the distance.

We are now above the tiny airfield of Phaplu, and then over Tumlingtar, the pilot makes a slight course correction heading southeast to cross the Nepal-India border in Ilam. Back in the cabin, left side to watch the Kangchendzonga massif only 30 km away. Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Gangtok can be seen in the green hills below as if a map were given. Soon, the plane begins its descent towards Paro, crossing the Bhutan border and turning due north to head up heavilyforested valleys.

The captain comes on to alert passengers flying in for the first time not to be alarmed to see the trees and mountains so close. Just as well, because the wingtips seem to literally graze the slopes as the plane banks sharply for final approach from the north. Outside, the bracing mountain air, the smell of flowers and pine are a big change from the stale air of the plains.



## Druk trek

Trekking in Bhutan differs from the Nepali experience mostly dictated by geography. The hillsides in Bhutan tend toward the near vertical, which means fewer farms, villages and camp sites. Because geographical considerations make the distance between these greater, trekking days tend to be longer.

Side-hill climbing on steep slopes also tends to mean that you do more up-and-down climbing to get around vertical cliffs, avalanche tracks and side canyons. In many places they have been worn down to paths of scattered, rounded rocks or mud. Campsites are designated, so you may have to share your spot with one or more other parties on the popular Jhomolhari (see pic, below) and Laya Gasa treks. Some campsites have huts that serve as kitchens for your crew or used as dining rooms. There are no Nepal-style teahouses or trekkers lodges in Bhutan. The trekkers you see may be older than your counterparts in Nepal, perhaps because they can better afford the high cost of travel in Bhutan than young

In most places in Nepal, the local people have become accustomed to trekkers but in Bhutan you are still a curiosity. People stare at you with open, friendly faces or greet you warmly as you pass—even come up to you and shake your hand. In my experience, trekkers meals in Bhutan compare well with restaurant meals. If you are used to Nepal's two hour-plus lunch breaks, you'll learn to adjust to a much shorter midday stop here. Horses and, at higher elevations, yaks carry tents and duffel bags. The animals of one district are not allowed to cross the border into the next and are replaced at district borders. Anxious trekkers may worry about the possibility of being left at some windswept mountain pass abandoned by animals. It happens, but rarely.



There are Western-style hotels and food throughout the country, but the best facilities are in Thimphu, the capital, and the town of Paro where the airport is located. If you travel to eastern Bhutan, be prepared for simple hotels and less familiar meals. To see the best of Bhutan, you should spend a week or

more on foot, trekking through the

great forested wilderness that covers

most of the country. Bhutan is a land replete with myths and legends, and many tales contribute to its undeserved reputation of being an impossible place to visit. While certainly isolated and remote, it is not in fact a difficult place to visit. There is no limit to the number of tourists who can visit and you do not need any special influence or 'pull'. Subject to some well-defined restrictions, it is actually easy to arrange a trip to Bhutan. You can even organise a

you do not have to travel in a group. Bhutan is a little-known country, and not much information is available. Sometimes it is inaccurately described as a 'living museum'. It does visibly maintain its traditions, but its temples and monasteries are active and viable institutions that are very much a part of the modern world. It is not a nation of saintly, ascetic, otherworldly monks; you will find Bhutan identity.  $\blacklozenge$ 

journey as an independent traveller;

Excerpt from the Lonely Planet's Bhutan guidebook by Stan Armington which won the best Travel Guidebook in the 2003 Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Gold Awards. Armington lives in Kathmandu and has also written the Lonely Planet guides, Nepal and Trekking in the Nepal Himalaya, which won the PATA Gold Award in 2002 and is in its 8th edition.

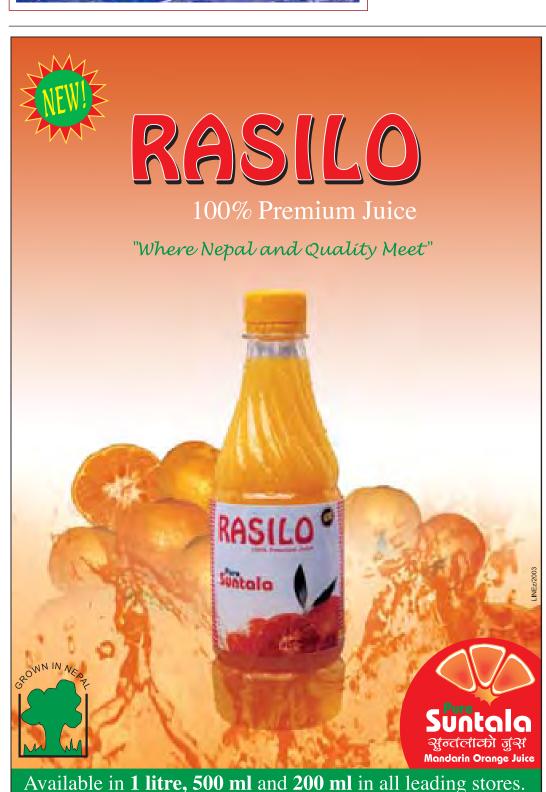
to be full of well-educated, funloving and vibrant people.

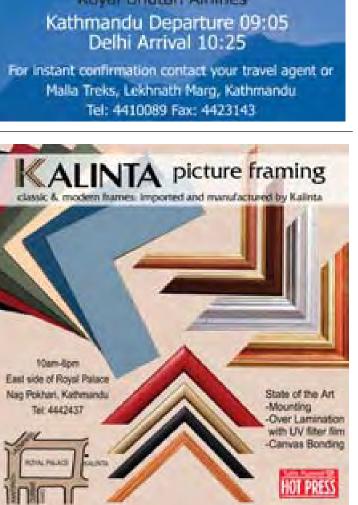
There are numerous contradictions in the various sources that describe Bhutan's history. Facts and figures are often missing or confusing. There is no authoritative list of place names, no list of mountain peaks, and population figures are based on estimates.

The statistics and description of historical events presented here are based on credible sources, but many of these 'facts' are open to nterpretation. Much of the information about temples, monuments and local history was provided by monks, caretakers and school teachers, who do not always agree with each other—or with the nistory books about events, dates and other information. Travel within Bhutan can be

frustrating, but it is always an adventure because the unexpected continually happens. Sometimes this utter fortuitousness causes problems; at other times the surprises are the joy of friendship, understanding or unsurpassed beauty that will bring you back again and again. If you visit Bhutan, you will become one of the few who have experienced the charm and magic of the country, and you may become a proponent of the kingdom's tourism policy and its efforts to maintain its distinct





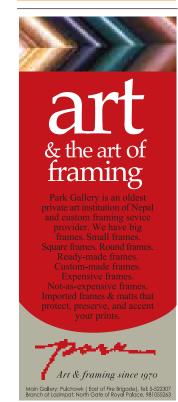


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MUSE, Burma – Burma's leaders are upset at the international

**Cutting production** 

rance, Portugal and Germany are

all flagrantly flaunting the

Stability Pact, the agreement

among Eurozone members to keep

their deficits below a critical threshold

(3 percent of GDP today, but lower,

supposedly, in the future). France's

defends his government's position by

saying that France was not prepared to

impose austerity on its own people.

why they should.

Other European leaders must wonder

Raffarin was right to say that

the Pact's strictures, but in debates

over economic policy, the truth is

seldom appreciated. A few years ago,

Alan Blinder, then Vice Chairman of

America's Federal Reserve Board, was

excoriated for stating the obvious: that

unemployment, and that, at least in

There is a long list of central

supposed to be questioned; do so and

you are exiled from the small circle of

those who supposedly know how the

bankers' homilies that are not

the short run, there may be a trade-

monetary policy should target not

only inflation, but also

off between the two.

austerity would result if France obeyed

Prime Minister, Pierre Raffarin,

An independent central bank is

necessary for sound macro-economic

policy. The truth: countries that do

not have an independent central bank,

like India, manage to contain inflation

central banks. There is little evidence

central banks grow faster, have higher

wages, or generate higher incomes than

Once inflation starts, it increases

at a faster and faster rate, and the costs

precipice, or that the costs of reversing

Inflation is bad for growth and productivity. The truth: below a

evidence of significant adverse effects

from inflation. On the contrary,

recent research by Nobel laureate

economist George Akerlof and his

colleagues suggests that pushing

threshold is higher for countries,

transition economies, engaged in

inflation too low may impede

growth, and that the critical

such as the post-communist

large structural changes.

of reversing it are high. The truth:

there is no evidence of an inflation

inflation are any greater than the

critical threshold there is no

benefits from inflation.

that countries with independent

those that do not.

as effectively as those with independent

When an economy faces a

expansionary fiscal policies. But in a

downturn, one should engage in

downturn tax revenues fall. Thus,

debt must increase. But the EU's

interpreted, requires either that tax

cut. Either way, such policies will

exacerbate the downturn. The EU

should seek automatic stabilisers,

economy in a downturn.

policies that automatically boost the

The US is facing, albeit in

somewhat weaker form, a similar

to the economic downturn, the

states are cutting back on expenditures, exacerbating

problem. As tax revenues drop due

America's slump—and the world's.

I warned of this problem more than

a year ago, and I suggested that the

Federal government pick up the tab

for the shortfall in state tax revenue,

because the states did not cause the

there was some disagreement about

how long the downturn would last

unfortunately I have been proved

right). But the Bush administration

pushed ahead with tax cuts for the

(I was a pessimist, and

country's slowdown. At the time,

rates be raised or that expenditures be

Stability Pact, as commonly

# The epidemic scorecard

he sudden appearance of an epidemic typically inspires rapt attention, panic and action. Once the crisis subsides, public attention wanes although the threat of contagion continues, especially among the

Compare our responses to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, or SARS, with the more familiar germs that plague us daily. Compare it to the dangers of smoking or getting into a car and heading out on the road. Every life is precious, but when you look at the numbers, SARS

just isn't as formidable a threat as we've made it out to be. Its death rate is far lower than that for AIDS or malaria; coronaviruses, like the one believed to cause SARS, tend to be most active in the winter and early spring.

In addition to taking the steps necessary to keep SARS at bay watching out for new cases and isolating people who are contagious to others—we would do well to channel our energies into something more lasting: a permanent, integrated and accountable global health system for the surveillance and prevention of the microbes that are certain to

emerge in the future. Right now, worldwide accounting of disease is incomplete at best, hampered in large measure by sketchy reporting from developing countries. These gaps slowed our containment of SARS and allowed rumour to spread more rapidly than reliable information. When the facts are few, it's easy for fear to fill the vacuum. ♦

(Howard Markel, professor of pediatrics and communicable diseases at the University of Michigan, is author of the forthcoming *When Germs Travel*.)

**EACH YEAR 1 PERCENT** of the world **BECOMES INFECTED** with the TB germ

SNEEZING \* EVEN SPEAKING \*

MORE THAN 100DEATHS AN HOUR

ONE THIRD

OF THE

WORLD'S

**POPULATIO**I

**BORNE BY MOSQUITOES** 

Medicines exist to but public health

300-500 MILLION CASES A YEAR

MILLION DEATHS A YEAR/ 10-30 MILLION NEW CASES A YEAR

TRANSMITTED VIA

 Mother to child at birth Unsafe injections or

Sexual contact

No effective treatment. Vaccine can block chronic infection, but its high cost listribution in poor nations

cholera, shigella, dysentry, typhoid, E. Coli and others)

1.9 MILLION DEATHS A YEAR mostly infants and young children

2.7 BILLION NEW CASES A YEAR

Within the last hour, 200 people have died of these diseases

Transmitted by contaminated food or water

1.5 billion people do not have easy access to clean water

A YEAR

20 MILLION

**NEW CASES** 

A YEAR

3.1 MILLION DEATHS A YEAR **5.5 MILLION NEW CASES A YEAR** 

42 MILLION PEOPLE ARE HIV POSTITIVE

IN THE LAST HOUR, MORE THAN 300 PEOPLE HAVE DIED OF AIDS

cardiovascular disease (heart deaths: 17 million a year

**Tobacco-related** deaths: 3.5 million a year

**Motor vehicle** fatalities: 1.26 million a year.

250,000 DEATHS A YEAR 3-5 MILLION NEW CASES A YEAR

IVIUUUIUU

NEARLY 900,000 DEATHS A YEAR 30 MILLION NEW CASES A YEAR

30,000 DEATHS A YEAR 200,000 NEW CASES A YEAR

ENTIRELY PREVENTABLE WITH A VACCINE THAT COSTS 26 CENTS AND HAS BEEN **AVAILABLE SINCE 1963** 

> According to Sharad Yadav, India's minister for food and civil supplies, the grain had to be given free of cost because the coffers of all the states were empty and they were not lifting central stock even at highly subsidised rates. Yadav said states tended to "exaggerate" their needs

> The issue has also turned into a political one, after the opposition Congress party president Sonia Gandhi alleged in parliament that states ruled by her party such as Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh—are being

discriminated against. Both states face provincial elections this year. The central government has ongoing drought relief programs for an estimated quarter million Indians in the affected states, but these are considered to be grossly inadequate. Already, there are reports of serious drinking water shortages as summer

According to the official Economic Survey for the 2002-2003 fiscal year,

The false promise of stability

#### Casting in stone institutional arrangements designed to address the problems of the past is a recipe for failure in the future.

rich, tax cuts that were not designed to stimulate the economy and that, no surprise, have failed to stimulate The lesson for Europe is clear: the

EU should redefine its Stability Pact in terms of the structural or full employment deficit—what the fiscal deficit would be if the economy were performing at full employment. To do otherwise is irresponsible. The Stability Pact holds another mportant lesson: casting in stone nstitutional arrangements designed to address the problems of the past is a recipe for failure in the future. There does need to be a commitment to fiscal responsibility. To insist on an arbitrary budgetary position in an economic downturn is to ignore everything we have learned about economics in the past seventy years, risking the well being of millions of workers who are thrown out of employment. ♦ (© Project Syndicate)

(Joseph E Stiglitz, the 2001 Nobel laureate in economics, is professor of economics and finance at Columbia University and the author, most recently, of Globalisation and

#### community, especially the United States, for failing to acknowledge the government's efforts to stamp out illicit drug production. But Washington says Burma is not doing enough to end the trafficking of drugs from Burma's Golden Triangle, which borders China, Laos

Burma's government says it has halved opium production throughout the country in the last poppy-growing season, which ended earlier this year. Travelling through Musa, a Burmese town on the border, there is little evidence of poppy production. The major poppy plantations here have been replaced by alternative cash crops. Former poppy farmers have also been encouraged to

concentrate integrated farming and intensive livestock projects. While the main rebel group in the region, the Wa, has steadily educed their opium production, another rebel group, the Kokang, have largely ignored the government's drive against drugs. But there are concerns about the long-term viability of the government's plans. The UN anti-narcotics organisation in Rangoon says the government is being over-ambitious. They say Burma must take more effective action against the production of metamphetamines if the international community is to take Burma's efforts to make the country drug free by 2005 seriously. (IPS)

#### Tit for tat

MUMBAI – In its suit before the Mumbai High Court, Dow Chemicals stated that on 2 December 2002, the 18th anniversary of the gas leak, activists gathered outside its office carrying placards, distributing pamphlets and "generally aiming to create a disturbance and disrupt the work of the company". The company wants about \$10,500 as compensation for "loss of work" that it says it suffered



Dow is demanding not only the compensation amount with interest—at 24 percent per year from the date the suit was filed till the date payment is made—but is also asking for a permanent injunction restraining activists and gas victims from holding protests before company premises. Dow has been the focus of protest and activist action since February 2001, when its merger with Union Carbide Corp was completed

Dow has consistently said it had "no remaining liability" for the Bhopal disaster. Victims and supporters' organisations filed a class action complaint in the US in 1999, accusing the company of "conscious indifference to the health and safety of the residents of Bhopal". It says they are liable for the damage and the "cost of the required clean-up". (IPS)

## Poor monsoon forecast

Western India braces

for the worst drought

in 100 years.

fter enjoying more than decade of 'normal' monsoons, the weather forecaster's prediction of a wayward monsoon in India this July has sent farmers and business people into a tizzy. Monsoon predictions are considered to be of strategic importance in this country, which is so dependent on its annual date with the phenomenon that the matter has to be cleared at the topmost political levels. Yet, RR Kelkar, chief of the Indian Meteorological Department and a

normally cautious man, chose to forecast a 60 percent probability of less than normal rainfall. "Parts of the country could suffer drought because there is massive variation in distribution," he said in an early forecast made last month.

Worst of all, Kelkar had no good news for eight of the 28 Indian states that were hit by drought last year but most especially the western desert state of Rajasthan, which is facing its fourth drought year in succession.

Rajasthan's Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has already presented a grim report to the central government asking for massive aid, saying that the state faces the "worst drought in 100 years" with an estimated 41,000 villages affected. Several states have been complaining of food shortages and their combined demand is now placed at 16 million metric tons, against which they have received 8 million metric tons, according to official releases.

and the central government had to weigh each request carefully before grants of grain and funds are released.

such has been the impact of the drought that the food subsidy bill was predicted to rise by a massive 20.3 percent to reach four billion dollars. The droughts come at a time when India is showing signs of finally being able to overcome its dependence on the monsoons. "If you look at data over a large period, the Indian vulnerability to monsoon has dropped," says Rajendra Vaidya, professor at the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research in the western city of Mumbai But the extent of the drought last year followed by untimely rains in November led to low agricultural output this year, Vaidya said. This year, the droughts have finally reached India's relatively pampered urban folk, including the national

capital where state Chief Minister Sheila Dixit has ordered stiff fines for people caught washing their cars with running water from garden hoses. In the southern Indian metropolis of Chennai, the state government has reported that the reservoirs have run down to 40 percent of capacity and demanded \$10 million from the central government to sort out the city's water shortage

Mumbai, capital of western Maharashtra state and considered India's business capital, has ordered a 10 percent cut in water supplies and water riots have broken out in several parts of the sprawling metropolis. According to the Maharashtra government, half of the state's 43,000 villages are at present being supplied water through tankers. On 19 April, battles over scarce water between groups in Bhopal, capital of central Madhya Pradesh state, led to the death of one person and injuries to several people.

Leading NGOs have blamed the situation on the central government's refusal to take simple but practical steps to drought-proof the country by measures like rainwater harvesting. The Centre for Science and the Environment has been campaigning against profligate water use by Delhi's urban rich. It is largely the result of their campaign that the state government banned the washing of cars with hoses and announced that building

plans would not be approved unless they also had a water-harvesting component. With tubewells rapidly lowering groundwater levels, the Delhi government has also moved to install metres on private facilities to mine out water that have been installed in nearly every home in affluent areas. Such measures may be too little too late this year and unless the monsoon proves the weather forecaster wrong, India is in for an unusually dry spell. • (IPS)



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Ghatna Ra Bichaar, 14 May

The ongoing agitation by the political parties of the dissolved House of Representatives has become something of a joke for the royal palace. Their movement has not won the people's support despite the media's amplification of police interference and brutality during their protest programs

What is missing is mass participation, even though political stalwarts like Girija Prasad Koirala of the Nepali Congress and Madhab Kumar Nepal of the UML are literally taking to the streets. Their only support comes from workers and party activists. It is clear to see that what they claimed to be a people's movement is actually a limited party-movement.

There is a reason why the political parties have been unable to latch onto the public like in 1990. The target then was the removal of a partyless Panchayat system and restoration of multiparty democracy. To that end people were ready to sacrifice even their

This time around, the end result is not as big or as defined. The protesting parties' demands of restoration of the parliament and formation of an all party government is by no means a goal like that of ending the Panchayat regime. In the event that this joint movement succeeds in reversing the decision of October Fourth, the same faces will jostle each other to be in the driving seat. The common citizen has experienced enough of that in the past decade and more. It is highly unlikely that they will martyr themselves for political opportunists.

Moreover, it is evident that these parties are still trying to bargain with the king, which is why they have launched only softprotest programs under their joint movement. It is clear that the top leaders of these political blocs still pine for ministerial berths. Only their minions carry the flame of this movement with any semblance of true zeal. In truth, the people are indifferent to the movement, and the royal palace and the government are cracking open the champagne over the fact. But they tread a fine line. Should their barely concealed jubilance be interpreted as arrogance, the people are likely to back the political parties.

The government is undoubtedly happy with the turn of events. It seems to believe that the parties' enthusiasm will fizzle in the days to come and that will end the story. They fail to take into account that the tide may turn if the people decide to support the movement.

The palace and the government must understand the people are not on their side just because they aren't flooding the streets in support of the joint movement. The situation can only be exacerbated by the likes of Sharad Chandra Shah having a say in the governance of this country. The palace could have all it's plans crumble if it doesn't take heed. The only way out is an understanding between the palace and the political parties.

rebel against suppression and discrimination.

The right to self-determination is like granting a woman her right to divorce...it is her

fundamental human right to fight injustice. Similarly, self-determination respects groups' right to

-Ram Bahadur Thapa alias Badal, Central Working Committee member of the Maoist party, in

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

#### **Adviser**

Chand's official and even a few unofficial advisers are playing the national treasury for what it's worth. Take the appointment of Sharad Chandra Shah *(pic,* below) as Chand's adviser. That took place almost six months ago and was only made public recently. Shah earned something of a reputation in the Panchayat era for his underground gang, and now, it seems he is performing his duty as adviser to the premier still very much away from the public eye.



The Nepal Rajpatra published earlier this month shows Shah has been receiving a salary and rent, telephone and a fuel allowance to the tune of Rs 50,000 every month. Chand's two other advisers, Prem Bahadur Bhandari and Jit Bahadur Kunwar, are also maintained on that scale at the state's expense.

His other aides include senior experts like Khagendra Poudyal, Min Bahadur Pal, Sher Bahadur Khatri, Nandalal Chataut and Gita Bhakta Joshi who receive Rs 14,000 every month apart from telephone and fuel allowances. Add to that other expenses like exorbitant bills from expensive restaurants and comandeering official vehicles for family

Budhabar, 14 May.

- Sent-Julion

जे स्वयं देशाओं 💵

काल हो क्यारे---।

आएले देवने सप्पे

## Drishti, 13 May

Some financial reform measures may be on his checklist but Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand's aides seem unaware of them. They have been disbursing funds with abandon from the national coffers.



#### members. As if that were not enough, Chand has recruited an army of unnecessary assistants at

his official residence in Baluwatar. Since the boss himself is squandering national funds, his colleagues in the cabinet are following suit. Almost all of them have appointed many advisers and assistants, burdening our already depleted financial resources.

#### **Exceptions**

Sanghu, 12 May

Of particular significance is the shuffle in Nepal's bureaucratic circles, particularly between the secretaries of Western Region Administration (WRA) and the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA). The first transfer post-October Fourth was Madhab Prasad Ghimire who substituted for Bal Krishna Prasai at WRA. The latter was put into Ghimire's post at the CIAA.

There are those that suspect foul play because the transfers took place at a sensitive time within the CIAA. Even Ghimire was surprised by the news—he is said to have found out through a radio news bulletin on the morning of 9 May. Ghimire's transfer is a technical demotion for him, from a CIAA secretary he has been made a regional administrator who has to report to the home

The order did not give any reasons for Ghimire's transfer, but our sources claim that he was allegedly punished for leaking names blacklisted by the high level Judicial Inquiry Commission on Property (JICP) to the local media. Still others hazard it was the result of a feud between Ghimire and CIAA commissioner Krishna Ballav Kafle who is supported by highly placed

people blacklisted by the JICP report. There are murmurs of Kafle and his supporters flexing their muscles to oust chief CIAA commissioner Surya Nath

Bal Krishna Prasai's background has led to alarm in some quarters, especially as a replacement for Ghimire. In the past, the CIAA insinuated his involvement in a citizenship scam seven years ago when he was a chief district officer in Jumla. Later, a parliamentary committee formed to probe revenue leakage found Prasai was involved in another racket. Prasai's appointment also raises questions about the integrity of Surya Nath Upadhaya, especially as the CIAA issued a directive to the government preventing appointments of any persons found involved in corruption to sensitive posts and special duties. Acting Chief Comptroller Narayan Silwal, and joint secretaries Jainendra Jivan Sharma and Ram Krishna Tiwari had their promotions withheld after they

were found guilty of corruption. This rule, apparently, does not apply to Prasai. Ironically, Prasai has been placed in a very high position in the same judicial body that repeatedly labeled him

#### Rights on hold Budhabar, 14 May

Activities of all political parties have been banned at Manma Khadachakra, the district headquarters of Kalikot, since 31 March by the District Administration Office (DAO). The official notification reads, "Organising mass meetings, rallies and sloganeering by any political

parties, organisations and associations are prohibited," in language that closely resembles directives issued by Panchayat governments.

The political parties are the first and direct victims of this ban that directly breaches the fundamental rights guaranteed to the people by the constitution of 1991. The local administration came down heavily on political activists who had gathered to celebrate International Labour Day on 1 May. The police have been accused of violent behaviour towards UML, NMKP (Nepal Workers and Peasants Party) and Jan Morcha workers who had gathered to observe May Day. Police Inspector Gyanendra Pakharin physically assaulted Tula Raj Bista, secretary of the UML District Committee. The political parties have condemned the incident, reporting that Sub-Inspector Jagat Man Shrestha had instructed his men to "kill and dispose of" anybody who defied the DAO



Nine human rights organisations in the district have also expressed displeasure at CDO Madhab Prasad Pokharel's directive, which they say contravenes what the constitution guarantees every citizen of Nepal. The political parties have demanded that the indefinite ban be scrapped immediately.

## Women in the revolution

Kalpana Dhamala

जनादश

Women's liberation is an essential part of class liberation. History shows it's beginnings within class suppression nence the emancipation of women cannot be brought about without first ensuring class liberation. It is essential for campaigns regarding women's liberation to locate themselves in the class struggle. nment and the Maoist rebels are negotiating peace and w peace process is being raised from different sectors. Our Maoist party and its sister organisation, the All Nepal Nomen's Organisation (Revolutionary), believes that the participation of women determines the success of any progressive change. We believe it is 100 percent valid to bring up women's concerns at this point. However, our efforts are being scuttled by demands for the physical presence of females in negotiation teams. We condemn their failure in realising that the achievements of the Maoist movement are also those made by Nepali women. The revolution and our place in it must not be questioned on this point alone.

Our party empowered women with the ideology of Marx, Lenin, Mao and Prachanda to fight for a just egime. This is an immense achievement. The 'ordinary' rural women of the past are now strong enough to face class enemies on the frontline. Although our numbers are quite small in the decision making levels, on the lower levels the number of women equals that of men



To raise more women to higher levels, our party nas made it a policy to encourage their participation from the bottom up. Our party appreciates the contribution, sacrifices and commitment displayed by women in achieving the present balance of power. Women made the Maoist party more vigorous and revolutionary in its fight against social injustice. Our other big achievement is breaking stereotypes and establishing women as brave soldiers for the cause. We do not need women in the peace negotiations to make our revolution a success, but we would appreciate their participation for its sustainability.

in the militia and the party structure.

We believe ensuring the progressive political agendas of our party will ensure the liberation and unbiased treatment of Nepali women. The economic political, social, religious, cultural and legal discriminations imposed by the *ancien regime* can be shattered. Only the roundtable talks, interim government and a constituent assembly can establish the foundation for equality.

**HISTORY AND CULTURE** 

Back at Sundarijal >35

## "I now understand human misery..."



One week into his solitary confinement, BP Koirala in his prison diary written in **English**, is nostalgic about relatives and is homesick. He also realises that he has become more sensitive about human suffering, and wonders whether this is because of old age or incarceration. A picture of his wife, Sushila, is pasted on the diary, and BP writes that he gazes at the picture many times a day.

#### 1 April, 1977

This diary was given to me by Nona a day before we left for Kathmandu. She has given me a small pocket note book also. I haven't made any use of the note book at all. In the beginning I used to write 'Sundarijal' on it every day to keep up a record of my stay here—but then I thought useless to carry on this practice—the record of my detention will be everywhere, and the mention of the place of detention everyday in a little note book is utterly valueless. I make full use of this diary all right. Nona was very thoughtful in getting this for me. Today I remembered her many times. She must have thought that the gift of the diary would stand me in good stead in jail and also that I will write my ideas in it which would be of value in the future—as a record for history. I know I haven't written anything of value in it and if she were to see it she would be disappointed by the commonplaceness of my writing. I don't know when I will be able to meet her, if at all, I also remember Kalpana. What is she doing without about GM. Laxman was to have taken her to All India Medical Institute on the next day of our departure for here. Patna doctors had given alarming reports and about one eye...doctors had given up hope. The present effort was to try to save at least one eye, which is also in grave danger. This is a great tragedy according to the doctors of Patna such cases are not suitable even for eye transfer. Nobody can do anything, and I feel in prison doubly helpless—can't even inquire about her health and send words of consolation.

In old age people perhaps become more sensitive to human misery—or is it the other way about? I have become very sensitive—perhaps it is not my age but my situation. Perhaps my sensitiveness to human misery is an extension of my sensitiveness about my own situation. The prison situation here is unequivocally trying. In the beginning I thought I would break down mentally. But that desperate mood is over, but the solitary confinement is a trying situation by any calculation. My present misery has prepared me psychologically to understand deeply what human misery is. I don't know. There is a counter argument—that infirmity makes one selfish, human old age, instead of promoting sensitiveness, induces selfishness, that misery [conquers] over sensitiveness, brutalizes it. Both are perhaps true—depends upon the human types.

#### 2 April

Sundarijal

I am very tired today, because I did some washing of clothes and bathed very elaborately. I become tired very easily these days. On the advice of the doctor I have given up exercises, and the little I do of yoga or the stretching type also makes me tried, hence I am giving up that too till I regain enough strength. I need to take morning and evening constitutional of almost one hour each—that too I can't maintain. Dr Basnet wants that I must strictly give up all exercises except walking, that too not briskly, for ½ hr in the morning and ½ hr in the evening. Today I couldn't do even that, but the washing more than made up for the quota of today's physical exercise. I am mostly tired, perhaps too tired even to get 20 mts siesta that I usually want to take after the midday lunch. When I am tired it affects my emotional side too—I become homesick, start indulging in self-commiseration. Perhaps this was so with me even outside, only it wasn't so deep and long-lasting. And moreover I hadn't such leisure for self-analysis (which I do here...for want of any other mental exercise). Ever since GM was taken away from here I have to do various kinds of small chores, which also involve physical exercise. But unless I am fit enough to do my normal exercise, I don't feel well both psychologically and physically.

Today is Saturday—hence no newspapers (that is those "govt sheets"—that is an army officer's expression, not mine) but I read those sheets carefully for two reasons, one for the usual reason of trying to squeeze out as much information as possible, like a sleuth on his scent on a fragmentary material, and the other for the love of letters—not that these sheets have any, absolutely any, literary value, but still they print words that are materials for high thoughts—building bricks. I love words for [their] sake. Since yesterday I have started taking Isopterin a specific for heart trouble—a mild heart stimulating drug according to the doctor Basnet. The doctor had sent it to me a week ago, till yesterday I resisted taking it, but since extra ...(?) ie missing of heartbeat is persisting and the doctor knows better, I thought that I must submit to his guidance in this matter. He has assured me that Isopterin is mild and shouldn't produce any side effects. Sushila too has a very mild heart condition produced by high bp—mine is not of a similar character of trouble—but still since some treatment for my heart condition has become necessary, we are, as in various other matters, in the same boat. A new link between us. I have a small passport size photo of her gummed on the inside cover of this diary. Whenever I look at it—I do it many times a day—I am [filled] with happiness and my mood is raised.

**BOOK REVIEW** 

# Mao by the book

he irst Saturday of May was dry, windy and desolate, like any other day at this time of the year. A disquiet peace hung in the air, a lull before an impending storm. But the people standing in the queue appeared to be too desperate to care about the risks ahead. They lined up the street from the gate of Dasrath Rangshala to the traffic roundabout at Maitighar, waiting patiently to get a pass that would entitle them to be interviewed for a job in South Korea.

Apparently, people have begun to vote with their feet in full force. The credibility of the king's direct rule was suspect from the day it began on October Fourth last year. Now the urge to get away is getting stronger as the government of king's nominees seems to be capitulating to the Maoists in order to keep itself well entrenched in Singh Darbar.

Despite the plethora of propaganda pieces on 'New Democracy' churned out by Maoist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai, no one has any illusion about their future in a dictatorship, be it proletariat or elitist. Forms may look different, but the content of Prachandpath and the rediscovered Mahendrapath of the Panchayat era are strikingly similar. So those that weren't in the queue last week were protesting out in the streets. The struggle against an unjust peace has begun in different forms.

Nepalis know what it is like to live under a totalitarian regime. The early seventies were the halcyon days of the Panchayat: bright King Mahendra buttons

and little pink books on the merits of the Back to the Village Campaign were used as tools to terrorise the masses. Any one could be picked up and put behind bars by the authorities under the specious suspicion of being "anti-national"

From Jan Wong's accounts of life in the People's Republic of China during the heydays of the Cultural Revolution, it appears that the lot of common Chinese under the dictatorship of the proletariat was no better. In many ways, t was worse, because an average Chinese had no way of getting away while even the poorest of Nepalis could freely use the option of trekking down to India in search of a job and security. In Mao's China, forget migration, people needed proper authorisation and special permission to visit "public parks on national holidays"

Wong begins her book by describing the pathetic condition of Mao's grandson who spends his time in a hospital flipping channels and dreaming about studying Maoism in the United States. The government won't let him out of the country, because as the over-weight Mao Xinyu explains to the author, "They are afraid I'll go out and my thinking will change. Or I won't come back."

A Canadian of Chinese descent, Jan Wong went to Mao's China in 1972 in search of an alternative world, if not the utopia itself. She enrolled at the Beijing University when the campus was still largely empty. But it didn't take her long to realise that her dreamland was a fool's

paradise, a hermetically sealed Maoist bubble where campaigns against Beethoven were justified on the ground that the long-dead musician was guilty of "composing bourgeois music".

Wong was in Beijing as a student during the first Tianamen Carnage of 1976 when some of Zhou Enlai's mourners were beheaded because Mao explicitly forbade the use of guns in the use of "necessary force" to crush the "counter-revolutionary rebellion". She was there again at the time of the Tianamen Massacre thirteen years later, this time as a journalist. Comparing the two as a writer, she has this to say, "Both protests began as disguised mourning for a senior Communist official. Both crackdowns coincided with purges at the top. Both times, the victims were labled counter-revolutionary and the death toll was a state secret. The only difference was that, in 1976, Deng was the victim; in 1989, he gave the order to shoot to kill."

There is a strange sort of nostalgia in the first and second part of the book. Wong longs for her lost youth in chapters like 'Pyongyang Panty Thief' and 'Matchmaker' with sardonic wit. Describing her days of courtship, she writes, "I began seeing Norman regularly. Did we date? Go to Disco? Take in a revolutionary opera? No, we joined a study group and read all three volumes of *Das Kapital*."

The text of the third part on 'Paradise Lost' and the final part titled

Required reading for every angstridden school dropout in Nepal duped into believing that dictatorship is a necessary condition for utopia.

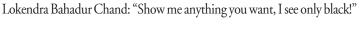
as 'Paradise Regained' is full of racy journalese and judgemental observations. But there is never a dull moment as the writer explores different layers of her own disillusionment. Denouement is reached when she finally realises that Canada is "far more socialistic than China has ever been, with its free public education, universal medicare, unemployment insurance, old-age pensions and government funding for television ads against domestic violence".

This book deserves to be translated into Nepali and made required reading for every angst-ridden school dropout who is duped into believing that dictatorship is a necessary condition for utopia. To a distraught person, the prospect of escaping to Korea may appear tantalising, but totalitarianism in every form must be fought if the root cause of the fear of future is to be removed. Running away is

Desperate souls seldom gain paradise, determined ones always do. This account of Jan Wong's journey through her life once again reiterates the continuing relevance of that old dictum. ♦



**Red China Blues** by Jan Wang Pages: 405 Bantam Books Price: £7.99



िकाल-विवाद माmalaya Times, 11 May

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#### **FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS**

- \* Kathmandu Vendors paintings by Mark Jordans at the Lazimpat Gallery Café. 4428549
- ❖ Contemporary Tibetan Art from Lhasa till 14 June at Lotus Gallery, Thamel. 4253646
- ❖ Tibetan paintings till 20 May at Pathibhara Art Gallery, Thamel. 4256004
- \* Exhibition and sale carpets, thankas, handloom and pashmina at Gallery Room, Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel. 4413632

#### **EVENTS**

- ❖ Ani Choying Drolma's 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Kathmandu Concert accompanied by Cadenza to benefit Arya Tara School. 4PM on 25 May at Durbar Hall, Hotel Yak and Yeti.
- ❖ Everest screening 4.30 PM on 18, 21 and 25 May at Nepal Tourism Board in aid of Pahariya village children, Chitwan. Tickets: Chitwan Jungle Lodge (4442240) and Ekta Books
- \* AWON's Tika Box Sale 17 May at Lincoln School, Rabi Bhawan. Entrance fee for presale from 9-10AM Rs 100, main sale from 10-12AM noon Rs 25. Great bargains.
- \* Reiki Level One Workshop 17-18 May at Babar Mahal Revisited. reiki@eld.org.uk 5541613
- \* French Animation in all its Glory Film Festival at the Russian Cultural Centre 23-25 May. 23: 5.30 PM Bestiaire / The menagerie. 24: 12.30 PM Bestiaire / The menagerie, 2.30 PM Contes modernes / Modern tales, 5PM Kirikou et la Sorcière. 25: 12.30 PM Courses poursuites et Polars / Whodunits and Chases, 2.30 PM Envols / Taking Flight, 5PM Mondes Familiers, monde insolites / Familiar and unusual world
- \* East meets West: the twain shall meet 30 May at Dwarika's. Fusion music, oriental and continental cuisine. 4479488
- Children's Carnival 12-4PM on 17 May at the Khel Garden, Shangrila Hotel, Lazimpat,4412999

- \* The Kathmandu Chorale presents Spring Concert with Mozart's Coronation Mass, madrigals and folks songs. 3.30 PM and 6PM on 18 May at British School Auditorium, Patan. Admission Free
- ❖ Live Music Friday at 5.30 PM, Saturday movie at 4.30 PM. Jivin' Joe's Restaurant,
- ❖ Abhaya and The Steam Engine Live at 7.30PM on 17 May at the Jazz Bar. Shangrila Hotel, Lazimpat. 4412999
- ❖ Live Acoustic Jam 7PM on Saturdays at Himalatte Cafe, Thamel. 4256738 ❖ Full Circle acoustic jam every Friday at New Orleans Café, Thamel. 4427311
- F00D \* Wood fired pizzas, Baskin Robbins icecream, cocktails and coffee at the Roadhouse Café, Thamel.
- \* Café Bahal Dieter's delight for the health conscious at
- Kathmandu Guest House's Food Court, Thamel. 4413632 ❖ Buddha's birthday celebration on 16 May at Stupa View
- Vegetarian Restaurant and Terrace, Boudha Stupa. 4480262
- \* Kids Combo Meal at all Bakery Cafés. Kids' meals with exciting
- ❖ Weekend breakfast: Smoked salmon scrambled eggs and filtered coffee Rs 100. 9AM-12PM. Thomas Kilroy at 1905, Kantipath. 4225272
- \* Masala Dosas for Breakfast and Chatamari's for Lunch. Traditional favourites at The Sunrise Café for breakfast and lunch. Yak & Yeti Hotel. 4248999
- ❖ Traditional Nepali Thali Lunch at Patan Museum Café 11AM-4PM. 5526271
- Saturday Asian Brunch at The Café, Sunday European Lunch at Rox Restaurant. Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 4491234
- ❖ Saturday BBQ Lunch at Club Himalaya Nagarkot. Rs 500 per person. 4680083/80
- ❖ The greenest patch Weekend lunches in the oldest and largest garden in Nagarkot at The Fort Resort, fort@mos.com.np. 226799 \* Newari Bhoj Traditional snacks, drinks and meals, outdoors or indoor, in a restaurant
- designed by Bhaktapur artisans. Lajana Restaurant. Lazimpat. 413874
- \* Tukche Thakali Kitchen, Darbar Marg for buckwheat, barley and dried meat specialities.

- ❖ Dakshinkali Package every Saturday Rs 500+tax. 4370714, 4371537
- ❖ Shivapuri Heights a traditional cottage with modern facilities. Rs 1,850 pp. www.escape2nepal.com, Email: info@escape2nepal.com
- ❖ The Great Godavari Getaway Special weekend packages. Godavari Village Resort.
- ❖ The secret of Kathmandu Overnight package \$99. Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
- ❖ Gamcha Organic Farm Guesthouse Traditional Nepali farmhouse. 6631734.
- \* Writing Retreat Full board package. Aesthetic living, innovative thinking, creative writing and nature at Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha. 375280
- ❖ Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge Special offers for Nepalis and expats. 01-361500
- ❖ Dolphin kiss extra special deals for expats at Jungle Base Camp. Email: junglebasecamp@yahoo.com. 061-532112

# **NEPALI WEATHER**

#### by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

This year's pre-monsoon looks like it is going be a wet rerun of last year. The cyclone hovering over the Bay of Bengal off Andhra Pradesh (seen in this satellite picture taken on Wednesday afternoon during the rainstorm over Kathmandu) will bring in moisture which will trigger afternoon thunderstorms and convection systems across the Himalaya into the weekend and next week. The cyclone is expected to move northwards, bringing its tentacles of clouds over Kathmandu, but these will be quickly dissipated by prevailing dry westerly winds. The rains will check the rise in temperature in the hills and tarai.

#### KATHMANDU VALLEY











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#### The Nepalis in Northeast India: A Community in Search of Indian Identity

AC Sinha, TB Subba (eds) Indus, 2003 Rs 960 Historian a book of

This book is a pioneering effort from Indian and Nepali scholars to uncover aspects of the life of Indians of Nepali origin. It documents the history, culture, recruitment in the armed forces, politics, settlement pattern, and language and literature of the Nepamul Bharatiya. Contributors include Anindita Dasgupta, Kanak Mani Dixit and Tek Narayan Upadhaya.

Women and Governance: Re-imagining the State from a Gender Perspective Indira Shrestha, Krishna Hachhethu

**BOOKWORM** 

Shtrii Shakti, 2002



Themes in Himalayan Languages and Linguistics Tej Ratna Kansakar, Mark Turin (eds) South Asia Institute and Tribhuban University, 2003 Rs 600

This compilation of 24 articles on languages spoken in the Himalayan regions of Tibet, India, Nepal and China covers a range of topics, methodologies and analyses that were presented at the 5th Himalayan Languages Symposium at Kathmandu in 1999. Contributors include KP Chalise, Chura Mani Bandhu, Marianne Volkart and Ram Raj Lohani.

Courtesy: Mandala Book Point, Kantipath, 4227711, mandala@ccsl.com.np

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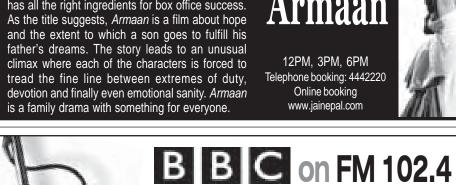
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For insertions ring NT Marketing at 5543333-36.



Armaan has a star-studded cast with legends like Amitabh Bachchan and Randhir Kapoor backed by Bollywood names like Anil Kapoor, Preity Zinta and Gracy Singh. Directed by Honey Irani and with music from the hit trio Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy, this movie has all the right ingredients for box office success. As the title suggests, Armaan is a film about hope and the extent to which a son goes to fulfill his father's dreams. The story leads to an unusual climax where each of the characters is forced to tread the fine line between extremes of duty. devotion and finally even emotional sanity. Armaan





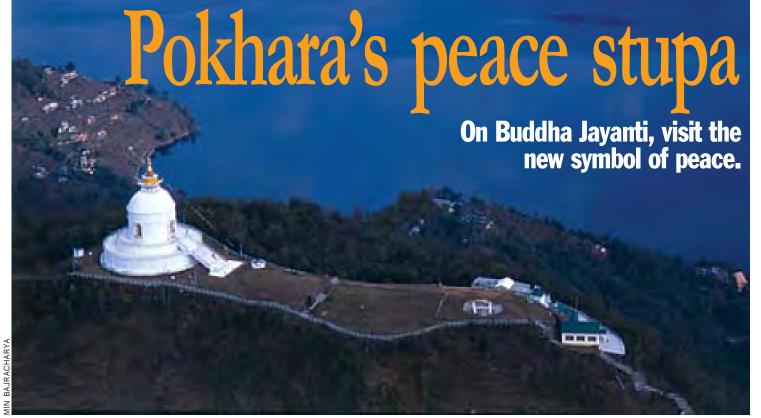


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## **BUDDHA JAYANTI**



### SRADDHA BASNYAT the forest and building without the n POKHARA municipality's permission and served an n an ideal world we would not 18-month prison sentence, Gurung need a place of peace. was seen as a Congress supporter and

The story of the World Peace Pagoda begins 60 years ago in Japan with Nishidathsu Fuji, a man who was disillusioned with the way of the world. His journey to share a message of peace led him to the birthplace of the Buddha. Befittingly, it was in Lumbini that Fuji had a vision to build a stupa for world peace. Nipponzan Myohoji in Japan, the sangha he belonged to, agreed to fund the project but Fuji couldn't find the right location. He shared this idea with a spiritual leader in Dharmasila who directed him to Pokhara and the perfect forested hilltop of Andu Danda overlooking the shimmering waters of Phewa Tal.

Min Bahadur Gurung, a former minister who owned the land, was more than eager to donate it for the stupa. In 1973 the foundation was laid for the peace pagoda but it would take another 20 years for Fuji's vision to be completed. Gurung was charged with clearing

the Panchavat administration razed the partially-built stupa.

After continuous petitions, the authorities relented but said the stupa could not stand higher than 4.5m. In 1987 a committee chaired by Bicchu Sudarshan Mahasthavir, a great proponent of the stupa, joined by Gurung, who declared it his life's mission to see the stupa stand, reignited the issue. By his old friend KP Bhatarai, Gurung was promised full compensation for what was destroyed. The money never materialised, but the 1993 Koirala administration finally gave the permit. A decade later Fuji's vision

crowns the hill: the World Peace Pagoda rises 35m and has become a landmark. Thirty-seven steps take you up to the second tier where four Buddhas face the cardinal directions. A standing Nepali Buddha in bronze faces south (see pic, left), a Sri Lankan Buddha meditates to the west, a Thai Buddha faces north and a Japanese Buddha looks east.

The view is breathtaking— Phewa Tal spans the distance between Andu Danda and Sarangkot, the mountains and the sky reflected in its depths. Below, Pokhara's lakeside sprawls on the eastern banks. Dhaulagiri, Annapurna, Machapuchare and Lamjung line up along the north and on a clear day you can see Manaslu, Himalchuli and even Ganesh Himal.

This is a popular spot pilgrims, picnickers, young lovers. tourists and even the occasional film crew come here. Hagit Zioni and Michal Maori, two Israeli trekkers who have been all over the

Muktinath," says Zioni, "And the Hindu and Buddhist temples there don't compare to this one." The area is kept up mainly by funding from the Nipponzan Myohoji and a special local committee. But it is not an easy job for Shyam Lal Pokhrel. He maintains the grounds leading up to the stupa despite frequent water shortages. "The Japanese will help us for some time, but at the end of the day we must learn to take care of this place of

On Buddha Jayanti, 16 May, a procession will leave from Pokhara

peace," he says.

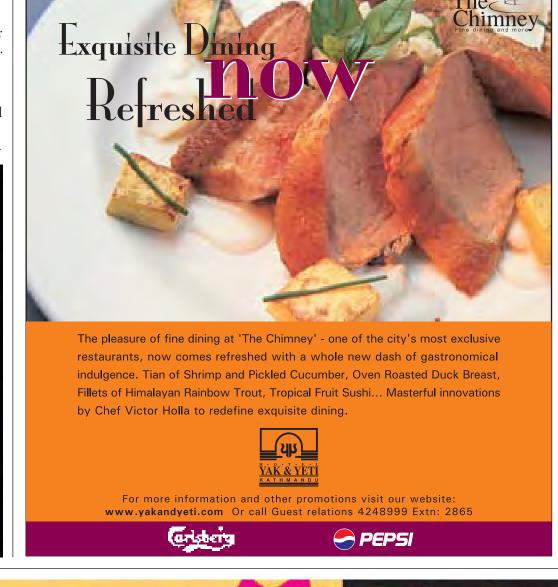


On Buddha's birthday, King Gyanendra will inaugurate the new Mayadevi Mandir in Lumbini. The Rs 60 million construction may not be an architectural marvel, but it allows pilgrims to climb up to observe the archaeological excavations of the area where the Buddha was born more than 2,500 years ago. The Ashoka pillar that s said to mark the nativity spot is to the left in the picture.

Annapurna region, were awestruck to Bindhyabasini park for an open gathering. Everyone is welcome to by the pagoda. "We've been to use the meditation hall. Pilgrims light butter lamps every full moon when pujas are held at the stupa. But the best time to visit is early morning as dawn colours the

world and there is a slight nip in the air. You have the place almost to yourself, with the exception of Pokhrel who putters around the grounds. To paraphrase Yeats, peace comes dropping slow on the veils of the morning, and you not only understand but also experience Fuji's vision. In a less than ideal world we do need a place for peace. •









#### **Under My Hat**

by Kunda Dixit

# How they knocked the bastard off

ranscripts recently declassified under the Freedom of Information Act finally give us a historical perspective on the first ascent of Mt Everest 50 years ago and lays to rest the big question of who got to the top first: Hillary or Tenzing.

It has been well documented that after he came down from the mountain, Ed Hillary told John Hunt: "We knocked the bastard off." What we didn't know was that Sir Ed was in habit of cursing a lot. The following transcript of his conversation with Tenzing as the two approached the summit on 29 May 1953 was discovered at the Royal Geographical Society. The contents are rated 'R' and we will request all unaccompanied minors at this point to run along outside and play on the swing for the duration of this column:

TENZING: (Muffled, through oxygen mask) Sir, can I call you

HILLARY: Not yet, 'Zing my man, wait till we knock the \$#\$%&\*@#! virginity off this #\$% mountain first.

TENZING: Here we are at the Grade Six bit of vertical rock on the South Ridge, sah'b, we'll need to rope up and I'll cut some steps.

Can we name this the Tenzing Step?
HILLARY: Me first. I hereby name this bugger the Hillary Step after myself.

TENZING: Oh. OK.

HILLARY: I'm so &\*#@\$ tired. Tenzing, why don't you rustle up some rum and coke while I try to establish the highest ever urinal in human history, that is if I can open my \( \structure{\infty} \\$ \%#@

TENZING: I'd check the wind direction first if I were you. Rum n' coke coming right up, sir.

HILLARY: Billions of blistering barnacles! The \$\%\\$#@ thing freezes solid as soon as it comes out, I'll have to keep breaking it off as I relieve myself over the Tibetan plateau.

(Later that day, as the summit comes into view.) TENZING: You realise, don't you sir, that we are setting some kind of world record here?

HILLARY: Yup, 50 years from now I'll be on a New Zealand \$5 note and on the cover of the %\$#+& National Geographic. TENZING: Whoa, there is already someone at the top. It looks like a clerk from the Mountaineering Ministry and he wants to inspect our climbing permit and the receipt for the \$60,000

HILLARY: You go on ahead, Tenzing. I'll take little nap right here. TENZING: No, no, it's getting late, we're nearly there, sah'b. Here, let me carry you.

(Tenzing, heaving Hillary on his shoulders, stands on the summit of Mt Everest, see pic.)

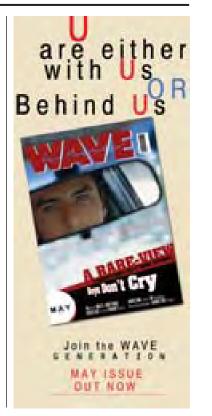
This secret transcript clearly proves that while Tenzing was indeed first to set foot on top, Hillary by virtue of being on his shoulder actually reached a higher altitude above mean sea level. The two were wildly feted as they came off the mountain. Hillary kept on muttering something about knocking the sonofabitch off, while the Nepali go

Dharma Raj Thapa to compose a famous folk song which goes:

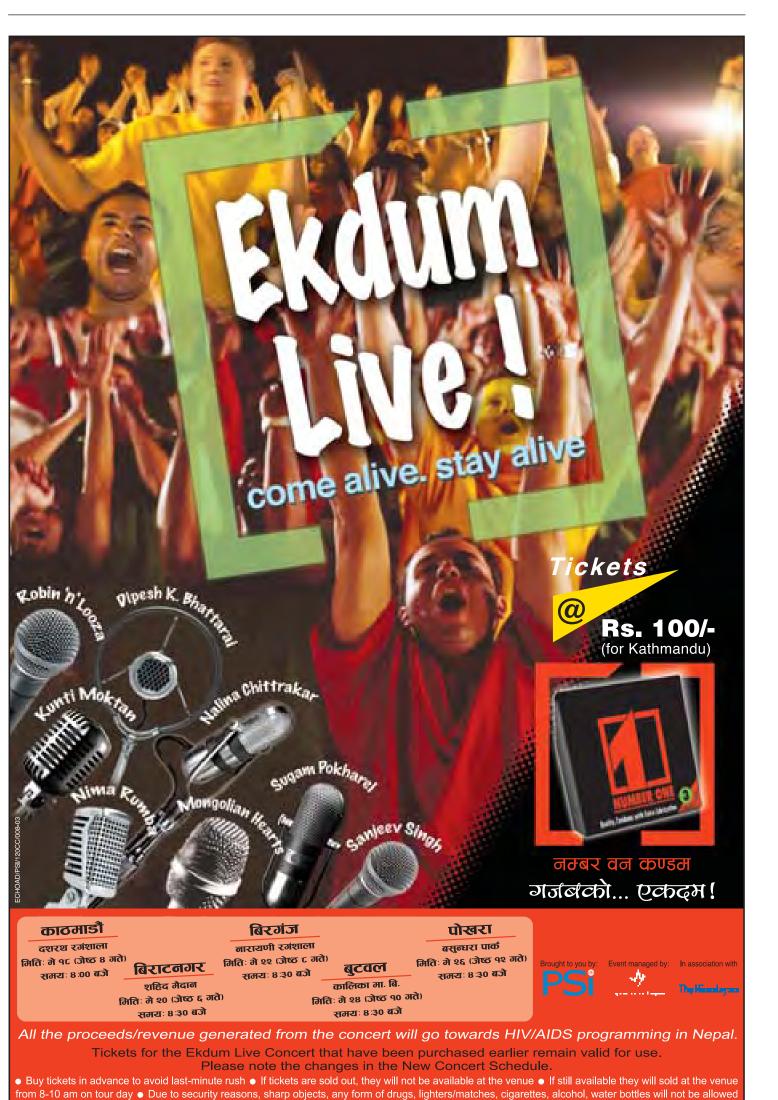
"Our famous Tenzing Sherpa, got to the top, carrying that weakling

Hillary in his rucksack...' A slight problem arose when the duo got back to Kathmandu and Tenzing promptly decided that he was an Indian national after all. It took Kathmandu 50 years to finally overcome bureaucratic hurdles to award Nepali citizenship to Hillary in honour of his ability to swear like a native. Now Sir Ed has all the rights and privileges of a Nepali citizen which means he will have to henceforth apply in New Delhi for an Australian visa. But at least he can fly to Lukla for one-third the tourist





16 - 22 MAY 2003 **NEPALI TIMES #145** 



side the venue. Ladies' handbags will be checked at the entrance • Parking will be at the vehicle owner's risk • Tickets once sold will not be refunded Tickets for Kathmandu available at :- The Himalayan Times office - Anamnagar, The Himalayan Times Classifieds booking counters -

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