4 - 10 July 2003





parties began a relay hunger strike against the royal

disclosure of all royal assets

move and started a signature campaign calling for the

#152

### **KUNDA DIXIT**

hen Surya Bahadur Thapa became prime minister a month ago, most people heaved a sigh of relief. Here was a wily manipulator who could use the executive powers bestowed on him by the king to lead the charge, and yank the politics out of the quagmire. It's looking more and more like the old horse is running out of steam.

18 pages

**Rs 25** 

To be sure, the odds are stacked against Thapa: there is the whole question of his legitimacy, the NC-UML alliance sees him as a pretender, the Maoists barely trust him. And then there is the daily list of damage control chores: street protests, school strikes, transport strikes, oil tanker stoppages.

"Nothing moves, things are at a complete standstill, there is no government," says a senior bureaucrat who has seen governments come and go, but nothing like what prevails today.

Thapa's check list was to first try and get the political parties on board by promising them a reinstatement of parliament, then crafting a multi-partisan approach to the Maoist talks, and once they agreed, announce a date for elections. He is stuck at Step One. His obstacles are many, but the most nagging is also nearest: the party president Pashupati Rana's faction feels left out.

But things are changing. The UML is torn by

Auto Loan

# Nothing moves

"Because no one is in charge, anyone can be in charge."

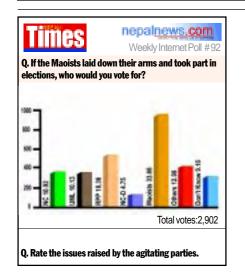
dissension from the KP Oli camp, which is now in open mutiny. Oliji is stirring things up and now wants a party convention, barely six months after the last one. It is hard to see where this is headed other than an open split because Madhab Kumar Nepal still commands the internal party votes. But MKN is being blamed by some in his party for his failure to achieve premiership after getting so close.

By washing its linen in public, the UML has frayed the five party alliance. The immediate effect is seen in the strong lobby within the Congress now wanting to go it alone. In the family, Shailaja Acharya doesn't seem to agree with anything her uncle GP Koirala does, and says so publicly every chance she gets. Girijababu, for his part, doesn't seem to care what anyone, least of all his own family says, and is launching ever-bolder broadsides against the king.

All this should make Surya Bahadur Thapa's job easy.

But it doesn't. After the abuse they have hurled at the king and his prime minister, there is no way the parties can now join the government. The only way is to lure defectors in. But there are doubts if such a government can be sustainable in the longterm. "Everyone is just sitting it out," explained one party insider. "This is a dangerous situation. Because no one is in charge, anyone can be in charge." Hence the paranoia about outside interference on the one hand, and groups like student unions who are exploiting the uncertainty to force closures on the other.

And now, with the prime minister busy with his daughter's wedding and the whole country gearing up for marathon celebrations of King Gyanendra's birthday next week, no one is expecting a dramatic clearing of the political air any time soon.











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**EDITORIAL** 

Times

Nepali Times is published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd,
Chief Editor: Kunda Dixit
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Webmaster: Bhushan Shilpakar
editors@nepallitimes.com, www.nepalitimes.com
Advertising: Sunaina Shah advertising@himalmedia.com
Subscription: Anil Karki subscription@himalmedia.com
Sales: Sudan Bista sales@himalmedia.com
Sanchaya Kosh Building, Block A-4th Floor, Lalitpur
GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 01-5543333 5523845 Fax. 01-5521013
Printed at Jagadamba Press, Hattiban: 01-5547018/17

STATE OF THE STATE

# Region d'être



A unity of command could help govern the capital valley as an effective administrative unit.

# UNLOCK THE COUNTRY here may be a truce, but this country is living under the shadow of the gun. In every sphere of life, there is the unspoken fear of violence: in the

here may be a truce, but this country is living under the shadow of the gun. In every sphere of life, there is the unspoken fear of violence: in the extortion rackets where the credo is pay-or-else, in the forced entry of hooligans into schools to lock them up, in revolutionary taxes that teachers, civil servants and businesses are forced to pay all across the country.

There is also the overt violence: the continuing harsh intimidation of ordinary people by security forces, the abductions, torture and, lately, new killings by the Maoists. In large parts of the country there are two administrations, two tax collectors, two justice systems, two armies, two governments. How else do you explain a 20-year-old Maoist in Dailekh forcing a man old enough to be his father to do sit-ups right ouside the district police post because he was caught drinking alcohol? Elsewhere the justice is just as summary, but harsher. This Talibanesque face of Nepal is keeping the population cowed in terror despite the truce, it has wiped out the slim hope everyone had for a return to a semblance of peace.

The spreading anarchy is not readily apparent in Kathmandu, where new townhouses are recording brisk sales, new motorcycle shops are opening daily, and the queue for mobile phones in Jawalakhel gets longer every week. But even in the capital, we get a glimpse of a new culture of anarchy and violence that grips the land as vehicle drivers are nearly lynched over minor traffic accidents, there are shootouts in broad daylight in New Road, and school principals are murdered in their homes. Something has changed in Nepal, and dramatically. We are living in a different sort of country now, and we may as well get used to it. If and when the peace talks resume, and it leads to some sort of normalcy, we have to learn to live with the legacy of this jungle raj.

The insurgency and the brutal attempt to suppress it have brought the country to the brink of ruin, but it has also brought out all the festering social, cultural, economic and political problems to the surface in a pus-filled abscess.

At least now, we can see the boil and treat it perhaps without having to amputate the feet.

It has now become quite clear that we need to dig deeper into the structural roots of the country's malaise: poor representation, exclusion and the power monopoly of the traditional elite. As the present crisis reaches breaking-point, it presents an opportunity to finally find a political answer to the problems of poverty and social injustice.

We were already on the right track in the mid-1990s, as grassroots representation started producing citizens that was ready to carve its own destiny. But then the extreme left decimated the grassroot structure of the political parties, and then the radical right finished off the job with democratic reversal at the national level. If this was a conspiracy to wipe out the country's political middle, then it was partly successful. What we see around us today is a direct result.

We can regain the middle ground with inclusion, representation and democracy. But first we have to unlock the doors to peace, not with pious paeans from pulpits, but by being honest and accountable ourselves.

he race to beat the budget freeze has once again taken over the streets of Kathmandu. Agencies of different municipal services are vying with each other to dig up roads in the middle of the monsoon with a zeal seldom seen at any other time except during SAARC Summits.

The gaping hole in front of the finance ministry shown in this paper last week is not an oddity. Similar craters have erupted all across town. Men at work: digging and then covering up. Their reason is that the budget was released too late to do anything about it.

The same excuse, however, doesn't hold for the annual power shutdown caused by the Machendranath Rath procession. Its route is fixed, the duration is known in advance, and the date of pulling the juggernaut is common knowledge. Yet, year after year, the Nepal Electricity Authority shuts down power supply citing the Rath. If the procession is so regular, what has the electricity agency done to spare its clients from the annual ordeal?

The route, the schedule and the operation of the Machendranath procession is better organised than the modern services (electricity, traffic, pedestrian, shopping) that it disrupts. Planners of the Malla period seem to have paid closer attention to

civic amenities because citizens were better aware of their rights and responsibilities. Since the rulers themselves took personal interest in civic affairs, service delivery was more effectively coordinated. In contrast, city life in our times seems to sway with the whims of several little tyrants at the controls of the service infrastructure, often working at cross purposes.

Today, it needs a letter to a local daily from a resident southeast Asian ambassador to get the Maharajganj road repaved.

Most city dwellers have no water supply, sewers overflow, the rivers have died, and tankers supplying turbid water at exorbitant prices do a roaring business. But there are no street protests. If freedom is when people can speak and democracy is when the government listens, then we don't have either.

The state is now just a necessary evil, one that has absolved itself of all public responsibilities: security, health, education and physical infrastructure. There are several causes behind this deplorable state of civic affairs, the main one being a lack of coordination between different agencies involved in service delivery. There is an urgent need for someone who dares to say: "The buck stops here."

The Kathmandu Valley badly needs a Regional Commissioner to take charge of law and order, coordinate the efforts of line agencies, have a vision for future development, and supervise projects to increase their effectiveness. The three DDCs, five municipalities and scores of VDCs in the valley have their roles, but a unity of command must be created if the capital valley is to be governed as one effective administrative unit.

A powerful regional bureaucrat can remind us of the Anchaladhish of yore who reigned over the zone under his command as the crown's direct representative. However, the office of the regional commissioner need not be as autocratic. With certain precautions, it can be made a democratic institution addressing the needs of administrative decentralisation.

To make the office of commissioner answerable to people's representatives, a regional council can be set up through a simple constitutional amendment requiring two-third's majority of the lower house of parliament. It can be formed without undermining the primacy of local government units if it is to be composed of the representatives of VDCs, municipalities, and DDCs in the valley.

A regional commissioner made answerable to a body of indirectly elected people's representatives is unlikely to raise the hackles of political parties. They may even see it as an opportunity to transfer blame for politically inconvenient decisions that need to be taken.

If such a model works in the valley—there is no reason why it shouldn't—it can then be easily replicated in all other development regions of the country. Instead of a ceremonial regional administrator in a flagged limousine, it would be more effective to turn the post into a constitutionally-mandated one and make the person answerable to the indirectly elected regional body composed of the representatives of all local government units.

The government at the centre can appoint regional commissioners for a fixed term—but the person will have to function in such a way that she or he is not removed through a no confidence motion in the regional council. Regional commissioners can become a bridge between the field and the centre. They may not be able to solve all the problems created by the line agencies, but at least they can listen to public complaints about pot-holed streets. After that, getting the holes fixed shouldn't be that difficult.  $\square$ 



FEEDBACK

# The Garment Fatwa

In withdrawing support from the Nepali garment industry and boycotting tourism, our American remonstrators ('Imperious power', #151 and 'Nepal feels the heat over Tibet deportations', #150) seem to have forgotten the social problems that similarly draconian measures have brought to the South Asian region in the past. While their proposals may appease personal egos, they are counter-productive when fighting injustice. The scandal surrounding the Harkin bill of 1994 in Bangladesh is illustrative in this regard.

Senator Harkin introduced a bill to the US Senate to boycott the import of garments from Bangladesh believing that this industry exploited children. But before the bill was even endorsed, the industry fired 50,000 children overnight. So dependant was Bangladesh on the American market. Is this how the Senator hoped to end child labour? In figures, perhaps. In reality, as UNICEF concluded in its study, children turned to more hazardous professions such as domestic labour, construction, and even prostitution. Is our memory so short that it takes only a decade to forget the cause of humanitarian misery in the same industry?

From my doctoral research on the garment industry, I put forth five reasons why it would be wrong to punish the Nepali garment industry for the actions of the government:

1. The people of Nepal are currently protesting a government which was appointed without their mandate. This protest movement is an alliance of citizens who collectively represent more than 90 percent of the popular vote in the 1999 election. It is wrong to punish the people

of Nepal for an act which was endorsed neither by them nor by their representatives. It is also naïve to assume that the present government would change its policies to limit public suffering.

Under these circumstances, a well-informed activist would be better advised to tackle the government directly and to spare its subjects.

2. By agreeing to withdraw support from the Nepal garment bill, Senator Dianne Feinstein is indirectly surrendering to the interests of an American private energy company—Panda Energy International. This firm held the Feinstein garment legislation hostage to its own unrelated dispute with the Nepal Electricity Authority over a power purchase contract and lobbied aggressively against the Feinstein legislation in order to force the Nepali authority to submit to their demands. The withdrawal of the bill can be seen as a ransom paid to them. From my discussions with the activist organisations working for the Tibetan cause, I understand that Tibetans feel as targeted on this issue as Nepalis do.

3. While boycotts may seem moral from afar, for those who earn less than \$200 a year, life involves a series of pragmatic choices. Here are some of the people who will be affected:

a 24-year-old high-school-educated girl whose family has never lived outside the periphery of Bhaktapur. All of her male kin are farmers and none of her female kin have an individual profession.

This girl, on the other hand, has learned to 'stitch' garments and commutes for work daily across three districts, and is the primary breadwinner in this 'son-less' family.

 $\ensuremath{\,^{\square}\,}$  a 26-year-old unskilled but healthy labourer from the western mountains

who fled to Kathmandu and joined the garment industry in order to escape an inevitable recruitment in to the Maoist camps.

□ La 35-year-old childless widow of the Damai caste currently working as a garment tailor whose parents and in-laws both disowned her on grounds of

'honour' soon after her nuptial ties with a groom from outside her caste.

What alternative livelihood would Senator Feinstein suggest for these 350,000 Nepalis who depend on the garment industry? And how would she persuade them that their personal disasters contributed to her 'conscientious' cause? Is she not also jeopardising the safety and wellbeing of the 20,000 Tibetan refugees who have settled down in Nepal? As the chance of a lasting ceasefire with the Maoists gets thinner day by day, does Feinstein's action not point redundant workers towards Maoist ideology?

4. The proposed bill will alienate Tibetans from one of their closest partners. The garment factories in Kathmandu have contributed to the global Free Tibet campaign. Among others, I know of a factory which, with the help of its 400-strong labour force, was applying about 90 percent of its total capacity to produce high-priced exportable garments with 'Free Tibet' logos and Tibetan Buddhist screen-prints. In the commercial arena, their hope that their efforts might contribute to the global 'ethical clothing' campaign are bound to dissolve when they learn of the 'fatwa' sentence the 'world leader of democracy' has imposed.

5. This unnecessary scapegoating and retaliation seriously damages the affinity between Nepalis and Tibetans. A large population of Tibeto-Nepalis currently reside happily with their mixed identities for whom to choose one side over the other is to curtail their identities. The alienation that the bill introduces brings serious rifts among the ethnic communities already divided during the Maoist conflict. It also dispirits the Tibeto-Nepali families both among the Kathmandu Valley elites and the high mountain dwellers who have continued to maintain their family ties through thick and thin.

Mallika Shakya, London School of Economics





# LETTERS

### TIBET

Despite self-styled Tibet freedom fighter Jeff Greenwald's assertion (#151) that Ethical Traveler has called off the tourism boycott, I notice that he is giving interviews to all and sundry saying it is still on. In Ethical Traveler's own website, it doesn't appear that the boycott has been witheld. Ethical Traveler should clarify this issue and Greenwald should stop contradicting himself in his media appearances.

### Tshering Lama, Seattle

Jeff Greenwald has specifically "withdrawn" his boycott of tourism in Nepal in a letter to you (#151), but he is still giving interviews to the San Francisco Chronicle (29 June) advocating the boycott. As has been explained by other contributors to your paper, sanctions would make life worse in Nepal for Tibetans. Your readers have also pointed out the severe costs to the Nepali economy will hurt the ordinary people (Nepalis and Tibetans alike) who depend on tourism. Greenwald has accepted these, so why does he keep giving more interviews calling for a boycott?

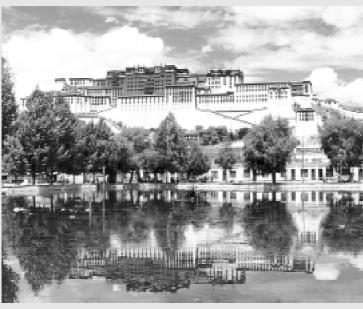
### Janet Simmons, email

I agree that a tourism boycott of Nepal may hurt ordinary Nepalis more than sending the needed message to Nepali policy makers concerning their attitude towards Tibetan refugees ('Tibet, Tibet', #150). However, it may be simplistic to look at the problem merely as the case of the refoulement of 18 Tibetans.

As someone who has been monitoring Nepali and Tibetan issues I know we need to take a broader perspective and see what the solution is. On the whole, Nepal has been good to the Tibetan refugees, providing over 20,000 of my brethren with home and space when they needed it the most. Even today several thousand Tibetans continue to live and prosper in different parts of Nepal, many even contributing significantly to the country's economy. Nepal has been expecting Tibetans to follow the laws of the land and that is something that Tibetans understand and appreciate.

There are two aspects to Nepal's attitude towards Tibetans. First is the treatment of Tibetans escaping from Tibet along the Nepal border. While several thousand Tibetans have enjoyed Nepali humanitarian assistance and have been able to live in freedom in Nepal as well as in other parts of the world, there have been cases when escaping Tibetans have undergone problems, including physical abuse, monetary coercion and deportation. Thus, the recent refoulement of the 18 Tibetans was part of what some feared might become a trend.

Second is Nepal's attitude towards Tibetans legally residing in the country. The problem arose several years back when a section of Nepali



bureaucrats started clamping down on lawful activities of the Tibetans in Nepal. What hurt the Tibetans the most was when the Nepali authorities did not permit them to even observe traditional and customary festivals like the birthday of the Dalai Lama or the Tibetan National Day. In fact, such bans have been sources of concern for a large section of Nepal's Buddhist population who are ethnic Tibetans. The Tibetan psyche was hurt when representatives of the Dalai Lama in Kathmandu were even detained without any provocation in the past when Chinese leaders visited Nepal.

Tibetans have always been aware of the pressure on Nepal as a result of being sandwiched between two Asian giants. They are not asking Nepal to either perform or permit political activities, which will place the country's security and stability at risk. Although Nepal is not a party to the UN convention relating to the status of refugees, it has been providing a safe haven to Tibetans, and this should be continued.

I do not subscribe to the theory that the international outcry "will spark new tensions between the Nepali and Tibetan communities". The tension has already been there for so long. It is only that the Tibetans have been understanding of Nepal's situation that they have not been making a big case so far. The writers only need to talk to ordinary Tibetans in Nepal privately and informally to see how they feel about the situation.

The recent international outcry is not solely on account of the deportation of 18 Tibetans but symbolises the concern of well-wishers of the Tibetan people at the negative aspect of Nepal's treatment of Tibetan refugees as a whole. This is the time for introspection to see if part of the blame is not with the Nepali official attitude towards Tibetans. Tibetans are victims in the current development and should not be blamed for seeking external support.

As a country having historical and traditional links with Tibet, Nepal can contribute significantly in enabling Tibetans to reside lawfully and in freedom in Nepal. Already there are signs of Tibet-China detente with envoys of the Dalai Lama visiting China. As and when there is a solution to the Tibetan issue, Tibetans on the other side of the border will remain forever grateful to the assistance rendered by Nepal and its people.

Bhuchung K Tsering, Virginia, USA

The lack of protests in Nepal against the deportation of the 18 Tibetan refugees is appalling. There have been protests in the west, but what about protests from our own leaders and the general public? All the actors in our Nepali stage have profited from refugee status at one time or the other. Imagine what would have happened if the Indian authorities had bundled up King Tribhuban, and had sent him back in 1950. If the Nepali Congress and the leftist leaders had been handed over to the Panchayat regime from their sanctuary in India? If the Nepali Maoist leaders in India gathered together and turned over to Kathmandu? Or even if all the Nepalis working in India or abroad as economic refugees were sent back? The country is going through difficult times now. But the utter lack of humanity exhibited by our leaders in throwing out the refugees shows a lack of moral fabric. Perhaps it is this lack of basic morality that is at the root of what is wrong with this country's rulers

Kabindra Pradhan, Pulchowk

I was shocked to read that Ethical Traveler has announced a tourism boycott of Nepal. This it totally unacceptable and it will make a huge negative impact to Nepal. Nepal's main source of income and employment is the tourism industry, and a proposed boycott will hurt a lot of people. Nepal has been giving refuge to Tibetans and Bhutanis even though most Nepalis live below the poverty line.

A boycott will never solve the problem. Why doen't Ethical Traveler take action against China—the ultimate guilty party here? Is it because China is a powerful country?

Buddhi Pant, Coventry, UK

## Mark Turin and Sara Shneiderman reply:

As the authors of the initial article 'Tibet, Tibet' (#150), we thank Greenwald and Cancellaro for their feedback (#151). Their letter raises several valid points. Here we respond to some of their comments, as well as to those of Bhuchung Tsering (see letter, above). We are delighted that Ethical Traveler and the Tibet Justice Center have decided to 'withhold action on the proposed boycott'. Their alternative tourist advisories are more appropriate and in line with the grassroots situation in Nepal.

However, some concerns remain. While Greenwald and Cancellaro suggest that the decision to withhold the boycott was reached 'after consulting

with several other human rights and Tibetan rights groups', we are eager to know whether human rights organisations in Nepal were among those consulted. The authors' acknowledge the broader human rights problem endemic to rural Nepal, but their closing demand smacks of a pious moral certainty that is disrespectful of Nepali citizens' ongoing efforts to reform their own polity from within: 'We hope that, should further actions become necessary, all Nepalis will support whatever actions Ethical Traveler and the human rights community suggests'. Moreover, if Ethical Traveler genuinely want Nepalis to support their reformulated recommendations they should disseminate their viewpoint in the Nepali language press.

Likewise, Bhuchung Tsering's analysis of the situation is nuanced, but he would also do well to recognise that there is no single 'Tibetan' opinion the world over. He suggests that we should discuss this issue with ordinary Tibetans on the street, as if we had not vet done so. In fact, it was precisely such conversations with Tibetan residents of Kathmandu that shaped the opinions expressed in our original article. While there is a natural diversity of opinion among the 20,000+ Tibetan population in Nepal, several Tibetans of various social backgrounds found the international Tibet support community's proposed boycott to be out of step with their own

Here we must correct
Tsering's misunderstanding. We
were not suggesting that a
general 'international outcry'
would 'spark new tensions
between the Nepali and Tibetan
communities'. A hurtful economic
boycott specifically targeted at
Nepal's tourist trade, however,
would surely do so. As our initial
article made clear, we believe that
a protest about the Tibetan issue
in particular and the Nepali human
rights situation in general is

absolutely necessary. The question is what strategy will yield the most positive results for all involved parties.

To conclude, we concur with CK Lal ('Imperious Power, #151) that the Ethical Traveler approach represents a troubling hypocrisy among American action groups on both the left and right. While Nepal is singled out for special condemnation for trespassing international law, the link to the United States on Ethical Traveler's Resources web page refers to the nation as 'the world's first modern democracy'. In light of the horrors of the Guantanamo Bay detention centre, the ongoing atrocities against civilians in Iraq and the inability of the United States government to sign international treaties, it is extraordinary that Ethical Traveler remains silent. Why no clickable email petition to the White House? Does Ethical Traveler recommend a tourism boycott to the United States, or expect 'all' Americans to support its recommendations? More careful consideration of such questions might benefit travellers and citizens of all countries.

> Mark Turin and Sara Shneiderman, Kathmandu

## ADS

The front page of last week's *Nepali Times* had 36 percent of its space taken by the newspaper and 64 percent by advertisements. At your current rate of depreciation, readers can expect the complete disappearance of news stories by some time in mid-2004. Why don't you just charge all of us a bit more for an issue and clean up the look of your otherwise excellent newspaper?

Mark Zimmerman, Patan

 (Nepali Times maintains a strict policy of always keeping its ad to content ratio below 1:3, as per international norms.
 Discerning readers will notice that the number of pages fluctuates in proportion to the volume of ads – Ed.)

### **SURESH OJHA**

What I read about Suresh Ojha (Nepali society, #151) made me very proud of him and his work. When I see his forward-looking and positive attitude towards the country it revives my hope. Thank you *Nepali Times* for introducing us to a rare kind of Nepali.

K Acharya, email



### **CORRECTION**

In 'A big hole in our budget' (#151) the cap on internal borrowing by the Nepal Rastra Bank Act should actually refer to the overdraft with the NRB and it should have been five percent of revenue of the preceding year, and not five percent of the budget as erroneously stated. The article also missed two details: the IMF's approximately \$70 million contribution for the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility covers three years, and the World Bank's budget support is through a Structural Adjustment Credit for the government's Poverty Reduction Strategy - Ed.



Salutations to

<u>His Majesty King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev</u>

on the auspicious occasion of his

57th Birthday.

May his guidance always take us in the right direction.



**NATION** 4 - 10 JULY 2003 NEPALI TIMES #152

# ajarkot's tense frontline "We can deal with poverty, we've always lived with it. But we can't deal with the brutality."



NARESH NEWAR in JAJARKOT

he first thing that strikes a visitor in Pipey village in Jajarkot is the silence. There are no children playing on the trail leading up to the village, no dogs barking, no one weeding the terrace farms. The houses look empty.

Pipey is a Maoist stronghold and there used to be 200 families here before 1996. The sound of a plaintive cry from a nearby house is magnified by the silence. We find Bal Bahadur, a sick 60year-old man on the floor bed (see picture, top left). He has been bedridden for nearly a year, and his wife is taking care of him. The district hospital is a long and hard walk from the village. There are no health posts nearby. There is no where he can go. People here are used to misery.

The old man struggles to speak and tell us he hasn't seen anyone else besides regular army patrols. "Are you the government people coming to help me? Are you carrying any medicines?" And all we had were questions

for which he had no answers.

In the next house (above. right) 50-year-old Pahiley Nepali and his wife stare blankly at us. Since their daughter's death before the ceasefire, all they do is just stay home quietly, trying to forget what happened that day. "She was just 18," the mother says about her daughter, a Maoist activist who had come home after a long time to meet her parents. The army patrol arrived and spotted her. She changed her clothes and ran as fast as she could but in vain. The villagers and her two brothers found her body a few days later. She has sent her other three daughters and two sons to India and told them never to return home. "I don't care whether there is a war or a ceasefire. For our family, at least, our hopes are lost," she tells us in a low voice as we

Pipey is two hours of hard walking from the Jajarkot district headquarters, in Khalanga bazar. We asked a family with only female members whether they



receive any help from Maoists or the army. "We don't want their help. It only means trouble," says the eldest female member. "We can deal with poverty, we've always lived with it. But we can't deal with this brutality."

Things haven't changed much here since the ceasefire: there is extreme poverty, subsistence farming, no income, health services or education. Like everywhere else, villagers are afraid of both the army and the Maoists. When they travel to Khalanga, they face interrogations by the security forces who think they are Maoists, and when they return home, the Maoists grill them with questions suspecting them of sharing information with the Royal Nepali Army.

"Both the state and the Maoists are violating the code of conduct. Compared to other districts, people from Jajarkot are suffering more, but word of the hardships and misery of our people is not getting out," says Hom Shah, a businessman in

B B C i

Khalanga. The district headquarter does not have telephone lines, and the nearest airport is 16 hours walk away in Chaujhari. The only link to the outside world are the BBC Nepali Service and Radio Nepal.

Like the rest of the population, the local media here is under pressure from both the local administration and the Maoists. Just before the ceasefire, a local journalist, Dinesh, was detained for two months by the security forces for reporting the ground situation during the insurgency. Now, the local Maoists don't like him because he mispelt the local commander's name in an article.

The district headquarter is bursting at the seams with displaced families who don't want to return to nearby villages for fear of Maoist extortion and threats. Water shortage and food scarcity is acute. "If we don't get aid from government now, there will be a big disaster soon," warns Bhairab Sundar Shrestha, former VDC chairman. Life seems more

# **Guns and medicines**

In the most serious breach of the ceasefire since it went into effect six months ago, a Royal Nepali Army patrol and the Maoists engaged in a threehour battle at Dalli village in Jajarkot on 18 June. The villagers here were already very anxious because of the rise in tensions, and when the sound of gunfire reverberated across the valley, they thought the war had started again.

The Maoists accuse the army of trying to probe their defences in their 'model village' under the pretext of establishing a health camp. The army says the local people are in great need of medical attention which the Maoists have not been able to provide, and this is part of their nationwide campaign to bring relief.

There are conflicting accounts from the two sides about what exactly happened. The army says the Maoists opened fire on the patrol while negotiations were going on about establishing the medical camp near Dalli, and eight Maoists were killed in the exchange. The Maoists deny that anyone from their side

was killed. Both sides agree on one thing: a civilian was killed in the crossfire Distrust between the Maoists and the army is now at an all-time high and peace activists fear another outbreak since the two sides are eyeball-toeyeball. Unlike the Sri Lankan truce, there are no international monitors here keeping the two sides apart. The Maoists say the army can enter their 'base area' for medical treatment, but without guns and uniforms. The outer perimeter of police presence is this small post, a two hour walk from Khalanga

Local social organisations and political leaders in Khalanga are now asking the Royal Nepali Army not to provoke the Maoists and work instead to mobilise community organisations to distribute medicines and food to the villagers in remote areas.

"During such a tense situation, humanitarian work should not be done in isolation but the responsibilty should be shared, so the ceasefire is not threatened," says Bhola Mahat, regional coordinator of the human rights group, INSEC. (Naresh Newar)

difficult for people of Jajarkot since the ceasefire. At least during the war, they earned money working as porters for the Maoists. "Most people here have no jobs and there is little to eat," says social worker Kewal Kumar Bhandari.

In Nepal's remote midwest, the distrust between the state and the Maoists is widening. The most serious skirmish so far during the ceasefire happened

near Khalanga earlier this month (see box) and given the proximity of the two armies such incidents will likely be repeated. The soldiers and the Maoists try to get away from each others' way but that is not always possible along frontline villages like Pipey. Says a dejected school teacher, Kumar Buda: "We feel crushed between two rocks. What kind of a peace is this?"

**NEPAL IN THE FOREIGN PRESS** 

# Misplaced priorities displace Kali Gandaki dwellers

**Plans for the** rehabilitation of people affected by the construction of Nepal's largest-ever hydropower project have remained confined to paper.





**BBCi** 25 June, 2003

Proposals to limit the impact of the building of Nepal's largest hydropower project in the Kali Gandaki river, in the mid-west of the country, have failed, according to researchers. A number of schemes were proposed in order to reduce the damage the dam would cause to both the area's indigenous people and the environment. They include new houses, economic compensation and safeguards for fish stocks.

But now the dam has been constructed (with a loan from the Asian Development Bank), very few of these proposals have seen the light of day, critics say.

"Even if you look at the ADB's own policies towards indigenous peoples, what these people are supposed to get is land, construction of their houses, facilities, and also resettlement and a permanent income source for them," Gopal Siwakoti of the Water and Energy Users' Federation in Nepal told BBC World Service's One Planet program.

"Since they are displaced from their traditional income, which is fishing, they are supposed to be given alternatives. If you apply these standards, they haven't received anything." Siwakoti added that the building of the dam had a double impact—the promised jobs has not materialised and the community is unable to return to their original source of income because of the environmental effect of the dam. "Their main tradition is fishing. Now, there are no fishes around, and they can't fish anymore," he said.

Although the massive construction project did initially bring in money, these jobs have now mainly gone. "They did have a lot of employment during the construction period—but post-construction there is not much as a sustained economy," explained Kavati Rai, a postgraduate student studying the effects of dam building on communities.

"We have nice and wonderful policies and institutions and laws, but it really does not get translated at the local level when it comes down. Kali Gandaki is one of the first places where indigenous groups have been impacted, so they are learning slowly."

One villager confirmed Rai's findings. "We knew the project was coming, but after a time the roads came in-we thought that we might be able to get employment with the project, but more than that we did not know," he said.

The dam was constructed in 2000 as part of the government's efforts to tap the vast hydropower potential in the country. Though Nepal is without much infrastructure, it has high hopes of using the potential hydroelectric power as a key export. But the scheme was controversial because of the effect it would have on both the indigenous people and the environment.

"There are religious sites, cultural sites, and also small villages and towns which are dependent on the water flowing from the Kali Gandaki," Siwakoti said. "There was a huge debate over how much water was going to be released, so the project agreed that a certain amount of water would be released all the time. What we understand now is that when there is

not a sufficient amount of water to go to the tunnel, they completely block the water and the whole river is dry.'

And as well as the river drying up, Siwakoti said the area has also suffered the problem of excess water. "What we have seen is that they have not made any arrangements for floods at all," he argued. "We have floods, and we have soil erosion from both sides of the rivers." Plans to ensure the continued existence of fish in the river had simply not gone through, he added.

The region is particularly prone to environmental damage from flooding. "The project planned that they would make an arrangement so that fish that flowed down would be taken up—but they never implemented it. They have not been able to maintain the lifecycle of the fishing industry."

But the builders of the dam stressed that they had done all they were told to do by the government. "According to the contract, we had to first of all give priority for engagement of the water to the people," Fabrizio Calvi, the project leader for the Italian engineering company which built the dam, told One Planet.

He added that those who were displaced by the dam had to be given work and training. "We had to build new houses for them. including a school and a library. Then, being an international company, we thought it was wise to also give them medical assistance. We had an internal hospital that was meant for our workers, at the end of the project we left them all our equipment and provided money for medical assistance for at least one year."

But he also claimed that the Nepali government had not gone through with a plan to provide a doctor to be trained by the Italians, who would stay on after the project was completed. "The Nepalis decided that the area was not among their priorities," Calvi said. "Therefore they declined the offer and the scheme has been abandoned."

A further problem has been that however well-intentioned the schemes, the indigenous people who lived on fishing have been pushed out by development, and have now been pushed out again by better-educated groups from the towns who see a way to turn what is happening at the dam into profits.

Where once were indigenous people making the best of a beautiful landscape teeming with wildlife, now a town of hastily-constructed houses has sprung up. Ironically, the new stone building the indigenous people have been rehoused in does not have electricity—although they made way for a hydroelectric dam.

But the owners of the dam blamed the complaints on unrealistic expectations. "People really expect too much," said Managing Director Janak Lal Karmacharya of the Nepal Electricity Authority, which owns the dam. "When they cannot meet that expectation, they feel frustrated and they complain."

(from BBC News Online http:// news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\_asia/ 3017398.stm)

Daniel Lak is on leave and will be back with his column 'Here and There' next week.

# **Lost by the Banara River**

Governments should be advocates for the vulnerable, but that has not happened for 1,000 families in Mahendranagar who have no land and no hope. Ken Ohashi, the World Bank representative in Nepal, visits them.





KEN OHASHI IN MAHENDRANAGAR

group of about 60 families is camped out in a forest clearing near the Banara River, just east of Mahendranagar.

According to a local social worker, they had been chased out of a Wildlife Reserve Extension area nearby, where they had lived, albeit illegally, for 30 years. Since they moved to this particular site about five months ago, they had sold all their animals to pay for food. By now they had even sold cooking utensils. Sitting right by the East-West Highway, the camp consisted of 30 or so 'tents', make-shift structures covered by tarp. There was one hand-pump.

They lived on whatever day job they could find, and whatever people would give them. Many children showed signs of malnutrition: unnaturally light hair colours, distended stomachs. They were out of school, had no access to safe water. Three children had already died of hunger or disease.

One man, holding a very young child, said he had not found any job that day, and they had not eaten. I happened to have a box of biscuits in my backpack. I knew there were not enough biscuits for all the children gathered around me, but I felt compelled to offer them anyway. No doubt most of the children were hungry, but older children let the youngest ones take them. That decency and dignity made me even sadder.

Worse yet, they told me that the Department of Forestry had served a notice that they had to leave the site by the following day. They said they had no place to go. Some expected that the police would come and perhaps even shoot them. But, they would rather die there than move again aimlessly. It seemed like they no longer had any energy or hope left.

Angry, I went to see the District Forestry Officer for Kanchanpur the next day. He said he understood their plight, but he could not do anything about it. He had been ordered to evict these people from the area. Finding land on which they might settle would be a job for the Ministry of Land Reform.

He also pointed out that many people have migrated from the hills in the hope of finding better land in the tarai. If they are given land, that would encourage more and more people to come. There simply was not enough to go around. He also pointed out that as the Department of Forestry had cleared encroached

areas, most families simply disappeared. He said they must have gone back to the hills where they perhaps still had their own land. As an economist, I could understand these incentive problems.

But, I said it was difficult to believe that these people on the banks of the Banara River had any land to go back to. If they did, would they stay there even as some of their children were dying of hunger? The DFO did not have an answer.

The people at the Banara River had also told me that the Assistant Minister of Land Reform, Prakash Chitrakar Pariyar, had met them in April, but had not come back. Since about half of them were Dalits, they had high hopes that Pariyar, a Dalit himself, would understand their problems and come to their aid quickly. They clearly felt let down.

Back in Kathmandu, I went to see the assistant minister. I was pleased to discover that he had been hard at work. He had asked a team of experts to analyse the problems of landless Dalits and recommend solutions. He was planning to take this up with his minister soon. Upon hearing about the latest problem of impending eviction, he immediately contacted various officials concerned to stop a unilateral eviction without giving some thoughts to where these people might go or how they might make living. He would also look into providing them with some immediate relief. I was hopeful that some solution may be found for these people.

But that was then. A new government has since taken over. And I do not know what has happened to the good work Pariyar began. But the question in my mind is why this should have required an intervention by an assistant minister in the first place? The Banara River residents do not care that the DFO's responsibility is limited to controlling encroachment and that finding a resettlement site for them was a responsibility of another ministry.

I have no doubt that to them, the DFO represented the government, not just the Forestry Department. He was the government. An internal problem of coordination should not become the citizen's problem, especially when it comes to powerless and deprived citizens. When Nepal is in need of

government institutions that are truly responsive to the people, old attitudes must change.

"That is not my responsibility," does not cut it. If government officials see citizens in dire need, they should figure out how to help them. If the matter is outside their responsibility, they should mobilise those who can help. In short, they should become advocates for the vulnerable. That is what one should expect from a good government, isn't it?

Behind the plight of the Banara River people, there is a much larger problem of thousands upon thousands of landless poor. And, the problem is also related to the migration of people from overcrowded hills to relatively land rich tarai. The DFO in Kanchanpur has a point. If the government gives the Banara River people land to settle on, that may encourage more people to encroach on the forest areas in the hope of receiving their own land.

The government has tried to identify those who had lived on government land for many years as having a certain claim, while discouraging further encroachment. Setting a "cut-off" date like this does seem to make sense. And, in fact, I understand that at least some of the families at the Banara River were recognised by the Ojha Commission, one of the several efforts to identify people who deserve certain claim to land rights. Whether this approach is effective is open to debate.

But, the point is that by all accounts the Banara River people have been already given certain recognition by the government. Their destitution is evident. I think they simply need to be helped. The debate over an appropriate long-term solution should not become an excuse for leaving them stranded.

Post Script: Nearly 1,000 landless families living in camps like those by the Banara River are currently gathered in the vicinity of Mahendranagar, protesting the government's eviction orders. As the breadwinners in the family stage a hunger strike, the plight of the women and children has gone from bad to worse.



Ken Ohashi is the World Bank Country Director for Nepal.

## DOMESTIC BRIEFS

# **UNICEF** says leave schools alone

UNICEF representative in Nepal, Suomi Sakai, has said the right to education is hampered when conflict enters the classroom and the rights of children to education and security are taken away.

Responding to a petition delivered Tuesday to UNICEF by the Concerned Citizens for a Democratic Nepal, protesting the actions of political unions against private schools, Sakai said, "Not even schools have provided a safe haven for children. This is unacceptable."

The citizen's group said that they were approaching the international agency dealing with children because the mainsteam parties were violating Nepali children's right to education by using schools as the target of political action. On Wednesday, they met leaders of the UML and the Nepali Congress and handed over letters telling them to keep politics out of schools.

The petitions demand that schools be declared zones of peace and not be used as zones for political action. Teachers and heads of schools should not be targetted, educators must be given due respect and the locking up of schools by student groups must be condemned. The petitions state that the actions against private schools

violate the Conventions on the Rights of the Child, the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The last instrument confirm that the parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education for their children, be they parochial, religious, vocational or private schools.

The government has a fundamental duty to protect schools from revolutionaries and if the government is not able to do so, then the international community has the duty to step in and act, says the petition.

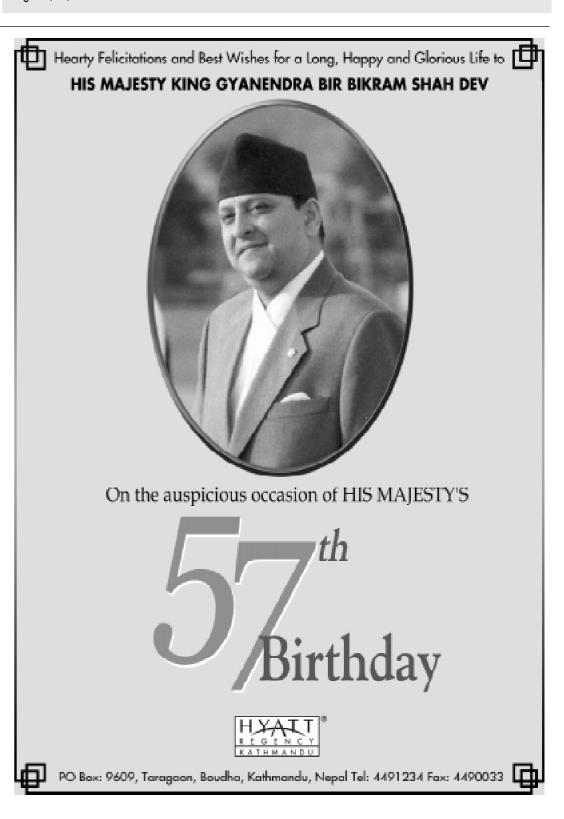
In her response to the petition to UNICEF, set out in a press release, Sakai also said, "When conflict enters the classroom, when schools are disrupted or closed, when teachers are harassed, education suffers even further. It is hard for children to wake up each morning not knowing whether their schools will open. And it is devastating for children to witness threats and violent acts at school."

# India to provide Rs 280 million for Polytechnic

A Tripartite Agreement was signed on 1 June between the Indian and Nepali governments and the Manmohan Memorial Foundation (MMF) on the establishment of the Manmohan Memorial Polytechnic in Morang district in eastern Nepal. The Indian government will provide a grant assistance of Rs 280 million towards the establishment of the polytechnic, which will cover all capital costs, including construction of administrative and academic buildings as well as the hostels and the residential complex, for equipment and furniture, and books for the library, a press release issued by the Indian embassy said.

The cost of the deputation of Indian expert faculty, for a period of five years, in disciplines where Nepali faculty is not available, and the cost of training Nepali faculty in India, will also be provided by the Government of India. The institute will be spread over four hectares from the Manmohan Foundation in Hathimunda (Morang district), about 10 kms from Biratnagar airport. The institute will offer 3-year diploma courses in electrical engineering, electronics and mechanical engineering. In addition, there will be short training courses in trade skills for electricians, plumbers, automobile mechanics, fitters, machine operators, electronics mechanics, refrigeration mechanics, carpenters and welder-cum-fabricators.

The Nepali government has proposed to set up one polytechnic in each of the five development regions of the country. The polytechnic in Biratnagar will be the first of these in the eastern development region. (UNI)



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# Prachanda's new path

The palace must take the Maoists' pressure for a resumption of talks seriously and rapidly move towards de-escalation.

t has become fashionable to say that the last 12 years of democracy stank to high heavens. Depends what you liken it to.
Compared to the previous 30 years of Panchayat, it was a rose garden. We breathed free and there was a palpable feeling of having our destiny in our own hands. The leadership sometimes went astray, but the beauty of democracy is that it is resilient enough to correct itself as it goes along. Autocracy is too brittle, it breaks easily.

The king has chosen to lead in the old Panchayat way, and if this continues we can foresee an emerging alliance between the parliamentary powers and the Maoists. Comrade Prachanda's communique on Sunday in which he calls on the public to raise its voice against "a conspiracy to derail peace process" can be seen in this light. "Without massive people's pressure, it has almost become impossible for the peace talks to move ahead," the chief said.

The Maoists made a mistake in thinking that the king could offer solutions that the democratic parties could not, and gave recognition to the Lokendra Bahadur Chand government by negotiating with it. Their reasoning must have been that they have an army, the king has an army and the political parties don't. But the parties have the public mandate on their side and represent the democratic gains of the 1990 movement.

The only factors hindering an alliance between the Maoists and

the parties is their recognition of the palace post-October Fourth, and the campaign of assassinations and torture against grassroots political leaders in the past years which is still fresh in everyone's minds.

With Surya Bahadur Thapa, the palace has made a classic Panchayat change-over and bought time. How long can it drag on like this? Thapa's appointment may have finally taught the Maoists that they cannot trust the palace on everything, and may need to keep the option of joining with the parties to push for the resumption of peace negotiations.

The Maoists are stretched to the limit trying to maintain their militia and cadre morale. The longer this uncertainty drags on, the greater will be the danger of impatient followers doing things on their own. That may be precisely why the palace-army combine wants to delay the process, hoping that something somewhere will give. But this is a dangerous game, it risks plunging the country back to a war even more virulent than the one that was suspended on 29 January.

By staging a 'unity rally', exerting national and international pressure and reiterating their commitment to the peace process, the Maoists are presenting themselves to the public as a party genuinely for peace. The Nepali public is forgiving, and for all the killings of the past, recent public opinion polls show that the people are sick of the same old faces and would consider voting for a Maoist

party that abandons violence.

It is a misconception to say that the Maoists agreed to a truce because of military pressure. From the Dunai attack to IGP Krishna Mohan Shrestha's murder, the Maoists had achieved extraordinary military successes. The exceptions to the rule were Maoist defeats during the emergency (in Rumjatar airport for example) and the counterinsurgency successes in the central region. Elsewhere, out of the 5,000 people they killed, human rights group estimate that only 10 percent were real Maoists. One cannot fight a guerrilla war with such statistics and expect to win.

How things have changed: the same force that watched as police were butchered in Holeri and Dunai because they had "not received orders to leave the barrack" are today reluctant to remain within 5km of their barracks as supposedly agreed in the second round of talks.

It is pretty clear now that the real reason for the Maoists agreeing to a truce was American pressure on India to deprive them of a safe haven. It was a different time and a different context, but BP Koirala returning to Nepal from exile in India in 1976 (only to be locked up at Sundarijal by King Birendra) and the Maoists agreeing to a ceasefire in 2003 both happened for the same

It is not difficult to see why the Maoists are suddenly so anti-American. Just about every



statement or speech they make these days is a tirade against 'American imperialism'. They may be trying to exploit the concern in defence establishments in New Delhi and Beijing of American hegemony in their backyard. Maoist leaders are openly calling for Indian and Chinese help. By strategically not opting to abuse the Indians, the Maoists hope to ensure the presence of their supreme leader there, as well as future refuge if talks fail.

Even so, the Maoists have realised that after seven long years of fighting to implement Mao's 'peoples rule', it would be unacceptable to our neighbours and impossible to sustain. So, they are looking for a way to slip into the mainstream. This transition is precarious for the country as well as for the Maoists themselves.

Thus, their frequent references to 'new model democracy', 'liberal society', 'competitive people's movement', 'equipoise government', and even 'a free market economic policy'. They cannot suddenly abandon the Prachanda Path, but the Maoists appear to have decided that Deng Xiaoping wasn't such a bad guy after all and that Stalin's single-party ideology was misguided. In Nepal, history repeats

itself as a farce, and just as Madan Bhandari launched a 'multiparty people's rule' Prachanda Path is metamorphosing into a 'multiparty peoples' movement'.

About time, too, since it is better to understand a nation's reality before undertaking a costly war. Most other guerrilla wars in the world have failed for that reason. The Chinese today are happy under the one country two systems, and their greatest fear is another cultural revolution. Lenin said imperialism was in its deaththroes, but even after 100 years new shoots are still sprouting. It is this same imperialism that has compelled the Maoists to look for a new people's democracy for the 21st century.

Have they now realised that conflict is a dead-end street? Are they shedding conventional Marxism for a truly genuine new model democracy? It does seem so. That is why whoever it is in the palace that is deciding these things has to take the Maoists' pressure for a resumption of talks seriously and resume the process with rapid movement towards de-escalation, dis-armament, and a return to an extortion-free environment devoid of threats so that elections can be held. The Maoists may just find that war-weary Nepalis may be willing to go along with them if they are not forced to. []

Puskar Gautam is a former Maoist commander and has now joined the UML. This article was translated from the Nepali original.

Puskar Bhusal is taking a break and will resume his regular column 'Somewhere In Nepal' in a few weeks

# The race to save rice



## KABINDRA PRADHAN

he official rice-planting day this year fell on 29 June and it was a time for celebration and hope. The monsoon, weak and late this year, has now started picking up steam. And this sets us in the mood to do our annual ruminations on rice.

Recent developments in our agriculture have changed the equilibrium of the rice economy in Nepal. The country has failed to keep pace with the cutting edge technologies

in rice production—large scale farming techniques, intensive use of fertilisers and other management inputs as well as high-yield seeds that improve quality of the rice as well.

While the last few decades of the past century saw newly developed genetic materials given away for free, it will not be so anymore with new high yielding varieties. The dwarfing genes discovered by Norman 'Green Revolution' Borlaugh in the 1960s made high yielding varieties possible. If patented and used

# We have to market the competitive advantage of traditional varieties of Nepali rice.

commercially, these genes could have earned billions for Borlaugh, but he decided to share his knowledge.

Various international laws will now make it unlikely that farmers in Nepal will have free or even affordable access to the new miracle seeds. Even if they did, it is unlikely the majority of the farmers will have the means to take advantage of their genetic potential to produce rice at a price that can compete with the huge and growing agro-economy in India or the rest of the rice producing world. Nepal's tarai rice has been devastated not by pests or floods, but by cheap Indian rice.

If we cannot fight the other rice growers on the technology or price battlefield, then we must choose a competitive advantage in other areas. This will be in the cultivation of traditional varieties that require very little modern inputs. In fact, the lack of modern inputs will be the actual strength of the old varieties plus the superior taste and texture of these traditional varieties.

Nepal has over 1,700 traditional varieties of rice—one of the most diverse regions for rice in the world. Many of these will soon be extinct. Every region in Nepal has at least one that is famous for quality and taste: Kala Namak from Taulihawa, the fragrance of which is said to be the gift of the Buddha, Jetho Budho from Pokhara, Krishna Bhog in Dhangadi, Birenful from Biratnagar, and different basmati varieties all across the tarai.

All it needs is proper cultivation techniques and intelligent marketing to compete with any imported rice found in the market. As the tentacles of WTO take hold in Nepal, there will be easy and cheap access to imported rice from more sophisticated economies. It will not make sense to grow the modern rice varieties for the market when the low productivity of Nepali farms produce rice at a cost much higher than the cost of imported rice.

It is of course not very easy to revert back to these varieties. Lack of proper recognition of these varieties in the marketplace has been a big obstacle. Few of these high-value rices are marketed in an unadulterated form. But a beginning can be made here in Kathmandu by marketing these old varieties under their own names and places of cultivation. Purchase of the paddy at a very reasonable price would help ensure purity of the variety. The higher price would then offset the lower yield of the traditional Nepali rices.

Marketing of these varieties could initially be a problem. Holding a rice fair to introduce these varieties to the public could help, but there has to be someone or some institution which can go around the country identifying these varieties and the farmers who are willing to grow these varieties. It is difficult to imagine the government stepping in to do this, so perhaps it should be a private group.

After all, if you can have book fairs and car fairs, why not a rice fair for our staple

Kabindra Pradhan runs a farm in Butwal.

INTERVIEW

# "The dynamics of consumer banking has crossed the threshold..."

# How do you look at the increased focus towards consumer banking in Nepal?

Historically, in Nepal and other emerging markets, a bank for an individual has always meant a place to open an account and deposit money. The main utility of a bank was safe-keeping the savings of individual depositors. Today a bank means much more than that. It is now looked upon as a provider of financial solutions for individuals, which provides products and services that compliment their lifestyle. And that is what consumer banking is all about: it includes home loans, auto loans and personal loans. We will always have our hand on the pulse of Nepali consumers to determine what products they need and be ready to deliver them.

Historically banks used to concentrate their lending activities to companies and institutions, but the stagnation of the economy and the growth of competition has forced banks to look at alternative avenues. The dynamics of the consumer market in Nepal have also crossed the threshold required to make it a feasible proposition. At Standard Chartered our aim is to not only be a player, but to be the leader in all the consumer products that we introduce.

# But has it worked according to your expectations? Isn't everyone else also getting on the bandwagon?

There is no doubt that first and foremost we are a part of the service industry. Customers can go anywhere, but a bank has to work on its main differentiator and for us at Standard Chartered, that is service and security. It is one thing to join an already existing market and quite another to raise the benchmark and create a new market. In Nepal, we feel that we have been able to do just that with several of our consumer products.

Our first foray into consumer lending was with our auto loan product, and we did more than just repackage and relaunch a generic service. We didn't want to just provide a loan to buy a car, we wanted to provide a solution to put the customer in the driving seat as it were.

It was packaged and marketed to be educational as well as promotional. The challenge was to break through the mindset of the customer who bought a car only after having saved enough over a few



Lenders in Nepal are turning more and more towards consumer banking. The prevailing stagnation in investment and competition has forced most banks to look at individuals and tailor products for their needs. *Nepali Times* spoke to Anil Shah, head of Consumer Banking at Standard Chartered Bank Nepal, to assess the trend.

years so he could pay for it. We have managed to get Nepali customers to take that quantum leap.

### Is the home loan market also growing as rapidly?

It does not take very in-depth market research to determine that most Nepalis aspire to save enough money to buy a plot of land and build a home. This is the cornerstone of our home loan scheme, and we offer the flexibility of providing financing for purchasing land, building a home, purchasing ready made homes as well as extensions to current homes as families grow. Although we are relatively new in the market, the growth of the book has exceeded our expectations. Our total consumer loan book is now close to Rs 1.5 billion.

# But with individual depositors, is there much you can do in terms of service that is radically different?

On the contrary, we are always looking at ways to provide new services and solutions to our account holders. We were the first bank in the kingdom to offer domicile free banking, which means we had connectivity of all our branches allowing our customers to go to any branch for transactions. So, when customers open an account with us they become customers of the bank and not just one branch. We were also the first with online ATMs, and since there were still some transactions that required customers to come to the bank we introduced Xtra Banking, with our Kantipath branch open 365 days a year for extended hours and Priority Banking for individuals maintaining substantial balances. And we also have Home Banking, which brings the bank to the customers' home.

# Don't you have to look out for alienation of the customer due to an increased internal focus in a large bank like yours?

We are aware of this, and as consumer bankers we always remember that the customer must come first in every respect and to succeed we have to deliver solutions that the consumer needs, not sell products that we have. The success of our consumer banking effort is mainly due to the team factor. It is not possible for an individual or a small group of senior managers to deliver sustainable success, you have to have the right team: from the frontline staff at the branches, to street marketers, to operations and technology support. In banking, like in any service industry, the quality control has to be conducted at the point of each and every transaction. This usually is the difference between success and failure. It is the ability to deliver exceptional service as well as generate exceptional business opportunities through all members of an engaged and motivated team that is the catalyst for success.

STRICTLY BUSINESS

by **ASHUTOSH TIWARI** 



# **Clothing diplomacy**

There is a lesson to be learned from the unlikely overlap of refugees and international trade.

alk about the application of the chaos theory in Nepal's attempts at pursuing international trade!

Eighteen Tibetans are deported and a few days later, a writer in San

Francisco—citing ethical reasons—advises travellers to boycott Nepal through a newspaper op-ed and a website. Within a week, an American Senator, feeling the heat from her pro-Tibet constituency, withdraws a Nepal-friendly garment bill from being tabled in the US Congress, leaving Nepal's private sector frustrated and helpless.

Looking back, who could have predicted that the window of relief worth millions of rupees that was potentially ours would be shut because of 18 Tibetans who were sent back? Who could have known how such remotely linked activities would effect one another and cause so much distress and angst in Nepal's business sector?

Now that such an unlikely confluence of activities—or, as chaos theorists would say, a series of nonlinear events that, upon hindsight, somehow ended up being connected to one another—has taken place, we must ask ourselves what we can learn from this experience. We must devise strategies to assist Nepali private sector businesses through similarly unpredictable paths of international trade in the coming years. Obviously, mere appeals to the better nature of international buyers will get us nowhere. Neither will indulging in ad hoc damage-control mechanisms by dashing offill-thought-out letters of apologies. We need to take a longterm view and work hard to have a framework in practice so that Nepal is



ready to respond effectively to events that relate directly to our commercial interests as they unfold internationally.

One tool we have talked much about in the past but have not made much use of is that of economic diplomacy—the kind that opens doors in other countries for Nepal to sell her goods and services with ease. As it happens, exactly a year ago, Kathmandu-based Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA), after months of interviews with former ambassadors and key private sector players and additional research by the Policy Study Group, submitted a report titled Nepal's Economic Diplomacy to the then government.

Pointing out that "foreign aid is not likely to continue as the most attractive component of economic diplomacy [because of] declining overseas development assistance [in the form of outright grants]," the report suggested that the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs (MFA) transforms itself to play the role of a facilitator to help the Nepali private sector take advantage of global opportunities in "trade, tourism and employment generation". The report further detailed how the institutional mechanism at the MFA could be rearranged to help adjust the MFA to its new role as a catalyst for private sector players looking to trade internationally. A year later, we are back to responding to international situations, as our government did in this case of the garment bill, in an ad hoc manner with "embarrassing results", while the IFA report, with its detailed recommendations, sits on a shelf, collecting dust.

To be sure, there is no guarantee that economic diplomacy alone would have somehow saved the garment bill. Doubtless, there were other factors such as the hurdle of getting the bill past the powerful Senate Finance Committee, which is not known for doling out concessions to Third World traders. Still, it is arguable that had we the mechanism of economic diplomacy in place, we could have smoothed ruffled feathers, tried to understand other perspectives, changed our sales pitch, garnered a measure of sympathy and, even in failure, left the door slightly ajar for future bilateral negotiations.

And so, the tragedy of the failure of the garment bill is not that Nepal did not get what it wanted. It lies in the fact that even when seemingly unrelated phenomena converged to give us a serious blow, we have yet to process the lessons to urgently push for economic diplomacy when dealing with other countries. I

BIZ NEWS

# Forum for the landlocked

Nepal has always complained about being landlocked but our bureaucrats were caught napping when the opportunity arrived to discuss their problem at an international forum. The United Nations is organising the first ever conference of landlocked developing countries in Almaty, Kazakhstan on 28-29 August but Foreign Ministry officials have made no preparations for this foreign-ministerial level meeting. It's the same story at the National Planning Commission and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

All that Arjun Bahadur Thapa, a representative of the Foreign Ministry, said at a preparatory meeting in New York last month was that Nepal enjoys excellent relations with India and Bangladesh. He added that we support the priority areas identified in the draft program of action and expressed gratitude to the international community for its efforts to improve the situation of landlocked developing countries.

The objective of this global event is to negotiate systemic improvements through cooperation with transit nations' donors and multilateral agencies. The Preparatory Committee elected Nepal, Iran, Japan, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Namibia, Paraguay, Peru, Armenia and Italy as its Vice-Chairmen.

# **Tibet reopens**

The Chinese government has finally lifted its restrictions on entering Tibet after the SARS scare. Air China, previously known as China South West Airlines, resumed its twice weekly flights between Kathmandu and Lhasa on Tuesday. Air China has already recorded an increase in reservations after the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu began issuing visas this week after nearly two months. More than 60 applicants received visas on Monday and an equal number flew to Lhasa the following day. The reopening of Tibet has come as a relief to tourism entrepreneurs in Kathmandu who sell packages that include Tibet and Bhutan. Tibet is a popular tourist destination between May and October.

# Lhasa railway update

The Qinghai-Tibet railway is inching towards the plateau with construction beginning this year for the world's highest railway station. The station will be situated at slightly above 5,000m in northeastern Tibet and will be completed next year. After this, the 2,000km railroad will reach Lhasa in early 2006, transforming the economy of the region as well as trade with neighbouring Nepal and India to the south.

# A SOCIAL APPROACH





Hospice Nepal is a center that takes care of terminally ill cancer patients with love and compassion. It is a non-profit organization that runs with the help of volunteers and contributions from various donors. TNT Nepal has been one of the answers for this desperate need to give relief from pain. TNT Nepal has decided to support this noble mission with your generous act. We have already contributed a generous amount since the year 2000.

Adding life to days Not days to life With our policy of "penny and penny laid up will be many", TNT believes that it can further help Hospice Nepal without much burden to any specific party. Our valuable clients, at the same time, can be proud of the fact that whenever they use the services of TNT, they are actually participating for the greater social cause. So, TNT has promised to donate NRs.5 from each courier sent out by TNT International Express, from Jan 1st 2003.

# TNT International Express Teenkune, Kathmandu

Ph.No.4474594, 4243237



# Do you really want to know what is in the water you drink?

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

ou don't have to go far to see the looming crisis with water. Just look at Kathmandu Valley. There are taps here in this town out of which water has not flowed for decades, tapping underground water has lowered the water table, the little water there is contaminated with organic and chemical pollutants.

So, I'll drink bottled water, you may say. Uh-huh. With most consumers too desperate or ignorant to care about quality, and the regulators doing little quality control, there is no guarantee that just because water comes in a plastic bottle that it is bug and chemical-free. Meeting the demand are some 20 companies ranging from the multinational giants to cottage industry enterprises that hold licences to sell water. There are plenty more that are not registered but are fully operational. It's a brisk business. Often mistaken and misrepresented as 'mineral water', bottled water has found a permanent place at most restaurants and offices, and is making rapid inroads into private homes and other institutions. As long as taps are dry and the government encourages boiling all drinking water, the demand for bottled water—perceived to be hygienic and bacteria freeis bound to grow. But are they

as hygienic as they are made out to be?

Records with the Department of Food Technology and Quality Control are appalling. "Almost all the brands have one problem or the other," says Urmila Joshi, chief of the food inspection unit. The most common test the bottled waters fail is the mesophilic bacterial count. While the official standard allows 25 of these microbes per ml of water, most Nepali bottled water substantially exceeds the limit. Last year, the department tested 79 samples of bottled water and found 28 to be substandard. The year before, 17 of the 49 samples had a higher bacterial count than

# Think before you drink

### Checklist

Read the label for:

- Brand.
- The manufacturer's complete address.
- Ingredients used in packaging.
- Quantity of water.
- Price, batch number and 'best before' dates.

Look for clarity, there shouldn't be any sedimentation.

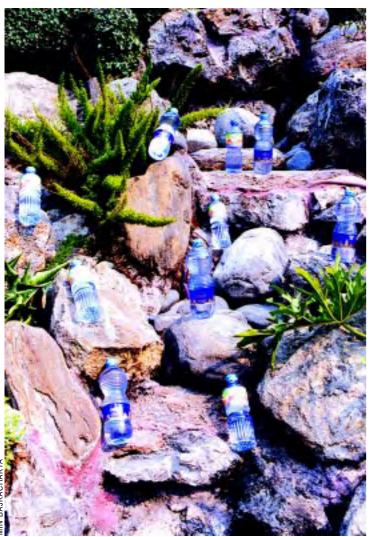
Make sure the bottle is properly sealed.

Source: Department of Food Technology and Quality Control





OE>Y



the prescribed limit.

The Food Act allows the department to initiate legal action against those who adulterate or sell contaminated goods for human consumption and numerous cases have been filed at the District Administration Office (DAO). It's a lengthy process and many fly-by-night operators shut shop only to resurface under another brand name. There are only a handful of success stories: Yes mineral water was closed after it was found to be contaminated. Seven years ago, in an unprecedented move, the then CDO of Lalitpur arrested the owner of Olympic Mineral Water after the department found it contained four times the threshold of bacterial contamination. Now, several bottling companies have begun to pressurise the government to do away with the bacterial count altogether. Bizarrely, department officials agree that a higher presence of bacteria does not make water undrinkable, even if it is substandard.

If only we had to worry solely about microscopic bacteria. In February bottled water tested in India by the Centre for Science and Environment including bestselling multinational brands like Coke's Kinley, Pepsi's Aquarian and Nestle's Pure Life, contained a cocktail of deadly pesticides like linden, DDT and chloropyrifos. We tried to get a response from Coke about its Nepali Kinley, but it said this was against official company policy to comment. The expose forced the Indian government to revise its standards

KALINTA

East side of Royal Palac Nag Pokhari, Kathmend Tol: 4442437

for bottled water. It is safe to assume that Nepali bottled water could also contain chemical contaminants, but the department has standards only for organic contamination and there are no labs that can test for

traces of dangerous chemicals.

"Budget constraints keep us from conducting required tests," admits Joshi. Gas liquid chromatography is the usual way to detect chemical compounds in water, but solvents used in the process are expensive. To cut corners, lab scientists use other processes that sometimes miss traces of chemicals. The department has got reports that some unregistered bottlers are collecting used plastic bottles and simply refilling them with tap water, but if it doesn't do spot checks public health could be in serious jeopardy.

At the Kantipur Mineral Water at Sinamangal, proprietor Neelam Aggarwal sits in her office and admits she is not concerned about where and whether her engineers get the water tested. Her products share the same shelf space as more quality-conscious operators. Her company is not registered, and does not have a licence, yet it continues with full-scale production. The department knows the existence of these companies but is unable to terminate them. Many bottlers keep changing their brand names to escape detection, especially when they are hauled up on charges of contamination. With lax laws on copyright, unscrupulous water barons often

picture framing

ed and manufactured by Kalinta

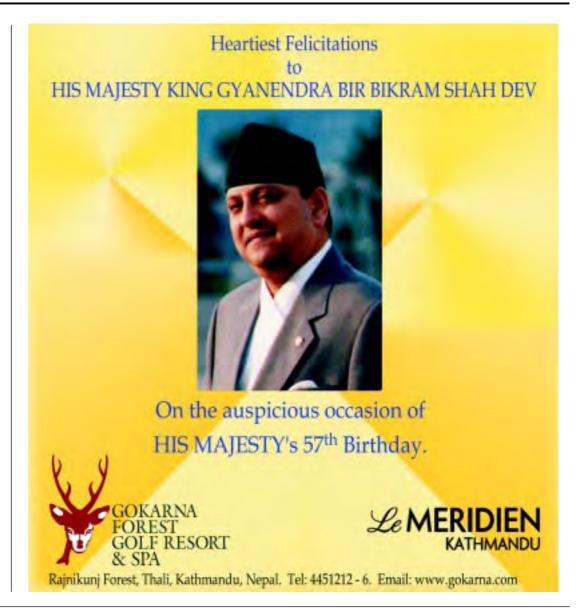
was Bonding

HOT PRES

pirate the popular brands.

One such sufferer is Sanjay Dugar and his Aqua 100 brand. He has received numerous complaints from consumers who mistook his water for others with similar names. "We are tired of defending ourselves," he told us. "It's bad for both manufacturers and consumers when brand names are misused like this.' Dugar is one of few companies that does its own tests for both biological and chemical contamination. "This way our product also gets double checked," he says.

The other risk associated with the bottled water is the cleanliness of the jars and bottles, an issue overshadowed by the quality of water. Even if the water is treated well to international standards, dirty carriers having pathogens, chemicals and microbes that make them harmful. Many bottlers use hot water and chemical detergents like Surf to clean the jars manually, but these leave behind residue that don't show up in lab reports 







1 O world 4-10 JULY 2003 NEPALI TIMES #152

# **Cracks in the system**

CANADA – Canada's health system is still reeling over its failure to initially control severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in Toronto. Canada's biggest and richest city is now coping with the end of a second wave of the epidemic, and appears to have avoided a third



wave, officials said. SARS
persistence in Toronto and the
higher than expected death rate of
12-15 percent has driven up health
care costs and knocked an
estimated \$1.1 billion out of the
city's economy. Part of the problem
is that Canada's once acclaimed

public health care system, and hospitals in Ontario in particular, have been starved of funds for many years, says Dr Lionel Mandel, an infectious disease expert at McMaster University.

In recent years, many governments favoured tax breaks over funding for public institutions such as health and education. There was a lack of co-ordination and communication between various levels of governments in the crucial first weeks of the outbreak as well. Perhaps the most important factor was the common practice of shuttling patients from one hospital to another. Not surprisingly, SARS-infected patients and medical staff spread the disease from hospital to hospital. More than 70 percent of transmissions have been attributed to Toronto hospitals. (IPS)

# Little benefits

BRUSSELS – Civil society groups have rejected the European Union's agreement to reform the 45-year-old common agricultural policy (CAP), saying it will harm developing countries. After negotiations, EU farm ministers finally agreed on a compromise concerning a radical mid-term reform of the so-called CAP, which was first introduced to increase farm productivity, ensure a fair standard of living for the agricultural population and to stabilise markets.

The EU's agriculture subsidies have been widely seen as a block to progress. The main elements of the proposed review include decoupling direct payment to farmers from production and making these conditional on compliance with environmental, food safety, animal welfare and occupational safety standards. NGOs argue the European Commission's failure to secure a deal to cut the controversial link between subsidies and agricultural production (decoupling) will harm the poor. The link between subsidies and output is blamed for huge overproduction by the EU farm market, which has resulted in subsidised products being dumped in developing countries for less than normal market price. Poor countries say that this leaves them unable to compete in the global market as they do not have such privileges. (IPS)

**ANALYSIS** 

# The final defeat of Thomas

he UN recently revised its population projections. Some 6.3 billion people now live on Earth. If fertility rates in relatively poor countries continue to follow the trends set by today's relatively rich countries, we are within shouting distance of the world's maximum population—9-10 billion—to be reached in 2050-2100.

But population may well decline thereafter. Literate, well-educated women with many social and economic options in today's rich countries have pulled fertility below the natural replacement rate. The problem is not that such women on average want fewer than two children; in fact, on average they wish to have a bit more than two. But because many of them delay childbearing until their thirties, actual fertility falls short of what they desire.

A world population that peaks at 9-10 billion is not one in which we have to worry about Parson Malthus, the English 19<sup>th</sup> century economist who prophesied a future in which people multiply faster than the resources needed to sustain them and hence starve to death by the millions. Indeed, it comes as somewhat of a shock to realise that the age of the population explosion may be coming to an end.

Just 30 years ago, people like

The age of the population explosion may be coming to an end.



Stanford University's Paul Ehrlich were telling us that the Malthusian Angel of Death was at the door. They assured us that it was too late to stop the famines that would kill hundreds of millions in the Indian subcontinent, and that humanity's destiny in the 21st century was one of war and struggle for the resources to feed national populations an extra crust of bread.

Today, however, the political flashpoint over food is not that there is too little, but that there

is too much. Developing-country politicians and populations complain bitterly that the rich industrial countries are growing too much food. "Exporting food is one of the few ways we can earn the foreign exchange we need to buy modern industrial technology," they say. "But your agricultural subsidy programs block us from establishing any sort of comparative advantage in most agricultural products. You say free trade is good in those manufactures that you export you say that enforcing property

rights is critically important for your investors—but somehow you go deaf when the topic turns to a level playing field in agricultural trade..."

They are right. Not every developing country can grow rich by making and exporting computer chips, or plastic toys, or bananas. Some need to export steel. Others will have to export furniture or textiles. Still others will have to export citrus, grains, processed foods etc. Yet there has been little forward motion in opening up world trade for nearly

COMMENT

by ALEKSANDER SMOLAR

# How to create a new Eurosolidarity



fter bruising enlargement negotiations and internal differences over Iraq, and with similar divisions surrounding the new EU constitution and the common European foreign and defence policy, one might well think just that. Public opinion polls also show a dramatic decline in support for enlargement within the current EU member states. Whether or not the crisis of European solidarity is real is a fundamental question, because the EU will not survive without solidarity, at least not as we know it.

The sense of equality and solidarity is a necessary foundation of any democratic community. In the 1950s the British sociologist TS Marshall wrote about the progress of rights, from civil rights in the 18th century, to political (democratic) rights in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to social rights in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These three dimensions—liberal, democratic and social—describe the modern European nation state.

Solidarity played the most central role in the 20 th century. Indeed, it was the driving force behind the development of the European countries in the wake of World War II, and led to their transformation into "social states" emphasising social security and a variety of welfare programs. We can measure this "institutionalised"



solidarity" in a nation state by the share of redistribution in its GDP.

There is also another level of solidarity, which we can call universal or global solidarity. Its importance—reflected in various forms of international aid—has been very limited until now. Its objective is not to ensure the equality of citizens' rights, but to guarantee minimum life conditions. Humanitarian interventions, much discussed in the 1990s, are another manifestation of this global solidarity.

Between citizen solidarity at the nation-state level and humanitarian solidarity on the global level lies a third level of solidarity which is most interesting for Europeans: the EU level. In its early years the European Community was mainly concerned with peace, stability and democracy. But institutionalised solidarity has become increasingly important in European consolidation and intra-European redistribution played a key role in

# Is the European Union expanding too rapidly for its own good?

the modernisation of Ireland, Spain, Portugal and Greece.

At the same time, the Zeitgeist has turned against the ideals of solidarity since the 1970s. Solidarity has lost ground against new demands of individual freedom, and even more against the imperative of economic efficiency, which became ever more pressing as a result of globalisation. A "revolt of the middle classes" that increasingly refuse to pay for society's "underdogs" is accompanied by budgetary constraints that can also make solidarity seem a luxury.

The demands of solidarity are even more difficult to sustain when they require inter-state redistribution. A refusal to carry the transfer costs associated with multinational states contributed to the "velvet divorce" between the Czech Republic and Slovakia and the dramatic breakdown of ex-Yugoslavia. Similar tensions exist in some West European countries (Belgium, Spain, Italy) as well.

EU enlargement, with the prospect of increased cross-national redistribution, thus exposes particularly thorny issues of European solidarity. The promised annual EU payments to the candidate members are far below

those made to current members.
Poland, for example, will get about
67 per year per capita during 20042006, Hungary will receive • 49, and
the Czech Republic will get just

- 29. By contrast, Greece received
- 437 per capita in 2000, Ireland got418, and Portugal was paid 211.

To be sure, Europe, with its sluggish growth, feels less rich than in the past, when the earlier accession deals were negotiated. But the difference in treatment of the current candidate countries does not just reflect budgetary problems. The changing attitudes of citizens of the more developed member states and the weakening of the sense of obligation entailed by solidarity are also responsible (probably primarily so).

The sense of solidarity between the candidate countries and current EU members is further weakened by the problem of external security. The accession states only recently regained their independence, and so retain a feeling of uncertainty as to their security. These jitters contributed to the support they gave to the US position on Iraq, which in turn provoked the irritation of some Western European leaders and the decline of public support in the member states

for EU enlargement.

The process of differentiation—inevitable to some extent, given the number and the diversity of member states—is also reinforced by the attitude of the new entrants. "Return to Europe" is no longer the battle cry of the new post-communist democracies. Public debates now focus on financial support from the EU and the status of individual nation states, rather than European destiny and common European projects.

There are fears on both sides. This is understandable, given the scope of enlargement and the need for an internal transformation of the EU. But these fears and the atmosphere of suspicion must be overcome. Mutual trust must be reinforced. The constitutional debate in the next several months should focus on these major questions: why and how Europe's peoples want to live together. The concept of solidarity should obviously be central to this debate. 🛮 (© Project Syndicate)

Aleksander Smolar is President of the Stefan Batory Foundation, Warsaw, and Senior Researcher at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris. by J BRADFORD DELONG

# Malthus?



a decade. Given the complexion of the US Democratic Party's key constituencies, this is not surprising. On the contrary, what is surprising is that President Clinton was so willing to swim against the tide generated by his own labour/protectionist base in 1993 and 1994 and establish NAFTA and the WTO.

It is also very surprising that the post-2000 Republican administration of George W Bush has been so hostile to freer trade. Indeed, Bush has backed several major anti-liberal initiatives: a steel tariff, the expansion of agricultural subsidies, and a declaration that FTAA (Free Trade Agreement of the Americas) negotiations cannot even consider the impact of US agricultural subsidy programs on trade.

Blockages to world trade jeopardise global economic development. Technology transfer is incredibly difficult. It may well turn out that \$4 worth of aid are a poor substitute for even \$1 worth of exports, because there are few better schools in which to internalise the organisational forms and technologies built since the start of the Industrial Revolution than the school of exporting.

If global development is at risk, then so is the final defeat of Malthus. If the poorest countries stay poor, their rates of population growth might fall

much more slowly than the United Nations predicts. Falling birthrates depend on a rise in the status of women, confidence in public health, growing prosperity, and strong cultural cues to convince people that there are other, better indicators of success than a large family. The fact that most countries are completing the demographic transition does not guarantee that all will. Perhaps Malthus will rule again, in geographically small but densely populated and immensely poor parts of the globe.

The world's high—and middle—income countries should not imagine that the relatively rich can fence themselves off indefinitely from poverty and misery in the poorest countries. Nationalism has long been a powerful cause of political violence. Nothing is more likely to strengthen nationalism and turn it to violence than a sense that one's own homeland is being exploited—kept poor and powerless—by other nations to satisfy their own selfish interests. The world today is too small for any of us to be able to afford for any corner of it to be left out of the conquest of Malthusianism. (© Project Syndicate)

J Bradford DeLong is Professor of Economics at the University of California at Berkeley, and a former Assistant US Treasury Secretary.

# Wireless revolution

HAIDER RIZVI at the UNITED NATIONS

hile rich nations of the world continue to reap hefty profits from the use of wireless internet, most poor countries remain shut out from this phenomenal technology, say UN officials, policy makers and information technology experts. About 200 delegates from all over the world, who attended the first-ever conference on "The Wireless Internet Opportunity for Developing Nations", called for urgent and effective measures to help developing countries achieve easy access to wireless internet technologies.

There are an estimated 429 million people online globally, but fully 41 percent are in North America. That total number of 429 million also represents only 6 percent of the world's entire population.

"The swift emergence of a global information society is changing the way people live, learn, work and relate," said Kofi Annan, the UN secretary-general, in a statement ahead of the conference. "Yet too many of the world's people remain untouched by this revolution."

Last year, Annan, a staunch proponent of internet use in developing countries, made a fervent appeal to information technologies companies to devise cost-effective strategies to promote the World Wide Web in developing countries. "Wireless technologies have a key role to play everywhere, but especially in developing countries," he said. "With considerable speed and without enormous investments, Wifi can facilitate access to knowledge and information by making use of unlicensed radio spectrum to deliver cheap and fast internet."

Experts agree that the wider use of wireless internet could empower people in countries where little or no infrastructure exists. How to get there is another matter. The conference brought representatives of developing countries together with leading information technology businesses, including Microsoft, IBM and Intel Corporation, the United Nations, the World Bank and field practitioners. Field practitioners say although it is not difficult for developing countries to set up wireless internet projects on their own, certain problems like a hot climate and lack of expertise need to be addressed.

"It is very interesting to get out of the lab. In rural areas, the hardware needs to be extremely rugged," said Amir Hasson, a field practitioner who worked at the US-based Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) before experimenting in Indian villages with Wifi networks for what he calls "first mile access". In developing countries, "the most significant challenge is the poor access to equipment," he said. "You can get it, but often times pay 30 to 50 percent duties on import, and the delivery can

Governments must change their licensing and regulation policies if they want to bridge the digital divide.

take three to four months."

Experts said it was possible to promote wireless internet in developing countries by making it more cost-effective. Hasson's experiment with wireless internet was set up on a variety of vehicles in India. His team would drive a bus that would automatically synchronise with another computer located in the village. The hardware his team used cost about \$350 per village.

Industry experts say wireless internet would cost much less if governments changed their policies on licensing and regulation. "We see many of the actions of the developing nations to be scarcity mentality, meaning, to minimise the amount of unlicensed spectrum to maximise their regulatory position for a few dollars of regulation or licensing benefits," said Pat Gelsinger, Intel Corporation's chief technology officer. "That's exactly what is limiting the growth of this technology in emerging nations."

Mohsin Khalil, a World Bank official, offered a somewhat different perspective. "Our concern is trying to promote access per se rather than a specific technology," he said. "Unfortunately, the advances are mostly on the telephonic sides and less on the internet and broadband side." [] (IPS)

OPINION by SEVANTI NINAN

# The other side of Bihar



fyou live in the back of beyond in rural Bihar you can be safely assumed to be well out of reach of the media marketeers as we know them, right? Wrong. No matter where you live in this seemingly backward state two newspapers and several FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) firms are invading the lives of very ordinary people. And other more solvent but more invisible people. Targeting them as newspaper subscribers, as clients for advertising, and as consumers.

Shed any notions you might have about Bihar as a caste and violence ridden mess. It may be that too but the overall picture is far more aspirational. Those who want to make profits are coming here because however hopeless it may be on several development indices Bihar is not short of one thing: money. The newspapers and those who advertise in them have done their homework, and will reel off figures at the drop of a hat.

Did you know for instance that the percentage of households with a monthly income of more than Rs 10,000 is higher than the all India average in Bihar, and for that matter in Jharkhand as well? Did you know that sales of 21-inch colour TV sets were higher in Bihar and Jharkhand than the national average? Or that the size of the cellular phone market here is ahead of Haryana and Rajasthan? In terms of percentage of Internet users to total population, Patna is ahead of Delhi. And talking of straight money,

Across Nepal's southern border in Bihar, the media is riding a consumer boom.

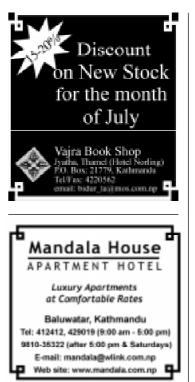
bank deposits in this money order economy have been growing at 15 percent over the last two years. On a lighter note Biharis are champion guzzlers of Chyawanprash: they account for 28 percent of the national consumption. Lots of advertising from that sector then.

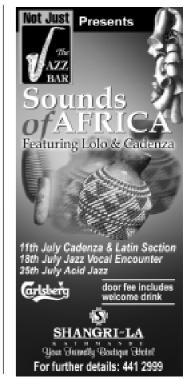
Many of these and other figures have been compiled by the marketing team of the leading newspaper here, *Hindustan* from the same stable as the *Hindustan Times*. Having made a hefty profit in the state last year, they are fully preoccupied in fighting off the *Dainik Jagran* which came into Bihar in the year 2000 for the same reason: to make money. The advertising pie is substantial because all colour TV, PC, car, refrigerator and microwave oven makers are busy notching up ambitious targets for these two states. Open the pages of newspapers here, and you will find them full of large and small ads.

But the paradoxes are also there in full strength. Given all the electric gadget makers targeting the state, you would think it has abundant power supply. On the contrary, electricity is almost as precious as gold in Bihar. The cities can expect a few hours of supply in the course of the day, the villages absolutely none, in many parts. But that is not stopping any potential owner of a frost-free refrigerator or a microwave oven. Everybody urban and rural has gensets. It is a way of life.

More paradoxes. Given all the FMCG advertising, you'd expect retailers to be advertising their showrooms as well. But they don't. Showrooms and jewellery shops shrink from advertising here, even during the festival season. They go to the other extreme: they tell the marketing men from the newspapers take my money if you insist but please don't run the ad. Why? "Bad response," says a newspaper marketing manager in Bhagalpur solemnly. What he means is put more succinctly by the *Dainik Jagran* people. "Run an ad, and you could get a phone call." You could indeed. The number of criminal gangs operating in the State has risen to an estimated 70. Usually they mean business. That is also Bihar for you.  $\square$ 

Sevanti Ninan is a media analyst, and this piece is excerpted from her column in *The Hindu*.







# Political murders rock Darjeeling

Ananda Shrestha in Himal Khabarpatrika, 15-29 June

हमाल

Darjeeling is experiencing a new wave of assassinations. A decade and a half ago there were an estimated 300 politically motivated deaths in this hill station during the Gorkhaland movement. Since then, twelve prominent leaders associated with different political parties have been killed. Murders in Indian politics are not uncommon but to have such a spate of it in a place like Darjeeling is an indication of a deeper malady.

A few months after Subash Ghising accepted the idea of New Delhi and Calcutta forming the DGHC, the popular senior leader of the Indian Communist Party (Marxist) and former member of the State Assembly TS Gurung was murdered near his home in 1989. Despite being a leftist, he was a staunch supporter of the Gorkhaland movement. Santosh Karki, secretary of the Kalebung Municipal Committee of the same party, was killed in 1992. Within two months of that incident, Rekha Tamang, a supporter of the Marxist Communist Party and a member of the Student Federation of India, was kidnapped and raped before being murdered. Sixty days later Sudarshan Shrama, the general secretary of the Gorkha League and a leader of the Nepali language movement was gunned down. In 1989 alone four supporters of the Gorkhaland movement were murdered.

Rudra Jumar, a DGHC member and a political leader, was hacked to death by unknown assailants in the middle of the Darjeeling market in March 1999, scarcely a week after his victory in the elections. Naren Rai, deputy chief of the Gram Panchayat in Takvar tea estate was killed in March 2001. Not even Subash Ghising, the chief of the

Gorkha National Liberation Front and Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC), is safe. He was attacked in Kurseong two years ago. Ghising survived the bomb but his driver and bodyguard both died in the incident. About a month ago, Prakash Thing of the DGHC was gunned down near his house.

The West Bengal government and the police do not seem very worried about the growing number of assassinations. Ghising himself does nothing, and people suspect he may have had a hand in some killings. With no investigations and no answers forthcoming, conspiracy theories abound: some believe the murders were connected to the Gorkhaland movement while others say it's the grand plan of the Marxist Communist Party to quell the Gorkha liberation movement.

The murder of CK Pradhan created uproar in Ghising's party. Thousands of his supporters attended his funeral but Ghising did not turn up, nor did he offer any condolences. This eventually led to many activists, including Pradhan's widow, establishing a breakaway party, the Gorkha National Liberation Front (C). They are widening their base in Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong and Siliguri. The party holds the West Bengal government and Ghising responsible for Pradhan's death because he was a strong supporter of Gorkhaland. "My husband had the dream of making the Gorkhaland movement successful," says Sheela Pradhan. "He always revered Ghising as his father but there was an attempt to link him to the attack on Ghising. He paid with his life."

Maximus Kalikote, the youth leader of GNLF (C), charges the West Bengal government and the local Dagopap government of being hand in glove in Pradhan's murder, and has named a Nire Gurung for carrying it out. "The administration had not even bothered to interrogate with him.



Murderers walk freely," he says.

Other leaders in the region believe that the West Bengal government fears replacing Ghising will restart the Gorkhaland movement.

But leaders of West Bengal's ruling Marxists say the assassinations are the result of in-house enmities. They accuse Ghising of squandering the government's money on hiring thugs for his vested interests. Criminals are being released under political protection. They are switching camps and committing crimes with impunity. Senior litterateur Indra Bahadur Rai and his contemporaries are worried by the bloodshed in Darjeeling, "Violence cannot be the longterm solution, this is our biggest concern for now."

Last week, Kiran Thakuri, nephew of prominent DGHC member Netra Kumar Thakuri, was stabbed to death at Chowk Bazar. The police arrested six activists of the GNLF for the murder and said they were assassins-for-hire and gun runners.

# No dowry

Spacetime, 27 June

स्पेसटाइम दैनिक

Before her marriage last year, Rajni Devi Yadav's parents promised her would-be in-laws a dowry package of Rs 50,000 in cash, a TV and a bicycle. But after her marriage with Umesh Yadav of Tangra in Rautahat, those gifts didn't materialise. Things were fine, then Rajni, following custom, returned to her parent's house for a short period. On her return to her husband's house, Rajni was beaten every day by her in-laws who nagged her for the dowry. She finally went home to her parents to ask them to give the presents. They managed to buy a TV, and Rajni thought that would appease her new family. She was wrong. Gagan Dev Baitha, a neighbour who witnessed the beatings said: "Poor woman, she had no one to share her pains with." The beatings were regular and brutal, her husband did nothing to stop them. Rajni died from the physical abuse last week. Her death galvanised some villagers into

lodging complaints at the local police station at the district headquarters of Gaur. When the police reached the village for investigations, the Yadav family had already left.

# **Suicide**

Himal Khabarpatrika, 30 June - 16 July

e-16 Ĵuly

Yubaraj Pokhrel decided to take his own life after unbearable harassment at the hands of both the Maoists and the security forces. The 38-year-old from Barbote village in Ilam was a UML activist who was arrested by the security forces two years ago and tortured in detention. On his release, the Maoists took him in for 'questioning' which lasted for months. The Maoists and the security personnel would take turns in coming to his home for interrogation. Pokhrel could not cope with the metal trauma and he wrote letters to his family, his party and the district administration office before hanging himself from a tree.

# Compromise

Nepal Samacharpatra, 3 July

नेपान समाचारपत्र

Classes will resume as normal after an agreement was signed between the seven student unions involved in the agitation and schools organised under Private and Boarding Schools Organiation Nepal (PABSON) and National Private and Boarding Schools Organiation Nepal (N-PABSON). School organisations, student unions and government representatives attended the talks initiated by Nepal Parents Organisation and the Education Journalists Group. The two national level school organisations agreed to the nine-point demands put forward by the unions. They conceded to providing free education to children affected by the insurgency as well as those of martyrs, 25 percent scholarships and the creation of a taskforce to recommend a fee ceiling for private and boarding schools within a month.

The latter will have two representatives each from the government, student unions, private and boarding schools, parents and missionary schools. The Education Ministry also assured the recommendations would be implemented within

15 days of the task force's submission.

After the talks, PABSON president Umesh Shrestha said schooling would resume, but N-PABSON president Raj Kumar Thakuri added it may take a few days for things to return to complete normalcy. Student leader Rajendra Rai said the unions were forced to resort to closing schools and street protests because the

government failed to implement recommendations made by earlier taskforces. "We hope we will not have to take to the street again with the same demands," said Rai.

In the meantime, the student unions have decided to continue a lockout of the offices of the principal and the accounts section of Kathmandu's Rato Bangala School. Rai said Rato Bangala was singled out because the school authorities had "misbehaved" at the offices of various political parties despite assurances from the students that the student-school dispute would be settled through talks.

On 30 June, private schools decided to close indefinitely when they could not agree on the four demands made by the student unions. The decision affected more than 1 million students attending about 8,500 schools across the country.



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Nepal Samacharpatra, 29 June.

# QUOTE OF THE WEEK

The palace offered me the premiership because they believed that neither Girija Prasad Koirala, Surya Bahadur Thapa nor Madhab Kumar Nepal could solve the Maoist problem.

- Amik Sherchan, president of People's Front Nepal. Rajdhani, 30 June



Heartiest Felicitations

HIS MAJESTY KING GYANENDRA

BIR BIKRAM SHAH DEV

On the auspicious occasion of HIS MAJESTY's 57<sup>th</sup> Birthday.



by MANJUSHREE THAPA

# Uday Niroula A poet of ideas



Uday Niroula writes poems with an essayist's sensibility: he prefers to explore ideas in his verses, rather than to delve into sentiment, as most Nepali poets do. This makes his work stand apart from the expressionistic impulse of the day.

In the first poem below, translated from his 2053 BS collection Jaraaharu Kimartha Mardainan, Niroula expresses the contradictions, hypocrisy and pretensions of modern Nepal, all of which may be quite familiar to those of us in Kathmandu:

## **We Reap Land Deeds from the Soil**

So many plants we should have harvested from the soil So many peaks we should have erected

from the soil Avoiding all we should harvest evading all we should erect we reap from the soil our citizenship certificates

and identity papers

Was creativity slain in the appraisal of land? Was creativity slain in the notebooks of

projects? It's been a while flowers have not

bloomed from our soil It's been a while flowers have not sprouted from our soil

Spreading the name of Buddha in the dust we set imported customs to boil on the stove Having sold our inner enlightenment do we nurture another's Buddha in our

We should sow mint plants of creativity but instead sow artificial etiquette We inject imported technologies trampling upon our beings plucking out our own consequences We taunt the poor We assure the future

We urge those who should be rising to lie down on beds

and measuring Sagarmatha with our eyes we urge those those who should sleep to rise as peaks

We thrill to receive gifts meant for others We rip out buds of creativity Stinging ourselves mercilessly we sow land deeds and etch countless fakes and forgeries in the soil

The second poem, translated from an earlier collection Kolaahal Piyera, explores the more universal theme of consciousness, focusing on the false consciousness that we easily slip into despite our claims to enlightenment thinking.

**The Human 'Chemical' Is Being Translated** 

Who doesn't know who doesn't say that people have consciousness? Only humans do not know this Only our consciousness does not say so This is what I have come to understand For I man a shop of consciousness I buy and sell licenses in

consciousness In my thoughts on being human I find surviving the present moment people chew through consciousness And gradually, gradually transform are transforming will transform

into beasts In images reflected in sophisiticated eyes

people don the coat of consciousness but bear the soul of animalhood as they chant 'Hara Ganga, hara Ganga' washing in the waters of turbid emotion People nurse their athiritic pains in the frostiness of consciousness

Human rights! INHURED? Amnesty? The security council?

The wars raging within wars give off a stench in the bogs and swamplands This is why people have not exploded or why they have not ingested patriotism Have no death sentences been sounded in the contracted judiciaries of the world? The veto has become someone's inheritance The bids and tenders of human rights work do not scratch the sovereignty of nations This is not a pack of wild men but a human-shaped human-sized assembly fragrant with the course of reason The matters of Arafat and Jerusalem do not so much as scratch the private affairs of any nation There is no free nation or a free nation is rare in the geopgraphy of the world

Humans beings are capable of consciousness! And that is why in the present the ghosts of humanity lurk in the shadows of

The sole universal truth now is death No battlefield has been prepared The warriors are all sheltering in oblivion

the history of humanity is crooked today's intelligent person is living on the plain of truth mixed partly in the size of a person partly in the shape of a beast It could be that science's 'chemistry' has finally been translated

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# Green Bar of the month



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### **ABOUT TOWN**

### **FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS**

- Pictures from Modern Life in Nepal photographs by William Mebane till 4 July at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited. 4411122
- Soham Silver jewellery by Shruti till 6 July at Gallery Nine, Lazimpat. 4436994

#### **EVENTS**

- Imaging Everest photographic exhibition from the Royal Geographical Society, London, in association with The British Council, Kathmandu. 8.30 AM-4.45 PM till 31 July at the British Council, Lainchour.
- Cine-Club Le salaire de la puer 2PM at the Auditorium Molière, Alliance Françaioe, Kathmandu. 4242832

## **MUSIC**

- Cadenza live 7.30 PM every Wednesday and Saturday. Rs 200 entry. Interested musicians welcome to jam. Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lazimpat.
- African Rhythms from Max-Lolo and Cadenza on 10 July at 1905, Kantipath. Entry: Rs 300. 4225272
- Live Music Friday at 5.30 PM, Saturday movie at 4.30 PM. Jivin' Joe's Restaurant, Kupondole.
- Live Acoustic Jam 7PM on Saturdays at Himalatte Cafe, Thamel. 4256738 Full Circle acoustic jam every Friday at New Orleans Café, Thamel. 4427311
- Thunderbolt with Ram Shrestha and Sabu Lama. 8PM onwards Wednesdays and Saturdays at the Red Onion Bar, Lazimpat. 4416071
- The Jazz Bar presents Abhaya and The Steam Injuns. 7PM onwards, 4 July. Shangri-la Hotel, Lazimpat.
- Chill out Friday jazz and club music 7PM onwards. Free entrance. The Club, Bhat Bhateni. 4440163, 4416430

#### **DRINKS**

- Liquor Buffet 7-9PM at the Splash Bar & Grill. Rs 550 per person. Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu. 4411818
- Fusion offers over 100 cocktails. Happy hour from 6-7PM. Dwarika's Hotel.
- K-too! Special Tropical Khukri drinks Rs 125 or Rs 750 for every 1.5 litre. Free Irish Coffee with every main course. K-too! Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. 4433043

### **FOOD**

- Weekends Late Riser BBQ fixed lunch at the Shambala Garden. Upto 66 percent discount. Shangri-La Hotel, Lazimpat. 4412999
- Executive lunch meals at Bhanchha Ghar Restaurant and Bar, Kamaladi. 4225172
- Cajun Food Festival at Rox Restaurant, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu from till 13 July. 4491234
- American BBQ accompanied by The Rusty Nails on 4 July. Rs 555 + tax per person at Dwarika's Hotel.
- **Belle Momo** for more 15 varieties of momos at Darbar Marg. 4230890
- Exquisite dining at the Chimney. Hotel Yak & Yeti. 4248999
- Expresso Bar newly renovated at La Dolce Vita, Thamel. 4419612
- Friday BBQ at the Summit Hotel with 6.30 PM onwards. Rs 500 + tax. 5521810
- Breakaway Buffet Lunch Rs 325-375 (weekdays), Rs 650 (weekends) at the Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu. 4411818 Up to 66 percent off.
- Traditional Nepali Thali lunch at Patan Museum Café inside Patan Museum. 11AM-2.30 PM. Cocktails and snacks 4-6.30 PM. 5526271 Summer specials smoked salmon soufflé, shrimp Newburg and
- crispy duck breast. Kilroy's of Kathmandu, Thamel. 4250440 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
- Kids Combo Meal at all Bakery Cafés. Kids' meals with exciting gifts.
- Saturday BBQ Lunch at Club Himalaya Nagarkot. Rs 500 per person. 4680083
- Papaya salad, seasonal vegetables with fillet or chicken and Italian icecream at Singma, Jawlakhel, Lalitpur. 552004

## **GETAWAYS**

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- Shivapuri Heights a traditional cottage with modern facilities. Rs 1,850 pp. www.escape2nepal.com, Email: info@escape2nepal.com
- Great Godavari Getaway special weekend packages. Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- 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
- Bardia Tiger Madness special deals for expats. Jungle Base camp, Bardia. 061-532112. Email: junglebasecamp@yahoo.com.
- Escape to Jomsom this summer. Rs 3,999 per person at Jomsom Mountain Resort. 449610

# **NEPALI WEATHER** VIS-02-07-2003 06:00 GMT

## **by NGAMINDRA DAHAL**

The satellite picture from Wednesday morning shows moisture laden clouds gathering over the Bay of Bengal which heralds heavy showers over the northern hills and the Gangetic plain. But a new low pressure zone over western Tibet will also bring the rains right up to the western Himalaya. Meanwhile the monsoon is rolling through eastern Nepal and if it follows the regular pattern there will be less rain for the far west. Last week many areas along the lower foothills recorded over 100mm of rainfall in 24 hours. The Valley can look forward to intermittent showers early next week.

## KATHMANDU VALLEY











## **BOOKWORM**



Blood Against the Snows: The tragic story of Nepal's royal dynasty Jonathan Gregson Fourth Estate, 2003

Rs 520

The author arrived in Nepal a few days after the horrific events of 1 June 2002, and cobbled together an account of what happened. It is interspersed with Shah and Rana history, a few Hindu myths, quotes from the Official Enquiry Report and eye witness accounts from the BBC documentary, Murder Most Royal. Gregson makes no mention of the Maoists, or tensions between the palace and the political

The Invisible Office: Reflections on Corruption in Public Life Keshab Prasad Regmi Gyanu Regmi, 2003

Corruption is often studied from a legal perspective. Delineating corruption as primarily an organisational problem, Regmi presents it in a managerial perspective. It challenges the conventional wisdom about confronting corruption and offers a people-centered solution to the problem. It also demonstrates the power of democracy to take on corruption.





Warrior Gentlemen: 'Gurkhas' in the Western Imagination Lionel Caplan Himal Books, 2003

Rs 375

Instead of exoticising them, Caplan discovers that past military writers find in their subject the quintessential virtues of the European officers themselves: the Gurkhas appear as warriors and gentlemen. Utilising a wealth of literary, historical, ethnographic sources and results of his own fieldwork, the author investigates the socio-cultural contexts that nurtured the European chroniclers of the legendary soldiers.

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

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# **Urgent notice for Kathmandu Valley residents**

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It's the summer of sequels—this time round it's the onscreen trio of Drew Barrymore, Cameron Diaz and Lucy Liu who are back in Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle. All the absurd elements of the 1970s TV show is pushed to the maximum and there is no situation these glamorous undercover agents can't get in or out of with gleeful airheaded nonchalance. This loud, fun, dumb, funny, ridiculous movie delivers what it sets out to do-entertain-with plenty of martial arts, surprise cameo roles and a slick production. Good morning Angels!

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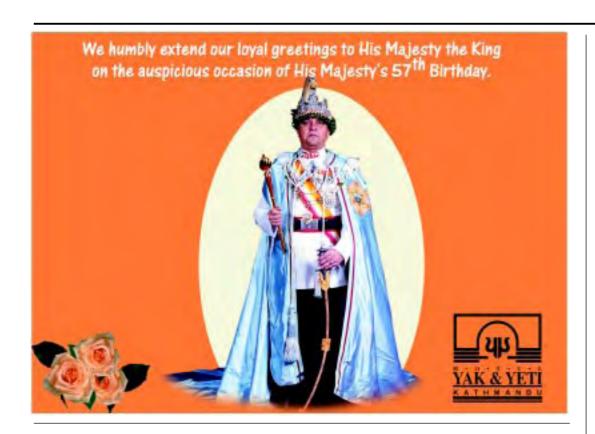
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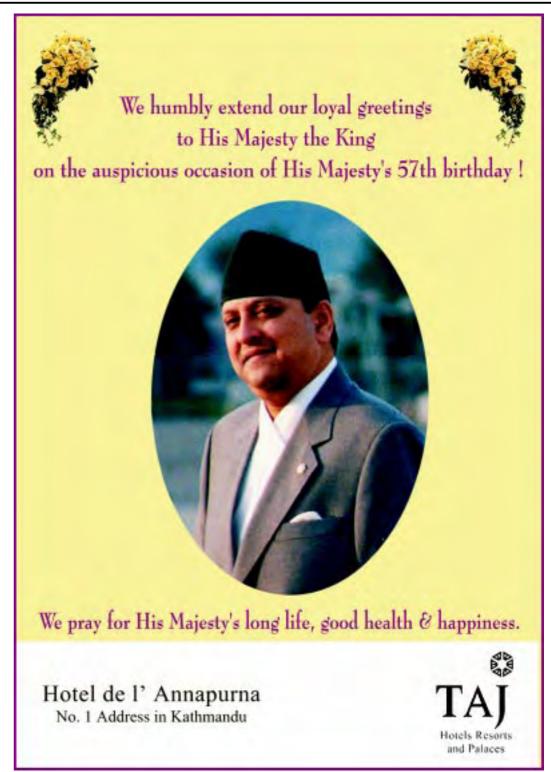


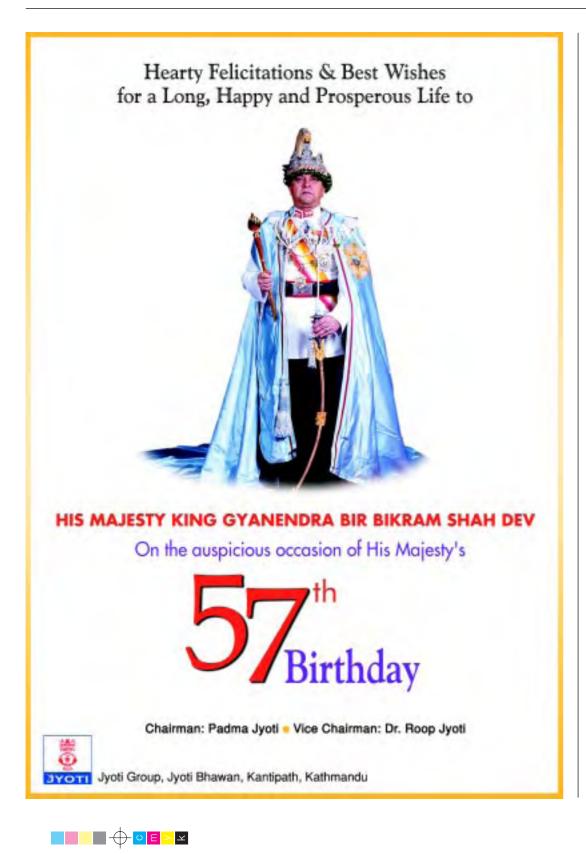


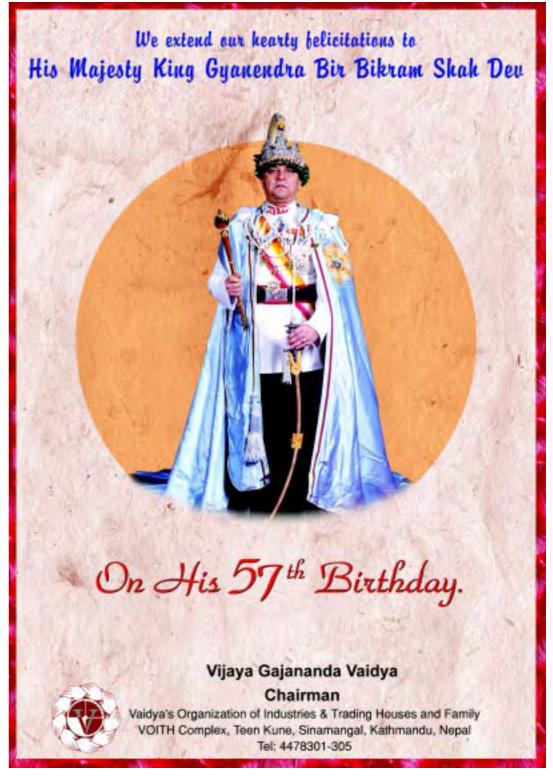
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# **SCIENCE AND HEALTH**

# The designer baby myth

his year's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of the structure of DNA has kindled many debates about the implications of that knowledge for the human condition. Arguably the most emotionally charged is the debate over the prospect of human genetic enhancement or "designer babies". It's only a matter of time, many say, before parents will improve their children's intelligence and personality by having suitable genes inserted into them shortly after conception.

A few commentators have welcomed genetic enhancement as just the latest step in the struggle to improve human life. Many more are appalled. They warn that it is a Faustian grab at divine powers that will never be used wisely by us mortals. Whether they welcome or decry it, almost everyone agrees that genetic enhancement is inevitable if research proceeds on its current

As it happens, some kinds of genetic enhancement are already here. Anyone who has been turned down for a date has been a victim of the human drive to exert control over half the genes of one's future children. And it is already possible to test embryos conceived in vitro and select ones that are free of genetic defects such as cystic fibrosis.

But when it comes to direct genetic enhancement—engineering babies with genes for desirable traitsthere are many reasons to be sceptical. Not only is genetic enhancement not inevitable, but it is not particularly likely in our lifetimes. This scepticism comes from three sources: the limits of futurology, the science of behavioural

We are told that a world of genetically enhanced humans is just around the corner. STEVEN PINKER is highly dubious.



genetics and human nature itself.

Even in mundane cases, technological progress is far from inexorable. Many futurologists write as if current progress can be extrapolated indefinitely. It takes a large number of more boring discoveries, together with the psychological and sociological imponderables that make people adopt some invention en masse. The Achilles heel of genetic enhancement will be the rarity of single genes with consistent beneficial effects. The effects of a single gene are much harder to show. Geneticists have failed to find single genes that consistently cause schizophrenia, autism or manicdepressive disorder, even though there is overwhelming evidence that these conditions are substantially heritable.

And if we can't find a gene for schizophrenia, we're even less likely to find one for humour, musical talent, or likeability, because it's easier to disrupt a complex system with a single defective part than to improve it by adding a single beneficial one.

The human brain is not a bag of traits with one gene for each trait. Neural development is a staggeringly complex process guided by many genes interacting in feedback loops. The pattern of expression of genes (when they are turned on or off by proteins and other signals) is as important as which genes are present.

Even when genes should be at their most predictable—in identical twins, who share all their genes, and hence all the interactions among their

genes—we don't have foregone conclusions. Identical twins reared together (who share not only their genes but most of their environments) are imperfectly correlated in personality measures such as extroversion and neuroticism.

It gets worse. Most genes have multiple effects, and evolution selects the ones that achieve the best compromise among the positive and the negative ones. There is a candidate gene in humans that appears to be correlated with a 10-point boost in IQ. But it is also associated with a 10 percent chance of developing torsion dystonia, which can confine the sufferer to a wheelchair with uncontrollable muscle spasms.

This places steep ethical

impediments to research on human enhancement. Even if some day it might be possible, could you get there from here? How can scientists try out different genes to enhance the minds of babies given that many of them could have terrible side effects?

Genetic enhancement faces another problem: most traits are desirable at intermediate values. Parents don't want their children to be punching bags or doormats, but they also don't want Attila the Hun either.

The third obstacle to reengineering human nature comes from human nature itself. While parents may have a strong desire to help their children, they have an even stronger desire "not to hurt" their children. It is not obvious that even the most overinvested parent would accept a small risk of retardation in exchange for a moderate chance of improvement.

 $Another\,speed\,bump\,from$ human nature consists of people's intuitions about naturalness and contamination. People believe that living things have an essence that gives them their powers and which can be contaminated by pollutants. These intuitions have been powerful impediments to the acceptance of other technologies.

Finally, anyone who has undergone in-vitro fertilisation knows that it is a decidedly unpleasant procedure, especially in comparison to sex. Infertile couples may choose the procedure as a last resort, and some kooks may choose it to have a child born under a certain astrological sign or for other frivolous reasons. But people who have the choice generally prefer to conceive their children the old-fashioned way.

It is misleading, then, to assume that parents will soon face the question, "Would you opt for a procedure that would give you a happier and more talented child?" When you put it like that, who would say no? The real question will be: "Would you opt for a traumatic and expensive procedure that might give you a slightly happier and more talented child, might give you a less happy, less talented child, might give you a deformed child, and probably would make no difference?" For genetic enhancement to "change human nature" not just a few but billions of people would have to

My point is not that genetic enhancement is impossible, just that it is far from inevitable. And that has implications. Some bioethicists have called for impeding, or even criminalising, certain kinds of research in genetics and reproductive medicine, despite their promise of improvement in health and happiness. That is because the research, they say, will inevitably lead to designer babies. If genetic enhancement really were just around the corner, these proposals would have to be taken seriously. But if the prospect is very much in doubt, we can deal with the ethical conundrums if and when they arise. Rather than decrying our posthuman future, thinkers should acknowledge the frailty of technological predictions and should base policy recommendations on likelihoods rather than fantasies. (© The Guardian)

Steven Pinker is Peter de Florez Professor in the Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences at MIT, and author of The Blank Slate.

# Gulmi Arghakhanchi Rural Development Project (GARDP) Phase II - ALA/95/01 **Vacancy Notices for Long-Term Posts**

GARDP II is an integrated rural development project financed by the European Commission. Its goal is the sustainable improvement of the socio-economic conditions of the rural communities in Arghakhanchi and Gulmi districts. Since its inception in July 1997, GARDP II has worked closely with rural producers to develop a large number of products. Now in its final year of implementation, GARDP II is establishing a regional Business Support Centre to provide technical, management, and financial services to enable rural entrepreneurs to meet the demands of the marketplace.

### **Information Management & Communications Specialist**

In order to manage the Centre's knowledge database and develop innovative strategies to effectively disseminate lessons learned, GARDP II seeks to recruit an experienced and dynamic Information Management & Communications Specialist. This long-term position will be based in

## **Required Qualifications:**

- ☐ Masters degree demonstrating strong qualifications in rural development and communica-
- ☐ Significant professional experience (minimum 5 years) as a knowledge database manager ☐ Strong ability to extract innovative ideas to
- prepare rural development reports
- Exceptional writing and analytical skills a must
- ☐ Demonstrated strong computer skills a must
- ☐ Previous MIS experience highly preferable ☐ Extensive experience working in rural areas
- ☐ Demonstrated leadership skills
- ☐ Excellent communication skills
- ☐ Willingness to relocate to the Western Region Fluency in English

# **Executive Director / Chief Executive Officer**

In order to lead the Centre's dynamic team of professionals in this pioneering effort, GARDP II seeks to recruit an experienced Executive Director with exceptional strategic vision. This long-term position will be based in Tamghas, Gulmi District with substantial time in Kathmandu.

# Required Qualifications:

- ☐ Masters degree in Business Administration, Agricultural Economics, Rural Development or related field
- ☐ Extensive leadership experience in strategic business planning and management, particularly pertaining to rural sectors/enterprises
- Demonstrated commitment to providing management guidance in a start-up environment
- ☐ Strong ability/experience in the preparation of feasibility studies and business plans
- ☐ Experience with developing and delivering funding proposals to potential investors/banks
- ☐ Good familiarity with the many constraints faced by small rural producers/entrepreneurs
- ☐ Good knowledge of markets and marketing requirements for rural products
- ☐ Excellent communication & negotiation skills
- ☐ Fluency in English (written and spoken)
- Fully computer literate a must

## **Marketing Specialist**

In order to develop innovative strategies to market the Centre's services, GARDP II seeks to recruit an experienced Marketing Specialist. This long-term position will be based in Tamghas, Gulmi District.

## **Required Qualifications:**

- ☐ Masters in Commerce or Masters in Business Administration with specialisation in Marketing ☐ Significant professional experience (minimum 5
- years) as a marketing manager Strong ability in the preparation of marketing
- materials (brochures, media kits, website content, advertisements)
- Skilled in identifying effective marketing audiences (forums, publications, trade shows)
- Ability to synthesize available information to prepare attractive newsletters (content and
- ☐ Excellent communication and networking skills Demonstrated leadership skills
- ☐ Familiarity with website design is preferable
- ☐ Extensive experience working in rural areas
- ☐ Willingness to relocate to the Western Region
- ☐ Fluency in English
- ☐ Fully computer literate a must

## **Investment Analyst**

In order to identify, evaluate, and monitor equity investment opportunities for the Centre, GARDP II seeks to recruit an experienced Investment Analyst. This long-term position will be based in Tamghas, Gulmi District.

# **Required Qualifications:**

- ☐ Masters in Commerce or Masters in Business Administration with specialisation in Finance
- ☐ Significant professional experience (minimum 5 years) as a financial analyst
- ☐ Strong ability in the preparation and assessment of investment and business plans
- Skilled in cash flow analysis and investment
- ☐ Skilled in preparation of financial statements and projections for investment proposals
- Ability to assess investment risk and returns of enterprises
- Familiarity with financial ratios and profitability analysis Previous equity capital investment experience
- an asset
- ☐ Good familiarity with the many constraints faced by small rural producers / entrepreneurs
- ☐ Demonstrated leadership/supervisory skills
- ☐ Excellent communication and negotiation skills
- ☐ Willingness to relocate to the Western Region ☐ Fluency in English
- ☐ Fully computer literate a must (especially
- Excel and Word) ☐ Women applicants are also particularly sought

Starting Date: Interested and qualified candidates should be available to begin work on, or shortly after, July 20th, 2003.

**Duration of Employment:** This is a long-term position, with an initial probationary period of 3 months. Depending on performance, the contract will be renewed indefinitely. Remuneration package: to be discussed (commensurate with qualifications and experience).

Closing date for applying: July 11, 2003. Applications (CV and cover letter) should be submitted to the address provided below. If applying by e-mail, please write the position you are applying for in the subject heading.

For any questions, please send your query by e-mail with a telephone number.

Project Support Unit (PSU), Gulmi-Arghakhanchi Rural Development Project, Phase II, C/O Ministry of Local Development, PO Box: 5691, Kathmandu, Nepal Fax: (977-1) 5537727 Tel: (977-1) 5526207 E-mail: psu@mos.com.np





**HERITAGE** 

# 4 - 10 JULY 2003 NEPALI TIMES #152



# **SRADDHA BASNYAT**

Ah, Love! Could thou and I with Fate conspire To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire, Would not we shatter it to bitsand then Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

Omar Khayyam's stanza from *The* Rubaiyat is inscribed in marble just above a lover's seat for two. The cracks running through the stone slab, a legacy of the earthquake of 1934, is painted on either side with leaves and flowers to resemble a vine. Inside the Garden of Dreams you forget the world outside, which is probably what Field Marshall Kaiser Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana intended when he lavished so much attention and detail on this remarkable garden.

It was supposed to echo the grandeur of the Versailles at France, but with a Nepali sensibility with its fine Newari art as well as Western neo-classical leanings. In one corner he put a figure of Laxmi with five conch shells overturned in a winning position.

The original garden and the palace built by Bir Shumsher in 1895 once spanned almost 10 hectares. It had six free standing pavilions, each representing Himalayan seasons: basanta (spring), grishma (early spring), barkha (summer-monsoon), sharad (early autumn), hemanta (late autumn) and shishir (winter). They formed the architectural framework around which the elaborate garden came together. Inspired by his passion for reading, to which his collection at the library stands testament, the Field Marshall commissioned European designs for the fountains, garden furniture and other elements like pools, pergolas, balustrades, urns and birdhouses. The original landscape included a lawn, wooded areas interspersed with formal gardens and a duck





The rebirth of Kaiser Shumshere's **Garden of Dreams.** 

pond to accommodate more than 500 migratory ducks every winter.

But urbanisation took a toll on this island of tranquillity. The palace became the Ministry of Education and the garden lay neglected. All but three of the seasonal pavilions fell to Thamel's urban sprawl, reducing the garden to half its original size. It crumbled slowly into decay, almost forgotten under choking weeds and overgrown trees.

Sitting at prime real estate, just opposite the royal palace and the road into Thamel, some enterprising business people proposed tearing the gardens down to create a row of shutter shops. It seemed almost inevitable. But in 1998 a project for the renaissance of the garden was finalised through Austrian Development Aid with the support of the Ministry of Education and Sports and implemented by the project team from the Austrian group, Eco-

A team was put together that included Lok Bhakta Rana (Kaiser Shumsher's youngest son), Götz Hagmüller (the man behind the renovation of Patan Museum), Eric Theophile (the designer behind Baber Mahal Revisited) and architect Prabal Thapa.

The hard work is beginning to show. The renovations are recent but they hold the essence of the ancient aesthetics that was part of the original plan. The new entrance gate reads 'Dreams' on the inside and 'Garden' on the outside.

The Swapna Garden Development Board is modelling itself along the lines of Patan Museum for self-sufficiency. Head of landscape design, Helga Gropper, explains: "We have to design this garden for people, which means that there will be a lot of maintenance and upkeep." But its location near Thamel is expected to yield revenues from visitors which will pay for the running cost and anything left over will be spent on

Clockwise from left: Omar Khayyam immortalised. A window in the Kaiser's bedroom waiting for restoration, shows his love of flora and fauna. The Basanta Pavilion with the pool in the foreground.

reviving the Kaiser Library. Project manager Ludmilla Hungerhuber agrees that future maintenance and management is the greatest challenge when the garden opens next year. "To get a garden like this, dormant and unattended for so long, restore it to its former glory, and open it up to the public is very satisfying. Now we have to make sure it also runs by itself."

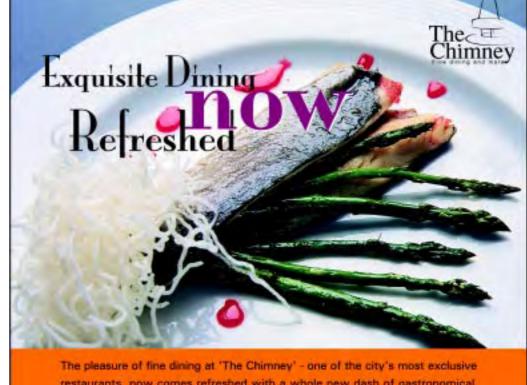
Shishir, the lost winter pavilion, is being reconstructed to house a restaurant aptly called the 'The Six Seasons', along with a Viennesestyle Kaiser Café at the Basanta pavilion. A gift shop selling quality handicrafts and garden products and a walk-in aviary showcasing a range of Himalayan birds is also planned. The garden, birds, trees, books: it all adds up to a Kaiser Shumsher Theme Park.

Kathmandu will soon have another oasis of tranquility right in the heart of the city, and rapt couples can sit beneath Omar Khayyam's immortal poem.

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a m'a z i n g

THAILANĎ

# **Under My Hat**

by Kunda Dixit

# News roundup

And here is our weekly roundup of sensational news from around the nation that somehow didn't make it to the papers:

# Relay hunger strike huge success BY OUR THEATRE CORRESPONDENT

BIRATNAGAR- Senior party leaders taking part in a nationwide relay hunger strike broke their fast after not eating for two hours to partake of instant noodles Monday as pro-democracy protests escalated across Nepal.

The strikers had vowed to take turns not to eat or drink for two hours each until all their demands were met, and aside from a mild case of ulcers, most completed the fast without any untoward incident. Cumulatively, the leaders spent a total of 3,580 man-hours without food, which is a national record.

Besides the obvious health benefits, the strike was expected to put strong moral pressure on the government-of-the-day to give in to their demand for power distribution to the needy. "Of all the protests so far, this is the most effective," one government source grudgingly admitted. "We just can't bear to see our leaders go hungry. I think we will now give in to their demand."

## Gharials genuine bhutanis?

CHITWAN (RSS) - Two male gharials which were repatriated to Bhutan Tuesday could be eligible for Bhutani citizenship if the Joint Verification Team determines that their ancestors left Bhutan voluntarily, Druk sources said.

"This proves we are serious about taking our citizens back, but it helps if they are crocodiles," the Bhutani chief of the JVT told RSS.

# Split in birthday celebration committee

FROM OUR POLITICALLY-CORRECT REPORTER SINGHA DARBAR - The 250-member His Majesty's Birthday Celebration Main Committee (HMBCMC) officially split Saturday over ideological differences about how many more sub-committees should be added to oversee the three-day event.

The row broke out after several stalwarts from the HMBCMC-(Rana) found that all the powerful sub-committees had already been given out to cronies of the HMBCMC-(Thapa). Negotiations to head off the dispute went well into the night, but broke down after dissident members from the Rana faction demanded upper berths in the powerful Publicity Sub-committee and the Hydropower Sub-committee.

# Effigies refuse to catch fire BY A STAFF RACONTEUR

KATHMANDU - Effigies of regression used at a rally in Kathmandu refused to catch fire Thursday, and a commission of inquiry has been formed to look into the matter.

Angry arsonists then set fire to Ason. "When you are fighting for freedom no price is too high," a leading torch-bearer said, playing his fiddle. Prodemocracy demonstrators suspect the contractor hired to supply the effigies used substandard non-flammable material.

"Either that or the kerosene used was adulterated," one effigy, who did not want to be identified, said. Effigies had decided to set up an All-Nepal Effigy Solidarity Front since they were getting bored with self-immolation. "I don't understand why we have to be reduced to ashes. Why can't we just be manhandled like everyone else?" the effigy asked rhetorically.

### Lack of locks hits nation

BY OUR ECONOMICAL CORRESPONDENT A dire shortage of padlocks in the Nepali domestic market has created a multiplier effect in the national economy with several planned lockouts of educational institutions having to be suspended this week.

National strategic stockpiles of locks ran dangerously low after a surge in demand from political unions this week and efforts were afoot to rush in emergency supplies from friendly neighbours India and China.

"It is incumbent upon us as citizens of a country with adults-only franchise to keep democracy vibrating by exercising our right to lock this whole place down."

## Pen-down strike

## BUREAU REPORTS

KOPUNDOLE - A 15-party alliance of journalist unions has decided to stage an indefinite pen-down strike until their demands are met.

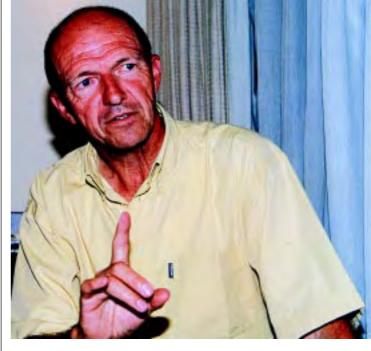
"We don't know what our 108-point demands are yet, but let me assure you that we will not budge an inch and we will not be responsible for the consequences if they are not met," said one union leader

Asked if the pen-down strike would prevent journalists from physically participating in the Signature Campaign on Royal Property, the senior editor said: "We'll use our thumb prints." However, a faction of the All-Nepal Federation of Self-styled Satirists and Insufferable Comedians has decided not to join the strike since they are registered under the Essential Services Act.



# NEPALI SOCIETY

# Belgian benefactor



How does a Belgian manufacturer of sleeping mattresses become benefactor for a pro bono orthopaedic hospital in Jorpati?

It all goes back to a 30-yearlong relationship between Luc Salens, from Maldegem in Belgium, and the clan of Juddha Bahadur Shrestha, the well-known public-spirited entrepreneur who died ten years ago.

Luc met one of Juddha Bahadur's sons, the engineer Promod Shrestha, in 1973 at a Jaycee convention in Nice. Their friendship spread to other members of the family, and he started to send cheques to Nepal to support indigent students at the Namuna Machendra School in Patan, and to help in the education of three blind boys, Sujan, Kamal and Utsab.

Over the years, the youngest son of Juddha Bahadur, Anil, finished his studies and became an orthopaedic surgeon working at Bir Hospital. In a trip to Kathmandu in 1997, Luc and his wife Ingrid were introduced to a "ghost building" at the Jorpati compound of the Nepal Disabled Association. "With thirty lakh rupees, I can make this into an orthopaedic hospital," the young doctor told the Belgian businessman.

Luc went back and started raising euros, and now the empty buildings have been transformed into the Nepal Orthopaedic Hospital (NOH) run by Anil Shrestha. "I am now retired, my associates run the business, and my central focus is raising funds for NOH so that it can stand as an example of people-oriented health care in Nepal," says Luc.

The money Luc sends back isn't frittered away for overheads, but goes directly to benefit patients. Making the Jorpati hospital self-sustaining is Luc's primary concern, so treatment here is not entirely free. But the charges are modest and vary according to the patient's ability to pay. The hospital plans high-end private rooms for those who can afford it as a way of subsidising the care.

Luc says their concern for Nepal, and more particularly the NOH, gives him and Ingrid a lot of joy. Then there is the deep friendship with the Shrestha family. Luc still keeps an unopened bottle of Khukuri Rum gifted to him by Juddha Bahadur years ago as a memento.



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