HODGSON

A Nepali scholar rediscovers the legacy of Brian Hodgson, the 19th century British resident at the turmoil-ridden Kathmandu court. The new findings may help rewrite Nepali history.

A Nepali scholar rediscovers the legacy of Brian Hodgson, the 19th century British resident at the turmoil-ridden Kathmandu court. The new findings may help rewrite Nepali history.

How long will this period of no war, no peace drag on?

The Budget

In numbers:

- Total: Rs 102.4 billion
- Regular budget: Rs 60.5 billion
- Development budget: Rs 42 billion
- Rural electrification: Rs 4 billion
- High priority areas: 70 percent
- Foreign loan and grant component: 70 percent
- Police: Rs 6.3 billion
- Army: Rs 7.2 billion
- Education: Rs 15 billion
- Health: Rs 5.2 billion
- Hydropower: Rs 6 billion

Other highlights:

- Parties get Rs 20 per voter garnered in previous polls two months before general elections
- Power Development Fund for rural producers
- Half of Nepal Telecommunication Corp shares to be sold public
- Nepal Oil Corp monopoly ended, private oil importers allowed
- Employment Bank to channel remittances from overseas Nepalis, and help migrant workers
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The present uncertainty must end, and peace restored for this budget to work.

– Finance Minister Prakash C Lohani
The Freedom To Be Fair. 

The people don't want war.

Priyanka Pradhan, New Delhi

- While I was notified to see the results of the internet poll give evidence to Baburam Bhattarai for giving him and the Maoist party a majority. I was equally horrified by Baburam’s admission of the impact. His teacher, Eleanor Elkins, made me think that Mrs. Elkins, she must have been halfway there herself in having created such a monster.

Tirtha Maiti, email

- The letter to your paper from Baburam Bhattarai gave us a glimpse of the man. Partially shorn of jargon and slogans, Baburam comes across as a revolutionary personality? Miss Elkins will not only be having nightmares about this as well. In the Mahabharata, the great riddle is called a ‘dimension that even the gods have no clear answers. In the state, and King Gyanendra had to continue defending Maoists even after the royal massacre, on 3 June 2001, that the TIBET

- My name is Sushil Bogati, Seattle, USA

- Nepal has been a process of clearing of my ‘cowards of confusion’. Over the last three years, I have asked more questions than I had answers to. The Kathmandu Post has been the‘Times’—a dimension that even the gods have to endure. At this point, let’s raise a toast to all Nepalis: may we live in less interesting times.

T H E T I M E S 

STATE OF THE STATE

May we live in less interesting times.

by CK Lal
Cheers!

On Your Third Anniversary

Nepali Times
Stealthy superpower

T
he latest edition of the American highbrow magazine, Atlantic Monthly, features as its lead essay an eerie version of diplomatic ‘kiss and tell’ by the widely read Robert D Kaplan, one of the most influential writers on foreign affairs in the world. Influential because his thoughts on once arcane topics like the Balkans were said to inform the opinions of Bill Clinton and other White House types. Influential then, and somewhat worsewise, because Kaplan’s latest essay, and he’s been producing books of the sort about America’s future interaction with the world, is called ‘Supremacy by Stealth’. I have much admiration for Robert Kaplan. And I have many disagreements with much of what he writes. Not because I don’t admire his style or scope—do I—no one in current American thinking works harder on developing a thesis or a theme, or approaches them with more wit or verve—but because I deeply deplore the premise of ‘Supremacy by Stealth’.

In this essay, and I fear it’s founded very much on American official thinking of the moment, Kaplan is telling the United States to accept its role as the world’s sole imperial power and to go about things more subtly, nicely, of possible. Thus the title. We have supremacy, he’s arguing, it’s de facto. Now we need to maintain and expand that. American decency and generosity should be reflected more in foreign and security policy. The founding principles of the United States are inspiring to many Americans and to the rest of the world. Given a choice, who wouldn’t choose freedom, the pursuit of happiness and concern for community over feudalism, class hatred or pure greed? The American military and its foreign policy elite, Kaplan says, must inject more of this into the country’s behaviour on the international stage. It’s already there in the behaviour of many individual soldiers, officials and diplomats, he says. People like army ‘peacekeepers’, or ‘humanitarain’ soldiers, and the government has to step in. But some schools are charging fees. He told us: “We told them, look, no one wants to go to government schools because of the poor quality, why not try to improve them instead of closing down the only alternative people have,” said Shrestha Koirala, founder of the Schoolnet English School in Gaurishankar. “But they don’t listen to reason.” Mahara now lives in a rented room in Ghorahi, trying to get his own two children through school. Of the 50 primary schools in Dang, only a handful remain open. Some of them are in Maoist-affected areas. Said one principal who did not want his name disclosed: “We have taken permission from Maoists to run our school. All we had to do was pay them off.”

To cater to the demand of families displaced from where their children were forced to close down or else—and then pocket their ‘donation’. With support from parents schools are now remaining. Some, like Rapti Vidhya Mandir, are islands of excellence in a sea of darkness. Of the 69 students who appeared in this year’s SLC from Rapti Vidhyaa, 69 passed in first division. “If you have dedicated teachers who believe in quality, there is no reason why all schools can’t be like ours,” says principal Gyaneshwori Danglal. Rapti Vidhya is likely to bag this year’s Regional Education Award for best performance in the SLC. But the reality of rural Dang and other districts in Nepal is different. There are many schools where not a single student passes the SLC, almost all are government schools. The anti-school campaign of the Maoists tries to capitalise on this insecurity as well as the fact that for every good private school there are two schools which are more commercialised and charge more exorbitant fees. Some private schools without a library charge library fees. There is one school in Ghorahi that charges ‘extra’ under headings like L.F.G.S., A.I.B.C.C., D.P.C.C., E.C.Y.F., with no explanations about what these acronyms mean.

Many private schools cram students into it. But in the past months the Maoist student unions have again started student unions have again started

Ram Hari Rijal

in Dang, a nine-year-old boy who washed through to a private school in Ghorahi everyday from his village. He has a heavy school bag that he slings across his head portmante, and he is sweating and tired by the time he reaches his classes. “I wish I lived in Ghorahi, so I wouldn’t have to struggle for every day,” Ram Hari tells a visitor.

There are hundreds of thousands of children all over Nepal who have always walked long distances to school. But these distances have suddenly become longer for children because the Maoists have forced the closure of private schools in their home villages. Similarly, school students have again started

America is advised to expand and rule with sweetness and light.

I don’t object to the fact that Robert Kaplan is writing this. By doing so, he is earning his living as an essayist and thinker. He is doing his duty. But I quail at the notion that he represents: America liberal opinion of the moment. Is this the best we can do? George Bush and his neo-imperialists assume their roles with just a few simple goals in mind, and apparently they include enriching themselves in the oil, security and defence industries. Oh yes, and national security too, and private enterprises against another totalitarian state.

But his recent African visit aside, Bush’s presidency since the beginning has also been about expanding the role of private capital in the public sphere at home and abroad. Witness Vice President Dick Cheney’s alma mater, the oil service multinational Halliburton, and his expanding role as the US military’s largest single private-sector provider of just about every logistical service that a modern army requires. At home, in Afghanistan, Iraq and around the world, American businesses have become as important as the American government—exactly what Bush’s Bush Corp. is.

Which is why writers like Kaplan need to switch their attention from tinkering with the extremes of imperial cynicism to considering the real implications of current policy. Having a nice military regime or a nice imperial power in charge of the world makes little or no difference when the daring warlords of private defence firms and the security industry are hiding behind the smiling faces of the ‘civil affairs officer’. Wake up and smell the coffee, Robert.
SANJAYA DHAKAL

According to a recent study, during the last six years, 162 children were killed and around 300 were injured in landmine explosions. “Some died while playing with unexploded bombs left near their houses by the rebels or security forces,” the CWIN study says.

The security forces arrested hundreds of children between 18 years of age during the state of emergency last year. The children are also pressured by the rebels who have been accused of recruiting under-aged soldiers. Many fled to the cities, but their nightmare didn’t end there.

“While a lot of them are in orphanages, a much bigger number is forced to work in dangerous conditions at brick kilns, quarries and wool-spinning mills. Others have become domestic servants,” says CWIN’s Gauri Pradhan.

Of the 575 children at the Nepal Children Organisation orphanage in Kathmandu, 133 are the victims of the conflict. “We have opened a separate shelter for orphans in Dhangadi, and a few also stay at our shelter in Kathmandu,” says Rajeshwori Niraula of the organisation.

Apart from children who have lost one or both parents in the conflict, many more have been displaced and have migrated to urban areas or fled to India. Pradhan points out these children are more vulnerable: “They can be sold for sexual exploitation in brothels. These displaced children end up in worse situations than others if they are in back at their villages.”

Most are exploited by both the Maoists and government security forces. Last week a Maoist sympathiser, Sharada Koirala, came to Kathmandu to find her two-year-old daughter, Prema, was taken away by security forces after they failed to arrest Koirala at her home in Gorakot district. She is a widow, her husband, also a Maoist, died in a landmine explosion. “You cannot imagine how brutal their life is. There is no one to take care of their education and so on,” says a social worker.

CWIN has received frequent reports of forced-recruitment of children by the Maoists, says Pradhan. “While we have not found children working as combatants, we have found them being used as porters and cooks.” Maoists reject the allegation, saying they do not recruit anyone below 18.

Government officials say that despite a serious problem, there are no numbers on the exact situation. The government has set up three shelter homes to house 600 children displaced by the conflict. The children receive educational materials and arrangements have been made for their education. The government says it will initiate fresh programs aimed at expanding the current one in the next fiscal year.

But the problem is so vast and relief is needed so urgently that the problem is likely to grow. Krishna Pahade of the Human Rights and Peace Society says: “The government is using the peace process as a means to extend its tenure, and the Maoists are using it to promote violence. Both sides are setting the stage for a horrendous conflict which will further deteriorate the human rights situation, including that of the children.”

Psychologist Niraj Prasad Upadhyaya, warns that burying the issue could have grave consequences to the society. “The government needs to take action before it is too late,” he says.

CWIN has received a total of 464 complaints during the first six months of this year and 202 during the second. “We are ready to discuss all the issues during the third round of talks but it should be non-conditioned,” says Krishna Bhusan Mahara, a member of the Maoist negotiation team. The government, on the other hand, argues that there should be no pre-conditions to the third round of talks. “We are ready to talk about all the issues in the third round of talks, but it should be non-conditioned.”

Reiterates Information and Communication Minister Kamal Thapa, to take late remains undeterred over disputes following the second round nearly two months ago. Limiting the army’s movement tops the list of disagreements. Meanwhile, the government has sent a formal letter to the Maoist leaders requesting them to be present at the next session. The Maoist leadership, which is believed to be in Delhi, had not responded till press time Thursday.

Pashupati package

Royal Nepal Airlines and Nepal Tourism Board are targeting Hindus from South India to Nepal in a big way by offering the Pashupati Day Tour Package. “The package is in the tourism lean-season in August and September for a bargain IRS 8,888 which included round-trip airfare, accommodation and all meals. If you are interested you can contact Royal Nepal Airlines or the NTB.”

NTB says there has been a 41 percent increase in Indian tourists this June compared to last year and it has a target to reaching 150,000 Indian tourists this year.

High fliers

By September the skies above the Valley should be fluttering with colourful paper kites. Taking this festive autumnal pastime a notch higher—quite literally, at 7,200 feet in Nagarkot—is the kite flying competition, Changa Chat 2060, organised by Club High Life, a new club, at Nagarkot from 13 to 15 September.

The objective of the event is to encourage healthy competition, sportsmanship, to record our changing environment at this altitude—by organising a kite flying event, same-sex South AsiaKarachi’s ‘Megastar’Rahat Fateh Aman to perform in Delhi on 17th September. For details, call Club Himalayas at 680803.

VACANCY NOTICE

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Kathmandu, Nepal

18 - 24 JULY 2003 NEPALI TIMES #154 5
Neither secular, nor Hindu

Nepal is not a theocratic state. The king is Hindu, not the kingdom.

By SUDHINDRA SHARMA

T he relation to the contemporary debate on secularism versus Hindu kingdom lies in opting for a middle ground that gives continuity to past traditions while simultaneously dissociating the state from aligning with Hinduism. This could be done by deleting the word ‘Hindu’ from the clause that defines the kingdom, though not necessarily replacing it with the word ‘secular’. By identifying ‘Hindu’ as an attribute of the kingdom, the 1990 Constitution gives the impression that Nepal is a theocratic state. The reality is far from that. Though some Hindu elements remain in the love, the polity at large is not governed by Hindu religious scriptures and the state prohibits caste-based behaviour, that is, premari Hindu governance frameworks. The state’s claim to being Hindu in these circumstances are manifested in certain signs and symbols combined in the constitution or pursued through statecraft such as a ban on cow slaughter, the promotion of Hindu religious discourses, including the use of Sanskrit, and a ban on proselytising. There has been a weakening of these elements and the core Hindu institution that remains in contemporary Nepal is a kingdom. Nepal’s de facto secular, but by positing ‘Hindu’ as an attribute of the kingdom, the present constitution damages the promise for the consolidation of secular principles. There are various sections of Nepali society such as those who adhere to minority religions, the janajatis, the dalits and reformist minded Hindus who vehemently oppose the Hindu identity of the Nepalese state and continue to advocate for the secular status of the kingdom. Inserting the word ‘secular’ in place of ‘Hindu’, however, is not the solution. A ‘secular kingdom’ is a contradiction in terms because a kingdom implies the existence of a king and by implicit logic, the king’s religion. In the Nepalese context, kingdom has had a symbiotic relationship with Hinduism in the very emergence of the nascent Nepalese state during the late 18th century. The continuity of that nation-state and of the Shah dynasty up to modern times, preclude the possibility of dissociating kingdom from Hindu religion. Hence the suggestion to delete the word ‘Hindu’ rather than insert the word ‘secular’.

In the constitution that safeguards the position of the king and his alignment with Hinduism when it outlines that the latter should be ‘an adherent of Aryan culture and a follower of Hindu religion’. When this clause in the constitution has already identified Hinduism as the religion of the monarch, identifying the kingdom as Hindu, while modern laws are not derived from Hindu religious sources, becomes a vacuous statement. It is also unnecessarily provocative and dysfunctional.

In the debate between secularism versus Hinduism in Nepal the experiences of countries such as France, United States, Turkey and India have reflected the concerns for the consolidation of secular principles. There are various sections of Nepali society such as those who adhere to minority religions, the janajatis, the dalits and reformist minded Hindus who vehemently oppose the Hindu identity of the Nepalese state and continue to advocate for the secular status of the kingdom. Inserting the word ‘secular’ in place of ‘Hindu’, however, is not the solution. A ‘secular kingdom’ is a contradiction in terms because a kingdom implies the existence of a king and by implicit logic, the king’s religion. In the Nepalese context, kingdom has had a symbiotic relationship with Hinduism in the very emergence of the nascent Nepalese state during the late 18th century. The continuity of that nation-state and of the Shah dynasty up to modern times, preclude the possibility of dissociating kingdom from Hindu religion. Hence the suggestion to delete the word ‘Hindu’ rather than insert the word ‘secular’.

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**ECONOMY**

**BIZ NEWS**

**Trading places**

Before going to WTO, Nepal has some ‘is’ and ‘but’s that need clearing up before the meeting in Carcain, Mexico, in September. A meeting in Kathmandu this week emphasized special status to be provided to the least-developed countries, in particular landlocked ones, in terms of their integration into the multilateral trading system. Participants included government officials, civil society, farmers, private sector and academia who all agreed that Nepal carpets should have a standard international label. A recent study by a German labeling expert found that a majority of carpet importers, wholesalers, and retailers in Europe support such a move. Nepal Carpet Exporters Association and Central Carpet Industries Association believe this will help customers differentiate Nepal carpets from the products of other countries. The industry has suffered from price dumping by competitors which wrongly brand their products Nepal made. In 1993-94 Nepal exported 3.3 million square metres of carpet while the figure this year stands at only 1.6 million.

**Thai tourism rebound**

Thailand has launched a major campaign to make its tourism rebound in the post-SARS scenario. Thai Airways International and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) are flying in some 1,500 tour operators and media from around the world for a four-day presentation being held in Bangkok. This year, Thailand (TAT) are flying in some 1,500 tour operators and media from around the world for a four-day presentation being held in Bangkok. This year, Thailand (TAT) are flying in some 1,500 tour operators and media from around the world for a four-day presentation being held in Bangkok. This year, Thailand (TAT) are flying in some 1,500 tour operators and media from around the world for a four-day presentation being held in Bangkok.

**Sharing life**

Kosmid and Pranab.com has launched Rs 2500 in two months to help the Nepal Cancer Relief Society. The money was collected from Rs 2 set aside from orders placed for developing and printing in Kosmid labs in nabha under the slogan, “Share moments, share life.”

**Strictly Business**

**Three copies for chefs who can't fail**

imitation minimises chances of failure.

E dryly this spring, an unusual visitor to our Government in Kathmandu. With a slogan, “Mafya.EK, Saurabh vaatam for sundaar goods”, the 99 Shop started selling everything from cups to T-shirts to handles of big brand, like 99 rupees. At first, no one showed the same enthusiasm for buying as the 99 rupees, but the brand name was already strong. The slogan was used to show that the 99 rupees brand was a strong value for money.

Fortunately, as we go into the budget we are not confronted with such a situation? Nepali Times: How do you rate Nepal’s pre-budget macroeconomic situation? Nepal’s pre-budget macroeconomic situation is strong. The fiscal situation is strong as well. The government has been able to reduce the deficit. The government has been able to reduce the deficit.

**MIN BAJRACHARYA**

**NEPALI TIMES #154**

**INTERVIEW**

**Suwiwadi Singh is the new International Monetary Fund (IMF) Resident Representative for Nepal. In the run-up to this week’s budget, Nepal Times asked him about the country’s macroeconomic situation and the IMF’s role in policy advice and technical assistance.**

Nepali Times: How do you rate Nepal’s pre-budget macroeconomic situation? Suwiwadi Singh: Despite the serious situation and difficult external environment, the macroeconomic has been managed fairly well in recent years. Fortunately, as we go into the budget we are not confronted with such a situation.

**Nepal’s soft loans from decades ago are maturing, and we have to repay them in a situation where the loans have not been used productively. Is this a classic debt trap?**

Yes. We have. We are encouraged by the progress being made by the management teams at both NRB and RBC. With dedicated Nepal staff, they have made substantial progress in improving the quality of the banks, improving financial performance and securing loan recoveries, establishing internal control systems and introducing modern banking practices. However, to build on this, it is crucial that the government make decisions on key issues that affect the costs and performance of these banks. I see two issues as particularly important at this juncture: reduce overstaffing and improve the debt recovery framework.

**Speaking of which, how is the problem of politically-connected defaulted borrowers in the Nepali banking system?**

Widly defaulted should not be extended beyond the case. This is the depositors’ money, and the government’s scarce resources should not be used for bailing out bad loans. Defaulters should be given an opportunity to first regularise their accounts within a reasonable time period. If they fail to cooperate, banks should use standard tools that are common worldwide to recover their money for example, blacklisting defaulters and related firms for any further borrowing or transactions. Where there is strong evidence of malpractice, I would expect cases to be placed before the Civil Court and then to proceed speedily to prosecution. It is difficult to compare with other countries, but the problem is certainly not unique to Nepal. Sufle to say the that origins of the problems are often similar, the magnitude of the problem at the banks is broadly comparable, and the resolution process and solutions are also similar.

Nepal’s pre-budget macroeconomic situation is strong. The fiscal situation is strong as well. The government has been able to reduce the deficit. The government has been able to reduce the deficit.
HODGSON'S interest was endless and his researches were endless," says Dhungel. "Under kast doha, kast doha lagaya samma paray, kay bahtano. The papers are a veritable encyclopedic record of 19th century Nepal. He collected anything and everything, from inscriptions to family histories and religious texts. Sometimes he bought them outright, at other times he had them copied at his own expense."

Hodgson befriended pandits and gubhajus of Kathmandu Valley (in particular the great Patan scholar Anandakumar, who became a valued informant), who were impressed by his knowledge of Sanskrit and Farsi (as well as his aesthetic lifestyle devoted to learning). Dhungel believes Hodgson revived the interest of Kathmandu’s powerful in their family histories, or barahmala, and received copies from many chautari families, and even King Rajendra Bikram.

Two of the most detailed aspects of Hodgson’s work were on Nepal’s judicial system and commerce. He also studied the military strength of the army, and is considered an architect of the Gurkha induction into the British Indian Army. Hodgson is also credited, while already in retirement in London, for convincing a reluctant viceroy to allow an eager Jang Bahadur to participate in the quelling of the Sepoy Mutiny 1857-58. Ramesh Dhungel: “Hodgson was probably the first scholar to get excited about ethnic diversity of the country.”

He called in members of ethnic groups from far and wide to the Residency at Lalitpur (from Lodging Part, according to some) and conducted interviews and meticulously wrote down everything, from linguistic attributes to physiognomy. Dhungel has discovered papers which indicate that Hodgson brought skulls from Nepal and Tibet to England, with accompanying details of ethnic identity, place, sex and price paid.

Wrote Hodgson, “My favorite amusements of the ordinary kind are researches into the origin, genius and attainment of the various singular race of men inhabiting Nepal.”

War party

The resident also kept a steady stream of friendly spies helping him with the gosspig among the powerful classes, and his reports to Lord Auckland, the viceroy in Calcutta, were regarded as information to the Kathmandu government. Through threats routed through Calcutta, he kept in check the ‘war party’ in Kathmandu that wanted to make amends with Company-held territories in the terrain. For this, he earned enmity in Kathmandu and gratitude in Calcutta.

Worried over the takeover of the state by the military (by then retaining chiefly 19,000 men), and the prospects of inter-clan rivalry for power, he wrote in the Viceroy in June 1857, “Civil wars have rather a tendency tobred than quench martial spirit and power.”

At Carrel No 39 at the British Museum, Dhungal has only had time to flip through 65 of the 108 bound (but not catalogued) volumes of Hodgson’s collection. But already he has discovered material of immense importance to Nepali historiography. For example, we know only of the social reforms of Ram Shah and Jang Bahadur Malla, but the Hodgson papers clearly point to reforms during the times of Bishnu Malla and Siddhi Narain Malla. We know that Mankumar, Chaudhari and Bijaygunj were regarded as separate states by the Gorkhals, but through Hodgson’s papers, we discover Chaurpat too had a status as a signa. Say Dhungal, “Being from Chainpur myself, I liked that.”
Anglophile

In 1841, King Rajendra Bikram writes an abject letter to the Viceroy in Calcutta apologising for the belligerent attitude toward the Company and its resident in Kathmandu, and says that “as per the suggestions of Hodgson saheb, we have dismissed those who have tried to bring a distance between our two great governments, whereas we have appointed those who are for friendship between our two great governments.” A list is also provided of the courtiers fired and retained.

Lumbini

Hodgson seems to make one of the earliest references to Lumbini, by referring to “Asocan Laths” (Ashokan pillars) of the tarai, in particular with reference to a site west-north-west of Bettiah, and 20 miles south of the hills. On top of this ‘lath’ is a couchant lion, which has long disappeared from the Ashoka Pillar at Lumbini. Because no sources are provided, Dhungel believes this may have been Hodgson’s own discovery.

Two Dhararas

In Hodgson’s own English handwriting (he also wrote in Farsi and in Devanagari), there is reference to two dhararas in place of the one that still stands and is called Bhimsen Stamba. The one named for Bhimsen, writes Hodgson, had 142 steps, whereas there was one taller than this, at 174 steps which was dedicated to Queen Lalit Tripurasundari. According to the historian Baburam Acharya, Bhimsen Thapa had these two towers placed at the entrance of his palace. The earthquake of 1834 seems to have taken a permanent toll of one of them.

Shree Teen Hodgson

At one point, Raghunath Pandit, who had earlier served as a stopgap Bahun prime minister during those turbulent years, writes to Hodgson referring to him as ‘Sri Panch Janaab Hogdson Saheb’. Jang Bahadur himself later went as far as to refer to Hodgson as ‘Sri T een’, reports Dhungel.

History

One continuous manuscript 1.200 feet long contains a history (brittanta) of Nepal commissioned by Mathbar Singh Thapa, the flamboyant nephew of Bhimsen Thapa, and prime minister, who was cut down by Jang Bahadur.

Spies

Through his spies in the Gorkhali court, Hodgson accessed a letter which is a demand on the vacillating King Rajendra Bikram from one faction that so many named courtiers of the other faction must be cut down (“Katnai parcha”) by Dasain-time. Their fault, being in cahoots with the British Resident. The words used to vilify Hodgson in that letter reflect the mores of the times and come across as shocking today. For, every time Hodgson’s name comes up in the text, he is called with willful use of what was considered pejorative, ‘Narchanya thu rutilan firingi'. (Narchanya = derogatory Valley-speak for Hodgson.)

Jang Bahadur

In the years after retirement, apparently Hodgson became quite friendly with the post-Kot Massacre Jang Bahadur, and Dhungel has found that Jang even helped Hodgson’s son during his visit to England. After Hodgson went into retirement in Darjeeling, and the Kot Massacre devastated the top layer of Kathmandu nobility, an informant calling himself ‘Pahalman’ writes him a letter in the Avadhi language, which gives a sense of the atmosphere in Kathmandu right after Jang Bahadur took power. Roughly translated, the letter reads, “There is not even 4 anna of security of the 16 annas we used to have when you were here. No one can speak, no one can move about freely. The real king today is Jang Bahadur, and he does whatever he desires. All the paltans are with the brothers, who are placed in Patan, Bhaktapur, Thapathali, Narayanhiti. There are preparations on to invade Tibet. There are no more comings and goings at the king’s palace.”
The resource curse

Many developing countries that are rich in natural resources are even poorer than other countries that are less well endowed. This is because natural resources serve as an enticing prize to fight over. Many countries with significant mineral deposits or valuable cash crops are in the grip of repressive or corrupt regimes or torn apart by armed conflict. This problem has come to be known as the "resource curse".

Now a broad movement has emerged to tackle the resource curse. Global Witness, a small British NGO, acted as the pioneer when it campaigned to close the Thai-Cambodian border to Klmer Rouge timber exports, ending illegal trade in teak and other rare hardwoods.

The resulting loss of revenue played a key role in the demise of that genocidal organisation. Global Witness is now set to attack the problem of diamonds in Angola, and a campaign against "conflict diamonds", led to the Kimberley Process of Certification. Last year, Global Witness, together with more than 60 groups from around the world, launched "Publish What You Pay", a campaign to force resource companies to disclose that regime.

I am proud to be associated with Global Witness and the "Publish What You Pay" campaign. But that is only the first step in tackling the resource curse. Governments must disclose the revenue they get from oil, and even more importantly, they should be held accountable for the way they use their revenues. That is what Caapistan Revenue Watch aims to do. Caapistan Revenue Watch aims to build the capacity of civil society in the new states surrounding the Caspian Sea, through research, training, and partnerships, to monitor the collection and expenditure of government revenues from the extractive sector. Greater accountability could result in a greater contribution to meet the UN’s Millennium Development Goals than most other initiatives.

Here the Chad-Cameron oil pipeline sets a useful example. The World Bank financed the project on the condition that Chad commits itself to complete transparency and uses the revenues for poverty reduction. A stringent supervisory mechanism was put in place with civil society participation; almost immediately, the Chad government was caught diverting a substantial portion of the fragile budget for arms purchases. Fortunately the mechanism expired when oil actually started flowing. Obviously, that arrangement must be extended.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair announced an Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg last September. The need for greater transparency in the management of resource revenues was endorsed by a UN declaration at the 58th session of the General Assembly in Evian this June. This was followed by a high-level meeting last month in the UK government in London in June and attended by governments, major oil and mining companies, international financial institutions, and representatives of civil society. The overwhelming majority of the 59 participants at that meeting endorsed the principles of EITI. A few countries volunteered to be pilot cases in which the government and all the companies involved would disclose revenues and their use according to templates designed by the UK team. The volunteers were Brazil, Ecuador, Ghana, Mozambique and Sierra Leone, with other important resource-rich countries indicating that they may follow.

This is a promising step forward, but there is always danger that a declaration of principles and a voluntary approach will turn into a sham. Public pressure must be mobilised to keep governments and companies to their promises. It is civil society that has moved the process this far, and it must become even more deeply engaged, particularly in the producing countries, to maintain the forward momentum and ensure that the movement succeeds in lifting the resource curse once and for all.

George Soros is Chairman of Soros Fund Management and the Open Society Institute.
Poster of the tensions last year. Pakistan felt the world would rush to solve the dispute. This turned out to be a miscalculations. In fact, the principal international aim has been to the Kashmiri mujahideen and Pakistanis nuclear weapons. This attitude preceded 9/11, but now dominates thinking. The US state depart- ment’s recent declaration of over 20 jihadist organisations as terrorists includes the Hizb ul-Mujahedin, the largest mujahedin group fighting Indian rule in Kashmir, with no history of attacking US interests. And in the international press Pakistan is often accused of playing the nuclear card to provoke fear, while India is blamed less often than in the past. The consequence of weighing overt war has been a steady loss of international support for the Kashmir struggle. This has been known to all Pakistanis who send the country in the world’s capitals, including those of Muslim countries. The moral high ground—the most powerful weapons of the week—ends after every massacre of Hindu civilians in Kashmir, India, the occupying power in Kashmir, has successfully portrayed itself as a victim of terrorism. There is little to suggest that Pakistan has any new game plan. Resistance to change has many sources, some possible backlash from the religious parties and extreme elements within the military, and a large standing army that needs an enemy. It seems and default dominate planning and design. Where abroad are we going? The two countries must abandon positions fixed 50 years ago and the year-long’s his-gam- mantly must be exchanged for one that values prosperity and social stability. This requires Pakistan to live up to its officially stated position, that it will provide only the dispute. Such signals make the threat of nuclear apocalypse real enough to keep a steady stream of foreign leaders coming to Islamabad and Delhi at the peak of the tensions last year. Pakistan lacked the muscle to wrest Kashmir decisively over Pakistan in difficult, mountainous terrain. This remains as true today as it was in 1949 when India’s unconvincing manipulation of Kashmir politics led to a popular uprising. Pakistan was quick to conclude India’s loses into its gains and the military establishment hit upon the ‘bleed India through jihad’ policy, to be accompanied by denials of involvement. Post-Iraq, and 70,000 Pakistani, Pakistani and Indian lives lost, it is opportune for Pakistan to ask whether this unacknowledged strategy is working. For the last decade this question has been off limits. So it was to my surprise that Pakistan’s president, General Musharraf, recently met with a diverse group of Pakistanis for what turned out to be an intense debate focusing on Kashimiri policy. That the president is willing to listen to dissenting voices such as mine is of some encouragement. Pakistan’s rationalist core is worn thin. The first objective of the low-intensity war was to ‘bleed’ India in a way that would cut its losses and quit. But there has been no evidence of a weakening of mobility. In fact, an unprecedented show of national unity emerged in India in response to Pakistan’s infiltration of troops and jihadis across the line of control. More significantly, confounding the expectation of Pakistani strategies, India’s economy did not collapse but boomed. Indian foreign exchange reserves stood at over $70 billion and 11 companies alone earn India $10 billion a year, equivalent to Pakistan’s total foreign exchange holdings. This figure is expected to double in the next few years. Indian scientific institutions are now among the world’s best. Pakistan’s embargo economy, on the other hand, own more than Musharraf’s abort handling of 9/11 due to any inner strength, its industry is barely crawling, while education and scientific research remain incurably ill. Its technologically driven industry, this is a devastating weakness. The second Pakistani national was to keep Kashmir in the news. The implicit hope was that a high level of tension between two nuclear communities would sufficientlyAlarm the international community, especially the US, that India would be forced to negotiate. To raise fear levels, Pakistani leaders worked to cultivate an image of Pakistan as a defiant, nuclear-armed state ready to commit suicide. But at other moments, they sought to project an image of being calm, assured and responsible. Many more significant, confounding the Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences Mending fences 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Where can we put our guns?

Interview with Ram Bahadur Thapa (Badal) in Mitha Khabarpatrika 17-31 July

Himai: There have been reports of major violations of the ceasefire Code of Conduct by your group.

Badal: Soldiers who are supposed in the barracks are patrolling the streets, is that following the guidelines? Did we import 3 billion worth of weapons? Did we have a military agreement with the Americans that invites them on our soil? Violations of the Code of Conduct are being carried out by the old regime, not us. Our activities are only political, and they are within the guidelines.

So, carrying weapons and raising money is allowed?

So, where do we keep our guns? Peasants carry guns and also lift their farms. They don't let our militia stay in one place, and if they do they are accused of setting up a military camp. They don't let us carry them, what kind of Code of Conduct is this? And the army is allowed to move into the alleys with guns and carry out searches in all kinds of places. About raising money: the Code of Conduct prohibits forced extortion, if people give us money voluntarily it doesn't say we can't take it.

Isn't it impossible not to give money to a party that is armed?

It used to be difficult to get in touch with our party. Now we have an office where anyone can contact us. And if there is proof, anyone can come and tell us we have done something wrong.

So, you have followed the Code of Conduct to the letter?

We don't say we have followed it 100 percent. Mistakes may have been made, but these are negligible. The main thing is that a party engaged in an armed struggle has come to the negotiating table and to do it has put forth a few conditions. Even our leader, Comrade Prachanda has admitted to some mistakes, criticised those instances and apologised. What you have to understand is that we have come to the talks after laying down our arms, not after giving them up.

How about abductions?

Who has been abducted? You have to understand that first. We have taken action against fake Maoists who have extorted people. The UML cadre are pretending to be Maoists in order to tarnish our image. How do you want us to react only politically against such people?

Is it possible to negotiate with a government with whom you say you have reached a strategic culminating point?

It would be a big mistake to think that we have come to negotiate after reaching the culminating point. We agreed to talks because we felt that using the weapons we took up to empower the people would invite disaster. If the government or the Royal Nepali Army thinks we should give up our weapons, they are mistaken. We will give our weapons to the people, to the government constituted through a constituent assembly.

Already secular?

Yubraj Ghimire, Kantipur, 14 July

Twenty-five years ago, Indian socialistic thinker Kishan Patnayak asked BP Koirala of the Nepali socialist thinker Kishan Patnayak Twenty-five years ago, Indian socialistic thinker Kishan Patnayak asked BP Koirala of the Nepali socialist thinker Kishan Patnayak.

...Nepali society is, by and large, secular...

Mankamana temple with his mother's prayers at a south Indian temple.

We need now for the political parties to explain and justify how their contradictory political parties to explain and justify how their contradictory positions fit into the framework of secularism. There have been reports of US violations of the ceasefire Code of Conduct by the Maoists. The Maoists took up weapons to spearhead social changes, but one of its leaders, Baburam Bhattarai, has been arrested for violating the Code of Conduct.

...Nepal government has taken a face-saving way out...

The Nepal government has taken a face-saving way out in the name of resolving the Bhutanese refugee crises.

...We, the people...

We the people...

Anamika in Haul, 15 July

The Maoists took up weapons to spearhead social changes, but one of its leaders, Baburam Bhattarai, has been arrested for violating the Code of Conduct.

...fourth of October... What we need now is for the political parties to explain and justify how their contradictory positions fit into the framework of secularism. Despite a few who encourage racism under the influence of Hindu extremist organizations, Nepal society is, by and large, secular in nature. Therefore demanding state secularism is irrelevant. If this is done to leverage political ambitions, be warned. Hindu extremism could raise our country.
Some of the truest literary expressions of Nepalese life today are coming not from works in the Nepali language, but from poems and stories written in the national languages.

As former Gurkha soldiers engage in a legal battle to win compensation that equals that earned by their British counterparts, Bairagi Nata Magar’s poem, below, reminds us of the losses that Nepal has suffered fighting foreign wars. The poem was originally written in the Magar language, and then translated into Nepali before it found its way into English, below.

An aged mother begs for blood alms
Bairagi Nata Magar

An aged mother begs for blood alms at the embassy.
Hajoor, give me something.
She cups her palms with tears streaming down her face she sobs
keeping her hands turned up.
Hajoor! My son went to the battlefield and died.
He disappeared, he never came back.
That’s why I’ve come begging, a supplicant of pity
The wound in my heart is infected
My persecution congeals like pus
I, a mother who has witnessed birth pangs
I can’t withstand the pangs of a grieving parent
My son who till yesterday filled my lap—
A share of my blood, a morsel of my flesh, my love, my joy, my want, my affection, my child—
My son who combats against me
He is dead, he is dead.

He’s received death alms, the cannon has swallowed him.
And I no longer feel hunger
I feel no desire to patch the rags on my back.
All I need now are blood alms.
See how my back trembles—
I don’t want to die—
I’d rather bear these pangs of a grieving parent.
That’s why I’ve come to this embassy begging for the alms of my blood son.
Pointing to a nearby statue she says—
That statue bearing a khukuri that is my son.
See: there’s no blood on his body.
He has turned into stone. He has turned into stone.
Modernity.
His eyes stuffed with sapphires my son is now blind
Give me my blood son I want to clasp him to my heart
And extract the burning bullet that killed him.
Because my son, that piece of my blood, appears in my dreams these days.
Lying on the battlefield, splashing in a pool of blood he tries to extract the bullet.

he says, Mother! I’m dying and cries before me
And then my tears wash away—
It’s all blood. He says save me, mother
And my son flows downstream, away from me.

The aged mother sits crying at the embassy begging for her son.

Another poem for the times is the one below by Urmila Kumari Chaudhari Udasi, who writes originally in the Tharu language. The melancholy she expresses is one that women throughout Nepal would identify with, living as they do under the constraints posed upon them by society, their own families, and their own colonized minds.

My mind is not at peace
Urmila Kumari Chaudhari Udasi

How can I walk forward to dispense faith
When I am mired in a society of disbelief?
How can I start to grow scented flowers
When the behavior of our society is fetid?
How can I struggle to truly define life
Before a society which idealizes falsehood?
My mind is not at peace for a moment.
An uproar is taking place within me
I had wanted to laugh with a brightly lit heart
But a row of tears always dims my eyes.
I had wanted to traverse a world filled with flowers
But thorns and needles always bar my way.

Both these poems, and other works from the national languages, are found in Rastriya Bhasaka Kabiya published by the Royal Nepal Academy.
NEPALI TIMES #154

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BOOKWORM

Living History: Memoirs Hillary Rodham Clinton
Rs 1,640

Clinton writes with candour, humour and passion about her upbringing in suburban middle-class America in the 1950s and her transformation into student activist to controversial First Lady. Living History reveals her memorial thoughts and reflections on the White House years and with Bill Clinton. It is her chronicle of a surviving personal betrayal, relentless partisan investigations and constant public scrutiny.

India-Pakistan in War & Peace JN Dixit
Books Today, 2002
Rs 595

The author, a former foreign secretary of India and one of the sharpest minds in contemporary diplomacy, explores the tempestuous New Delhi-Islamabad relationship. He produces a grand sweep of history, embellished with details that only a participant can know, viewed from a perspective few analysts can match.

Who is Kalam? B Ramnathan
Konark Publishers, 2003
Rs 595

This is neither a biography in the traditional sense nor a critical analysis. The book simply aims to explore the personality of the 12th President of India through the eyes of one who has worked closely with this fascinating and multifaceted individual. Ramnathan worked with Kalam for over seven years as his Financial Advisor in the Defence Research and Development Organisation.

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Urgent notice for Kathmandu Valley residents
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Kathmandu can not take it anymore. What will happen unless you take individual action. Please get your vehicle checked to see if it is burning fuel efficiently. Better still, ride a bike or walk wherever possible. This reminder is brought to you by the station that hits you when you are there. Hits FM 91.2

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NEPALI WEATHER

by NAGMINDRA DAHAL

Following three consecutive weeks of rain, the monsoon is now taking a breather. The next low pressure circulation is hovering over the Bay of Bengal, as this satellite picture taken on Thursday morning shows. That mass is headed our way and should arrive by early next week to dump more rain in eastern and central Nepal. The current pressure pattern that governs distribution of rainfall indicates the monsoon is maturing, bringing hefty local passing showers without thunder and strong winds. Mostly, the rains will tail conveniently at night, leaving bright sunny mornings.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

Poetry Festival Mark Wyatt reads from “Snow and Other Adventures” 16 July, Prabhitul Tulathar and Smiti Jaiswal on 20 July. Both at 7.30 AM at the Lasting Banyan Cafe. 4428549

Traditional and modern Nepali paintings at 8 PM of the Gallery. Hotel Vaja. 4271611


Monsoon Moods Paintings by Uttam Nepal, Shashi Shat, Batsa Gopal Vaidya, Shashikala Tiwari, Manir Manandhar, Ragini Upadhyay-Ghale at Siddharta Art Gallery, Baber Malayal Revisted. 4411122

Fresh Pair of Eyes: perspectives from volunteers working in Nepal Paintings, photographs and drawings from 18 July at Lazimpat Gallery. 4428549

Mithila Art Exhibition from 19-26 July at gallery Vine, Laisam. 4466944

EVENTS

Bharatryanam in Kathmandu Lecture-demonstration by Priyadarsi Govind. 10-11.30 AM at Padma Kanya Campus on 18 July, performance at BICC at 5PM on 19 July. Entry on passes. 4431174, 4410900

Martin Chaurari Discussions every 3PM on Sunday about political issues, 5PM Tuesday on various topics. 3PM Thursday on media, and 3PM Friday on youth related issues. Participation is open to all.

Ghanta Dance Blast International artists, DJ Arjun, bottomless bar on 18 July 9Y & Yel. Tickets: Rs 1,111 for drinks and dinner. 4248699

The God Dance of Kathmandu Valley 7PM every Tuesday at the Big Pagoda, Hotel Vaja. 4271615

Kathmandu Toastmasters Club 6.30-7.30 PM every Tuesday. Improve your speaking and listening skills. Free at ELM, Tupreeshwaro. 4429538

Keftew R&B. commercial and trance dance party from 7PM on 19 July at Rex, Hyatte Regency Kathmandu. Entry Rs 100.

Monsoon H2O party: Welter the better 25 July at Dwarahat’s Hotel. 447988

MUSIC

Jazz Vocal Encounters with Cadencia 8PM onwards 18 July at Not Just The Jazz Bar, Shangri-la Hotel, Laisam. 4410298

Live Acoustic 7PM on Saturdays at Himalatea Cafe, Thamel. 4265738

Thunderbolt live 8.30 PM on 18 July at Rox Bar, Hyatte Regency Kathmandu. 4491234

Cadenza live 1.30PM every Wednesday and Saturday. Rs 200 entry. Interested musicians welcome to jam. Upstair Jazz Bar, Laisam.

Full Circle acoustic jam every Friday at New Orleans Cafe, Thamel. 4427311

DRINKS

Liquor Buffet 7-9PM at the Splash Bar & Grill. Rs 550 per person. Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu. 4471618

Fusion offers over 100 cocktails. Happy hour from 6-7PM. Dwarahat’s Hotel.

K-koop! Special Tropical Khuki drinks Rs 125 or Rs 750 for every 1.5 litre. Free Irish Coffee with every main course. K-xo Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. 4433043.

Kiyoro’s Monsoon Wine Festival 14 different wines at Kiyoro’s of Kathmandu. Thamel. 4250400

FOOD

Weekends Late Riser Bistro fixed lunch at the Shambala Garden. Upto 66 percent discount. Shangri-La Hotel, Laisam. 4412999

Executive lunch meals at Bhanchha Ghar Restaurant and Bar. Kamaladi. 4251712

Belle Momo for more than 15 varieties of momos at Darbar Marg. 4230890

Exquisite dining at the Chimney. Hotel Yak & Yeti. 4264999

Espresso Bar newly renovated at La Doite Mia, Thamel. 4411612

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

Traditional Nepali Thali lunch at Panat Museum Cafe inside Panat Museum. 11AM-2.30 PM. Cocktails and snacks 4.30-6.30 PM. Market rate.

Summer specials smoked salmon souffle, shrimp Newbury and crispy duck breast. Kiyoro’s of Kathmandu, Thamel. 4250400

Wood fired pizzas, Baskin Robbins icecream, cocktails and coffee at the Roadhouse Cafe, Thamel.

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, at Club Himalaya Nagarkot. Rs 500 per person. 4680083

Full Circle acoustic jam every Friday at New Orleans Cafe, Thamel. 4427311

Guinness Black Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. 4433043

Kiyoro’s Monsoon Wine Festival 14 different wines at Kiyoro’s of Kathmandu, Thamel. 4250400

Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited. 4411122

Vaidya, Shashikala Tiwari, Kiran Manandhar, Ragini Upadhyay-Grela at Paintings, photographs and drawings from 18 July at Lazimpat Gallery Café. 4428549

Monsoon H2O party: Welter the better 25 July at Dwarahat’s Hotel. 447988

NEPALI WEATHER

VIS -17-07-2003  02:00 GMT

R & F

Following three consecutive weeks of rain, the monsoon is now taking a breather. The next low pressure circulation is hovering over the Bay of Bengal, as this satellite picture taken on Thursday morning shows. That mass is headed our way and should arrive by early next week to dump more rain in eastern and central Nepal. The current pressure pattern that governs distribution of rainfall indicates the monsoon is maturing, bringing hefty local passing showers without thunder and strong winds. Mostly, the rains will tail conveniently at night, leaving bright sunny mornings.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

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KATHMANDU VALLEY

NEPALI WEATHER

by NAGMINDRA DAHAL

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Bhusan’s fireside

Two rival private terrestrial television channels Kantipur Television and Image Metro were launched this week. They have one thing in common: Bhusan Dahal. The suave and self-assured 37-year-old chief producer at Kantipur Television helped establish both stations.

Today, Bhusan is thrilled by the strides that television in Nepal has taken, both technically and content-wise. Bhusan’s career graph is impressive: from a rookie reporter at Nepal Television 15 years ago, a stint at Young Asia Television in Colombo, three years at Image Channel, to the production house Divyadrishtee, and then to Kantipur Television. Most viewers still remember Bhusan from his Sunday Pop program on Nepali TV, which at the time was the only program on English music. “I was really raw then,” Bhusan recalls, “but NTV gave me invaluable experience and got me hooked into television.” In the slick new studio at Kantipur, Bhusan doesn’t mind admitting that he has learnt through mistakes, using every opportunity that came his way.

The Sri Lanka-based international channel, Young Asia Television enabled Bhusan to broaden his horizons, but there was something missing. “I realised the importance of working and creating something in your own country,” he says. So he returned, joined Image Channel which at that time produced software for NTV and helped launch Divyadrishtee which didn’t work out. Bhusan is philosophical about that particular loss. “It was ahead of its time and there weren’t enough buyers for our production,” he says.

But at Kantipur Television, Bhusan is in his element: using his wide experience to create a vibrant, exciting and technically superior channel for Kathmandu Valley. His colleagues say he is a hands-on boss, looking at concept, design and execution of not just his own program, Fireside, but other broadcasts as well.

“TV is a huge challenge,” he says, “one needs to be able to translate ideas into pictures continuously and effectively.” Leading a handpicked team of 150 people from journalists to beauty queens, Bhusan is keenly aware of his responsibility to owners of the station who have already invested Rs 500 million in the venture. But Bhusan has his eyes set on the future, when the network will broadcast not just in the capital but to the rest of Nepal.

But what of the competition? Bhusan is clear about the task ahead. “It’s going to be survival of the fittest.” It looks like Bhusan is doing better than just surviving. He’s thriving.

(Hemlata Rai)
Back to the gun?

Till press time, there was no answer from Bhutan in the prime minister’s letter. The future of the talks now seems to rest on that answer, and whether it addresses the points that Bhutanese opposition laid out when Surya Bahadur Thapa became prime minister six weeks ago. These include whether the agreements made with the Leftist negotiating team about the army being restricted to five km of the ceasefire may not have to be revised. There have also been indications in the regional geopolitics in the past month: the India-China rapprochement after Vajpayee’s death has irked New Delhi no end. In fact, except for the absence of major battles, the ceasefire period has been characterised by competition between the two sides over who can violate more provisions of their agreed upon Code of Conduct.

The guerrillas are not known to have killed any Western tourist. In interviews, they repeatedly stress that they favour international tourism here. Krishna Bahadur Mahara, third ranking in the Maoist hierarchy, said in an interview: “As far as the tourism industry is concerned, we very much encourage it. This country needs tourism.”

In a country where high unemployment forces many to emigrate, the tourism industry is a choice many are making at least a dozen people in the Maoist movement have made at least a dozen visits here in recent years. “Western tourists are a welcome sight,” said Krishna Bahadur Mahara, third ranking in the Maoist hierarchy, in an interview. But in two separate attacks last fall, the Maoists killed two Nepali guards at the American Embassy. The current United States Government consular information sheet on Nepal warns that the unpredictable nature of Maoist attacks “increases the likelihood that Americans in Nepal could be caught in the wrong place at the wrong time.” It warns against travelling at night, on public buses and during general strikes. It also warns that guerrillas often demand “donations” from tourists passing through their rural areas. Trekking to the base of Manaslu peak, five months after the information sheet was written, Scott Dansayed said he saw a different side to the guerrillas. “The Maoists gave us a letter to give to the porters at the next village,” said Dansayed, an Alaska-based photographer who has made at least a dozen visits here in recent years. Addressing porters who charge the equivalent of $19 to carry a 100-pound load for six hours, he said: “They wrote: ‘You are changing the foreigners too much.’”

You see a lot of them wandering around with the camouflage, with their red flags and dogons, “Dansayed said of guerrillas in an area in central Nepal, far from Everest, where he hiked and climbed in mid-May. Last fall the government issued permits to 55 climbing groups, largely Americans and Europeans, 25 percent jump over the same period in 2001, according to figures compiled Lisa Choegyal, an American who promotes adventure tourism in Nepal. For many Americans who have never visited, last year’s toll of violence, 6,655 dead, has made them think twice about coming this year. “I would have had 12 people here I had six,” Chuck Demarest, a Colorado businessman, said minutes before receiving a Nepali government climbing medal in a 50th anniversary celebration. Demarest, who reached the summit of Everest in 1998, said that some friends and family declined his invitation to come to Kathmandu. “People were scared about the Maoists, that the ceasefire would break down,” he said. But after widespread American and European coverage of the anniversary events, including interviews with Sir Edmund Hillary, honorees now are betting on the Everest effect. Navnet Nagpal, manager of the Yak & Yeti Hotel, said of Rights that link this Himalayan capital with India’s three largest cities: “The flights are coming in chockablock.”
DANCE

Audiences will have a chance to watch one of India’s best-known Bharatanatyam artists, Priyadarsini Govind, see interview, pic right. The origins of Bharatanatyam can be traced to the temple and court culture of south India. The earliest form was dasarutam, performed by girls who were given to the temple by their parents to live as abadhatu, servants of God. Murals and sculptures from more than 2,000 years ago depict young girls dancing for the deity. It was a sacred ritual from which the dance has evolved to become a devotional dance that is part of the Hindu temple tradition. Bharatanatyam is considered one of the most beautiful forms of dance in India. The origins of the dance can be traced back to the court and temple dances of the Chola and Pallava dynasties. Bharatanatyam is a form of classical Indian dance that originated in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu. It is performed by women and is characterized by graceful, flowing movements, intricate footwork, and expressive hand gestures. The dance is performed to Carnatic music, which is a classical style of South Indian music. Bharatanatyam is a complete art that involves a combination of music, dance, and drama. The dance form is divided into three main sections: Nritya (dance), Nrityangama (dance and pantomime), and Nrityadhyayam (dance and mime). Bharatanatyam is known for its emphasis on technique and precision, and the dance is considered a complete art that requires a mastery of the body and a perfect sense of rhythm. It is a form of classical dance that is deeply rooted in Indian culture and is considered to be one of the most beautiful forms of dance in the world. Priyadarsini Govind is a renowned Bharatanatyam dancer who has performed extensively in India and abroad. She is known for her fluid movements, expressive hand gestures, and vibrant stage presence. She has performed for numerous prestigious organizations and has received numerous awards and accolades for her contributions to the art of Bharatanatyam. Priyadarsini Govind will perform at the 12th Vijay Scheme Arts Festival in Kathmandu and will conduct a workshop at Patan's Mahabharatapura Campus on 17 July. The workshop is open to all and will focus on the fundamentals of Bharatanatyam. It is a great opportunity for anyone interested in learning about this beautiful form of dance to get a glimpse of its beauty and charm.
Efforts by the travel and tourism trade to promote Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) in Nepal finally appear to be paying off. People from all known human sub-species, political affiliations, and caste backgrounds are suddenly descending on our fair city to hold seminars, workshops and hunger strikes. They have found that Kathmandu is an ideal venue for such events because of its scenery, salubrious climate and complete freedom to stage street protests that bring traffic to a standstill outside the International Unconventional Centre. All this augurs well for the future development of our tourism industry, and if present trends are any indication, we could even contemplate bidding to host the 2009 Allahabad Kumbha Mela in Nepal.

This week saw Kathmandu chosen as the venue for the XVII International Convention of Brahmins in which upper caste delegates from all over the world took part. After the plenary, participants broke up into sub-groups to discuss burning issues like: ‘Why don’t low caste people like us?’, ‘Untouchability can prevent future SARS outbreaks’, ‘Imaginative new uses for the holy thread’, and ‘Replacing English with Sanskrit as an international language’. However, a delegation of Boston Brahmins which wanted to discuss ‘Greater tolerance of the views of upper caste Americans’ was hooted off the podium.

Aside from the fact that we Brahmins are directly descended from God (which means we have a fast-track to heaven when the time comes to go) being a Brahmin has a lot of other fringe benefits. As general sales agents here on Earth for the Almighty, Brahmins get a cut from all transactions between the spiritual and temporal planes. Being divine middlemen, we also have broadband access for all communications between heaven and earth. Lastly, there has been some heavy two-way traffic and to accommodate the added workload, the International Convention of Brahmins has decided in its nine-point Kathmandu Declaration to open a permanent secretariat in Nepal in recognition of this country’s ability to make no progress at all in socio-cultural reforms.

This week also saw the annual get-together of the newly-formed Ex-Prime Minister’s Organisation of South Asia (EPMOSA) in which deposed, ousted, retired and vanquished heads of state and government from the subcontinent came together to push for a restoration of democracy in each others countries so that they can get back to doing whatever hand-knepply they were engaged in before being unceremoniously unseated.

The closed-door conference unanimously elected ex-prime minister Benazir Bhutto as Chairperson, ex-general Hussain Mohammad Ershad of Bangladesh as General Secretary and ex-prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala of Nepal as Treasurer. Deceased heads of non-South Asian countries like ex-President Dr Hastings Banda of Malawi and ex-President Papa Doc Duvalier of Haiti have been granted special observer status in future EPMOSA meetings.

MICE tourism promoters in Nepal have also got inquiries from the Revolutionary International Movement (RIM) which wants to hold its next International Convention of Underground Revolutionaries in Kathmandu. RIM says Nepal was chosen as a tribute to the rapid strides this country has taken in realising the goals of the international proletariat revolution and global solidarity against parasitic running dog imperialist lackeys, traitorous revisionist cheques and expansionist regional hegemons.