The mother of all floods

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA
at the KOSI BARRAGE

T

his is Nepal’s biggest river, it carries the most water and the highest sediment load. It used to be called the ‘Sorrow of Bihar’ because the Kosi often changed course, bringing misery to millions of people downstream in India. In 1964, India built the Kosi Barrage near the border to control the floods and to provide irrigation to farms in both countries. But standing atop of one of the towers looking out at this sea-like expanse of water, it is clear the Kosi is a river that is about to go places. The gray-brown river surges out of the mountains of eastern Nepal to join the Ganga in India, depositing some 120 million cubic metres of silt along the way. That's more than the Nile and five times more than the Sutlej. In 1964, India built the Kosi Barrage near the border to control the floods and to provide irrigation to farms in both countries.

The government and Maoists are now not just exchanging letters, they are also exchanging fire again. There has been a dramatic spurt in clashes since Prachanda agreed to resume talks last week. But while they reiterate their commitment to talks, they have also been ambushing army vehicles and killing police with sniper fire. In the most-serious incident so far, three soldiers were killed in a landmine blast in Panchthar on Tuesday. The human rights group INSEC says 46 people have been killed since the ceasefire announcement six months ago when both sides were supposed to be following the code of conduct. The breakdown of the figures show the Maoists killed 26 people, while the security forces took 20 lives. Within this period, INSEC says the security forces detained 48, while the Maoists abducted 32.

For reservations please call 552 6271, 552 4694

Not ceasing fire

The Kosi has migrated 150km westwards since 1730, and now flows along a channel it made in the 1954 flood. (See map, p5) The point where the river flows out of the mountains in Churia, the Kosi is rising higher and higher, and it could easily flow back to its original course. This would take it past the heavily-populated farms on the eastern outskirts of Biratnagar and down the Bihar and West Bengal plains. Such a flood would be of such proportions that everything else in the history of the Kosi would pale in comparison. Various studies on the Kosi have shown this to be a very real possibility, and it would cause an unimaginable human catastrophe. We would all be caught napping, “says Nepali water resources expert, AB Thapa.
The dogs of war

Cry, “Havoc!” and let slip the dogs of war.

Shakespeare, Julius Caesar III.1.270

Kathmandu is all agog with talks about talks again. The Maoists want the agitating parties to be included, and the government expects the parties to abandon their protests and join in the negotiation process.

The parties want to talk, the Maoists and continuous agitation against the October Fourth royal move simultaneously. Fingers about the agenda, the two teams do not seem to be too clear about what they want to achieve or who the stakeholders are involved. In this confusion, the Maoists Prachanda expects the impending round of talks to resolve longstanding political issues, he is clearly being optimistic.

The facilitating team is more engaged, Prachanda and Padma Ratna Tuladhar want better confidence-building measures in place. But Kathmandu high society is so enthused about the mere possibility of talks that it hasn’t stopped to consider the issues that are at stake.

The Maoists haven’t budged an inch about talks again. The Maoists are competing to prepare for war. For them, the security forces continue to be on high alert wherever they are, facing daily sniper attacks and ambushes. The Maoists are walking towards a serious vacuum. Their own campaign continues without hiccups. The government and the insurgents are saying peace, they are competing to prepare for war. For now, the ceasefire holds, but it is a perilous peace.

Perhaps it was to clear the air of uncertainty that New Delhi’s foreign minister, Kofi Anan last week made this statement: “The secretary general remains at the disposal of Nepal to assist the achievement of a negotiated peaceful solution.” But even such an innocuous statement of goodwill has raised the hackles of the Indian establishment. Indian media reports that New Delhi is miffed at “extra-regional powers” offering “help” of conflict resolution experts to facilitate the negotiations. “The UN is a power? Unnamed “Indian officials”—often a euphemism for the official view—obliquely sympathised with the issues raised by the Maoists. Media reports quoted the official pointing out: “If the talks between Kathmandu and the Maoists get stalled, it is not because the two sides lack conflict resolution skills or do not know how to negotiate. The negotiations will succeed or fail depending on whether a meeting ground is reached on substantive issues being raised by the Maoists. If that’s not direct enough to reveal New Delhi’s real intentions, here is the punchline: “And how can anyone be neutral between a state which is trying to maintain law and order and those taking up arms against it?” Indeed, neutrality in such cases is impossible, but which side are we on, “unnamed officials”?

At the other end of the spectrum, an article published in the website FrontPageMagazine.com (http://frontpagemag.com/article/ReadArticle.asp?ID=9908) last week leaves no room for ambiguity. A certain conservative academic, Steven C Baker suggests: “The United States should work closely with India to ensure that the Maoist insurgency is extinguished. A peace process” between the current government and the Maoist rebels should be discouraged.”

Shades of McCarthyism cloud the piece in which Baker doesn’t let his ignorance of world affairs get in the way of pursuing his nationalistic and expansionist policies from Langley about the ground reality in Libgan.

When this entire piece first came to our notice, we decided to call it off after all, every country has its share of paranoiacs. But Baker’s theory of the fear of the peace movement has to be taken seriously when the American Information Centre in Kathmandu provides reproduction rights to local newspapers. We may be smoking peace pipes inside the country alone, but the drums of war are still booming outside. Comrade Prachanda must ensure progress in the next round of talks. Political parties must remain relentless in their pursuit of democratic rights. The king must make up his mind, a country can’t be half-democratic. And civil society must stop chanting the mantra of peace at any cost. If that were possible, there would be no wars in the world. Some values—like freedom and democracy—are too important to be compromised for an unjust peace. In any case, we may not be interested in war, but if it does happen, the dogs of war are very interesting to us.
DIRTY DIESELS
For Kailash Oli's response (Letters, #156) to my article (Breathing is harmful to health, #155), Prime Minister of diesel engines has long argued that because diesel engines produce more fuel efficient than petrol engines it produces less carbon dioxide and is therefore more climate friendly. This claim can not be true. A study by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency says that although diesel cars use 25 to 35 percent less fuel than petrol, they emit 15 percent more carbon dioxide for every litre of fuel than petrol. As a result the overall effect of CO2 emissions is negligible. In another study, Mark J. Jacobson from Stanford University has used computer simulations to prove that although diesel cars obtain better mileage and emit less COx than similar gasoline cars, they can emit 25 to 400 times more particulate black carbon and associated organic matter "particular matter". Reduced air quality due to diesel engines is not just global climate but also local pollution caused by diesel exhaust that is raising concerns even in Europe. In the few years since 2002, for example, the world's leading manufacturer of diesel engines, levels of nitrogen oxides and soot (which mainly result from diesel engines) have gone up to dangerous levels several times forcing authorities to issue controls on the sale of diesel vehicle movement. Similarly, according to WHO report, 6 percent of all deaths in Austria, France and Switzerland are due to diesel engines (again mainly caused by diesel engines).

Manufacturers in Europe may be developing "cleaner" diesel engines but it will be years before these technologies and the corresponding ultra low sulphur fuel come to Nepal. We do not have data on all diesels in Nepal, but at least admit that they are dirty and keep them at a safe distance from sensitive areas such as Kathmandu. Bhaskar Tuladhar, Clean Energy Nepal

BAHUN BAD!
CK Lal is my favourite columnist. His is the first thing I log on to your internet edition. I admire his analysis and understanding. But it is when CK Lal writes on Hinduism or on his pet subject of Bahunbahad that I get dissolve. I don’t understand why he is going out of his way to champion himself as one of the crusaders against Bahuns. Does it help to make Nepal a secular country in the near future? What does he gain by making a mockery of Hindus? Are Bahuns head of other so-called down trodden ones to espouse communion in Nepal?

C.R.Y. EDUCATION
How often I get confused when closed doors of the schools and colleges in the name of education. I felt better after I burned the chair of the vice chancellor of the university. I frequented the fumes of the burning library and pumped myself with the perfect education. I saw the books burning. I recognized some of those books. I had studied some of those books in my IA and BA. I used to take great initiative to arrange a grand program on Teachers Day. We had our teachers seated in a decorated chair and we put ink on their foreheads. We also managed to collect some money and gave them some gifts. It was to be the best in giving speeches on those occasions, stating how we must respect the teachers because they were our gurus. I considered myself an ideal student because I was never interested in education. I was interested only in a certificate. To tell you the truth, teachers meant nothing to me.

Well, the past is past. Now I am a professor. I have a Dr in front of my name and a long and a line of abbreviations at the end of my name. Now I am a master of mind and a person. Students say that I don’t prepare for class. Who cares? I am an ‘honourable man’. I don’t need a certificate. I don’t need to provide a synopsis of the information provided in the profile. Mention of the project’s title is intended to highlight the area of study of the student and not to provide a synopsis of the findings of the project. Further information about the project can be had from the concerned students, if permitted by the related organisations in which the studies were conducted. As an academic institution, Kathmandu University School of Management (KUSOM) emphasises theories and principles related to different fields of management and their application in a dynamic changing environment with a more holistic approach aimed at helping students succeed in such an environment. We appreciate Tiwari’s suggestion of ‘resume workshops’ which would help students write better resumes but our primary emphasis is to ensure that students are worth what they put into their beautifully produced resumes.

Shubhajit Pradhan, Lecturer KUSOM

TALKS
You deserve appreciation for your illuminating editorial comments on the ongoing peace process between the government and the Maoists (‘Pen for pen’ #156). The Maoist problem will not be resolved in the near future, as the three players (the palace, the Maoists and the agitating political parties) are committed to defending one another at the cost of national independence. We were never a slave country, but we were (and are) always plagued by politics: instable, corrupt, poverty and corruption. Does it not show that our rulers have completely failed us? Do we really need a political master to teach us good governance? And is sovereignty the price we have to pay for it? Bigyan Niva, Bhaisahatgarh

CORRECTION
The calculations for an education voucher system in parts of Alak Bahun’s opinion piece (‘Ahead of its time’, #156) were erring during writing. Parts of the second-last paragraph need to read as follows: With a 10 percentage estimated increase in upcoming election counts of 15 million voters, an education trust fund of Rs 300 million (at the proposed Rs 20 per voter) can be created to fund 8,333 poor students for one year of undergraduate education at the rate of Rs 3,000 per month in a non-profit private school or any other public schools of their choice. Using these vouchers, 1,666 students in each region can serve as vigilantes and stimulate active participation and debate among students and public institutions.
Thinking the unthinkable

A marooned village on the Kosi River in Bihar in 1994...

Just 15km upstream, the Sunikosi, Tamur and Arun join to form the mighty, Saptakosi that cuts a deep gash in the mountains before disgorging into the plains. Others share Thapa’s concern for Chatara as the possible trouble spot. If the Kosi tributaries in eastern Nepal all peak at the same time, then the government must be prepared to manage monsoon cloudburst when the soil is already saturated, the river could easily change course at Chatara. None of the experts we talked to could accurately estimate the casualty figures if the Kosi changed course, by-passing the barrage altogether. The estimates ranged from 1-10 million people affected in Nepal and India with tens of thousands of deaths, and longterm destruction to crops and livelihood. “Anything could happen,” says Ajaya Dixit of the Nepal Water Conservation Foundation. “This is an unpredictable river.”

The Indian government’s reaction to the annual floods in Bihar has been to repeat its commitment to build a mammoth 260km high dam at Barachaura, the Kosi’s gorge 15km upstream from Chatara. The dam has been proposed since 1947 and the only reason it hasn’t been built is because of cost, and the lack of priority for Bihar within India. But things seem to be moving. There was an initial understanding with Nepal in 1992 to study the site. And news in mid-June that this year’s floods were threatening the barrage came coincidently on the same day as a report from a joint Nepal-India team was setting up a feasibility study on the Kosi High Dam. The Nepali side has never objected to the Kosi High Dam, but only wants that its future project—to transfer Sun Kosi storage water to the Ganges through tunnels—not be affected by the dam. The joint study is expected to look at both projects in conjunction. The three-year $10 million study would look at the feasibility of what could be the largest hydroelectric and irrigation project in the region costing anywhere up to $3 billion. “It all depends on that study if we will really build the dam,” says Suresh Manohana Bajracharya of the Department of Electricity Development. Indian officials are all out to push the idea of the Kosi High Dam, but only wants that its future project—not just to protect the barrage but also as a longterm flood control and energy solution for Nepal and northern India. “The high dam will actually prove to be beneficial for Nepal,” official of the Bihar Department of Irrigation stationed at the Kosi Barrage told us this week. There are indications that India now wants to prioritise Kosi, since the other joint projects on Pancheshwar and Mahakali have turned into political hot potatoes in Nepal.

Indian engineers argue that the High Dam would help downstream all of which means the river bed will stop rising, thus prolonging the life of the barrage. There would be flood control benefits, water released in the dry season would help irrigation and generate 4,000 megawatt of power that Nepal could sell to India. Another bonus is the possibility of a regulated Kosi providing Nepali goods access to the sea through river navigation, Indians blab.

Some Nepali experts, however, caution that the plans are too grandiose and will not solve the problem of sedimentation. “Because of the Kosi’s high sediment load, the dam will sit up just like the barrage has silted up,” says water expert Santa Bahadur Pun. Bihar suggests the high dam as a panacea for all its ills, but it could turn out to be a white elephant. Bajracharya at the Department of Electricity Development disagrees, arguing that the sedimentation problem can be mitigated. “We cannot compare the Kosi Barrage and the Kosi High Dam because they are based on different technologies. The barrage can’t be accurately estimated, while there are now technologies to flash sediment from dam reservoirs.”

For India, the Kosi High Dam project could be a component of its ambitious $2 billion project to interlink 37 Indian rivers for flood control and irrigation. According to recent reports in the Indian press, the Kosi will be linked to canal to the Gughar and, similar links will be charted between the Gandak, Kamal and Mahakali river systems after they flow out of Nepal. The waters of the Gandak for instance, will be channelled to the Ganga to ease water scarcity from the Ganges basin.
The Kosi’s changing channels in the past 250 years.

Swept away

Morion landslides and floods have destroyed an important bridge over the Mahananda River near Mejia, cutting off a major north-south and east-west highway artery. A makeshift bridge will take another week to put into place, according to officials in the Roads Department. The Department of Roads has no stock of Bailey bridges.

“No work has been done,” admits MG Maleku, director general of the department. “We should’ve stockpiled for emergencies.” With the monsoon season upon us, these prefabricated steel panel bridges should have been ready to move, but officials blame everyone but themselves. “There was a fund crunch as usual,” another senior official told us. “We did notify the ministry on time, but they told us the money would be released in November.” Maleku says the government has learnt its lesson and will now stockpile Bailey bridges in five regions across the kingdom. Check back next year in this same space.

Not submerged: India

The Indian government has once again refused Nepal media reports that some of its barrages and embankments near the border have inundated Nepali villages. “Such reports are misleading and a part of the misunderstanding between our two friendly countries but vitiate the atmosphere in which inundation problems can be successfully tackled through co-operative efforts,” the Indian Embassy said in a press statement on Wednesday.

But reports of a dam-like structure supposedly being built on the Nepali side of Lampa Nar village near Nepalgunj, a barrage being washed off the Rapel “wall” on the Indian side. The barrage is not operational, and when in use it will save low-lying villages on the Indian side of the border from being flooded. The statement also stated that no dam is being constructed at Khobalas. An old reservoir straddles the India-Nepal border at Khobalas, with a gated escape on the Indian side. This escape was washed some time ago, and due to heavy rains the discharge of water threatened to flood the Indian side. Temporary measures have been taken and there is no threat to Nepal. On the much talked about Mahasagar, the Indian government has said it has given conditional clarifications and agreed to a joint site visit to find mutually acceptable measures to meet Nepal concerns.

No reprieve

Kathmandu Valley may not be delisted from the endangered sites. The debate over the Kosi is divided about dams and embankments near the border have inundated Nepali villages. “Such reports are misleading and a part of the misunderstanding between our two friendly countries but vitiate the atmosphere in which inundation problems can be successfully tackled through co-operative efforts,” the Indian Embassy said in a press statement on Wednesday.

Whatever the case, the threats of a Kosi breach at Chatara or a flood bypass of the barrage are clear and present dangers. It could happen 10 years from now, or it could happen next week. But it will happen. And when it does it will make this year’s floods and landslides look like a picnic.

The question is will the Kosi Barrage have been washed off by then? Or worse, will the Kosi have changed course at Chatara in the next 15 years? Both would be disasters with huge human costs and an economic and political fallout. But the disasters could also sway public opinion in Nepal and India in support of a long-term solution to Kosi floods, and India in support of a low-lying villages on the Indian side of the border from being flooded. The statement also stated that no dam is being constructed at Khobalas. An old reservoir straddles the India-Nepal border at Khobalas, with a gated escape on the Indian side. This escape was washed some time ago, and due to heavy rains the discharge of water threatened to flood the Indian side. Temporary measures have been taken and there is no threat to Nepal. On the much talked about Mahasagar, the Indian government has said it has given conditional clarifications and agreed to a joint site visit to find mutually acceptable measures to meet Nepal concerns.

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Given the experience of 19th century, the question is will the Kosi Barrage have been washed off by then? Or worse, will the Kosi have changed course at Chatara in the next 15 years? Both would be disasters with huge human costs and an economic and political fallout. But the disasters could also sway public opinion in Nepal and India in support of a long-term solution to Kosi floods, and India in support of a low-lying villages on the Indian side of the border from being flooded. The statement also stated that no dam is being constructed at Khobalas. An old reservoir straddles the India-Nepal border at Khobalas, with a gated escape on the Indian side. This escape was washed some time ago, and due to heavy rains the discharge of water threatened to flood the Indian side. Temporary measures have been taken and there is no threat to Nepal. On the much talked about Mahasagar, the Indian government has said it has given conditional clarifications and agreed to a joint site visit to find mutually acceptable measures to meet Nepal concerns.

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Visa required

First the UK and now the US has tightened their airport security requirements for transit passengers. The US has suspended its Transit Without Visa program (TWOV) and the International-to-International transit program (ITI) which will affect Nepalis travelling through the US to third countries. TWOV has been in force since 1952 for international passengers who were permitted to go through the United States to another foreign country without a visa to stop and change planes. Air passengers using the US for transit purposes will now need a visa. US intelligence believes that terrorists groups have been planning to exploit these transit programs to gain access to the country and its airspace without going through the consular screening process. For us Nepalis it just means even more visa queues.
A yam between two stones (and a huge boulder)

What is behind the Maoists' anti-American rhetoric?

A cleaver and greener Kathmandu, one tree at a time.

by RABINDRA MISHRA

Green revolution

SOPHIA PANDE

F or all the talk of a concrete jungle and the fact that public policies are being framed on the basis of what is considered the ‘urban voice’, the trees in Kathmandu Valley have a surprising amount of greenery. In fact, comparing period pictures from the 1960s of central Kathmandu to today, shows a lot more trees growing in between houses and office blocks. On the Valley’s outskirts, the growth and love for trees is evident.

But in inner-city Kathmandu, the roots of Kathmandu’s green revolution are being laid by groups like Save the Environment Foundation (SEF) and the Environment Division of the Kathmandu Metropolitan City. They are busy planting trees along roads, traffic islands and vacant lots. SEF has been working since 1994 to set up green belts around the Ring roads and along the city’s main thoroughfares. The effort is gaining momentum, especially with private firms dinners to maintain the green spaces. Many flowering traffic islands and young trees are being maintained by companies like Cariborg and Toyota who realise that such public works are beneficial to everyone’s health.

To be sure, Kathmandu is far from being a green city. SEF’s Chandra Rana knows this better than most. “Unfortunately, planting trees in areas like New Road is completely unfeasible because of the amount of urban congestion already present,” she told us. Just outside New Road, on the ever-shrinking Thundikhel, there used to be a 200-year-old gingko tree that shaped giant bonsai. Even Gayatri Basnet’s branches would accommodate scores of local who climbed it for a better view of the parades. Unfortunately, both felt prey to road expansion and only one survived the translation to Godavari. Other trees like the beautiful pipal near the Nepal Rastra Bank in Bhanuwat were simply axed down. For what it’s worth, the roads are wider now and we have more on-road pedestrian crossings.

The good news is that SEF recently planted 400 gingko giants right around Thundikhel because the trees are good air purifiers and their strong roots give them the best chance of survival on the sidewalks. The rare trees lost back to the Jurassic era and may have been there before Buddha in Mahabodhi and China and Japan who lovingly preserved them. Gingkos are also incredibly resilient, even surviving the atomic bomb blast in Hiroshima.

Rare old trees can still be found in pockets of Kathmandu. Trees lovers can behold awe-inspiring specimens inside the Botanic and Indian Embassy premises where the forest is so thick, a family of foxes has been known to inhabit it, or continue to flourish on the grounds of the Nayanjaya Palace, Singha Darbar, Baber Mahal, the prime minister’s quarters at Bhanuwat, Neri Bhawan, Kirtipur Bhawan and the end of others foreign embassies. The gardens of Kushal Mahal, currently undergoing renovations (Remembrance of 2001 World Trade Centre) also houses some veteran trees.

It takes vision to plant trees because they are an investment in a future that may not be near. The best part about taking the initiative to make our Valley greener is that individual effort makes a big difference. On hot summer days people find welcome relief under the shade of the magnificent jacaranda trees that line Dharahara Marg (see pic). They were planted by the late Princess Jayanti Rajya Lakshmi Devi Shah to beautify the road leading to the palace on the occasion of visit of Nepal Year 1998. Today, the trees have grown and spread, giving the bulldozer’s head a look that is a poignant symbol of her foresight and dedication.

Small things also add up, like individual efforts to grow a few gingko in school gardens, parks and private lands. A consortium of private companies located around Tinkune could take the initiative to adopt the trees along the road and turn it into a beautiful park. Or, people could support private parks by planting trees and supporting efforts of organisations like SEF.

Contacts: SEF - 4375858 Kathmandu Metropolitan City Environment Division - 420719 420734

Save the trees!

The Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVP) and other concerned groups have been trying since 1997 to save the trees lining the Arniko Highway near Bhaktapur. The trees are being uprooted this week by the municipality citing safety reasons, but they could be transplanted instead.

Activists are now moving to court and getting a stay order to halt the destruction of trees. Livelihood of thousands of trees between Bhaktapur and Thimi have already been uprooted, and the trust says that at this rate most of the remaining trees to Sanga Bazaar will be gone by the end of the monsoon.

“We are telling them, Kathmandu is a concrete jungle, it’s a keep these trees are one of the identities of Kathmandu,” says KVP.

The KVP started a similar campaign when the Arniko Highway was widened and was awarded a Rs 15,000 prize by Save Our World for making 7000 trees between the Ring Road to Sanga Bazaar successfully hated after only 250 trees had been uprooted.

The poplars lining the Arniko Highway outside Bhaktapur are so many that you can’t even see the sky from this picture taken from 270km up in space by space shuttle astronauts at noon in February 1996 (see pic). The department says storms caused several fatalities in Kathmandu Valley this year from trees falling on vehicles, and that the trees will pose a danger to theromo bees when the trees start flowering. The government’s department has started to go on a logging spree recently to destroy 50 majestic eucalyptus trees in Tinkune (after seeing the local government’s annual survey report with no public resistance), and Kathmandu was deprived of one of its unique ecological landmarks next to one of its important historical sites.

The trees along Arniko Highway were planted in the early 1970s and are an example of environmental engineering, giving shape and visual contrast to an increasing number of people who use this road both on wheels as well as foot. KVP admits that the poplars may not have seen the best choice but they should be trimmed, not uprooted.

What is behind the Maoists’ anti-American rhetoric?

In January, India’s former ambassador to Nepal, KV Rajan argued that New Delhi was not “comfortable” about the growing US- India influence in Nepal (http://www.observer.com.np). He also predicted “substantial dilution” of Indian influence in the country in the coming years. If assimilated in Indian diplomat, who continues to advise the South Block on Nepali affairs, predict such a scenario, it would be an act of genuine concern of the Indian state. Last month’s move to reportedly back in Delhi, and this added a fresh dimension to the uncertainty over the continuation of dialogue between the two states.

India? It had become a must for Delhi to put pressure on the Maoists after 11 September. It did, and the Maoists acknowledged that they have come to talk because of the pressure from the US, the UK and India. But the post 9/11 trend on South Asia has virtually evaporated and India can again be master of its own will in the region.

That means they can let Nepal know loudly and clear that they are not interested in being happy about the growing US influence in the country, which they have long considered as an exclusive sphere of Indian influence. And to convey that message, what could be a better medium than the rotating rebuffs, the negligence of the Nepalese state?

But those Nepalis who draw instantional pleasure in India-bashing should understand that Indian idealism is far too cynical in international politics. It is all about the advancement of national interest and if Nepal had the ability to manipulate regional geopolitics we probably could do the same.

Then, instead of blaming others, let us blame those Nepalis who, from the 1990s to the present, have allowed themselves to be used by India in the hope of fulfilling their political ambitions in Nepal.

Mistras is a journalist with the BBC World Service in London, currently researching India’s influence in Nepal’s domestic politics.

OPINION

RABINDRA MISHRA

8 - 14 AUGUST 2003 NEPAL TIMES #157

GREEN REVOLUTION

A cleaner and greener Kathmandu, one tree at a time.
Powerless rupee hurts Indian exports

Huge dollar reserves and a strong rupee worry Indian information technology investors.

I nternational and domestic factors are behind the phenomenal rise in the rupee in recent months. The phenomenon is not seen in decades, the steady appreciation of the rupee over the dollar and foreign currency reserves hovering above the $80 billion mark. Particularly concerned at the sustenance rise of the rupee against the dollar in the first week of August are exporters, who earned $20 billion from foreign exchange transactions between April 2003 and continued into July are software exporters, who now earn $10 billion worth of foreign exchange annually. The bulk of this is made by such major as Wipro Technologies, Infosys Technologies and Telecommunications Consultants India Ltd (TCIL).

Wipro's chief finance officer Suresh Senapathy told FTPI that the rupee's appreciation against the dollar represented a new challenge to his company, which earned $1.5 billion in the five quarters of the fiscal year. A hefty 77 percent of that earned $195 million in the first quarter of new challenge to his company, which depended on Rs 50.000 is required.

Better insured

India's competitors, such as China, Malaysia and Thailand, have either not appreciated or not appreciated as much as the rupee. Said Bamechi Kanna, owner of a major apparel export firm based in the national capital: "We are still competitive but cannot hold out much longer if this trend continues and there are countries in the region like Taiwan and Philippines whose currencies have already appreciated." A recent survey conducted by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) covering 100 importers, exporters and financial institutions showed that most of them believed that the lower value of the dollar against the rupee had eroded their competitiveness in the international market.

FICCI made the assessment that the review was likely to continue on its upward trend, although this has been challenged by other experts. Suamitra Chaudhury, economist adviser to the prestigious Investment Information and Credit Rating Agency (ICRA), said in an interview that what is happening is determined not only by trade but by steady foreign direct investment (FDI) flows which he described as "transient". "This type of capital flow invariably levels off on asset prices and that is how profit motive will work in the initial stage. Investors move in and out," Chaudhury said.

Some of the flows were the result of the fact that interest rates in India continue to be between 3 and 5 percent points higher than in the United States and other advanced countries. This encourages wealthy expatriates, foreign investors and even hedge funds to take advantage of the situation, exposing the economy to more foreign capital and highlighting challenges that other developing countries have faced in liberalising their economies.

India maintains high interest rates for political reasons—mainly because it does not want to keep its currency and investments stable against rising inflation.

Corporate culture has embraced skill and saving instruments. Government-subsidised and tax-exempt bonds and saving instruments. According to Suamitra Chaudhury, the reason for the high rate is that he can still invest in foreign exchange market.

"India intervenes in the market to even keep up and investor's exposure in foreign markets to prevent destabilisation speculation while facilitating foreign exchange transactions at market rates for all permissible purposes," the document said. For the first time this year, India, because of its strong foreign exchange position, is more likely to keep the rupee at its present level by increasing imports of foreign exchange.
Twenty-four years after seeing it for the first time, an anthropologist goes back to the 12-year chariot festival of Bungadya to find out what has changed, and how much has stayed the same.

BRUCE OWENS

The 12-year festival of Bungadya that has just concluded is a festival that both Hindu and Buddhist Newars insist everyone should attend at least once in their lifetime. It is the large-scale version of the largest of Kathmandu Valley’s innumerable annual festivals, and the god it honours is known by many names, Rato Matsyendranath and Karunamaya among them. They are revered as a guru by many, and the festival itself is a large-scale annual event.

Several of the changes due to cultural attrition are those that very few would notice, for they are apparent only early in the morning and late in the evening. Daily devotional activities at the chariot begin at around 3:30 in the morning, and build to a climax with the morning rituals of wakening. The chariot crowds are split between those who have been ritually bathed and those who have not. Among the many lamps burning around the chariot, one could notice, for they are apparent only early in the morning and late in the evening, so that the crowds are less emboldened by libation and yet are still sufficiently emboldened to make the pulling of the rath possible.

There is a general consensus among the elders that the rath pullers used to be more respectful of the decisions made by the gurujuya paltan as to when to call it quits for the day. The contrast between then and now is not as clear as I had first thought. I recall being surprised to see the pullers ignore the gurujuya paltan’s ceremonial conclusion of the day’s pulling during the last 12-year festival, and chalked it up to changes that had happened. This having been said, those who are most closely responsible for the welfare of the chariot agree that those who are pulling it now are less disciplined (and less skilled) than in the past. One of the gurujwis who lashes the rath together and often risks his life at the top of the rath in order to coordinate these pulling movements below told me that, these days, (with several clear exceptions) no one could say how far or late the rath would be pulled on any given day.

Given the rambunctiousness of today’s rath pullers, the paving of the jatra route is a mixed blessing. The smooth hard tarmac makes it easier for the often unruly pullers to pull the rath too quickly. The speed and direction of the chariot are controlled by brakemen, or gakhus, who walk backwards, immediately in front of the seven-foot-high wheels, armed only with large chocks of wood attached to sapling handles, which they shove under the wheels at critical moments to redirect or stop the chariot. The nicely paved road and lively pullers make it necessary for them to do this far more often than in the past, placing them at greater risk, and lurching the vulnerable chariot more than it should.

Julis or jatra?

The jatra has always presented numerous occasions for conflict, whether it be in determining who will lead the chariot pullers with cries of hoste, struggling over the coconuts that are dropped from the chariot spire, or determining where it will stop for the night. The threat of these conflicts has become more ominous, however. Police armed with rifles rather than lathis now stand on the parapet as constant attendants enconced on Bungadya’s chariot, and events are heavily guarded by police in riot gear and held earlier in the evening, so that the crowds are less emboldened by libation and darkness. Perhaps the line between julis and jatra threatens to become too thin.

This wonderful cacophony of morning praise can still be heard, though it is now quieter and shorter than it was two decades ago. The Namsangiti singers are still in force, though few newcomers are among them, and there are fewer instrumental groups than before. Those who remain to sing and play every morning cite the increasing demands of office work, tighter schedules and declining interest as reasons for these changes, but this is difficult to ascertain, as it is hard to talk to those who now are absent, or who might have otherwise been inspired to join in the morning rites of wakening.

If the morning brings a chorus of sound to the chariots, the evening brings a festival of lights, and there was certainly no shortage of batli burners at the rath this year. Twenty years ago, however, among the many lamps burning around the chariot, one could often detect the form of a supine worshipper or two, swathed in cloth, and shielded with daubs of cow dung, topped with clay plates of oil, burning with lighted wicks. This year’s jatra saw only one mhe matta chyakemha, from Thimi, fulfilling a vow at Jawalakhel, accompanied by members of his family, who reflected the saucers of oil with so that he might burn 360 over the course of the night.

Further visible, though paradoxically a bit less clear, are changes in the way the rath is pulled. There used to be a more general consensus about where the rath should stop along its route, and it is generally agreed that the rath pullers used to be more respectful of the decisions made by the gurujuya paltan as to when to call it quits for the day. But the contrast between then and now is not as clear as I had first thought. I recall being surprised to see the pullers ignore the gurujuya paltan’s ceremonial conclusion of the day’s pulling during the last 12-year festival, and chalked it up to the changes that had happened. This having been said, those who are most closely responsible for the welfare of the chariot agree that those who are pulling it now are less disciplined (and less skilled) than in the past. One of the gurujwis who lashes the rath together and often risks his life at the top of the rath in order to coordinate these pulling movements below told me that, these days, (with several clear exceptions) no one could say how far or late the rath would be pulled on any given day.

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Pilgrims’ progress

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Customs that had been forgotten or ignored have also been recently revived. Twenty years ago, steel cables concealed within the rath’s tower added strength at the cost of inauspiciousness. In honour of a tradition that had been flouted for two decades, these unholy innovations have now been eliminated. In another instance, I was surprised one morning, nearly two decades ago, to find that the chariot had been pulled from its place of construction by the phuku in Pulchowk to Svorakutti Patti just below, before the normally scheduled pulling that afternoon. The people of Pulchowk had restored an earlier custom, which had been abandoned until the reconstruction of the patti that year.

Other new traditions have been invented. Women are now a conspicuous presence among the drummers and cymbal players who help urge the chariot pullers along: an exclusively male domain until a few years ago. People who live in the ever-taller and more numerous houses that line the jatra route now pour water on the chariot pullers as they go—something that the chariot pullers seem to appreciate and even encourage, but that many others more closely tied to the jatra consider to be an unfortunate innovation. Though many complain of disbanded guthis and miss the feasts that they used to provide during the jatra, the relatively new phenomenon of so-called hampaam (or fair share) awathay, is partially filling the gap. The first-ever Kumari puja hampaam bhatay was celebrated in Bungamati this year and over 600 people attended, their Rs 100 price of admission to be devoted to constructing a house for the village Kumari.

Some involved in the festival this year doubt that there will ever be another 12-year jatra, and for others, even the fate of the jatra of next year hangs in the balance. For others still, the question of whether or not there will be jatras in the future is preposterous, for it is impossible for them to imagine a year without one. Those who fear for its survival most often express frustration over being inadequately compensated for the considerable time and labour that they must devote to the jatra. Ritual obligations such as these were previously directly tied to rights to the fruits of land set aside for the purpose of perpetuating religious observances. But with the centralisation of the administration of major guthi holdings, the increasing privatisation of guthi lands and the increasing dependence upon wage and salary earnings, the costs of devoting one’s labour and time to god’s work (dyahya jyaa) are becoming ever higher, and the compensation given is, for many, not keeping pace.

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Conventional wisdom has it that this festival has been going on for around 1,400 years, and historical evidence confirms that it is at least 11 centuries old. The crowds at this year’s jatra were larger than any could remember, and their joy was undeniable. But the survival of Bungaditya’s jatra depends on more than the enthusiasm of devotees. It will also require that the government that now controls the assets that fund this festival help keep the privilege and burden of doing this work feasible for all concerned.

Bruce Owens is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Coordinator of the Anthropology and Asian Studies Program at Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts.
Off road?

Thailand's 'road map' for Burma is unclear.

LARRY JAGAN

Bangkok

Thailand is pushing ahead with its initiative to bring democratic change to Burma by pursuing discussions on a road map for political reconciliation and democracy, but where this political journey leads remains unclear. This week, Thai Foreign Minister Surakiart Sathirathai (left) discussed his ideas for this road map with his Burmese counterpart Win Aung (right) in Bangkok. Win Aung said he would take the Thai ideas back to Rangoon for further discussion.

Since Thai officials met with Burma's deputy prime minister Khin Maung Win, who visited Bangkok as a special envoy for Gen Than Shwe recently, Surakiart has been canvassing vigorously for support from countries in Asia and Europe that have expressed interest in helping Burma implement democratic reforms. Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has said that Thailand was taking the initiative because the crisis in Burma was more than Rangoon could handle, and that it would be easier for it to deal with friendly neighbours than with the matter to be brought before the UN Security Council.

"We are doing what we are doing now because we are concerned about Burma. We are not pressing Burma or interfering with its internal affairs," he said. "Since we are Burma's close neighbour, we would like to initiate something that leads to the international community's acceptance of developments in Burma."

Under its vision for this road map, Thailand wants the Burmese regime to complain, protest and demand. It is in its best interest to retain the role of the victim, rather than receive reparations. Instead of a one-time satisfaction, you retain a permanent privilege. What is true about individuals is even more true of groups. If it can be convincingly shown that a group has been the victim of a past injustice, the group in question obtains a bottomless well of moral credit. The greater the crime in the past, the more compelling the rights in the present—which are gained merely through membership in the wronged group.

Of course, we now recognize more clearly than ever that history has always been written by the victors, which gave rise in recent decades to frequent demands that the history of the victims and the defamed be likewise written in a way that, if not quite to that of the victors, is in fact an entire legitimacy demand, because it invites us to become familiar with a previously ignored past. However, speaking in the names of victims doesn't bring additional ethical advantage. Indeed, no moral benefit can be derived from evoking the past if we fail to realise our group's long history of shortcoming or errors. But doing so is problematic. For example, in 1995 the Smithsonian Institution in Washington sought to take a fresh look at the Enola Gay, the plane that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. John Dowler, an American historian and specialist of modern Japan, studied the extent of the damage. He demonstrated how history can be presented and valued in differently various ways from an American or Japanese point of view, even though no one is making up facts or falsifying sources. Selection and combination of data to make history.

For the Americans, there was "a heroic or triumphant account in which atomic bomb would be the final blow against an aggressive, fanatic and savage enemy." From the Japanese perspective, there was "an account of victimization," in which "atomic bombs have become the symbol of a specific type of suffering—rather similar to the Holocaust for the Jews." At the Hiroshima museum itself, the victim role has been exploited in ways that similarly distort memory. Neither the Japanese government's responsibility for initiating and continuing the war nor the inhuman treatment that prisoners of war or the subject civil populations suffered under Japanese rule are adequately acknowledged. Everyone chooses the point of view that fits him best. Whether we identify with the heroes or the victim, with the pilots of the plane that put an end to WWII or with the passive population subjected to the hell of atomic annihilation, we are always rooting with the "transcend" and the "good guys". At the Smithsonian, the Enola Gay was to play a central role in an "exhibition meant to depict the Hiroshima bombing in all its complexity. However, due to the pressure of various US patriotic groups, the exhibition was cancelled, because it was seen as an offense against memory. By failing to depict the American government's role as benefactors, it suggested that they were responsible for a massacre that could only be justified. What would an account about evil be if the author refused to identify himself with either the victim or the villain? Dowler's research into the different ways Americans and Japanese commemorated Hiroshima provides us with a good example. He could identify with both groups, he belongs to one and his work has made him intimately familiar with the other. The title he gave to his version of the facts, after trying out "Hiroshima as a victimisation" (the Japanese point of view) and "Hiroshima as a triumph" (the American point of view), was "Hiroshima as strangely.

Tragedy: the word signifies not only suffering and distress, but the opposite. Whatever path is chosen, in a tragic way we die together. The cause of the Allied forces was undoubtedly superior to that of the Nazis or the Japanese, and the war against them was just and necessary. However, even "just" was provoke tragedies that cannot be dismissed lightly under the pretense that it was the enemy that did them.

The 12-year-old child's lunchbox blasted at Hiroshima, preserved by chance, was worth much as our conscience as it was worth. Indeed, it was the display of the box among the artifacts that the Hiroshima museum lent to the American institution that made the exhibition unacceptable to the former "heroes". Only if one knows to put the courage to envision the bomb and the lunchbox at the same time is possible to comprehend the tragic vision of history that Hiroshima—like other episodes that have scared our modern conscience—most clearly represents.

Tzetven Todorov is the author of Hope and Memory.

The lunchbox and the bomb

Victimization confers a right to complain, protest and demand.
WASHINGTON - Foreign leaders and diplomats appear increasingly confused about where US foreign policy is being made, they are no alone. From Cheney to the West Bank to Karbala in Iraq to North Korea, contending forces within both the administration of President George W. Bush and his Republican Party are deadlocked for control, and the White House seems more and more unable to impose discipline.

While the neo-conservatives and right-wing hawks in the offices of Vice President Dick Cheney and Pentagon chief Donald Rumsfeld, who led the drive to war in Iraq, have broken the defensive costs in blood and measure of the post-war occupation, they have by no means retreated from the battle. And while Secretary of State Colin Powell has worked quietly to extend his power, particularly over the Israeli-Palestinian roadmap and dialogue with Pyongyang, right-wing hawks in the offices of Vice President Cheney to both press his positions and to keep the Pentagon on its back. Indeed, the overriding impression is one of diffusion of power that the president might find difficult to recover when official Washington reconvenes in September for what is shaping up as a very difficult autumn. Congress has scheduled a battery of hearings on Iraq, and King Abdullah's visit to the US this week was intended to put his administration exasperated the threat to the country allegedly posed by Iraq in the run-up to the war, and how and why it so completely failed to anticipate and plan for the post-war debacle. Unless the military has captured Saddam Hussein and resistance to the US occupation has been substantially reduced by then, those hearings could spell major trouble for the administration. Bush's handlers appear to have sensed that he has lost authority over the few weeks, despite last week's killings of Saddam's two sons, a development that appears to have at least temporarily halted a deep slide in Bush's popular support. Adding to the growing sense of a vacuum at the White House has been Rice's sharply diminishing public stature as a competent arbiter of policy. Her case was probably not helped by Bush's effusiveness--if immoderate--endorsement of her as "an honest, fabulous person" at his press conference. Her initial attempts to blame the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) for the president's reference to the African yellowcake have clearly backfired, and her tardy admission that she had not read key intelligence documents on Iraq has exposed her as a bit of a klutz, but lack of expertise and authority. That shortfall has been evident for a long time but this pasting was produced last year when Cheney-assisted United Nations' weapons inspectors just as Powell had persuaded Bush to request new inspections.

Her public exposure as a lightweight, combined with Bush's hush, has set back the hopes of those who thought Powell might regain more control over policy. The result is a cascade of an uncoordinated scramble for power, with Cheney and the Pentagon--buckled by Congressional right-wing--still pulling their agenda, at the same time that Powell and key Democrats and moderate Republicans try to push back, with Bush, Rice and the White House somewhere out in right field. The jockeying was clear all week long. While Powell and the senators all but pleaded for a new US Security Council resolution that would permit more countries to contribute troops and financial assistance to Iraq, Wolfowitz rejected any arrangement that would diminish US control over the occupation. In a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon--a favourite of the hawks--Bush declined to criticize Israel's construction of a security fence in the Occupied Territories as he had done just the week before. And while Sharon was at the White House, the powerful Republican Majority Leader Tom DeLay, assured his right-wing hosts in Jerusalem of his reservations about the roadmap and that he can't 'imagine in the very near future that a Palestinian state could ever happen'.

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After the Maoist leaders suddenly went underground last month, their organisational expansion into the east of the country became clear. In the presence of Maoist chief Prachanda and leader Baburam Bhattarai, the Limbuwan Liberation Front and Kirat Workers' Party reorganised the Kirat National Front during the two communal parties' first unity convention held between 16-18 July. Reports say both Prachanda and Bhattarai rode horses to reach Yanguannama in Panchthar district.

Fifty-nine-year-old Bhaktapur Kandangwa, (nec homonimos), a member of the Maoist Revolutionary People's Council and chief of the people's government of Tehrathum, was elected the new chairman of the Kirat National Front (KNF). A near merger between the Limbuwan Souda Forum and Limbuwan Liberation Front brought the KNF into being.

That Maoist-mediated unity did not last long. The Khumbrwan Front's Gopal Khambu dismissed himself from the new party, and subsequently the Khumbrwan Front's prachanda group called themselves the Kirat Workers' Party. On 23 July, the renamed Kirat National Front declared in comeback and made public in 29 papers as well in Kathmandu, which would not include Gopal Khambu. Insiders say that he has been made a politburo member of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). Khambu is also part of the revolutionary people's council formed under Baburam Bhattarai.

Kandangwa stressed reunification was necessary to fight discrimination. Referring to the demands for the self-governance by the Kirat of the east, he added that even the Maoists have accepted this fact. He also believes that his party and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) need each other in this respect. The Maoists have tried to expand their presence in the east by bringing the two parties that are demanding the separate state of the Khumbrwan and Limbuwan under its umbrella. They are trying to use the Maoist umbrella to achieve their goals. "Our demand is not related to class, it is a community demand," says Kandangwa. "If they betray us, we won't hesitate to take up arms against them." How long the Khumbrwan, who believe in class struggle, go along with these community-centric organisations, remains to be seen.

That the current government is ready for an interim government like the Maoists demand, but they are not likely to let the rebels lead it. The other Maoist demand for proportional representation of all sections in the new government is unacceptable to the other political parties. If the king participates in the talks as the Maoists demand, he will be stepping outside his constitutional boundaries. This will be unacceptable to the Maoists themselves, and the other political parties too.

The present government is ready for an interim government like the Maoists demand, but they are not likely to let the rebels lead it. The other Maoist demand for proportional representation of all sections in the new government is unacceptable, but a constituent assembly might draw controversy because the parties with political parties believe amendments to the present constitution will suffice. The government, however, may suggest a referendum.

But the rebels have made some impractical demands that they need to abandon. They must lay down their arms if they wish to enter mainstream politics. Then comes the issue of where the Maoists will have to disband. They need to decide how the rebel army can be assimilated into national life in a way acceptable to everyone. Including the political parties is crucial. They are still divided between reinstating the parliament and an interim government. Some constitutional experts suggest the present prime minister can reinstate the parliament since it was dissolved on the recommendation of a former prime minister. The king could also initiate a revocable but by enacting Article 127. A referendum can make a decision on the remaining issues. At the end of the day, one thing is certain: there are no quick-fix solutions.
Thursday, 14 April 1977

Sundarjal

It is now becoming clear why the other day Ass Assaiahulhadi came to inquire whom from my family members I wanted to consult in common and during the engagement of lawyers for my case. Today, I have visited yesterday’s Gorkhapatra and I was to be extremely afraid of ghosts and such unnatural sounds and noises, voices like those of human beings, groans, heavy treading on the floor, whispers, gasps, sound and noises, and I have been really....

Sushila that for his admission to medical college in India, Rajnarayan Kusum. If they decide not to bring us before a court of final orders will emanate. He further said that he himself has done it.

Indeed she did come. My 1st impulse was to see her because the govt has been given any formal notice nor have been produced as received the message from Rosa at Varanasi to proceed to Chetana and Manisha, Sriharsha, Ruchira and...couples are all here. That is why I was in the beginning reluctant to see her. Then I decided to see her because the govt received the message from Rosa at Varanasi to proceed to Chetana and Manisha, Sriharsha, Ruchira and...couples are all here.

I repeatedly told her that the way I am living, kept in cynical disregard of Human Rights, has a powerful champion these days in the President of the USA. I don’t think she got the hint. She is a very clever girl in some ways. [see 237]

Sushila that for his admission to medical college in India, Rajnarayan Kusum. If they decide not to bring us before a court of final orders will emanate. He further said that he himself has done it.

to be met. That is why I was in the beginning reluctant to see her. Then I decided to see her because the govt received the message from Rosa at Varanasi to proceed to Chetana and Manisha, Sriharsha, Ruchira and...couples are all here.

I repeatedly told her that the way I am living, kept in cynical disregard of Human Rights, has a powerful champion these days in the President of the USA. I don’t think she got the hint. She is a very clever girl in some ways. [see 237]

To today’s Gorkhapatra has an editorial criticising the statement of JP. JP’s yesterday there was an added show of military force in this camp. The rifles were pointed towards the building horizontally from the four guard towers—and I could see from my room that there was lawyerly activity going on in the tower. The soldiers and the COs instructing them were in full battle dress. They were guarding as individuals as individuals have employed an army for their purpose, then thinking that it was not enough to have a demonstration of that capacity to kill me, if need be or if such orders were received, at the drop of a hat. Maybe such a demonstration is instead to cow me down and demoralise me. If it is so, what foolish idiots! And if it was really for training purposes, they should have started. I am very happy with this development—the total discomfiture of the softliners and hardliners among his followers. He has kept us in prison and if he succeeded he would even like us to die in prison. The policemen and even in the opposite directions by the softliners and hardliners among his followers. He has kept us in prison and if he succeeded he would even like us to die in prison. The policemen and even in the opposite directions by the softliners and hardliners among his followers. He has kept us in prison and if he succeeded he would even like us to die in prison. The policemen and even in the opposite directions by the softliners and hardliners among his followers. He has kept us in prison and if he succeeded he would even like us to die in prison. The policemen and even in the opposite directions by the softliners and hardliners among his followers. He has kept us in prison and if he succeeded he would even like us to die in prison. The policemen and even in the opposite directions by the softliners and hardliners among his followers. 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KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

What you burn is what you breathe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>&gt; 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ok</td>
<td>61 to 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhealthy</td>
<td>121 to 350</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harmful</td>
<td>≥351</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Last week’s results of air quality monitoring at six stations in Kathmandu showed that the PM10 particulate matter that is smaller than 10 microns or small enough to enter the human body’s respiratory system had doubled further in Pulchowk, Satdobato, in comparison to the previous week. The average monthly PM10 levels hit their lowest mark in July, a figure that was one third less than in January.

Neuromarketing

Dr. John Grady's book being heralded as a modern classic. It has helped men and women realize the communication styles and how they can bridge the gap without conflict and resentment. Finally in the book, Grady is a confident we all can become better interpersonal communicators—with a little help from him. Courtesy: www.jgrady.com

BOOKWORM

We would like to introduce ourselves as the one and only automotive tyre and tube Manufacturing Company of Nepal. We are planning to buy Rico Husk boiler with following specification:

1. Boiler out put (Kg / h) - 1000 kg / h.
2. Safety valve set pressure (Approx) - 17.5 kg / cm².
3. Working pressure (Approx) - 15 Kg/cm².
5. Pollution Control equipment for 355 mg/m³.
6. Complete accessories including 30m³ storage tank.
7. Husk feeding system & Ash removal system.

Interested manufacturer and authorized supplier are requested to submit the technical specification of boilers & accessories with installation detail & their service facilities in Nepal, before 12-27 August at The Cafe, on 12 August at Stupa View & Terrace, Boudha Stupa. Contact: 4428604.

Gorakhkali Rubber Udyog Limited

Kalimati Kathmandu

Gorakhkali Rubber Udyog Limited

Mr. S.K. Sharma (Engineering Deptt.)

Tel: 44-274537, 01-4271112

Fax: 44-270367

E-mail: guru@wlink.com.np

Gorakhkali Rubber Udyog Limited

P.O. Box 6958, Bakhundole, Lalitpur, Nepal

Published on July 28, 2003 - The Himalayan Times, Rising Nepal Kathmandu Post

For insertions ring NT Marketing at 5543333-36.

Visit Ground Zero: Fine wines, designer candies, cards, gifts, stationery, wooden items, perfumes and more. Darbar Marg, opposite Hotel Arpana

Visit Femilines, the Exclusive Lingotee Store for ladies undergarments, nightwear, bathrobes and more. Ladies staff: Opposite Sahaj Yatarat, Harihar Bhawan, Pashchimput. Tel: 544748

Florowords: Florowords, it’s FUCHSIA time again!! See 60 beautiful flowers in bountiful! Our flowers are flown in from California and are flowering. Only at THE BISHAMUN MURTHY NURSERY, tel: 44-31797. 5 min. from Bhadrau planetarium, 2 min from Bhagbail Chowk (turn right and downhill).

To Let: Rabibhawan area two house 4 bedrooms 2 bathrooms large kitchen dining living room and terrace.

For insertions ring NT Marketing at 5433333-36.
Gajalu ti thulathula aankha
Teera bane basyo yo dilaima..."

The mellifluous baritone of Ghulam Ali singing King Mahendra's classic tender ballad of love can be heard in the narrow lanes of Asan, in the hills of Gorkha, even in certain suburbs on foreign shores—in fact wherever Nepalis have set down roots. The slight Urdu accent doesn't detract from what many associate with Home. This song, among others, earned added popularity after being compiled into the Nepali album Narayan Gopal, Ghulam Ali ra Ma two years ago.

That is how Ghulam Ali came to be better known in Nepal, but it is actually for his ghazals like "Hungama hai kyon barpa" and "Chupke chupke raat din" that he is world famous. The Pakistani artist is a true performer—not in the sense of pop bands that entertain with their antics and vocals—but in his ability to connect with his audience. He experiments with music and words, often scouring his vast library of Urdu poetry for the right lyrics to set to music, which he composes himself.

Mira Ghaihi, Asamir Kharro and contemporary poet-lyricists like Ahmed Faraz, Qateel Shifai and Farhat Shahzad have all been blessed by his touch. In the album Visaal he collaborated with India's famous Gutar and with singer Asha Bhosale on Miraz-E-Ghazal. Now his son and disciple, Nazar Abbas Ali is following in his father's footsteps. Although he accompanies his father occasionally, everyone knows the main event is always Ghulam Ali.

Born in 1940 into a musical family—his father was a vocalist and sarangi player—at a Sialkot village in Pakistan, Ghulam Ali studied his craft with his parent, as well as the legendary Ustad Bade Gulam Ali Khan, Bade Mubarak Ali Khan and Barkat Ali Khan. His career began in the 1960s on Lahore radio, after which he cut many albums. In the more than 40 years that the maestro has honed his art, his style has evolved, revealing a rich patina brought about by a lot of riyaz, training and a thorough base in the classics. He fuses the complexity of classical music with a perfect understanding of the ghazal. Over the years he has widened his range to encompass nazm and thumris with equal elegance.

While the brilliance of many ghazal singers has waxed and waned, Ghulam Ali continues to command respect and a new fan following with each successive generation. A truly South Asian artist, the ustad transcends national borders and technological innovations. His music has survived the long evolution from vinyl to MP3s, and his live performances still reward with appreciative calls of "wah Ustad!"

Ghulam Ali’s concerts in India, Nepal, the US and the UK are as well attended as they are in Pakistan, where he is regarded a true ghazal maestro in a country where they are a dime a dozen. His voice mesmerizes even the normally boisterous and intimidating Nepali audience who fall into silent awe when he sings. And at this Saturday’s live performance, when the ustad begins the opening strains of "Gajalu ti", it’s going to feel a bit like a homecoming.

Ghulam Ali will be performing live in Kathmandu on 14 August.
**Guy Jatra**

In this indicator of the tremendous gender balance in our society that next week we celebrate Guy Jatra, and a week after that, we mark Tij. The latter is a festival in which members of the female species from all walks of life re-dedicate themselves to their profession by undertaking 24-hour rule hunger strikes at cardinal points in the city to wish their present or future husbands health, wealth and happiness.

Those who, for technical reasons, don’t wish their current spouses to have any of the above, will have no other alternative but to move on to the seventh phase of their agitation which, they hasten to warn, is going to be decisive, and could turn violent. Anyways, it’s the thought that counts.

Some of the more passionate women I know say they will not even swallow their saliva during this period as they pray intensely for their husbands to be inducted into the nest government line-up. Good luck.

Among our upcoming festivals, my own personal favourites is Guy Jatra. It is a very funny festival and a time for us guys to forget our cares and worries, let our hair down, and cast doubts about the gender, if any, of our current spouses to have any of the above, will have no other alternative but to move on to the seventh phase of their agitation which, they hasten to warn, is going to be decisive, and could turn violent. Anyways, it’s the thought that counts.

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Among our upcoming festivals, my own personal favourites is Guy Jatra. It is a very funny festival and a time for us guys to forget our cares and worries, let our hair down, and cast doubts about the gender, if any, of the Rt Hon Prime Minister and members of his cabinet. Why exactly this particular incident that took place on a freezing winter morning a few years ago when she slipped and fractured her leg on the way to Bungamati. As she lay there, freezing, she thought that counts.

Q: As a just-about-average Nepali male, what do you when you are by yourself, and certain that no one is looking?

- a. Put your hand in your pocket and vigorously attend to a suburban anus.
- b. Attend to aforementioned itch even if someone is looking, after all it’s an emergency.
- c. Go to a nearby mirror and square blackheads from your nose cone.
- d. Sharpen the non-flammable end of a matchstick and use it as NASA would the robotic arm of the Mars Explorer to reach hitherto unexplored and remote caverns in your mouth cavity containing fossil remains of last year’s Dasain goat, and dispatch the specimen to a subterranean itch.
- e. Swallow your contents of last year’s Dasain goat, and dispatch the specimen to a subterranean itch.
- f. Streamline your nasal passages with a smart ‘pthoo’ through the window into the street nostril which at regular intervals dislodges obstructions filters. Most models have an automatic self-cleaning device which at regular intervals dislodges obstructions filters. Most models have an automatic self-clearing device which at regular intervals dislodges obstructions and permits said gobs from the nasal cavity into the oral cavity whence it can be either defenestrated with a sharp intake of air through the nostril or ingested into the alimentary canal as a protein-rich nutrient. Either way, it is a disgusting habit that all Nepalis proudly call our own.
- g. Who said press freedom in Nepal had been curtailed? This column proves we can get away with writing any rubbish. Right, then. If you ticked all of the above, congratulations. You are the proud recipient of this year’s Guy Jatra Mr Revolting Nepal Contest.

Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

**Guy Jatra**

T here is something determinedly Keatsian about Shashi Kala Tiwari, the eminent poet and artist. “I never paint anything ‘glamorous’, there is enough sadness in this world,” she says with a playful smile in her voice. Her paintings bust with colours and strong brush strokes to create an abstract glow of nature’s radiance.

In her art, flowers symbolise the beauty and benevolence of the human spirit. This appreciation came at a price. Shashi was traumatised by the whole event, she says that stranger’s kindness restored her faith in people. She never met him again.

The other man who influenced Shashi was her father: he always believed that art and poetry keep me alive,” she says. Her favourites include Shrabantar’s tribute to the Late King Birendra and the royal family, Richard Bartaman (dedicated to the victims of Kalka incident) and Timi Alito Pachy Koon (Bliss) (on the cross in the country). Shashi cannot imagine what she would do if she wasn’t an artist. “Painting and poetry keep me alive,” she says.

*(Navosh Nepal)*

**NEPALI SOCIETY**

Bangladesh, South Korea and the UK. The Nepal Association of Arts has twice named her the best national artist (1981, 1984) and she recently received the prestigious Gohtak Dakshin Bahu. As a struggling artist, Shashi often sold her poems for Rs 30 each to pay for art supplies. Of course, things are different now: “I don’t write for money anymore, but for art and literature,” she says. Her favourites include Shrabantar’s (a tribute to the Late King Birendra and the royal family), Richard Bartaman (dedicated to the victims of Kalka incident) and Timi Alito Pachy Koon (Bliss) (on the cross in the country). Shashi cannot imagine what she would do if she wasn’t an artist. “Painting and poetry keep me alive,” she says.

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