The students appear to have the green light from their mentors in the parties to step up the rhetoric in a last-ditch attempt to pressure King Gyanendra to agree to retract his October Fourth move, and restore power to the peoples’ representative. Student leaders who began their campaign by demanding that the king restore democracy are now openly calling for him to step down from the throne.

King Gyanendra himself tried to defuse the situation by initiating a series of meetings with party leaders and presenting them with his 7-point agenda for political consensus. The leaders were not too impressed.

The palace for its part doesn’t seem too worried about the street agitation or the insurgency escalating out of control. Does it know something we don’t? It could be pleased about recent military gains in the see-saw war as well as old rifts opening up between the NC and the UML.

The two parties are divided about whether reinstatement of parliament or an all-party government is the way forward. Both want to have an upper hand when, and if, the king backtracks. They have also adopted a two-pronged strategy: telling the students to take a hardline anti-monarchy stance while they themselves soft-peddle it.

Most independent analysts agree that neither a republic nor a return to absolute monarchy are feasible at present, so the palace and the parties have to meet halfway. Only then can they look for a solution to the Maoist insurgency. If the king decides to go it alone, it is sure to push the parties and the Maoists closer and rush us towards a republic.

The Maoists are taking full advantage of this polarisation. Ideologue Baburam Bhattarai in a writeup in the party paper, Janadash, this week poked fun at the king’s audiences with party leaders. He urged the parties not to listen to the king and keep up the republican momentum. “King Gyanendra is offering the parties green grass...but if they fall for it again it will be suicidal and a major blunder,” Bhattarai wrote.

The Maoists have declared a Magar Autonomous Region in the midwest and are planning a big gathering at a secret location to mark the event next week.
TAIL WAGS DOG

W hat a difference two weeks makes. Last month, we bit our tongues while talking about the anti-monarchy slogans being raised on the streets. Today, it has become so commonplace, we don’t bat an eye.

Till a few weeks ago, people spoke in hushed tones of the shoe gandsans on royal effigies. Last week, they cremated a corpse of ‘repression’ wearing a crown, and it was regarded as just another street demo.

Now that the streets are resonating with republican slogans, one has to wonder why Nepalis have to kid each other for that cause anymore. Nine thousand lives and eight years of mayhem later, it now looks like the main demand of the Maoists could just as easily be met by street protests and setting a few government vehicles afire. The petty bosses unleashed the students, but will the kids listen to Grandad Girija anymore?

The tail is wagging the dog.

It is difficult to gauge just how much support the students on the streets get from onlookers on the sidewalks. But the fact that so far they are just looking on, and not joining in the arson, may indicate the slogans are just that: slogans. The Nepali people still appear to be drawing a distinction between the institution of monarchy and the intention of the monarch. Most burglars don’t trust the political parties all that much either.

They take a dim view of the bonfire of government properties bought with public money. Nepal first demos must be nothing but a Drukpa monk’s not-reach remote Nepal. The message is magnified by television news, but the people analyse it as being less about republicanism and more about parties trying to upgrade their bagging position vis-a-vis the king.

It doesn’t help the parties’ cause that the people recognize some familiar faces leading the marches, faces that are on the CIAA’s watch-list. The public is also dismayed that these past few weeks prove the modus operandi of the parties hasn’t changed. If they get back on the saddle, they will be back to their old tricks, including fighting each other tooth and nail.

Meanwhile, sitting in Nagpur and gazing down at his capital Valley, the monarch is reticent. The royal families have failed to do their trick. The king’s use of the seven-point plan seems to have underemphasized the frustration of the parliamentary leadership as well as the potential of the street agitation to spiral out of control of both the government and the parties.

Now that we are forced to think the unthinkable, we have to say that Nepal will probably survive as a republic. But why get rid of an institution that is not just a symbol of our historical evolution into a nation state, but also an institution that can be the constitutional force of last resort?

If the parties showed more measured and responsible behaviour and the palace proved through its actions that it is committed to restoring the peoples’ sovereign rights, there may still be a way out of this morass.

Kleptocrats anonymous

Real regression is putting arsonists and extorttions in power.

B oh Suchak Shaha and Shankhu Prasad Gyawali (my father) have now passed into the pages of history, but they were gems that bestrode the Nepali public sphere for half a century. Both were architects of the 1962 Constitution that lasted 30 years despite being mangled, first by Pancakiru hardliners in 1975 and subsequently by myopia in 1980 after the National Referendum. A few months before my father passed away, I remembered the two debating the 1990 Constitution, which had to be exhumed fast.

They did not doubt that it had certain democratic features, but it also contained contradictions which led to the present mess in governance. It was based against small and emerging parties, and it effectively failed to include heterogeneous minority groups. Provisions such as the judicial council removed the onus of proper administration of justice from the shoulders of the chief justice. Under a winner-takes-all scheme, real representation was waning. Anointing the distinction between law making and executive functions, check-and-balance failed in a systemic way.

But was the constituent assembly advocated by the Maoists the solution? It was just for those who believe in consensus at gunpoint advocate. The grip of that exuberant debate was that if the parliament itself failed to initiate necessary reforms, it would inevitably be done from outside—such as a constitutional reform process initiated by King Birendra or through the Maoist path of a constituent assembly. After having his fingers burnt in 1979 and 1990, the monarch seemed reluctant to pursue the first. Was the second option of wiping the slate clean and starting afresh even feasible?

The scenario could unfold as follows. At the very instance that a constituent assembly was declared, the 1990 Constitution would be null and void. Immediately the executive, legislative and judiciary powers of the kingdom would revert to the head of state. The constituent assembly would then be the process of bringing back those powers to help organizing and legitimating them. The difficulties inherent in that course of action, they felt, were not being seriously considered.

First, one had to decide what legitimate constituencies were. The 205 electoral districts would have already been annulled. How was one to reorganize? One: on what basis? Population? Language? Ethnicity? Religion? Some or all of them? Who was to decide, and how? Second, elections would have to be held in each of those ‘constituencies’ because nominations would not do.

In this kingdom that consists only of minorities, would not all (Muslims, animists, everyone living around and, however, the forlorn, Brahmin) demand for the same separate status? Third, after these practical hurdles are crossed, there would have to be a consensus about the framework of a new order, for which no one has proposed any serious blueprint.

If one has to go for elections, why suffer the fumes of fear of electing an impractical constituent assembly? Why not elect a fresh parliament that already has a blueprint to change the constitution with a two-third majority? There is nothing in the present constitution stopping it from adding provisions of ethnic or linguistic balance or even a referendum. Why don’t the parties go to the people with that clear blueprint and get the requisite mandate?

Five years ago, when the elders debated this question, there was still hope that the parties could not set the height and lead to reforms. Today, we have seen much more visibility, and the governance debate is far less edgy and challenging. Most diplomats have no business calling themselves democrats. Anonists or extorttions are no less deplorable than factions that want to power without them having to face voters in the real regression.

The way out of this quagmire is to begin the process of local elections that will throw up a newer set of young leaders. Let all parties answer the seven points raised by the king and let them go to the public with their view on the constitution, preferably after reforming themselves. The only thing that mandates the public will give.

That they cannot go to the people because of the Maoists is a long-exhausted argument. The Maoists have already stopped into the political vacuum left in the countryside by the parties unable to explain their blueprint. Most democrats have interregnums will continue until the people can decide.

Foreign envoys and Nepali politics

A number of Western envoys in Kathmandu have been extraordinarily strident in their advocacy of a role for political parties in resolving the Maoist problem and bringing the country back to the democratic track. (See Editorial, ‘Nowson’s Laws,’ #177)

Their statements, in turn, seem to have emboldened the agitating parties to reign in the regime of power even without a popular mandate in an election. While their unspoken phases of agitation against regression have failed to generate popular enthusiasm, the five-party alliance of a loose and opportunistic ensemble could conceivably lead to the outcome that this kind of exuberant debate was that if the
The main obstacle now is regime legitimacy.

STATE OF THE STATE
CK Lal

Politics, ‘normal’ depend on who is talking. The country is in the grip of an unprecedented crisis, but the World Bank thinks that since governance in the hands of technocrats, the situation is normal. A restoration of democracy seems to be an important risk for the Bank as the fear of Nepal turning into a Failed State.

As the launch of World Bank’s Country Assistance Strategy last Friday, Prakash Sharan Mahat, an adviser in Sher Bahadur Deuba’s disgraced regime, raised objections from the floor to the Bank’s belief in normality. This gave Ken Olavazi another opportunity to repeat some well-worn clichés about causation and correlation.

Safeguarding democracy isn’t one of the missions of the bank. Like any other commercial enterprise, predictability is the key criteria in making investment decisions. Democracy is unpredictable by definition.

Hence, like all advocates of ‘liberal’ economy, the bank also invariably preaches illiberal politics.

However liberal Ken Olavazi may be in private, he would be failing in his duty if he ignored the natural proclivity of politicians towards populism. He could have silenced critics at the Crowne Plaza by simply asking them to read his bank’s lending policies. The borrower has to bear the economic, political, social, cultural and environmental consequences of borrowing.

Looking from his frequent contributions in the media (including this newspaper) Olavazi seems to suffer from a mild case of Napoleon’s Complex. Instead of reminding readers that he isn’t in the charity business, Ken delivers harsh homilies on the importance of good governance, ignoring the basic premise of state accountability: no taxation without representation.

He says the country he comes from “naturally superimposed the concept of high growth.” Nepal’s annual GDP growth exceeded 10% on a sustained basis in the 1990s and wants us to emulate it. How can one question such a noble motive? But Japan’s economic miracle happened under a constitution that gave no power to its celestial emperor. Japanese do what they do because they have a stake in it.

Therefore, in the larger picture, the problem is that while our donors and lenders are so concerned about the ownership of public infrastructure and institutions, the electorate still is not questioned. The World Bank has praised the handing over of schools and hospitals to communities, how about handing over the country to its people?

King Gyanendra passed on his seven-point agenda for national consensus to the leaders of different political parties he met last week. Sadly, it ignores the severe crisis of legitimacy slowly engulfing the regime and seems to be another ploy to pacify strategists to keep the parties mired in wrangling. But it isn’t the seven points—a national consensus over their importance is a forgone conclusion. It is who has the power to set that agenda.

Legitimacy is the process by which an institution attempts to justify its existence and power. King Gyanendra has done anything so far to validate his Fourth October move. The crisis arises when strains within the polity reach such a stage that the state is mired in an imminent danger of collapse. The triangular contest between the royal government, the Maoists, and the parties seems to be headed in that direction. We are in the ‘falling stage’ in which a state passes through before ‘failing’ and then becoming a ‘failed state’.

Donors and lenders like Ken Olavazi must note that the main obstacle now is regime legitimacy. Good governance, important as it is, has become secondary. The priorities of the state have changed; politics now has to return to centre-stage. For Nepal’s good governance, anything else can happen.

Perhaps we are too close to current events to understand the significance of slogans. How about allowing the protesting students to chant, but they are suffused with unimagined possibilities. Never before have a coalition of the royals and their royally the way the young generation are doing. The writing on the wall is too glaring to ignore.
Differently-abled

Ten percent of Nepal’s population is disabled. What are the others doing to help?

NARESH NEWAR

B

ound at birth, Babu K Maharjan feels he lives in a different world, not because he can’t see but in the way society and the government looks down on him and the rest of the disabled population.

A 1995 UNICEF report put the number of disabled Nepalis at a staggering 10 percent of the population. By today’s count, that should make 2.5 million people in this country are hearing impaired, visually challenged or mentally and physically unstable.

“In the villages, our disabled children and parents are crying for help but their voices are ignored,” says Maharjan, acting president of the National Association of Disabled-Nepal (NADN). There is great awareness and sympathy, it is mostly lip-service. Since the Maoists started their ‘People’s War’, the number of the physically and mentally disabled individuals have risen adding to the disabled population, according to experts.

The UN and NGOs only talk about protecting children from the conflict or extend their sympathy for the disabled, they never seem to care much about the children who are still alive with broken limbs and in trauma,” says Nirmal K Deblota, speaking in sign language. The hearing impaired Deblota says he may never be able to scream for the government’s help, but he has millions of friends to make his voice heard.

In July, Deblota joined a huge delegation from the NADN to present their case with its 15-point demand to Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa at his office. This meeting also launched the first-ever movement to demand equal rights and privileges for disabled people as they were asking for was an amendment to the Disabled Persons Protection and Welfare Act introduced in 1982 during the Panchayat regime. Their demands also included five percent reservation seats in government jobs, free medical treatment in all government hospitals, 50 percent discount on transportation, free education for children and compensation for those disabled by conflict. Says Maharjan, “So far nothing has happened, but we will not give up.”

Nepal became the first country in South Asia to introduce an act in favour of the disabled population, but lags behind the rest in implementation. In theory, Nepal’s commitment towards the disabled is probably one the best in the world but neither the government nor the NGOs have done much, despite significant funding. Most of the disabled people, whether poor or rich, rely on family support, just as they always have.

“We are not asking for sympathy, just recognition for our citizens and said he was hamstringing in attempts to make economic sense out of administration policy.

Hindsight is a wonderful thing, always clear, unassuming and accurate. And O’Neill is plugging a book about his experiences that he has no doubt earn him a few of those dollars he’s supposed to have squandered as treasury secretary. But it’s interesting to hear his insider’s view of Bush cabinet dealings in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq last year, whatever pinches of salt are needed.

The point is that Britain and the United States did the wrong thing by rolling into Iraq, and they continue to do the wrong things during their occupation. No neutral observer could feel differently. You have to be politically partisan, or a member of one of the many groups to suffer at Saddam’s bloodstained bands to support London and Washington’s Iraq adventure. At least one can understand and sympathise with these latter groups.

The capture of Saddam Husseins last year was supposed to be a Christmas present for Bush and Blair, a boost for their Iraq strategy that would see public opinion soaring. Bush in particular was thought likely to turn the discovery of the vile dictator in his ‘spider hole’ near Tikrit into a stepping stone to a second term as President in this year’s elections. Yet so far, there’s little sign of that happening.

Not that Bush won’t win a second term, on current form, he’s likely to, given the weakness and disarray among his opponents. But the president remains hostage to fortune and fortune favours both the brave and the lucky. Anything can happen between now and 2 November 2004, American election day. For all the might of the US military, for all the campaign money in Republican coffers, for all of the effort expanded in wars against Iraq, Afghanistan and terrorism, Bush’s redaction hopes still depend on events beyond his control.

In the end, I’m not sure that he or Blair will pay for their willful distortions of the truth over Iraq. But more and more people are learning that they lied. And that’s worth something, I
The business of helping

Nepal’s top restaurateur Shyam Kakshapati’s derives joy not just from his successful restaurant business, but also from employing 40 hearing-impaired waiters and waitresses in three of his Nanglo Bakeries in the Valley.

“I wanted to show the world that they are equally professional,” says Kakshapati who has made his name as an entrepreneur with a heart. Since Kakshapati turned his small café into a successful restaurant venture, others were quick to copy his idea. Many named their cafes similarly and even copied Bakery Cafe’s trademark green. But one thing no one copied was its social consciousness and philanthropic mission.

The idea of hiring hearing-impaired staff came to Kakshapati even before he started his first small café. He wanted to run his businesses differently by combining social service with the service industry. If he could generate employment for the disabled while satisfying his guess, he had a win-win situation.

“I’m glad this is working well,” says Kakshapati. While they have might certain disadvantages compared to normal people, Kakshapati makes sure that there is no public show of pity or special treatment. “That way we don’t cross the line and take advantage of each other,” adds Kakshapati who believes that the business community has social obligations and it’s not just the government’s duty to change the circumstances of the disabled. “If the business community wants, they can create so many opportunities for this section of the population,” says Kakshapati.

His next challenge is to give vocational training for disabled people in the Information Technology industry so they can get decent jobs. He also hopes to employ more disabled in his other hotels and restaurants.

Skills and capabilities,” says Arjun Timilsina from Jhapa, who lost both his legs 18 years ago after a car accident while trying to save an old woman along the Jiri highway. It is difficult for Timilsina to negotiate the staircase in his wheelchair to reach the office of the Ministry of Women and Social Welfare, but he is there to convince officials that disabled people can also contribute to the nation’s development.

Maharjan gives an example of the indifferent attitude of the government: despite a provision in the 1982 Act, disabled children who are guaranteed free education are still required to pay school fees. In 2000, Maharjan and his friends won a case at the Supreme Court to provide free education to all disabled children. “As a follow up, I visited a lot of schools and was shocked to find disabled children, even those from poor families, still paying fees. The matter has been ignored by NGOs too,” says Maharjan.

It is not just indifference, government officials are ignorant about the laws. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics in 2001 estimated that only 0.45 percent of the total population was disabled. “The government lacks a clear definition of a disabled person,” says Bishnu Kunwar Singh, 28, from Galmi, who had her left arm amputated. “Can you believe that I am not counted as disabled even though I don’t have an arm?” She recently completed her Masters in Nepali and is having problems finding a job. Singh runs a centre for disabled women and wants to help them be independent. "I want to encourage more girls to study whether or not there are jobs waiting for them," she adds. For now, this group of disabled Nepalis are preparing to launch a much stronger campaign to ensure their representation in all sectors, even politics. “We have no one but ourselves to rely on,” says Tirthankhe Neupane, a visually challenged teacher. "We want the government to create an environment where there is equal opportunity for all citizens." He wants the government to recruit more disabled people in the education sector. Out of the 200,000 teachers in government schools, only 600 are disabled.

"We don’t want to blame the government or depend on it totally, but it is high time we were recognised for our worth," says Maharjan who believes the private sector and citizens have a role to play in giving them a chance to live with the basic rights and privileges accorded to all citizens. "There are some in the private sector who have been helping us but it is more out of pity than respect for our capability."
NEITHER HERE NOR THERE

Anagha Neelakantan

CHENNAI – A short visit to southern climes has been a good opportunity to review my last close acquaintance with a South Asian city where crab is readily available. It is also a time to come face-to-face with subcontinental journalism.

Air dashing with crack sleuths

A Mumbai history graduate student from the University of Chicago has begun to slowly compile a 21st Century *Hobson Jobson*: ‘a lexicon of the marvellous clichés, truisms, banalities and other little idiosyncrasies that litter the pages of our Great Indian Newspapers’. Nearly four years later, it is obvious that there are other contenders for greatness. Even Nepali journalism has fallen under the oppressive hold of Language ‘Ultras’in the last two years.

Here is a small sampling of what it means to read newspapers in this part of the world. And, as Rao, the soul of the project, requested readers in his preface to this priceless list, I too ask you to 'pitch in', to 'leap into the fray', to 'throw in your two pence worth'.

1. confabulate: to confer. ‘The party leaders confabulated about the new agreement.’
2. work out the modalities: sort out the details. ‘The party leaders confabulated about working out the modalities of the new agreement.’
3. supremo: head dude. ‘The party supremos confabulated about working out the modalities of the new agreement.’
4. brigand: bad dude. ‘The Karnataka and Tamil Nadu supremos confabulated about working out the modalities of the new agreement with the forest brigand.’
5. crack sleuths: smart dudes. ‘The Karnataka and Tamil Nadu supremos confabulated with the Special Task Force’s crack sleuths about working out the modalities of the new agreement with the forest brigand.’
6. strongman: big dude. ‘The Karnataka and Tamil Nadu supremos, in consultation with the Maratha strongman, confabulated with the Special Task Force’s crack sleuths about working out the modalities of the new agreement with the forest brigand.’
7. airdash: to move at other than usual glacial pace. ‘The Karnataka and Tamil Nadu supremos, in consultation with the Maratha strongman, confabulated with the Special Task Force’s crack sleuths about working out the modalities of the new agreement with the forest brigand. The PM himself has been airdashed in.’
8. beefed up security: more bodies, but not necessarily more security. ‘The Karnataka and Tamil Nadu supremos, in consultation with the Maratha strongman, confabulated with the Special Task Force’s crack sleuths about working out the modalities of the new agreement with the forest brigand. The PM himself has been airdashed in under conditions of beefed up security.’
9. second only to Scotland Yard: the subtext is that it’s not anymore
10. swing into action: to finally stop drinking *chai* and reluctantly get off your ass.
11. swoop down upon: ‘The Karnataka and Tamil Nadu supremos, in consultation with the Maratha strongman, confabulated with the Special Task Force’s crack sleuths about working out the modalities of the new agreement with the forest brigand. The PM himself has been airdashed in under conditions of beefed up security. Meanwhile the Mumbai police force, second only to Scotland Yard, having been called in to assist with the situation have now swung into action and are ready to swoop down upon the brigand and his associates.’
12. nab: seize
13. hardened criminals: tough dudes
14. And finally, a favourite in those times when people are swinging into action: ‘flying squads of nuisance detectors.’ These are the Mumbai PD’s intrepid stalwarts who have been relentlessly patrolling the city enforcing the municipality’s ban on plastic bags of less than 20 microns thickness. ‘The Karnataka and Tamil Nadu supremos, in consultation with the Maratha strongman, confabulated with the Special Task Force’s crack sleuths about working out the modalities of the new agreement with the forest brigand. The PM himself has been airdashed in under conditions of beefed up security.’
If the political parties are not the solution, then they are a part of the problem.

CAPITAL LETTER
Yubaraj Ghimire

Last week, King Gyanendra undertook what appeared to be an ice-breaking exercise by inviting leaders of the political parties one by one for dialogues. He handed them his seven-point political guideline, albeit in the form of a suggestion, so they could build a consensus around it to end the political stalemate. This belated move was received with an air of mistrust by the political leadership. Nevertheless, the king seemingly tried to impress upon the people and international community (both largely pro-democracy) that his efforts to restore the constitutional process and democracy are genuine and sincere.

Unfortunately, this gesture will not be taken at face value if it isn’t followed up with matching actions. The preliminary response of the parties is proof of a crisis of confidence. The hardline that a dominant section of the palace secretariat has been pursuing continues with the king visibly a part of it. When they evaluate the king’s agenda, the parties cannot remain oblivious to the political snad that the Raj Parishad has been spreading ahead of the impending public felicitation for the king in the west. This is the third public event since he invoked the controversial Article 127 and took over executive powers.

Still, the political parties have an obligation to push their own agenda with a broader understanding if they do not agree with the king. After all, they can’t escape their share of the blame for having malpracticed democracy during the past 13 years. If they are not willing to be part of the solution, they will be considered a part of the problem. Burning public and private property using students and youths will only legitimise ‘terrorism’ as a means to demand political rights. Can G P Koirala or Madhab Nepal fully endorse what students belonging to their parties are doing on the streets?

If they do, perhaps the king should bypass Koirala and Nepal and just invite student leaders Gagan Thapa, Gurn Ghimire and Rajendra Rai in for a chat. As long as he is at it, maybe he could ask the students for their views on how the elections can be held within a clear time frame so that people’s sovereignty and the constitutional process are fully restored.

A protest movement has to be fully answerable and accountable to the public. A leader cannot be absolved of any crime or damage caused to the nation, public or individual in the course of such a movement. Leaders who can’t keep a situation under control should give way to someone who can. That’s what democracy is all about.

Mahatma Gandhi had called off the mass movement in 1921 when over enthusiastic pro-independence groups set ablaze a police station in Chauri Chaura near Gorakhpur in violation of his appeal for a non-violent protest. It is time for GP Koirala and Madhab Nepal to decide: do they lead the students, or is it the other way round?

The times are no less challenging for the king. The slogan of ‘republic’ has the potential to write off established power centres. World history is replete with such instances. The present constitution makes it clear that the executive powers do not belong to the king: it should go to the people and be exercised through an elected parliament and a government accountable to it. Nothing but elections at the earliest will do justice to the spirit of the constitution.

If the king and political parties refuse to understand this, it will be because of their reluctance to take lessons from history. Or it will mean they are both equally indifferent to the future of this country.
Gender agenda

A Shadow Report to an international conference in New York paints a bleak picture of women's rights in Nepal.

The need to belong

The Nepali community in the UK needs a cultural fix every now and then.

Farnborough, excited to watch the famous comedy duo act and to bring some warmth to their heart.

In the UK, cultural events like this are becoming a common occurrence and Farnborough always is a must visit place for such touring 'charity' events due to the large concentration of Nepalis in the area. The format at such events is usually always the same, a basic hall with no frills shows where families and friends 5,000 miles from home take the opportunity to meet up and share a little of the Nepali cultural warmth and replenishment in the cold English climate.

There is always some VIP or film star from Bollywood (probably now living in the UK) ready to regale us with their back catalogue for the community to laugh, dance and be magically transported back to their families and their past lives in Nepal.

The Nepali community lacks the close knit strongholds and proximity enjoyed by other communities such as the Bengalis in the UK. It is often necessary for Nepalis, (whether students, professionals or labourers) to travel great distances in order to attend these kinds of celebrations. However, the comfort of ones' own culture and the need to belong can have a strong magnetic pull when one is in a foreign land.

It can be a business opportunity for some in the community. There is some financial incentive for putting on shows, as a large audience is always assured, no distance or indeed cost (most programs now charge £15 a ticket) seems too much for the Nepali community to bear. This is because these programs satisfy our need for a cultural fix. The UK has many positive factors (honest), but to a Nepali far from home, the UK can be a cold and unwelcoming place.

I heard a man bemoaning the lack of decorations on the stage. “Shows in the past used to use a waterfall or a snow machine, but now its lack of frills shows the lack of decorations on the stage. ‘Shadows in the past used to use a waterfall or a snow machine, but now its lack of frills shows the lack of atmosphere. For him, these nights are about looking. For a British tourist dreaming of Shangri-La, “Villages and hills, a river running past a village in the foreground,” he went on. For him, these nights are about recalling an idealistic image of the homeland, much in the same way British tourist dreams of Shangri-La. For many like him, there is an inherent need for cultural identity and sense of belonging. That is why contraception (many mothers) like these are there to satisfy a need. This demand has been expertly tapped by some entrepreneurial Nepali individuals, but one wonders if it could also be tapped for a more altruistic and noble purpose.

They need not be just nostalgic meanderings, but used to promote awareness of ‘disappeared’ Nepalis, or those who have died needlessly in a vindictive, vindictive and violent struggle for power. We could do more to support those friends and relatives who continue to live in the shadow of this war. The Nepali community should not content itself with having merely financial influence back in Nepal, it is capable of so much more. In this new year, when the need for peace in Nepal has never been greater, Nepalis in the UK must learn to face the reality of what happens far away in their home villages and towns, and we must all take responsibility for seeing that peace can return there.
Journey of a lifetime

Everest Base Camp was selected in 20 Journeys of a Lifetime by The Observer (1 January 2004) by journalist Jill Hartley as great adventure with that roof-of-the-world feeling as you stand there in awed silence, surrounded by towering snow-capped peaks.” Hopefully, this will translate to more tourists in 2004.

Tee off

Millennium Hotel Club Health & Golf Resort in Dharan will be playing host to His Majesty Crown Prince Paras Bir Bikram Shah Dev–All Nepal Amateur Open Golf Tournament 2004 on 17-18 January. The course is the oldest in Nepal and was designed by Nuffield Trust (UK). It has 18 holes with 5,992 yards, 70 par. Besides golf, the resort also offers yoga, meditation, swimming, tennis, squash, treks, natural foods and in-house cultivated rare herbs, natural therapies include herbal steam baths, traditional oil massage, mud therapy and other rejuvenating programs. There are two luxurious banquet halls for accommodations, a multi-cuisine restaurant and catering facilities for parties and weddings.

Better stays

Shangri-la Delight Hotel, which was recognised as one of the Top Ten Tourist Service Houses (TSSF) of the year 2003-04 by the NTB, Pratin Bahadur Panday, executive director of Shangri-La Hotel received the award on 30 December 2003 from Shangri-La Group, Nepal’s only boutique hotel, which is among the higher tax and tourism service fee contributors in the past year.

Top class

Hotel Nepalgunj, which has been classified as a five star hotel, has been awarded the “Gold Certificate” by the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). The certificate is awarded to hotels who provide the best possible service and facilities to their clients.

Newbies

Radisson Hotel Kathmandu recently appointed Klaus P. Russo as the new general manager. Russo has held senior executive positions in high profile properties in Europe, Asia, China, America and Samoa and now in Nepal. Prior to Russo’s appointment, Abhinav Rana, resident manager looked after the hotel for almost a year and a half as acting general manager. Russo, after taking over the hotel, has also appointed Konala Ram Krishna Reddy as Executive Chef. Reddy took over Radisson’s kitchen from out going Chef Nabinbho Goth.

Higher aims

Civil saving and credit co-operative hold themselves up as an example to those who view organisation like theirs with pessimism. At its annual general meeting on 14 March, it has decided to launch “Global Peace Fund” to battle out the social problems and to meet the objectives of the organisation: “To collect every small sum and invest in transportation, medical facilities and other industries to meet the higher aims of the country.”

Profits and shares

Niranjan K. Tiwabala was elected to the board of Standard Chartered Bank Nepal Limited (SCBL) to replace the outgoing Hari K. K. Shrestha at the bank’s 17th annual general meeting on 8 January. Net profit after tax amounted to Rs 507 million earned in the fiscal year 2003-04, a 5.6 percent growth. Shares of the bank are trading at Rs 140, with a cash dividend of 110 percent and bonus share in the ratio of one bonus share for every 10 proposed by the board of directors.

Bang for buck

At its own AGM, Everest Bank announced an operating profit to show a 60.5 percent growth. The bank has declared a cash dividend of 110 percent and bonus share in the ratio of one bonus share for every 10 proposed by the board of directors.

NEW PRODUCTS

MORE FROM DABUR: Dabur Arm, a new range of hair products, has been launched in Dabur Nepal was unveiled on the last day of the Dabur Amrit Motion Picture Award 2001 held on 10 January. The Amrit brand includes Dabur Natural Shampoo, Dabur Armour Coconut Oil and Dabur Arm anderson Amla Hair Oil.

SUGAR RUSH: Java confectionery, a part of Laxmi Groups, has introduced Crave or Rs 1 each, a rich candy combination of real cream, butter and milk with the slogan “try to believe it.” The group also produces successful brands like Chocofin, Laclofin and Mango Tart.

World Bank message

If we can get our act together, there is a lot more money for Nepal’s development.

K an Ohashi, the World Bank’s Nepalese director, made it clear at the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) launch last week that the government must set its priorities in place. The government meets target it has set, the World Bank will continue to assist Nepal. If the performance is good, was the message, there is more money. While media latched on to the ‘failed state’ warnings in line with our strong belief in the Ahram rule of thought, the Beed takes a more positive view. World Bank assistance is dependent on scenario that needs a government to perform and pushes for peace to end the long years of conflict. It is very clear that the money will be as strong as any government ensures that there is a strong anti-corruption drive, true decentralisation, banking and fiscal reforms that will manage public expenditure and the annual action plan targets that are realised. While the current base demands less than the public service spending of $120-200 million each year during the assistance period, the best case scenario could be $200-250 million. For hope from the Kham Chul Club, the nightlife is $50 million or less.

It is very important to note the Bank’s position on the political situation. The Bank, however, does not support the multiparty agenda, it has more to do with the functioning of ‘patronage politics’ rather than democracy itself. The Beed has often questioned whether banking reforms or Nepal’s entry into the WTO would have been possible if we were still in the old politics. This does not, however, suggest that we should not get back to parliamentary democracy but when it happens, there will be a strong need for politicians and the government to make it in order to reform agenda can be pursued. It is always better to achieve reform faster and reap the benefits than staggert and loose out. The Bank’s CAS want to stimulate growth through private sector development, push public private partnerships and create a better environment for investment. It is pinioning more hope on the government.

It has to work with the government. But it can also work with independent agencies on specific issues. For instance, in case of economy-related legislative reform, it is important to work with advocacy groups and think tanks. Similarly, working directly with successful pro-reform local governments may provide others incentive to move towards reforms.

CAS is what the Beed thinks should be done. Now, the onus is on Nepal to do its bit. At a time when general feeling is that we are losing our, the Beed’s message is that if Nepal can control its own destiny, there is help at hand.

ECONOMIC SENSE

Artha Beed

Who will ensure tourists get the best service?

NATO vs NATA

Who will ensure tourists get the best service?

Two associations of travel agents, Nepal Association of Tour Operators (NATO) and Nepal Association of Travel Agents (NATA) are divided over the issue of the bank guarantee they are required to deposit into the national coffee fund.

NATO has proposed to the government that any travel agent working as a tour operator should deposit Rs 2.5 million as a bank guarantee to ensure quality service to clients. NATA argues that a majority of travel agents cannot afford to deposit that amount.

NATO’s chairman Basanta Mishra says the idea has to be pushed because of complaints from tour operators that had bid for tourism projects. “We have to respond to such complaints before Nepal becomes a destination for hippies again,” Mishra says. “Once the deposit is fixed, tour operators will be forced to maintain quality.”

NATO says NATO just wants to monopolise the business. “The majority of travel agents are dead set against the idea,” says Rabl Poudel president of NATO, which has 250 travel agents. “How can we pay 2.5 million when our business has slacked, why should only big operators be allowed to do business that way?” he asks.

More than 600 travel agencies are registered with the Ministry of Tourism, but only 200 are in business. Travel agents get their operating license with the Ministry of Tourism, but only 200 are in business that way?” he asks. NATO officials argue that since travel agents deposit bank guarantees to different airlines for ticketing transactions, there is no reason why they cannot do the same for tour operations as well.

Despite its four decades of experience, Nepal’s tourism industry does not have any accreditation program, either from the government or from the private sector. None of the tourism related organisations and government agencies have fixed criteria for services offered by travel and trekking agents.

But Poudel argues: “How can you guarantee quality by increasing the deposit?”

300,000. It approached the government to lower the amount. “We have been assured that it will be lowered,” says Poudel.

NATO officials argue that since travel agents deposit bank guarantees to different airlines for ticketing transactions, there is no reason why they cannot do the same for tour operations as well.
The Buddhist circuit
Nepal is part of a new regional initiative to promote Buddhist pilgrimage tourism.

IMTIAZ MUBGIL IN BANGKOK

The travel and tourism pendulum swung from Southeast Asia to South Asia last week as violence in southern Thailand gave rise to safety concerns while South Asian countries made peace and announced plans to hold a Tourism Year in 2005.

Also last week, the Asian Development Bank announced the approval of a $450,000 technical assistance grant to develop a tourism plan for Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal, the four countries belonging to the South Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (Sasec).

The Sasec tourism plan is expected to evolve around the common themes of the Buddhist circuit and ecotourism. It will give a major boost to investment in badly-needed infrastructure for millions of potential Buddhist pilgrims, similar to the model of Muslim pilgrims to Saudi Arabia.

A major component of the South Asian countries’ plan for regional integration and free trade, tourism featured prominently in the South Asian summit that ended on a largely positive note last week. The final Islamabad Declaration said: “Development of tourism within South Asia could bring economic, social and cultural dividends. There is a need for increasing cooperation to jointly promote tourism within South Asia as well as to promote South Asia as a tourism destination inter alia by increasing intra-regional travel.”

The summit also designated 2005 as ‘South Asia Tourism Year’ and saw India and Pakistan resuming bilateral air links and overflights. PIA started Lahore-New Delhi-Lahore flights on 1 January and Karachi-Bomtay-Karachi flights from 2 January. The airline plans to add flights from Karachi to New Delhi in March. PIA has also resumed its flights to Kathmandu from Karachi which overall India.

Indian Airlines on Friday was to start a twice-weekly New Delhi-Lahore-New Delhi flight. It also plans to start a direct flight between New Delhi and Kabul. Flights over Pakistan airspace will shorten travel time by 10 to 60 minutes for Air India and Indian Airlines flights to the Gulf, Europe and the United States.

Travellers previously had to fly via Dubai to Karachi separated by only a few hundred kilometres. Air India said it would save about $80 million per year on fuel costs. India’s privately owned airlines Jet Airways and Air Sahara have also applied to start flights to Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal since a policy change at the Indian civil aviation ministry permitted private domestic operators to fly to South Asian countries.

Bus services had resumed last July following a ceasefire on the borders. And train services between the countries are set to resume from 15 January. The summit also announced plans to set up a SASEC Cultural Centre in the Sri Lankan hill resort of Kandy “as a symbol of South Asian shared cultural heritage”. The centre will work on preservation of traditional skills and crafts and promotion of South Asian cultural exchanges.

A PIA footing for the Sasec tourism plan will fit in nicely with the South Asian summit goals. Les Clark, a New Zealand-based tourism planning specialist, is to undertake a similar plan for the Sasec countries, covering the period 2005 to 2014.

He will work with the Sasec tourism industry and related parties in developing a framework program and project concepts. National workshops will be held in each of the countries hosted by the respective national tourism organisations.

Snima Sahni, an ADB senior project economist, said: “The subregion can offer activities such as overland cultural tours and mountain trekking. Aside from bringing in foreign exchange, creating jobs and contributing to overall economic growth, this kind of tourism promotes rural development.”

Focusing on the Buddhist circuit will also strengthen cultural and religious tourism linkages between South and Southeast Asia, both directly as well as via other subregional groups such as the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) and BIMST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Co-operation).

Bangkok-based ESCAP has also done extensive work on developing the potential of the Buddhist circuit. Presentations from a recent Japanese-funded seminar on the circuit are available on www.unescap.org/th/index.asp

The UN body’s Transport and Tourism Division chief Burry Cables said: “ADB funding will certainly go a long way toward attracting interest in investment in this very important part of the world. I hope local authorities will ensure that there are the right kind of products in line with the sense of place.”

Imtiaz Mubgil is executive editor of Travel Impact Newsweek, an e-mailed newsletter and analysis service focusing on the Asia-Pacific travel industry.

Thoughtless food
Chow, chow and more chow.

A stroll down the street from Thapathali to Pulchok has always been an eye-opener to the state of affairs. You end up thinking a lot more than you would inside one of those vehicles jostling past one another across the bridge. Hoarding is surely having its show and more chow assault your eyes. Billboards pushing greed and lust communicate with the commuting masses every hour of every day.

My informal poll has shown that the 2003 Most Gender-Insensitive and Repulsive Billboard of the World Award was carried away by the ‘Nothing satisfies more than Virgin!’ billboard on the bridge. Feeling a bit nauseous here is not just the odour of a decaying Bagmati wafting into the vehicle. The fact that a passé macho attitude can still sell whisky in this day and age must be an indication of how far back Nepal maledom still is. Yet another case of 2CD: creativity dead.

If we were to go by the barrage of media persuasions, the advertisements that assaul our senses every time we turn a page, tune in to radio, switch one of the new local television channels or drive past street hoardings, it would seem that we are turning into a nation whose staple food is instant noodles. By the time you’d have beenFood

But we have<br>been<br>...
Namche Bazar wasn’t quite prepared for the Christmas-New Year rush of trekkers last month, but no one here is complaining. The lodges are not 100 percent full, but owners say they haven’t seen a winter with this many trekkers in a long time.

Namche’s restaurant owners and hotel managers who by now would be in Kathmandu only to return in spring, are staying on this winter. Many people here have varying explanations for this, but two seem to stand out: the worldwide publicity of the Everest 50th Anniversary event, which is still lingering, as well as some trekking traffic diverted from the Annapurna circuit because of news of Maoist extortion there.

Ghandrung’s loss, therefore, has been Namche’s gain.

No one has done an exact tally, but information from the national park and other sources say the trekking arrival figures for 2003 was as good as Visit Nepal Year 1998, when over 35,000 trekkers visited the Everest region.

The rush can be seen in Lukla airport itself. If the visibility is good in Kathmandu, the Lukla flights start taking off at 6:45. On one day in December just before Christmas Day, there were 50 flights from Kathmandu and Phaplu, and Yeti Airlines alone is regularly doing 15 flights a day. Not all carry passengers, half the flights carry cargo or a mix of cargo and passengers. Some up market tourists staying at the Everest View Hotel fly directly to Syangboche.

The trekking demographics is also changing. No more is there a predominance of Americans and Britons. They have been replaced by more exotic nationalities: Koreans, Israelis and a growing number of South Americans. There are advantages to being a Nepali trekker here, since there are so few of us. Thanks to NTB, there is even a name for Kathmandu people who go hiking for pleasure and not for business: ‘Antarik Paryatak’. But Nepali trekkers like me form less than one percent of the visitors to Khumbu.

Many along the trail, once they found out I was Nepali, would ask me which trek group I was leading. When I replied that I was just here to take pictures, they were surprised. But nowhere were they dismissive after finding out I was Nepali, as happens elsewhere where waiters and receptionists tend to pay more attention to ‘genuine tourists’ than ‘domesticated tourists’.

Namche is now firmly ensconced in the global village. There are internet cafes, VSAT phone booths all along the trail, pool parlours and cable television. There will be the purists who will lament this modernisation and wish Namche remained the yak town it used to be 50 years ago. But for the people of Namche, there is no doubt which is better.

The trail from Namche to Tengboche is thick with snow. The pine and fir forests are thick, with flocks of danphes flapping off into the undergrowth when accosted while sunning themselves on a rock. Despite the number of tourists and the encroachment of modern media, the Everest trail in winter is still a great place for those getting low on battery to go up to recharge.

Lukla is surprisingly affordable for Nepalis, the local line roundtrip is Rs 3,600. (It is just under $100 for foreigners and some airlines offer a special rate for Indians.) It is a standard Rs 100 per tourist for a room and food prices are standard.
Climbing up to Namche always feels like an achievement: the second half of the incline seems endless, the trail always much longer than I remember it.

Bend after bend, walking on until finally reaching the entrance to this amphitheatre which is still on the other side of the slope from the main bazar. Here chickens dart across the trail, porters rest their loads on the slate ledges and tourists (or anyone who looks like one) are usually accosted by “Namastes!” from children.

Taking either the higher or lower path into Namche, it is always a little bit of a shock being confronted by the bulk of the town. Every visit, there are new buildings, the confines of the town creeping ever so slightly upwards and outwards on the slopes that cradle it.

Located above the point where the Bhote Koshi and Dudh Koshi converge, hotels and lodges are everywhere. In peak season (March-April and October-December) these lodges are crowded with trekkers, each with their own plans to head further on up the trail to Tengboche or Gokyo or Everest base camp, or more rarely in the other direction up the Bhote Koshi towards Thame. Others are on their way down, full of monotonous tales of how far they got, their altitude sickness or lack thereof and their flight uncertainties in Lukla.

Come winter, things are slightly different. After the first snows around the end of December, the fir trees on the hill are bent with their load. Entering or leaving Namche can be an adventure on its own. Snow melts, only to freeze into ice. Walking is a delicate and often embarrassing process. I remember an undignified slip a few years ago that made my journey down the first part of the Namche hill considerably faster than expected.

Local schoolchildren don’t seem to mind though. Skiing Khumbu style consists of tying lengths of polythene pipe to one’s shoes and careening down the ice, counting on a convenient snow bank or possibly a strategically located rock wall as a landing pad. Although never quite brave enough to try this myself, I have gone down a certain slope in Khunde seated on half of an old jerry can, the accepted substitute for a toboggan. I can recommend it to anyone who doesn’t mind walking stiffly for the next few days.

Winter isn’t all fun and games though. It’s bitterly cold, particularly in the foggy mornings and afternoons. For the weeks before it snows, terrific winds blow up dust everywhere—going
outdoors is difficult and unpleasant. In the villages, livestock is brought down from the summer pastures. The ground floors of traditional houses are crowded with animals, piles of firewood and dried dung cakes, collected and stored to burn through the winter, along with potatoes harvested before the earth froze.

Snow brings its own problems: travelling becomes difficult or impossible, and snow blindness, frostbite, avalanches and problems ranging from the sniffles to pneumonia are always a possibility. More minor irritations include having perpetually wet boots and socks, eggs with frozen yolks and on one memorable occasion, having my hair freeze with little icicles on the tips after I’d foolishly attempted to wash it one January afternoon.

Winter is time for trading. The Saturday haat bazar in Namche is a microcosm of the variety the human race has to offer. The down-valley Raish and Chettris, tourists from all over the world with their rainbows of down jackets and tinted glasses, the occasional government bureaucrat, the Khampas and of course local Sherpas, all mix together in a riot of colours, languages and nationalities.

The mix of goods on offer is astounding—essentials like sugar, flour and noodles that people from villages like Thame and Pangboche come to collect to stock up for Losar, exotic Turkish apricots and Bulgarian salami abandoned by large trekking expeditions on their way down and jackets and trousers that the Khampas have bought over on their trip from Tibet. As the day wears on, the snow around the bazar turns brown and slushy under the hundred of boots. By late afternoon, most are ready to leave.

The fog rolls in as the sun dips down. The mountains—Thamserku, Khongdi and Khumbila gradually fade into the mist. The temperature drops rapidly with another late-afternoon flurry of snow. Days are short and everyone is happy to be in warm homes by dark.

All of this is familiar, yet different, every winter. Jemima Sherpa was born in Khunde Hospital above Namche.
Business visas for non-businessmen

Foreigners staying in Nepal use the investment loophole for long-term visas.

When the government introduced new business visa regulations in 1992, there was a surge of optimism that the new rule would encourage foreign investors to flock to Nepal. The Foreign Investment and Technology Transfer Act allowed foreign entrepreneurs to have 100 percent share equity in selected sectors and simplified visa procedures for such companies. There is no minimum limit for investors in Nepal, and those approved are eligible for incentives, including the business visa provision. For the first few years, the act helped boost foreign investment in hydropower, manufacturing, and the tourism sector.

Today, the act and the easier visa processing that went with it have become loopholes for spurious investors and fly-by-night operators to obtain long-term business visas. Even though foreign investment is at an all-time low, an investigation of the paper at the Department of Industries revealed that just 50 new foreign investment ventures had been registered in the last eight months and investors had availed themselves of business visas. Most of these are restaurants, but there are also agro-based industries, IT companies, garment industries and language institutes.

Hawley honoured

Honorary New Zealand consul in Nepal, mountaineering chronicler Elizabeth Hawley was presented with the Honorary Queen's Service Medal for Public Services (GSM) by the New Zealand ambassador to Nepal, Caroline McDonald, at a function here yesterday. Hawley's name was the first on the list of people who would like to attend because the new dates are not suitable. The royal palace officials. The inauguration had been postponed earlier because of a project, the 144 MW Kali Gandaki A, on 22 January according to sources.

Hawley was conferred the medal by Queen Elizabeth last year and was in recognition of Hawley's contribution to New Zealand interests in Nepal since the 1970s. She has been involved in dealings in Nepal and assisting Nepali students to study in New Zealand. Hawley also works for the Himalayan Trust, which was set up by Sir Edmund Hillary in 1965 to help education and health projects in Kumbhu.

"Miss Hawley has made an outstanding contribution to New Zealand's relationship with Nepal. She has done so in her personal capacity, and through her role as Honorary Consultant and her position on the Himalayan Trust. I am pleased that her long years of willing service have been recognised in this way," McDonald said.

Hillary himself described Hawley as "a most remarkable person" when he was conferred the medal last year. Hawley was conferred the medal by Queen Elizabeth last year and was in recognition of Hawley's contribution to New Zealand interests in Nepal since the 1970s. She has been involved in dealings in Nepal and assisting Nepali students to study in New Zealand. Hawley also works for the Himalayan Trust, which was set up by Sir Edmund Hillary in 1965 to help education and health projects in Kumbhu.

Tibetan leader dead

An era of Tibetan history came to an end this week with the death of Dorje Wangdak Dongtotsang in Kathmandu. The elected ruler and resistance leader of Khan in eastern Tibet. Dorje twice escaped the Dalai Lama out of the country to safety in India at great personal risk. Immortalised in such films as Kung Fu and Seven Samurai, he led a quiet and reflective life in Nepal as head of an extensive family, fascinated by his unfailing kindness and understanding despite the loss of his beloved sons, he passed away in Beijing at 100. The death of Dorje was a shock to the entire Tibetan community.

King to inaugurate Kali Gandaki

King Gyanendra is set to inaugurate Nepal's biggest hydroelectric project, the 144 MW Kali Gandaki A, on 22 January according to officials. The inauguration had been postponed earlier because of a lingering controversy over an unaidsed payment of cost overruns. The project was intended to help pay for the construction of the new civil president. President Chadon Chino of the Asian Development Bank, which financed the $428 million project, will now not be able to attend because the new dates are not suitable. The royal palace communication secretariat, however, said it did not know about the inauguration. "We have not been informed about it," said an official.

The palace had sought details of the cost overrun last year (see Nepal Times Feb 16).

However, officials interviewed for this article in various government ministries admitted that business visas are being grossly misused by some entrepreneurs who have not invested in Nepal, but bribe officials to obtain multiple-entry long-term business visas. The 1994 Immigration Regulation Act for foreign investors specifically prohibits such action. The reason non-genuine investors opt for business visas is not only because they don't have to worry about it for five years, but also because you have to go through a lot more procedures to get a visa than a non-tourist visa which costs $60 a month for the first year and $100 a month after that. "This is obviously why some people prefer business visas," admitted Harihar Shrestha, director of the Department of Immigration.

The fact that there is no minimum investment threshold and it is relatively cheap to register a foreign investment makes it easy for those who want to save the law. And no one really seems to check whether they have actually set up an industry, paid their taxes, or even if they have registered.

To be sure, a business visa is a long and tedious process where the applicant has to go to several ministries for clearance before immigration puts the stamp on the passport. Still, can easily pay a date and cash paid under the right table, and there are always 'facilitators' who know the process and can be hired for the job. In the end, what happens is that the investor doesn't really invest in Nepal at all.

Our investigations show that out of the 2,450 business visas issued last year, 291 were business visas and most of them are not genuine foreign investments. For example, only half of the 850 foreign investment ventures registered with the Department of Industries are still functioning.

One such is a Korean-Nepal joint venture Konep Craft with an authorised capital of Rs 10 million which was supposed to produce 100,000 pieces of ready-made garments a year. The project was never opened. The Immigration Office has record of the company's registration, but no one has reported the loss of profit loss statements. Yet, the Department of Industry never deemed it necessary to investigate the application further and simply tracked down the factory in Sainajija or call the phone number showed it was never established.

Still, Konep Craft's Korean investor got his business visa extended twice by the Foreign Investment Section of the Department of Industries. "It was a difficult case; we knew it was just a trick to get a business visa," one ministry clerk admitted to us on condition of anonymity. After finding, the clerk added guardedly: "I am only small fry in this office, I don't know much and shouldn't speak about these matters."

There is an unrestricted supply of secrecy about business visa misuse northern government departments, which seems puzzling. But clerks speak in hushed tones of phones calls and meetings going on behind the scenes preceding the renewal of visas. When we asked section officer Sushil Dhakal at the Department of Immigration how a foreign investor who had not invested in the industry he was given permission for was getting his business visa renewed every year, he appeared at first defensive, and then offensive.

"Our job is to recommend a business visa if the file meets relevant requirements for foreign investors," he said testily. "I don't know anymore. I have told you as much as I know." (Khos Patrikaran Kendra)
The World Social Forum, to be held in the southern Indian city of Mumbai between 16-21 January could not have been convened at a more different place from Porto Allegre in Brazil, in venue for the three years since 2001. Porto Allegre is in a province of Brazil ruled by the progressive Workers' Party, as much a forward-looking popular social movement as a political organisation contesting elections, whose leader is now that country's president. Mumbai, India's financial capital, with its gleaming chrome-and-glass buildings generates more than a fourth of the country’s direct tax revenue. But two-thirds of Mumbai's people live in shantytowns. In some ways this is a microcosm of India, although its urban existence bears sharp contrast to the rest of the country, 70 percent of which is rural.

Mumbai's—and India's—reality gives lie to the Indian government's claim that globalisation, along with privatisation and deregulation, has transformed the conditions of life of the people for the better and holds the key to genuine development and progress. The government has been tone-tomming the achievements of neoliberal economic policy through a series of advertisements entitled 'India Shining'. They are part of propaganda by the ruling coalition before a probable early parliamentary election around April. It celebrates India’s “gains” and “brilliant achievements” – seven percent growth rate in GDP, rising stock prices, lower interest rates, a boom in information technology, a tripling of the number of cellular phone lines in two years, construction of new highways.

All these claims are suspect or downright meaningless from the point of view of the people. High share prices carry no relevance for the majority; less than 60 million out of India’s one billion people own stocks and shares. Low interest rates are part of a new deflationary regime in India. Deflation is likely to reduce wage incomes, weaken indigenous industrial capabilities and impoverish the economy.

All of India’s new highways are being built as toll roads, which will raise the costs of transportation while unjustly rewarding contractors. The expansion of the cellular phone market, undoubtedly impressive, is taking place at the expense of access by the majority to basic phone lines: less than five out of 100 Indians have a simple land line.

For the IT boom, India is producing lots of “cyber-cooks”, low-wage, sweatshop workers at the lowest end of the value-chain. Two sobering thoughts are in order: IT accounts for under two percent of India’s national income. The fastest growing sector is call centers, where young people work 12 to 14-hour shifts for $150 a month, only to reach a career dead end. However, what of the claimed high GDP growth? India’s average growth rate in the past three years has been in lowest in a decade. Ironically, India’s organised-sector workforce shed 420,000 jobs in 2001-02, and now accounts for just 7 percent of total employment in India. Today, it has 910,000 fewer jobs than in 1997. So much for ‘India Shining’! The fall has not been made up by the unorganised or informal sector, where total employment has fallen by a mere one percent a year over the past decade. Over the past 15 years or so, annual employment growth in India has decreased from 2.7 percent to just 1.1 percent.

There are other distressing figures that tell Indian reality better: appalling stagnation in health, nutrition and education indicators. India now lags behind Bangladesh in primary education access, fallen from 124 to 127 in the UN Human Development Index. And 35 percent live below one dollar a day.
**Vegetarian cows don’t go mad**

RIÓ DE JANEIRO - In an era of mad cow disease, the ability to tell that your cattle are purely vegetarian constitutes an indispensable weapon for beef exporters like Brazil. Brazil’s farm researchers have developed a fast, effective method to detect the presence of animal protein in livestock feed. It benefited from the lengthy drought that devastated cattle production in Australia, becoming the world’s biggest beef exporter, selling 1.3 million tons in 2003—30 percent more than in 2002. Brazil has also benefited from mad cow disease, or BSE, which first emerged in the 1980s among European cattle raised in feedlots and fed ration produced by some 700 plants within hours and the low cost of the test method allows the detection and quantification of animal proteins in feed produced by some 700 plants. 

**After shock**

RAMIN MOSTAGHIM in BAM

**H ow much longer must our people suffer tragic disasters?**

Hamid Birjandi asks, looking out at his hometown, this historic city in south-eastern Iran that has been left in ruins by the massive earthquake on 23 December.

Birjandi used to be a drug trafficker, running opium between Afghanistan and Pakistan. “Until five years ago, I was smuggling hundreds of kilos of opium to provide for my relatives to live decently, to study and marry. I have dug up the bodies of 30 of my relatives myself.”

Last week, Birjandi was mourning beside the corpses of his relatives, when a motorcade bearing the city’s mayor passed by. “The government is behaving as if it were in the time of an earthquake,” says Abdulhssain Aslani, a businessman in Mashhad. “The government is behaving as if it were in the time of an earthquake,” says Abdulhssain Aslani, a businessman in Mashhad.

This is the time of an earthquake, and the government is behaving as if it were in the time of an earthquake.

**You can’t nuke terrorists**

America’s nuclear weapons program may promote the very proliferation it seeks to prevent.

Dianne Feinstein

UNITED

With the world’s focus on the debate over Iraq, the nuclear threat and the Bush administration’s doctrine of unilateral preemption, the American government’s new emphasis on the nuclear posture review may be received the attention it deserves. This is unfortunate, as this is the year when the idea that nuclear weapons represent a revolutionary shift in US national security policy.

The Bush administration’s shift in US national security policy,意在为新的核安全框架奠定基础，核武器预演了传统核武器的概念。该转移目前在一定程度上反映了对核武器的危险的共识，this year, the Bush administration has put forward a new nuclear weapons management framework that aims at a new nuclear posture for the US.

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The Bush administration’s shift in US national security policy,意在为新的核安全框架奠定基础，核武器预演了传统核武器的概念。该转移目前在一定程度上反映了对核武器的危险的共识，this year, the Bush administration has put forward a new nuclear weapons management framework that aims at a new nuclear posture for the US.
The vaccine divide

E ven without SARS, there is an emerging threat of a worldwide flu epidemic. But developing countries are woefully unprepared to deal with it because the resources to fight the disease are concentrated in the rich countries.

“Our concern is that during an influenza pandemic, first, vaccines will not reach developing countries until developed countries have set aside their demand because vaccine-producing companies are there,” says Klaus Stohr, head of the WHO’s Geneva-based Global Influenza Programme. “Developing countries have not yet started with the other items that belong to pandemic preparedness, which include deciding whom to vaccinate first, how governments will allocate hospital and other medical resources, and developing treatment guidelines.”

While the Fujian strain of the flu is getting most attention this winter, it is the emergence of two avian (bird) flu strains that have experts worried.

During outbreaks in 2003 each bird strain, one in Hong Kong and the other in the Netherlands, killed one person. To date, researchers have been unable to develop a vaccine against either variant and, unlike the Fujian version, no existing strains are similar enough to be used in a vaccine that would fight them.

“The only thing that has stood between us and a possible catastrophe is that the virus has not learned to transmit human to human,” said Robert Webster of the US-based St Jude Children’s Research Hospital. “That’s the only remaining step to be achieved.”

The last pandemic, the 1968-1969 Hong Kong Flu, killed an estimated 700,000 people worldwide. The next one could produce 650,000 deaths in less than two years—in industrialised countries alone.

Countries outside of North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand accounted for 35 percent of the almost 233 million doses of influenza vaccine used in 2000. The main users included Russia, Japan, South Korea, Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay. Almost overwhelmingly, they purchased the vaccine from companies in Northern nations, which in 2000 produced 85 percent of the global vaccine supply. Those production figures have really not changed.

“Currently, China produces around four million vaccine doses,” Stohr says. “But it’s a drop in the bucket.” But when a pandemic hits, that ‘bucket’ might be the only supply immediately available in the South, as all experts agree that developed countries will hoard (‘nationalise’) flu vaccine until they have treated their own citizens.

With just over 250 million doses now being produced worldwide, vaccinating the populations of industrialised nations could take a long time. Experts agree that a mechanism needs to be developed so that the inequities that will arise with the nationalisation of vaccine supply can be overcome. Researchers are also pushing for regulatory authorities to accept a new technique, called reverse genetics, to produce vaccine strains. But it faces two main hurdles: what it produces is considered a genetically modified organism, which the EU does not permit, and the patent for the technique is held by one company: US-based MedImmune.

Stohr says the company is willing to discuss how it will be compensated if reverse genetics is accepted for producing the virus strain in normal years—and to take a huge cut in compensation in the event of a pandemic—while EU officials are also open to talks. All sides will meet at the WHO in February, when plans are made for next season’s flu vaccine.
Giriadhara Rai in Garibdhā, 10 January

Our movement has scaled new heights. It has already produced some results and forced regression to stoop. It was because of us that the regressive forces had to release three of our student leaders who were arrested on 16 December. The king is now meeting the leaders of political parties, which is also a result of our movement. We have succeeded in exerting pressure. Many of our friends have been wounded. Many of them face legal charges. The army and the police have detained others. Security personnel killed a brother who had just returned from taking care of his hospitalised sister in Pokhara. We students are being killed in the name of controlling the Maoists. We are fighting for the reinstatement of democracy and for educational reforms. We have the support of the people because they realise that the king betrayed the political parties in previous meetings. Now that such talks are taking place again, the movement is not about to lose momentum. Our leaders’ dialogue with the king should not have any negative effect on our struggle. If the political parties decide to end the movement without attaining the goals for which there has been so much bloodshed, they will suffer. But we believe that the parties will never make such a move. The movement began with demands for the restoration of parliament or the formation of an all-party government. Since the king has not acceded to these demands, the present movement will not stop even if there is an all-party government. The king and the political parties must understand this. There have to be some changes in the constitution ensuring that power is restored to the people permanently.

Some goals are attained in the long run. Some have been campaigning for a constitutional monarchy but we think that concept needs to be overhauled. After all, the monarch is responsible for reversing Nepal’s democracy time and again. It is unreasonable to think that Nepal needs to keep a constitutional monarch. Today, we may need a king, but the political parties must begin to think of ultimately moving away from a monarchy. We may not be able to unseat the king, but we will be satisfied if his powers are curtailed and democracy restored.

For our eyes

Avani Pradhan, 12 January

Finding eye donors is becoming difficult as the death of potential donors is not reported on time to the eye banks, creating problems for the eye donation program. The cornea has to be transplanted within six hours after a donor’s death, but most of the time, family members are too grief-stricken to report the demise on time. “One person can open up a new world for two blind people,” says Bhola Prasad KC, committee member of the eye donation program. He encouraged the families of potential donors to inform the eye bank and hospital sooner so that the donor’s wishes would not go to waste. He also added that the families should be aware of caring for the dead person’s eyes by covering it so that dust and other waste materials do not contaminate it.

At present, there are 27,670 persons willing to donate their eyes after death. Till date, only about 2,348 blind people were lucky to have their vision back. The largest cause of blindness in Nepal is due to cataracts.

Living like Laxmi

Nepal Samacharpatra, 13 January

As if having a beard and moustache was not bad enough, 16-year-old Laxmi Shrestha of Tanahun also has to deal with teeth that fall off and grow back every year. While the psychological pain of being different from other girls has always been difficult, Laxmi also has problems eating. The ninth grader also does not have the luxury of staying at home, she runs a tea-shop—the only source of income for her mother and a brother. Laxmi’s case is of interest to medical researchers, who say they can’t make any conclusions or suggest antidotes.
Student suicide
Rajdhani, 11 January

“My son was so scared of the police that he killed himself,” says the bedridden mother of Naresh Maharjan, a 17-year-old schoolboy who recently committed suicide to avoid police arrest. Two years ago, Naresh was detained for three months on suspicion of being a Maoist. "He was blindfolded all the time and tortured to get him to reveal the names of Maoist acquaintances. "After all that time blindfolded, his eyes became so weak that he had to start wearing spectacles," says Babita, his sister.

For the last two years, Naresh had been living under severe mental stress. Recently, when police said they were coming to arrest him again, Naresh could not bear the trauma and decided to kill himself. On 9 January, his family found him lying on the bed writhing with pain. They desperately tried to save him, but he died on the way to Patan Hospital.

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Back at Sundarijal

“I am at the king’s disposal”

14.11.77

1st thing in the morning that I receive is a tiffin carrier with boxes of rasgolla + cheese sent by Shailaja. I know at the very first sight that they were from Shailaja but I inquired of the officer who brought them only to make sure. The camp commander complained to me about the behaviour of someone, perhaps Shrinivas who, however, (according to the c.c.) abruptly cut off the line saying that he knew nothing of the Koirals. I too thought it was a very strange behaviour on Shrinivas’s part if it was really he who was on the phone. I think the c.c. was connected to a wrong person. I came for a while + told me that he had spoken to PM about our demand for foreign newspapers + radio. He feels that this would be met after PM returns from Hetaura three days hence. I. g. again asked me to do something to go out of prison + function outside as a free man. “It is no use being a second Abdul Gaffar Khan.” I told him everything depends on the king’s attitude + that I am at his disposal + I won’t discuss my plans or ideas on political matters with anyone, unless it is very urgent. I would, however, like to meet Shailaja, but she is not permitted to see me. And, then, what is there to talk about?

15.11.77

The day passed in a very dull manner. I got up at 3:30 PM, an unusual hour to leave the bed. I didn’t generally get full sleep these days moreover my bladder full to the bursting, washed my mouth had a glass of tepid water + then prepared two glasses of tea (one for the senry who was standing in the cold outside my room) read for sometime most fitfully, waited to go to bed again, but couldn’t get sleep, then tried reading without concentration—took some time decided what warm clothes to put on before going out for a small walk in the limited area surrounding my room which is known as the compound of my cell, it is an hour’s constitutional. At about 7AM prepared a hot glass of milk boiled with rasgolla + cheese sent by Shailaja. I receive is a tiffin carrier with boxes of rasgolla + cheese sent by Shailaja. I know at the very first sight that they were from Shailaja but I inquired of the officer who brought them only to make sure. The camp commander complained to me about the behaviour of someone, perhaps Shrinivas who, however, (according to the c.c.) abruptly cut off the line saying that he knew nothing of the Koirals. I too thought it was a very strange behaviour on Shrinivas’s part if it was really he who was on the phone. I think the c.c. was connected to a wrong person. I came for a while + told me that he had spoken to PM about our demand for foreign newspapers + radio. He feels that this would be met after PM returns from Hetaura three days hence. I. g. again asked me to do something to go out of prison + function outside as a free man. “It is no use being a second Abdul Gaffar Khan.” I told him everything depends on the king’s attitude + that I am at his disposal + I won’t discuss my plans or ideas on political matters with anyone, unless it is very urgent. I would, however, like to meet Shailaja, but she is not permitted to see me. And, then, what is there to talk about?

17.11.77

Had an elaborate bath. I have to make up a determined mind to take a bath because it is so boring and therefore tiring that I...

18.1.78

Was informed in the morning that my people would come to see me at 2PM. The information did not produce excitement or expectancy. Interviews in the present condition should be exciting, but I find myself unexcited—the prospect leaves me almost indifferent. I feel like telling them not to come to see me, unless it is very urgent. I would, however, like to meet Shailaja, but she is not permitted to see me. And, then, what is there to talk about?

19.11.77

Dr Gangol and Dr Laxmi Narayan saw me today. My BP 110/60. My voice has developed hoarseness to a great degree than when I arrived here. It is contrary to the expectation that I will regain my old voice gradually. Hence a matter of concern. Left vocal chord is stationary, the right one is working but is being overworked.

BOOK REVIEW

Nostalgia revisited

by CK Lal

There was a time when Nepal was called the Last Shangri-La. Now it is the Lost Shangri-La. For Europeans recovering from the after effects of catastrophic conflict, the promise of a trip to the heart of Buddhism appeared alluringly cathartic. But getting into Nepal itself was a challenging task, let alone getting around the country on foot. A few brave souls dared, helping open the floodgates for tourists that followed in their footsteps. Among the pioneering travellers, Toni Hagen is better known by common Nepalis. But the cogosognoscenti respect the Italian backpackers used to be the most common tourists along the trails of central Nepal—mainly because of Tucci’s accounts of his travels along the Kali Gandaki. His Journey to Mustang 1952 was one of these original publications. When he puts himself in the ‘hands of Moniram’ in Kathmandu, when he is greeted by the Himalaya’s ‘glistening in silent beauty’ at Kakani and when he goes beyond Kagheni ‘dreamily into lunar landscape’, we share Tucci’s awe and wonder.

It is as a scholar, however, that Tucci suffers from the subjectivity of the pioneer explorer. He notes that Nepal was one of the few Asian countries to have submitted its samples to the British Museum for study. He does not follow the British practice of cataloguing with dates. He is detained at the Police Training Centre and is only allowed outside on medical grounds. His deteriorating health is not permitted to see me. And, then, what is there to talk about?

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After his second return to Nepal after going to the United States for medical treatment, BP is imprisoned once more. This time, his diary entries become sporadic. He does not follow the printed order of the diary anymore, but jots down notes with dates. He is detained at the Police Training Centre and is only allowed outside on medical grounds. His deteriorating health is not permitted to see me. And, then, what is there to talk about?

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Tucci writes with the enthusiasm of the explorer—you can feel his energy almost in every page of the book. When he puts himself in the ‘hands of Moniram’ in Kathmandu, when he is greeted by the Himalaya’s ‘glistening in silent beauty’ at Kakani and when he goes beyond Kagheni ‘dreamily into lunar landscape’, we share Tucci’s
Getting started

W ith my 22 years of golfing experience in Nepal, I find that generally people are quite puzzled about how to start playing golf. Reasons for this include the belief that it is an elitist game, that it will cost too much, take up too much time, the equipment is too expensive, membership is exclusive and “It is an old man’s game, so why should I start now? I’ll wait till I retire!”

I have found that almost all golfers here develop an interest in the game through their friends and relatives who are already golfers. Very few start on their own initiative. Perhaps this has to do with the lack of awareness of what golf really is all about and how to get introduced to available golfing clubs and facilities.

In general, golf is a recreational sport that can be enjoyed from youth up to a ripe old age. Though not fast-paced, it still requires a degree of fitness to play the game satisfactorily. You have to walk fairly briskly for over 8 km every four-hour round you play, and doing this regularly definitely makes you fitter.

Though golf is not available throughout Nepal, we do have nine facilities in four cities: four in Kathmandu, three in Pokhara, and one each in Dharan and Narwalparasi.

Golf can be learnt in all these places. The two driving ranges (one in Pokhara and the other in Kathmandu) are built to help those already playing to improve, and encourage newcomers to start the game. The golf courses all have their own driving or practice facilities with dedicated golf professionals to teach the game.

To learn golf quickly and properly, one needs to take professional coaching. If not, progress is slow and bad habits develop, which can be very difficult to correct. Additionally, the game has comprehensive rules and etiquette which you are expected to know and follow. The basics of these are taught during golf lessons.

All you really need to start playing golf are a pair of sports shoes, comfortable clothes and, if your hands are a little soft from inactivity, you may require a golf glove which is available at the golf practice facilities.

Of course, there are many other facilities available golfers can take advantage of, such as being taught during golf lessons.

Less than 200 had basketball tournaments in almost all categories. Ranchesh Shrestha and Himalayan White House College says, “We don’t have enough space for football or cricket but basketball court doesn’t need a large area which is why it is got priority.” In a city where land is scarce, this factor has certainly helped the game.

A few years ago, Lincoln School, Srijan Xavier and Budhanilkantha School were the top three in all tournament finals. Now Gyanodaya, Himalayan White House, Prime College, Bhamabakhel School, Apex College as well as Godavari Alumni Association have been promoting the game. After Gyanodaya Balkharka included basketball in its youth sports program, Gyan Carnival, in 1994, other schools have followed suit.

Netball and Gymnastics are jointly organising the Gyan Carnival as a national level event. PABSON, Rhododendron International Boarding School, Milan Vidhya Mandir, Reliance International Academy, and Trumpong International Academy have all had their first tournaments. In 2003, the RHN boys school team ruled, winning six titles including the 10th Gyans Carnival and PABSON Prince Birthday Cup. Gymnastics and the Alpha's proved themselves strongest among the girls’ school teams.

Basketball has undergone a cultural transformation in Nepal. Once a game thought to be exclusively for “rich kids”, it is now becoming popular in urban areas outside Kathmandu as well. At the recently concluded national championships there were five teams from outside the Valley, and Dharan hosted the Eastern Region Inter-school tournament. Rayamajhi says: “We’re trying to promote the game in other parts of Nepal and five new district associations are going to be formed in near future.”

The story of Nepal teams in international tournaments is not as encouraging. The squad that went to the Middle Asia zone qualifying round of the Asian Basketball Championship returned with their confidence shattered after coming in fifth in the five-nation league. The national team finished third at the inaugural SAARC Men’s Basketball Championship in 2001. We are moving forward, but not fast enough.

Another major drawback for Nepali players is their height. NBA has recently started free training for players taller than 6’6”. Five players have already joined and all of them are from outside the Valley. They also hired US coach Bill Warner for the SAF Championship. Coaches believe it is just a matter of time and effort before Nepal is a force in international basketball, especially with the development of dedicated players. Bijendra Maharan, captain of the national team, says, “It may take 30-30 years but we should start now.”
KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

As the winter morning fog continues to hang over Kathmandu trapping the pollutants, the city air quality remains bad. The last week was even worse than the previous one. The pollution levels were above the normal level. Pollution levels in Thamel and Basantapur were also above the normal level. The pollution level in Basantapur showed an increase of 18% over the previous week. This mainly due to the brick kilns on the outskirts of the town pollution level in Bhaktapur showed an increase of 28 percent over the previous week. The pollution level in Patan Sadak was almost three times higher than the national standard. The pollution level in Bhaktapur was almost two times the national standard. The pollution level in Basantapur showed an increase of 18% over the previous week. This mainly due to the brick kilns on the outskirts of the town pollution level in Bhaktapur showed an increase of 28 percent over the previous week. The pollution level in Bhaktapur was almost two times the national standard.

NEPALI WEATHER

The weather this week is likely to remain cool and cloudy. The temperature will remain below freezing in the high mountains. The temperature will be around 10°C in the lowlands. The temperature will be around 5°C in the central region. The temperature will be around 2°C in the far west. The temperature will be around 0°C in the hills.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

18-02 - 22 JANUARY 2004

Hazardous >425
Harmful 351 to 425
Unhealthy 121 to 350
Good < 60

JAI NEPAL CINEMA

Chameli

Call 444220 for bookings
Call for show timings.

ELD TRAINING 2004

Professional Developments

Drinking

Kosmo Cocktails at Mirs Lounge Bar. Above Cafe Mirs, Thamel.
Cosmic Cocktails from 8PM on 16 January with dj St Yves +
Bobby Gurung on percussion, Shyam Nepali on Indian instrument, the Ghatam (or Clay Pot). 4PM on 17 January.
Drummer’s Circle, percussion evening, 7PM on 20 January, Entry Rs 300 at Lincoln School. 4415845 (231)

JAI NEPAL CINEMA

The Land I Love
Starring Al Pacino, director Sidney Lumet. American Centre.
From 12 PM on 24 January, 4491234

THE SECOND SEX

Simone de Beauvoir

A landmark book for Kathmandu.

Simone de Beauvoir’s groundbreaking study of women’s status, five decades after its first publication, is the first landmark in the modern feminist upsurge that has transformed perceptions of the social relationship of man and womankind in our time. Of all the writing that emerged from the existentialist movement, hers will probably have the most extensive and enduring impact. It is at once a work of anthropology and sociology, of biology and psychoanalysis. Particularly for women’s needs.

The Second Sex
Simone de Beauvoir
Vieze, 1997
Rs 775

BEETLE RALLY

The 4th Great Himalayan Volkswagen Beetle Rally will happen on Saturday 28th February. Great prizes to be won, great opportunity to support the production of peace stickers, craft lip and paste surgery in Nepal; and women’s health services in remote areas.

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CLASSIFIED

Villa Ground Zero Few stores, designer candles, cards, gifts, stationery, wooden furniture, performances and music, Darju Darju, opposite Hotel de l’Ambassadeur
Villa Families, the Exclusive Utopia for Burlington residents, with swimming pools, bathrooms and more. Staff suite. Opposite Villa Nieuw. Halfrath Elsen, Pulchowk, Tel: 574287

Tad: Rabigari Stunning stone house bedroom, 2 bathrooms, 2nd floor, dining terrace lawn and pond and telephone. Contact Enrico Vergani 5525758

USE & STYLE: Arcadia Apartments in the heart of Thamel: Completely located, fully furnished apartments at unbeatable rates. For details: Tel: 9810003, 4380167


Contact: for a private suite. Let’s not to find the perfect house, apartment or even a retail space that meets all your needs. Make an easy booking by reporting a vacant property on ZeroTimes.com.co

Tel: Tad: Pleasantroom (with privates), bedroom, 2nd floor, in the heart of Thamel, shared kitchen and large lounge. Perhaps suitable for working professionals or volunteer. Tel: 448549

To Let: Flac: Jawalikhel Opp. Mahila Mandala. 2-bedrooms, 2nd floor, dining, kitchen with wooden room. Contact 5554589

Wanted: Flat in Jawalikhel, interested person should have experience for ultra light aircraft with Freisa 600 engine. Apply with your CV to Mr. Chandra Avul Coxe Phulchowk Pvt. Ltd. POB: Box 769

UNIONEAL ESTATE AGENTS

Our Factory Offers good quality products At wholesale BAGS AND GARMENTS - photo and contact address within 7 days to 4442220 for bookings

MOMMA: Nepali weather is bad. The temperature will be below freezing in the high mountains. The temperature will be around 10°C in the lowlands. The temperature will be around 5°C in the central region. The temperature will be around 2°C in the far west. The temperature will be around 0°C in the hills.

KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

As the winter morning fog continues to hang over Kathmandu trapping the pollutants, the city air quality remains bad. The last week was even worse than the previous one. The pollution levels were above the normal level. Pollution levels in Thamel and Basantapur were also above the normal level. The pollution level in Basantapur showed an increase of 18% over the previous week. This mainly due to the brick kilns on the outskirts of the town pollution level in Bhaktapur showed an increase of 28 percent over the previous week. The pollution level in Bhaktapur was almost two times the national standard.

NEPALI WEATHER

The weather this week is likely to remain cool and cloudy. The temperature will remain below freezing in the high mountains. The temperature will be around 10°C in the lowlands. The temperature will be around 5°C in the central region. The temperature will be around 2°C in the far west. The temperature will be around 0°C in the hills.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

18-02 - 22 JANUARY 2004

Hazardous >425
Harmful 351 to 425
Unhealthy 121 to 350
Good < 60

JAI NEPAL CINEMA

The Land I Love
Starring Al Pacino, director Sidney Lumet. American Centre.
From 12 PM on 24 January, 4491234

THE SECOND SEX

Simone de Beauvoir

A landmark book for Kathmandu.

Simone de Beauvoir’s groundbreaking study of women’s status, five decades after its first publication, is the first landmark in the modern feminist upsurge that has transformed perceptions of the social relationship of man and womankind in our time. Of all the writing that emerged from the existentialist movement, hers will probably have the most extensive and enduring impact. It is at once a work of anthropology and sociology, of biology and psychoanalysis. Particularly for women’s needs.

The Second Sex
Simone de Beauvoir
Vieze, 1997
Rs 775

BEETLE RALLY

The 4th Great Himalayan Volkswagen Beetle Rally will happen on Saturday 28th February. Great prizes to be won, great opportunity to support the production of peace stickers, craft lip and paste surgery in Nepal; and women’s health services in remote areas.

For insertions ring NT Marketing at 5843333-36.

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Villa Ground Zero Few stores, designer candles, cards, gifts, stationery, wooden furniture, performances and music, Darju Darju, opposite Hotel de l’Ambassadeur
Villa Families, the Exclusive Utopia for Burlington residents, with swimming pools, bathrooms and more. Staff suite. Opposite Villa Nieuw. Halfrath Elsen, Pulchowk, Tel: 574287

Tad: Rabigari Stunning stone house bedroom, 2 bathrooms, 2nd floor, dining terrace lawn and pond and telephone. Contact Enrico Vergani 5525758

USE & STYLE: Arcadia Apartments in the heart of Thamel: Completely located, fully furnished apartments at unbeatable rates. For details: Tel: 9810003, 4380167


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HAPPENINGS

TRASHY AIRPORT: Two armed police guards walk past a refuse dump outside the Pokhara airport terminal building recently.

HALL OF FAME: Patan’s famous Ashok Cinema, which got a facelift and has been converted into a modern convention hall, was inaugurated on Thursday.

AND THE WINNER IS: Director Ujwal Ghimire holding aloft his Dabur Anmol Motion Picture Award on Saturday at the BICC for his film, Biswas.

PLAINCLOTHES: Plainclothes security personnel wrestling down student protesters on the streets on Monday in Kathmandu.

YAM BETWEEN STONES: The eve of the first day of Magh on Wednesday saw brisk sales of traditional food items, including yams on Kathmandu sidewalks.

PUBLIC OPEN FORUM & TALK PROGRAM

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Date: Saturday, 17th January, 2004
Venue: Durbar Hall, Hotel Yak & Yeti

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Bobby’s heartbeat

H is eyes bright with excitement, Manohar (Bobby) Gurung calls out the eight beat cycle, or adhihalam: “Tha–ki-ta-tha-tha-ka-tha-tha-tha-tha-tha-tha-tha”. With his hands, he plays out this vocal percussion on his thighs as he would on the ghatam. Strong and rhythmical, it is one more percussion instrument to add to his repertoire.

Drums were Bobby’s hobby since school days. He played the madal during bhajans at home at home or the tabla while his sister danced Bharatnatyam for the school. Gradually, he picked up the jembe, conga, damphu, almost anything with a skin framed over it. And if no drum was in sight, he’d play a beat on the table with his hands while his mother sang.

But Bobby’s mother thought all this was taking him away from his studies. So, through college, he continued to play drums for functions at a home, never daring to dream he could take it up as a profession. Studying for an MBA in UK for a year in 1996, Bobby got bored with studies. “It became monotonous, there was no rhythm in it,” he recalls, almost painfully. Bobby found places where he could listen to drums from all over the world and found London was a great place to perform. Soon Bobby made friends who shared his passion and encouraged him to play. He even co-recorded an album, Bazaar in a Nutshell.

After seeing how music therapy could be used to help children with disabilities, Bobby decided he would be a drummer. Back in Kathmandu, he has performed with 1974AD and Sitapati. He learned the ghatam, an earthen pot used in classical Carnatic music in south India. When Pandit Vikku Vinayakam performed in Kathmandu in 2003, Bobby was in raptures and was invited to Chennai by the master. He trained intensely with Pandit Vikku and his son TV Umashankar and has returned to Nepal to spread the sound of the ghatam.

It is hard work: Bobby practices eight hours a day, fingers turning black and blue with practice. He has chosen to specialise in the Manamadrini ghatam which is fired with five elements and is harder than the Madrasi ghatam. “The harder you hit the ghatam, the more painful. The more painful, the more beautiful the sound,” Bobby explains.

Bobby has introduced a drum circle every Tuesday at Mohit in Jawalakhel. He also hopes to do more music therapy. But his dream is to have a Carnatic music school in Nepal. For now, he just wants the ghatam to be known in Nepal.

“Our rhythm is already inside us,” Bobby says. “Each of us has a heartbeat. I can feel that rhythm.”

(Sraddha Basnyat)