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# Help them go home

What the Nepali diaspora can, and should, do for Bhutani refugees

## CARROT AND STICK

There used to be a time six years ago when we complained about how the rest of the planet didn't really care about the brewing crisis in Nepal. As far as the outside world was concerned, Nepal was a cute little kingdom out in shangrila somewhere. People refused to believe that nasty things were starting to happen here. Now, the pendulum seems to have swung in the opposite direction. There are dire predictions every other day that Nepal is failing...failing...failed. The international media can't get enough about paradise lost and prophesying doomsday. The world rarely reacts with required urgency, or in direct proportion to the magnitude of a crisis. For its part, the international media when it decides to take an interest seems incapable of seeing things in anything other than black or white. For years, it ignored Darfur, now we get hour-by-hour updates. The United Nations could do nothing to stop the Rwandan genocide, and now the world has moved on.

Let's hope that in our case the change from international indifference to obsession is driven by a desire to catch Nepal before it falls off the edge. In recent weeks we have been buried in an avalanche of foreign delegations here on fact-finding missions. After the Human Rights Watch and the International Commission of Jurists, we've had the International Crisis Group's president Gareth Evans, the EU's high-powered Troika, the UNHRC's Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. The National Democratic Institute brought the former Northern Ireland Assembly Speaker Lord John Alderice for consultations on mediation, and British special envoy Sir Jeffrey James has just passed through on his bi-annual migratory route between London, New Delhi, Kathmandu and New York.

All have sat and talked to the government, which has reiterated its commitment to restore the political process through elections. They have talked to politicians who have given widely-divergent prescriptions from constitutional reform to House restoration to constituent assembly elections. Most visitors have gone back more confused than when they came.

When you can't see the forest for the trees, it is important to boil things down to their essence: who are the main players, what do they want, can they be persuaded to meet half way?

There is a political stalemate in Kathmandu between the king and the parties and there is a military stalemate in the field between the army and the Maoists. So, the rebels and the palace have a choice: we can let this drag on for another 15 years and talk, or talk now. Since both sides seem to be hell bent on a fight to the finish, since outside mediation doesn't seem feasible, the only thing that may work is a carrot. After all, the reason the Sri Lankan ceasefire is holding even though talks have failed is because the Tigers and Colombo have been promised \$1.5 billion by the international community as a peace dividend.

There is a tendency in Nepal to look south of the border for answers. It is happening again. The king needs to talk to the Nepali people about a solution, not to the Indians. No one can seriously object if he engineers a peace process, but he shouldn't be tempted to go for it alone just for legitimacy. This is a home-grown revolution, it needs a home-grown solution.

A little carrot-and-stick approach from outside, however, may prod our war mongers to negotiate.

During the heydays of the Panchayat, when the state was trumpeting songs of Nepali patriotism, the most prominent Bhutani human rights leader Tek Nath Rizal was abducted from eastern Nepal at night and handed over to Bhutan to be humiliated and tortured in prison for a decade.

### GUEST COLUMN Jugal Bhurtel

The Panchayat regime has long gone, but its political hangover lingers on. Rizal had to struggle to get travel documents from the Nepali government even when many other Bhutanis have got theirs frequently from the foreign ministry. Apart from putting a few sentences about the refugee question in UN addresses, the Nepal government has done precious little to make the international community aware of a country that has evicted one-sixth of its population.

As a result, this profound humanitarian tragedy has been almost forgotten by the world. Who or what unnerves our government and bureaucracy is anybody's guess. But Rizal now has a travel permit to go around the world to drum up international support for his people's struggle. He must be a deeply worried man. As someone whom 135,000 refugees in eastern Nepal and India look up to, he understands that time is running out for a just settlement. The Bhutani government continues to distribute and redistribute confiscated farms, houses and orchards while many refugees die in the camps due to illness, malnutrition and psychological

trauma of a never ending refugee life. Considering the position taken by Bhutan and India vis-à-vis the refugee issue, Bhutani Nepalis will never get to go home unless the international community takes a strong and unambiguous position. But faced with a shortage of international allies and financial resources, Tek Nath Rizal has a daunting task ahead. Thimpu has already won the diplomatic war against Kathmandu on several fronts. The puppet regime in Thimpu has New Delhi's blessings. Bhutan portrays ethnic Nepalis as a threat to its unique culture and tradition. Many western countries and donor agencies seem unaware of their own double-standards when they buy into this racially-prejudiced argument.

Overseas Nepalis could be Tek Nath Rizal's most natural allies. But the 1.2 million strong Nepali diaspora is a largely untapped resource because most are unaware of the magnitude of the crisis and therefore aren't concerned. Some regard it as 'dirty' politics and are hesitant about getting involved. Rizal has the task of educating and convincing Nepalis abroad that it is not about politics: Bhutani refugees are not struggling to overthrow their authoritarian monarchy or pushing for multiparty democracy. They just want to go back home.

The Nepali diaspora has a moral responsibility to react and condemn the state-sponsored ethnic cleansing of people of Nepali origin in Bhutan and persuade the international communities to follow suit. The long and effective struggle for self-determination of ethnic



KIRAN PANDAY

Tamils, Sikhs, Palestinians, etc would not have been possible without a strong moral and financial support from their respective diasporas. We should do the same and extend a helping hand to our Bhutani brethren.

If what happened to Bhutani Nepalis is ignored or excused, there is no guarantee that ethnic Nepalis who have remained in Bhutan or those living in India will not be subjected to a similar fate. Tek Nath Rizal needs not only financial support but also active lobbying by overseas Nepalis in their host countries for repatriation of Bhutani refugees with dignity and honour. The time has finally come to do something more than just extend the diaspora's moral support. We can be a formidable force in shattering the shangrila myth that is present-day Bhutan. ●

Jugal Bhurtel is an environmental researcher based in Moscow. jugal\_bhurtel@yahoo.com

## LETTERS

### INDIFFERENCE

Thank you Rajendra Pradhan ('Indifferent to differences', #224) for calling a spade a spade. It was time somebody pointed out what was what to the mainstream media that has been perpetuating a myth. One example of unfortunate intolerance that I can cite right away are the hate calls received by FM stations that broadcast in 'national' languages.

NA Pityata, Kathmandu

I found it very contentious that Rajendra Pradhan should be excusing violence in his column 'Indifferent to differences'. ('Unfortunately it is only through struggle—and sometimes even violence—that we learn to accept, value and really tolerate differences.') There is no justification for violence either by those who instigate it or by those who use it as an excuse for counter-violence and revenge. As Gandhi taught us, it is a never-ending cycle.

Bijen Shakya, Thamel

### SHORT-SIGHTED

Your editorial ('Don't do it', #225) exemplifies the myopia of Nepal's liberal pseudo-democrats who have lost sight of what 'civil liberties' are ultimately for. You seem to want democracy for democracy's sake even if it has been proven time and again that it is like a coconut in the hands of monkeys such as Girija P Koirala. Unless our so-called democratic leaders stop behaving like royalty both within their parties and when they are in power, having a parliament or democratic institutions has no meaning. This is the reason for the present anarchy, and some people want to restore parliament and give power back to them. For what? So they can finish off the country once and for all?

Gyan Subba, email

The recent Raj Parishad conference sent a clear signal to the public: the Panchayat regime is about to be resurrected, not by intention but by necessity. King Gyanendra has an important decision to make and faces the test of time as a leader. Twelve years

ago, the people of Nepal had the option of being led in a democratic way, which never came to fruition. Today, regrettably, the only option they may have is to be led in an autocratic way.

D Mahat, Baltimore

### GUNDRUK DIPLOMACY

When Canadians served George Bush beef at a state dinner, they were at least making a point about their BSE-free cows. If we were to follow Lak's advice ('Gundruk diplomacy', #224) and have Manmohan Singh ingest gundruk, lapsi and aila, the only point we'd prove is that Khalsas and Nepali delicacies don't go together. I can just imagine the Indian PM seated next to the king at a banquet, squirming in his seat, trying to hold in his breath along with the rumble in his tummy threatening to break out at any moment from the wrong end.

D Sagar, email

### MEDIA-BASHING

Your translations of articles from the Nepali press are helpful for not just the only-English readers who have

keen interest in contemporary Nepal but the selection is useful for even those who read Nepali. Your translations of two items 'Premier tantrums' from Kantipur and 'Media bashing' from Samaya (#225) reflect the prevalent attitude of politicians and the security forces towards the fourth estate. Prakash Pokhrel who was abused by soldiers in Argakhanchi has rightly cited that if the RNA can behave in such a manner with journalists what would its attitude be towards civilians? In the meantime, the prime minister takes every opportunity to criticise journalists for not aiding the government. Of course, there may be some in the media who are sympathetic to the Maoists. The PM, more than anyone else, should understand that journalists are neither completely for the state nor for the Maoists. They are for the people. Pokhrel raises a few questions: how can one keep quiet against such brutal acts? Is reporting such atrocity an endorsement to the Maoists? But not reporting the incident would also mean endorsement of state atrocities.

Milan Gurung, email

### ALARM BELLS

The western press, as with western politicians, tries to magnify the problems of the developing world and make a case for foreign intervention on those nation's home affairs. This has been the tendency for decades and will continue in the future. Therefore, I totally agree with CK Lal ('Self-fulfilling prophecy of failure', #225) dismissing *The Economist* alarmist report on Nepal that calls on the outside world to intervene in Nepal's politics to 'save Nepal from being a failed state'. However, Lal must admit that even though Nepal is not yet a failed state, it is getting close. There is a fork on the road and a wrong turn will lead to disaster. The bitter truth is that there are signs, which suggest that a wrong road is about to be chosen. If the king begins to act in accordance to the recent submissions of the Raj Parishad, what do you expect? Kathmandu-based diplomats have already indicated that they would not stop the king from taking the final authority. Alarm bells are ringing and this is all very reminiscent of



# A 'state' visit to India

The mood towards Nepal in New Delhi is somewhat frigid

NEW DELHI—In winter, the Indian capital wakes up to foggy mornings, struggles through windy days and goes home fighting the evening haze. In journalese, a newspaper calls it Delhi's 'winter hell'.

That may be why the royal itinerary has been carefully worked out to take in Dehradun, Lucknow, Patna and Calcutta as well. Even though the official

## STATE OF THE STATE CK Lal



agenda is yet to be announced, sources insist that except for Sikkim, a state so far free of the Maoist scourge, King Gyanendra will be visiting every Indian state that borders Nepal.

For once, the palace has got it right. Instead of a pilgrimage to sundry shrines in South India and bowing to controversial godmen, it makes much more sense for Nepali rulers to keep the minders in India's neighbouring state capitals in good humour.

State governments have more say than ever before in the formulation of Indian foreign policy towards neighbouring countries. Courting royal relatives like Karan Singh and Vasundhara Raje Scindia is still important but the attention is slowly shifting away from them to regional satraps like Mulayam Singh Yadav, Laloo Prasad Yadav and Buddha Dev Bhattacharya.

The Indian side seems to have decided to let King Gyanendra see the exasperating state governments New Delhi has to battle on a day-to-day basis. We have our own rogue's gallery in the Kathmandu political scene but in comparison to India's cow-belt politicians, ours are saints. New

Delhi's subtle message to King Gyanendra is that however frustrating, one has to learn to live with politicians. Democracy may be the worst form of government as Winston Churchill said, but it is still better than everything else we have tried.

While the Raj Parishad was meeting back home and the dates of the royal visit hung in the balance, busybodies in New Delhi held a seminar on the importance of the institution of monarchy in Nepal. Come to think of it, if Pugwash can hold a Kashmir conference in Kathmandu there is no reason why Nepal's monarchy can't be discussed in New Delhi. But the hosts must prepare themselves for an intellectual boomerang effect. The Indian intelligentsia doesn't have much patience for monarchy anymore. The same, however, can't be said of Indian officialdom which still seems to have more faith in the monarchy than either the Maoists or the mainstream political parties.

For public consumption, Indian officials still insist that constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy are "two pillars of stability in Nepal". But in informal chats, they seem to prefer putting all their eggs in one basket. Nepal's have failed (not that we tried very hard) to convince the Indians that only a democratic set up in Kathmandu can guarantee peace and usher long-term development in the upper reaches of the Ganga tributaries.

Another challenge is to grab the attention of Indian opinion makers and hold it long enough to make them think seriously about Nepal. In Kathmandu, we tend to think that South Block has nothing to do but conspire against Nepal's interests on a nine-to-five basis. But news from



Nepal is still relegated to the inside pages—positioned somewhere between Falluja and the benefits of Atkins diet. Headlines here are hogged by Manipur, Nagas, Shankaracharya, Uma Bharati and the sibling rivalry of the Ambani brothers. Radio and tv give even less attention to Nepal. Apart from a few raised eyebrows from New Delhi's paparazzi who see an

opportunity for a royal photo-op there isn't much interest. The palace, we hear, is trying to raise the profile of the visit by arranging a slew of one-on-one interviews for Indian television.

King Gyanendra can expect a cool and formal reception in New Delhi. The mood towards Nepal is somewhat frigid. But this may turn out to be an advantage for King Gyanendra who is believed to be business-like and is said to have sought to deal with South Block on a one-to-one basis without the interference of 'middlemen'

politicians.

But in asymmetrical relationships between neighbours, such temptations need to be resisted. The king needs all the cushion he can get between himself and the New Delhi babus watching Nepal drown in its own juice. If they give a hand to the monarchy at such a moment of crisis, the price to pay for this munificence may be too high. The royal entourage will be well advised to feel the pulse of the people in provincial capitals rather than in New Delhi. ●

Afghanistan in the 70s. It is time for Nepali politicians, students, scholars, press and everybody who loves the country to resist a royal takeover. If pro-democracy leaders are taken into custody, people disappeared on top of Maoist atrocities the country will not be able to survive. Danger is looming ahead and we can't wait passively for another 30 years of darkness again.

Rameshwor Kafle, London

## MONARCHY'S MORALITY

I read Raghu Pant's guest column with considerable interest ('A monarchy's morality', #225), where he asks other Asian monarchs to emulate Thailand's King Bhumibol. I have a lot of respect for the Thai King since I served with the UN regional office in Bangkok for quite a while. But I think King Gyanendra is an equally good monarch advocating good governance, a middle path in Nepali politics, equality and justice, shunning media publicity and sincerely concerned about the country's political future and economic

growth. He is the king of a peace loving country where peace is still elusive. Monarchs are, in their own right, different, each having their unique personal qualities moulded to fit the public's expectation of their king. Thailand and Nepal share a similar history, even the Hindu-Buddhist religion to an extent. But then, Raghuji, geo-politics does not allow our kingdom to behave otherwise and neither could Thailand juxtapose itself in Nepal's place. As a minister, I am sure you know this though you have not mentioned it.

Surya B Prasai, e-mail

## CORRECTIONS

Due to an editing error in Barbara Adams' 'From Asan to Angkor' (#225) the OBE was incorrectly referred to as a 'knighthood'.

The photocredits in 'Kathmandu's dog day afternoons' (#225) should have gone to Sunzip.

स्वास्थ्यको लागि हानिकारक छ



# Rebelling against



Thirteen-year-old Surya Bahadur Shahi's mother nurses her son who was injured by a socket bomb hurled by rebels at an anti-Maoist meeting and (below, right) weeping relatives of Khadga Bahadur Khadka who was killed in the explosion in Chhiudi on 7 December.

ALL PICS: RAMESWOR BOHARA

## Giving and taking

We see the ultimate conundrum of the development-cum-aid business in Nepal today

**F**oreign aid as we know it began with the reconstruction of Europe after World War Two. Wise men in Washington and there were a few in those days, foresaw that a prosperous Europe rebuilt with US funds and with a kinder, gentler capitalism to keep it developing, would probably not go to war again.

**HERE AND THERE**  
**Daniel Lak**



cash and aid was born.

The cold war kept alive the notion of spending rich country money in poor countries. Keeping communism at bay wasn't cheap. And a lot of that money was supposed to help the poor, well, if it had to be spent on the home front, on local companies to build the roads, bridges and airports that would bring development, then so be it.

In the 60s, we discovered the purity of compassion and a lot of people who couldn't make their own economies substantially more equitable went to work

for global development. In pliant poor countries, they found a laboratory in which to experiment with impunity and without restriction.

Gradually, aid became a profession and developed a body of scholarship and research that inserted it neatly in the economic mainstream, at least as far as the theory goes.

Thus we had the Washington Consensus of the 1990s where all you had to do was open your economy to global business and things would pick up. What you think of this experiment depends on what data you believe and that's driven by where you stand on the political questions. It worked, say the free marketeers. A catastrophic failure, according to left-leaning types and we journalists tend to come down the middle. Some things did, some things didn't, is our take.

Whether or not we think market economic changes helped developing countries, we do know one thing for sure. There has been steady growth in the

power and influence of the IMF, the World Bank and powerful bilateral aid dispensers like USAID and DfID. This is definitely a sector that's done well over the past 10 years or so. Many many new jobs have been created, consultancies have expanded, libraries have been filled with reports and papers. Business has been good.

The new aid profession isn't without its critics and many of them are fierce, focused and committed. Set aside cranky columnists and look at both serious investigative types and authors from inside the development paradigm and you'll find another growth industry. Consider the canon, if you will. Joseph Stiglitz, Graham Hancock (alas now sadly in search of mythical sunken continents rather than World Bank perfidy), Greg Palast, David Sogge, whose 2002 book *Give and Take, What's the matter with foreign aid?* should be required reading for anyone thinking of entering this poisoned chalice of a sector.

And we see in Nepal today the ultimate conundrum of the development-cum-aid business. Dysfunction defies it. Now the aid types try to help battered countries develop their social, political and economic institutions rather than bridges or airports. They encourage and fund studies into how a new law will help the poor or how excluding women or traditionally underprivileged communities has immense social costs. They take a high moral tone and expect their beneficiaries to learn from that.

So what, to date, has Nepal gained from any of this? There is a Maoist rebellion against a still powerful feudal elite, rumblings of a royal coup to fix democracy by ending it, economic hemorrhaging on a grand scale, a fledgling civil society that can't seem to grow up and environmental catastrophe at every hand. Spot the benefit to this country from any aid activity at all in any of that and win a prize.

A one way ticket home. ●



# rebels

## One month after rising up against the Maoists, Dailekh’s villagers fear for their lives

**RAMESWOR BOHARA**  
in DAILEKH

Returning to Dullu in Dailekh after last month’s women-led revolt, it is clear anti-Maoist feelings are still running high.

The spontaneous outrage has spread even to outlying VDCs and the rebels have either been chased out or caught and handed over to the army. The Maoist western command in-charge, Diwakar, has been in damage-control mode after issuing a self-critical statement. But his district-level leaders have taken the uprising as an affront to their prestige and retaliated against unarmed civilians wherever they could.

In the latest incident on Sunday, a group of armed Maoists surrounded the village of Khadkawada, beat up locals and abducted four of the women leaders who had been leading the anti-Maoist movement. Earlier, on 7 December, when villagers had gathered at nearby Chhiudi to discuss the recovery of property that the rebels had looted, a local Maoist cadre threw a socket bomb at the group. Khadga Bahadur Khadka, a farmer, died and 16 others including a woman and a child, were injured. In two previous incidents, Maoists have killed five Dailekh resisters. In Chhiudi itself, Maoists hurled a socket bomb at a group of women who had led the anti-Maoist movement two weeks ago. Luckily, the bomb didn’t explode.

It is clear that the local comrades are defying Diwakar’s direct orders. Diwakar had announced the formation of a Maoist internal investigation committee to probe the causes that led the locals to rise up. The results of that investigation

have not been made public but since the revenge attacks against unarmed villagers have not stopped there are fresh doubts that Diwakar’s statement may have just been for public consumption. In August, rebel leaders promised to punish the killers of journalist Dekendra Raj Thapa but they were just transferred to another district.

The security force’s response was to set up a temporary military base in Dullu on 25 November. The villagers have handed over more than 100 Maoists to the army and another 200 have been caught and transferred to military custody in Dailekh’s headquarters. Villagers have persuaded other Maoists to surrender and apologise for their past brutality.

Locals who had handed over the Maoists to the army are now vulnerable to rebel retribution because it has been learnt that some of the rebels have been summarily executed. Maoist area in-charge, Rabindranath Yogi (Comrade Surya) was caught by locals in Paduka VDC and handed over to soldiers at the military base in Dullu. The locals that the army took him with two other rebels from Bhabani Baksh Battalion and killed them on 7 December, locals confirm. The army later claimed the three had been killed while trying to escape.

The executions could have been the military’s way of undermining the Maoist morale hoping that it would bolster the people’s revolt. But it may only serve to infuriate the rebels and further tarnish the army’s human rights record. The killings will also strengthen the Maoists’ argument that the Dailekh uprisings are not spontaneous but orchestrated by the state. In addition, unarmed villagers who had mustered the

courage to rise up against the rebels are now exposed to even more vicious Maoist revenge.

One month after the mothers of Dailekh rose up, the revolt has got much national and international coverage. How spontaneous it was has been debated and experts in Kathmandu have tried to analyse why it took place in Dailekh and not elsewhere. Villagers here are glad their courage has received recognition but they fear for their safety. They also warn that although feelings against the Maoists are running high, this does not translate into support for the government.

“All we need is peace, tell them that,” says Nar Bahadur Shahi of Chhiudi. He strongly advises the government and the security forces not to try to instigate the villagers because it may escalate the violence. “Thousands may be killed and this people’s uprising will fizzle out,” Nar Bahadur adds. What the villagers do want is protection from the army against Maoists bent on settling scores.

Nearly 2,000 families have moved to Dullu from outlying VDCs. Many are living in tents here. “We will do what we can to maximise patrolling and establish security,” says Dailekh CDO Rishikesh Niraula who confirmed that military bases were being established in Salleri and Naumule.

But the presence of the soldiers doesn’t make villagers feel safer because there now is more danger that a clash might erupt. There are no political parties here who could have given the uprising a civilian character. Leaderless, the movement is in danger of drifting and the locals of Dullu feel they have been left to fend for themselves. ●



## “Enough is enough”

**The people’s revolt against the Maoists in Dullu was spontaneous and essentially leaderless. But it would not have been possible without the voice and role of a few outspoken women like Krishna Shah (above). In Kathmandu this week, she told us how it all began.**

**What moved you to muster the courage to defy the Maoists?**  
At first they used to come and go and they asked for food from villagers. Once the local police station was vacated, they came in an organised way and formed a village people’s committee. We were not sure what were they up to in the beginning. There were hopes that things would get better. But later, we began to understand that it was all about intimidation. They used guns and khukuris to threaten us. They would send us to their labour camp if we did not attend their programs, they force-marched us for miles and miles. They made our teachers WTs. Even the the children were made to walk for two days at a stretch sometimes to attend week-long abhiyans. For many of us, it was getting unbearable and most of the young had already fled to India. Only us women were left in the villages. They started to ban us from temples, and forced widows to put abir (vermillion) on their heads. They would take pressure cookers from each house to make bombs, they took clothes, utensils. And from the money our children sent back from India, they demanded Rs 500 from each family. As if that was not enough, they began to rob houses.

**You tolerated all that, what was the last straw?**  
Life was becoming more and more difficult but there was one incident that sparked it off. A man who had been forced to become the village chief by the Maoists was shot dead by the army. We knew it was not his fault but we blamed the Maoists for forcing him to be headman against his will. We felt enough is enough, there is nothing left to lose. All I did was raise my voice against the Maoists, then 20 or so villagers suddenly began to chant slogans against the Maoists and before long there was an anti-Maoist rally. It all happened spontaneously and when people from surrounding villages saw the rally they joined in too. That is how all 13 villages in Dullu came to take part.

**Did you try to convince the Maoist leaders that they were hurting the people?**  
We did several times, but we found their local cadre didn’t do what their leaders told them to. The leaders always talk about human rights but they never worked that way in practice. I don’t think the Maoist leadership has control over its cadre.

**Are the people in Dullu scared of Maoist reprisal?**  
The people are determined to defy the Maoists. They have decided they will no longer accept the atrocities and brutality. The people have started taking into custody any Maoist they find. If they assure us that they will quit the movement we let them go. If they are unrepentant, we hand them over to the security forces.

**How about you, do you feel safe?**  
If the security camps are situated far from us, we might face problems. I guess when we go back we will have to stay close to the base for protection.

**Will you continue the revolt?**  
There is no turning back. Personally, I will very much remain involved in this campaign and I am confident that the local people will remain united in the long run. We have formed people’s committees to guard our villages and more and more villages are joining our campaign despite obvious threats to their lives from the rebels.







# Designer rugs

A top Nepali carpet exporter, Senon D Lama (above, posing with his carpets at a Versace signature room in Paris) is optimistic that the carpet industry in Nepal will bounce back. His own Senon Carpet Industries has come a long way in the last 35 years to produce carpets of the finest qualities. He says Nepali carpets have a good brand name and can compete with the best in the world.

**Nepali Times: Is the carpet industry really rebounding after the crisis?**

**Senon D Lama:** We have to understand the needs of the consumers at a global scale. Their tastes keep changing. We should always relate the carpet business to the fashion world, keeping in mind the choice of colours, design and interior settings. We must think ahead, aiming now for 2006.

**Is competition stiffer than it used to be?**

It's highly competitive. We can no longer produce ordinary carpets. Our main competitors such as China and India are already producing large quantities of carpet at less than half our price. Our sales depend on our technical skills and unique designs.

**So price is not the issue?**

Our clients are ready to pay any price for good quality. We must not let the quality slip, we must maintain our reliability and innovate. For instance, we have started producing carpets made from pure silk, pashmina as well as from lamb and sheep wool. The best part is that we work closely with our customers at all phases from colour selection and design to final production.

**What is so special about Nepali carpets?**

The best thing is that we have enormous flexibility in terms of individual preferences for design, size and colour. We also put their signature in the middle of the carpets. The clients get exactly what they ask for. Our prime concern is customer satisfaction for which we have been successful among our top clients in two of the largest importing countries, Germany and the United States.

**Why do the Germans like our carpets so much?**

They do not consume everything in Germany, they are wholesale importers and re-export Nepali carpets to the rest of Europe. The reason our carpets go to Germany is because Hamburg and Frankfurt are good hubs.

**What do you see in the future of Nepal's carpet industry?**

This business will never die. There is, of course, tremendous competition but it will not be tough as long as we have professional management and manufacture top quality Nepali carpets.

# Quality, not quantity

Nepal's rug industry has staged a dramatic comeback and this time it is with value, not volume

NARESH NEWAR

**D**espite the slump in the past decade due to a carpet glut, falling prices and stiff competition from India and China, Nepali carpets are staging a comeback in the international market.

Carpet exporters are excited and are preparing to meet market demands with new creative ideas and better prices. Nepal's carpet exports saw a decline from Rs 10.28 billion in 1998 to just Rs 5.6 billion in 2003. The Chinese had eaten into the market with rock-bottom prices and the Indians were copying Nepali designs, pirating clients and selling rugs at half the price.

Nepali carpet makers say they will not fall for volume any more, they have a good brand and don't want to compromise. "Our clients in Europe and the US have started to notice the quality difference between Indian and Nepali carpets. Our products have great brand recognition and high value around the world," explains Kabindra Nath Thakur, president of the Nepal Carpet Exporters' Association.

Still, Nepal is the third largest carpet exporter to Germany. In 2003-04, sales to Germany amounted to more than Rs 750 million but Nepali exporters are pinning their hopes on the American market. US demand for Nepali carpets has grown from just Rs 64 million in 1991 to Rs 550 million in 2003. "Business prospects for Nepali carpets in the US is promising, they seem to prefer our designs, colour and quality," adds Thakur.

Strangely, Nepal is also taking coals to Newcastle by exporting rugs to Turkey. Export sales to Turkey in 2003 exceeded Rs 100 million where the clients seem to be



tourists visiting Turkey rather than the Turks themselves. However, the Turkish government's imposition of an additional 25 percent tax increment on the import of Nepali carpets has posed a problem. Nepali exporters have to go through a long official documentation process at the Turkish embassy in New Delhi.

"The Nepali government is not doing much to help promote the carpet industry," says Surendra Dhakal, adviser to the Nepal Carpet Exporters' Association. He explains that the government was making things worse by imposing tax on every exportable item. The industry has to pay 0.5 percent tax as service charge, an additional 40 percent on income and five percent on dividend. Businessmen say, this is in contravention of the Export Policy-2049 that promotes tax benefits for small scale industries.

Despite this, rug makers are optimistic about growth and carpets still rank as one of the top foreign exchange earners in the country. "This is due to the perseverance and efforts of the private sector," Dhakal says. The exporters' association has organised frequent promos in Europe and

America for Nepali carpets. "All we have to do is compete with our rivals, not in price but in quality," explains carpet entrepreneur Senon D Lama (see interview, left).

Lama believes that Nepal's carpet industries have to move with the times and not just remain content with manufacturing ordinary and low cost carpets. There has been a shakedown in the industry and the number of carpet companies has fallen from 700 six years ago to 150 today but those that have survived are the strong, creative and aggressive ones.

Nepal's carpet industry began in the 1950s after the United Nations promoted carpet weaving among Tibetan refugees as a source of income for them. By the 1980s, it had become Nepal's top export. ●



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Bajar colours

Pashupati paints recently introduced a fully computerised automatic tinting machine called Colour Bajar. This latest technology will be used for the production of high quality paints.

A Gurkha bank

Gurkha Development Bank (Nepal) Limited, started by a group of ex-British Gurkhas, was inaugurated on 12 December. It has begun banking transactions with the objective of supporting agricultural, industrial, business and other sectors in Nepal. [www.gurkhabank.com](http://www.gurkhabank.com)



And a Kathmandu bank

For this fiscal year, Bank of Kathmandu has declared a dividend of 20 percent to its shareholders, half of which will be rewarded in cash and the other 10 percent will be retained as capital fund. The latter will be used to benefit shareholders. The figure shows that the operating profits have increased by 54 percent in comparison to the first quarter of the previous year.

Scratch and match

Asian Thai Foods, the distributor of 2PM noodles has begun its '2PM scratch and match offer'. Each packet of noodle has a coupon with six numbers that has to be scratched. According to Asian Thai Foods, a consumer can win from Rs 11 to Rs 999,999.



NEW PRODUCTS

WHAT'S SMOKING: Surya Nepal has launched Shikhar Lights, a lighter version of Shikhar Filter Kings. The new Shikhar Lights is supposed to be milder in taste and comes in a premium international red and white packaging. It will soon be available in stores across the country in packs of 20 for Rs 29.80 per pack.



PRIVILEGE CARD: Hotel Yak & Yeti and Standard Chartered Nepal jointly launched its Privilege Card Program. It will bring their clients benefits and privileges beyond their wildest imagination.



GOING MOBILE: Syakar Company, Jyoti Group, the authorised dealer of Philips A/V equipments has launched a new range of mobile phones. Philips 330 and 535 are available in all Philips outlets in Nepal. User-friendly, the phones are available in various colours with one-year warranty.

Democratic authoritarianism  
Either way, what is the impact on the economy?

The winner of the current political tournament between autocracy and democracy suggests there will be two finalists. The chances of the political parties being eliminated by the state and the Maoists look likely. The outcome will have a direct bearing on the economy and it may be time to start looking at the scenarios.

ECONOMIC SENSE  
Artha Beed



It has become fashionable to say that despite everything, Nepal's macro-economic health is sound (See: Ameet Dhakal in *The Kathmandu Post*, 4 December). Dr Chandra Gurung of WWF Nepal has been ardently arguing that things are not as bad as they seem. Has the suspension of parliament really had a positive impact on the economy? The macro-economic indicators have not looked too bad and it is debatable whether Nepal would have entered into the WTO or brought reform-oriented legislation with an active parliament.

As we have seen with other countries, you don't really need democracy for economic growth. Every time some westerner lectures to the Chinese about democracy, they retort: 'Do you want us to become like India?' Beijing has shown how political ideology can be used to boost the economy and it is being replicated in Vietnam and elsewhere. There are the obvious examples of Singapore and Malaysia that have sacrificed individual political freedom for economic growth. The Middle East has no democracy but plenty of oil which has greased

their economic engines.

In Pakistan, Pervez Musharaf has used autocracy to reform the economy, arguing that the "country comes before democracy". In Nepal we tried autocracy for centuries and for 30 years under the Panchayat, we had crony capitalism. Whether Nepal will be able to leverage economic reforms in an autocratic state is the big question. The way political power and business nexus has grown in the past two years is also a cause for concern.

Some economists always argue that democracy and reforms are complimentary. The US is cited as the best example of how democracy can push the economy in the long run and nearer home, we have examples

examples of money politics destroying the benefits of electoral choice.

India vis-à-vis China also reflect how an elected elite can create wealth for a few people and not the nation as a whole, whereas a one-party state is more accountable to national welfare. The biggest benefits of a democracy, however, accrue when the benefits of decentralised growth are spread.

The challenge for those who see more pluralism as the answer to Nepal's ills is to ensure that democracy is more inclusive and see that rural Nepal contributes more than the 20 percent it currently does to the GDP. How to bring about effective regulatory mechanisms for businesses that will ensure



KUMAR SHRESTHA/NEPALNEWS.COM

like Taiwan and South Korea. However, it is important in a democracy for strong regulators capable of wielding power to act as effective watchdogs on business and politicians getting too cosy with each other.

In a democracy, political parties need money especially at election time. Patronage undermines the voting process and dilutes democracy. The inability of the Philippine economy to emerge despite democracy and the leadership failures of African states are

governance and reduce corruption, how to make businesses, political parties and the government more accountable?

The debate on autocracy or democracy is unending. The economic agenda should take the front seat and whatever system we go for, it is accountability of the leadership that is more important. Surely, the current hybrid governance is the worst option. Like all short-term measures, it has long-term impacts. ●

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# Reverse lens

**It should be legal for men to have sex with men and women to have sex with women, should they want to**

Imagine a Nepal where Chettris and Bahuns could not enter temples, where men were considered polluted for days every month, where Nepali-speakers had to learn a second language for school and government transactions and where children of Nepali fathers could be denied citizenship. Imagine a Nepal where everyone born able-bodied was hampered from participating in everyday life. Or where marriage—or even love—between men and women were illegal.

Even in this, the era of civil rights, a majority of Nepalis suffer discrimination everyday only because of the station they were born in. The papers last week have been filled with stories of atrocities against the dalit castes and gender and racial discrimination abound. While

COMMENT  
Manjushree Thapa



most modern-minded Nepalis now will not necessarily fight for civil rights, they will—at least in principle—oppose discrimination against women or

the dalit castes, the janajatis or the differently-abled. Yet when it comes to gays and lesbians, many people still publicly balk (or giggle and blush). They will want the topic to stay hidden in the private spheres rather than come out of the closet, as it were, into the broad fight for civil rights.

Now one Achyut Prasad Kharel has stepped forward to demand that homosexuality be banned in Nepal. Every civil rights movement throws up its villains and he, apparently, is keen to be the *khal-naayak* this time around. In the writ he has filed against the Blue Diamond Society—the only organisation openly working for the health and well-being of sexual minorities—he has deemed homosexuality to be antisocial, anti-religious, immoral and illegal.

Kharel has apparently made it through law school. Yet his attempt to outlaw homosexuality is the moral and intellectual equivalent of trying to outlaw dark skin. Being gay or lesbian isn't an option, it's how some people are born. Some people are born with dark skin. But unless you condone apartheid, you can't legislate them as lesser citizens. Similarly, some people are born gay/lesbian (or women, dalits, janajatis or differently-abled). You can't just outlaw them because you're more historically privileged.

Unless, of course, you don't believe in equal rights. Why else would someone with all the gender, caste and educational advantages of Kharel—who I assume is militantly heterosexual—take it upon himself to disable the rights of those different than he? I would ask him to imagine, for a moment, that his marriage (if indeed anyone has married him) was illegal. Say he was barred from temples and forced to learn a second language to argue his cases (including this one) in court. Say he was considered polluted for days every month and looked down upon, inconvenienced for being of able body. All because he was a heterosexual bahun man. Would he finally put his legal skills towards defending equal rights?

But it does not take a woman to fight for women's rights, or a dalit, janajati, or differently-abled person to fight for the rights of dalits, janajatis and the differently-abled. Happily, just as we all have the capacity for rational thought, we all have the capacity for empathy. Now I myself am something of a flagrant heterosexual but I believe firmly that it should be legal for men to have sex with men and women to have sex with women, should they want to.

Why? Because in an enlightened polity, it is incumbent on the majority to safeguard the rights of minorities. Otherwise the rights enjoyed by the majority are hegemonistic and tyrannical. In this case, this means that—gasp—only when the rights of gays and lesbians are protected by law can heterosexuals like Kharel exercise his own sexual rights in good faith. ●



# Happy to be gay

**On 18 January the Supreme Court will make a landmark ruling on the legal status of homosexuality in Nepal**

ULASH RANA

As a gay man growing up in Nepal, I went through tumultuous phases of self-denial and self-acceptance. A big part of it had to do with the shame factor of being 'unnatural'.

Now I know that I'm not 'unnatural' yet the law doesn't recognise me as 'natural' either. In June, a private lawyer filed a petition in the Supreme Court demanding that the government enforce existing laws on 'unnatural' sex.

Nepal's Criminal Code penalises 'unnatural sex' with up to one year's imprisonment or a fine of Rs 5,000 according to Clause 4 of the chapter on 'Bestiality'. 'Unnatural sex', however, is defined in terms of human sexual intercourse with an animal only and does not specify any other form of sexual intercourse or homosexual acts.

On the other hand, there is no law against sexual harassment and inhuman brutal treatment of MSMs (men having sex with men) and Metis (effeminate male cross-dressers) in Nepal. Justice hasn't been served to the perpetrators who happen to be law enforcers. Who are we to point fingers at? The reinforced state of impunity gained by the armed forces in this environment of Maoist insurgency or the same law whose eyes are blind to such unjustifiable and unjustified degrading acts?

The petitioner has pleaded

that homosexual activities be banned and punished as per his interpretation of 'unnatural'. He also wanted the Blue Diamond Society that is working for gay rights and sexual health closed down. Blue Diamond Society has been involved in rescuing Nepal's MSMs and sexual/gender minorities and been active in treatment and awareness of sexually-transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

I'm a gay man. My very core being that defines me, my homosexuality, is under attack. By stating that BDS is inspiring homosexuality, the petition has struck at the institute I revere most. Let's not make a mountain out of a molehill within the narrow confines of what one misguided petitioner deeply mired in the stereotype perceives. Let's not see each other as mere labels or objects, let's demolish judgmental attitudes based on ignorance and start seeing and regarding each other as fellow human beings.

What are we to make of some lawyers claiming that gay rights are not human rights? Are we not human beings? When the same people claim that the main features of human rights are universality, indivisibility and naturalness, I guess their stress has been on 'naturalness' of homosexuality. This is conformity to social conditioning.

The Supreme Court hearing has been scheduled for 18

January 2005. The response from the Ministry of Home Affairs to the Supreme Court asked that the writ be quashed because the government would need a law to take action and there is no law against homosexuals, not even Bestiality Law No 4. But the outcome on 18 January can take three possible courses:

- 1 Homosexuality can be deemed illegal and hence open homosexual activities banned
- 2 Homosexuality can be ruled legal in which case the government should define it and bring positive laws
- 3 Leave the status quo under which homosexuality is neither legal nor illegal.

The third option is better than the first but we will not be satisfied unless the second option is implemented: the recognition that homosexuality exists and its legalisation. The Ministry of Home Affairs is sticking by the status quo in defense of the existing 'non-existent' law.

But what is the real status of homosexuals in Nepal? Is it the existing 'non-existent' homosexual law or the fact that we are unquestionably accepting this very law? By accepting the status quo will we be actually accepting, conforming and unwittingly preserving the existing social mores? ●

Ulhas Rana is a Nepali gay writer.

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www.groups.yahoo.com/group/





## Pugwash puts Nepal on limelight

The Pugwash conference in the capital on the nearly six decades old Kashmir dispute put Nepal in the limelight. More so because the participants said it was a good start to the dialogue between the two South Asian nuclear rivals. The meeting brought together nearly 50 delegates including political leaders, activists and academicians from both sides of the Jammu and Kashmir Line of Control (LoC). The positive note on which the meeting ended has increased chances of Kathmandu hosting such conferences in the future. But will the Nobel-winning Pugwash, the organisers of the Kashmir-meet, mediate between the state and the Maoists in Nepal?

"We are a small organisation. It may not be feasible for us to take up such a mission given our financial and organisational constraints," said Secretary General of Pugwash Conferences, Paolo Cotta-Ramusino. "But if asked, we could do whatever was within our power to resolve the crisis at the earliest." Cotta-Ramusino said Pugwash chose Kathmandu as venue because "it's neither India nor Pakistan but very close".

## Troika support for Deuba

At the end of its three-day visit to Kathmandu, a tripartite EU delegation on 15 December urged all democratic and constitutional forces to rally with the present coalition government and form a united front. "The EU sees no alternative to a government with a broad-based democratic mandate," the delegation said. The 'Troika' delegation added that elections in the present circumstances may be difficult but said: "It is important to begin working towards this goal. Creating a secure environment is essential to allow free and fair elections."

Reiterating that the EU was ready to offer full support to the peace process, the Troika delegation urged the Maoists to respond positively without preconditions to the government's invitation for dialogue. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba had set a 13 January 2005 deadline last month for the Maoists to come for dialogue. He had said that if the rebels failed to turn up at the negotiating table within the stipulated time, he would go for elections. "If the Maoists fail to respond positively without preconditions, it will serve as evidence that the CPN (M) has no real intention of pursuing political objectives through legitimate means," the delegation said.

An EU Troika is made up of representatives from the EU presidency, the next member state to hold the presidency, the European Commission and the High Representative.

## UNDP wants more empowerment

UNDP's annual Human Development Report released on Wednesday hopes to put the debate about which comes first, peace or development, finally to rest.


The report, titled 'Empowerment and poverty reduction' says: 'Facing the worst crisis in its modern history, the country must take a critical step further and place the empowerment of its citizens at the centre of human development.' Despite the post-1990 achievements in education and health, economic growth and investment, a vibrant press and increased awareness among the marginalised groups about their condition, the report says these advances have not yet reduced the powerlessness of a vast majority of Nepalis.

How to go about it when a conflict is raging? The report has drawn up a Human Empowerment Index which traces a countour map of exclusion and marginalisation of communities in Nepal. The map shows that mid and far-western hills are the least empowered regions of Nepal and this is manifested in its underdevelopment. The report says this disenfranchisement and neglect has led to grievances that have piled up and erupted in conflict.

The report also carries a study of UNDP's own social mobilisation efforts in the past decade and the conclusion that local democracy and participation in decision-making can break the cycle of poverty and empower grassroots communities. The report was prepared by Sriram Raj Pande, Bikash Sharma and Dilli Raj Khanal with a team of advisers and consultants for UNDP. The report concludes that Nepal's macroeconomic health has not acted as a locomotive to promote pro-poor growth in the country.




Pande was involved in the report's prescription of the future, contained in a nine-point checklist, which include:

- Deepening democracy
- Removing discriminatory laws
- Pro-poor macro-economic reforms
- Stress on agriculture
- Equitable health and education
- Infrastructure
- Employment
- Empowering the marginalised
- Investing in the poor






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# Unilateral fatalism

If you are not part of the solution, there's plenty of money to be made prolonging the problem

Living near Washington DC, I get my Nepal news from the Internet and I read that the Maoists declared a three-day *unilateral* ceasefire in Rupandehi, ostensibly to allow the Second World Buddhist Summit to proceed in peace. Unilateral? Weren't they the only ones setting off explosions as the Summit was getting underway? Are these guys going soft? What's next: a proposal for World Peace?

Why is it only the Second World Buddhist Summit? You'd think they would have a couple of thousand summits by now. We're falling behind every single religion and it is disappointing to see it considering we are usually the first in scaling summits, holding summits, seminars, meetings, workshops, soirees, spontaneous gatherings, weddings, bandas or general clusters of

NEPALI PAN  
Pravin Rana



confusion. Was there any Scotch consumed at the Summit and which PhD adviser appointed Deuba along with a cast of several dozen politicians as the event coordinators? Urgent note to appointers: if you want this event to continue (say to the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Buddhist Summit) you might want to select a new team.

And where was Daniel Lak for all these festivities? He must have been kicking back in Miami covering Bush's relation-mending visit to Canada. If Bush's second term goal is to mend relations, he will be on the road until 2008 visiting 180 countries. Friendly note to Lak: replace your current mug on page four, you look like you're posing as a Disney character after having one too many Kingfishers. Ok, I'm just jealous he is living it up in Miami while reporting on Nepal.

I see that the Nepali media is finally beginning to refrain from the terms 'martyr' and 'intellectual'. The math must have started sinking in. But I continue to see vernacular like 'fructification'. But the grand prize goes to our own wacky politicians that took up the word 'regression' and have since relentlessly bludgeoned us to brain death with its use. Can the NHRC, ASPCA, ICRC and the FNCCI please make note of this torture.

I've got a few suggestions as alternatives just to give our politicians a little variety during their banda. I got these from the Second Edition of the Unabridged Version of the George W Bush Dictionary: relapsification, retro-reversionism and retrenchirisation. Please feel free to substitute as necessary.

So the Indian Minister Rao Indrajeet Singh has said that the chances of Prachanda and Baburam taking shelter in India are none. All right then Mr Rao, that's an enlightening piece of intelligence but didn't it take your country about 40 years to hunt down the sandalwood brigand, Veerappan? Loosely translated, this means we don't believe a damned word you said. And we keep hearing the same emphatic denials from Pakistan about another fellow: "We don't know where Bin Laden is but we can assure you that he is not in Pakistan." It's too dangerous having these two countries fighting each other. Let's get them together for peace talks first.

I know all kinds of (ahem) intellectuals, writers, artists, diplomats, UN-types, NGO-types, embassy-types, FNCCI-types (with or without garlands), college kids and sadly, even elementary school kids have weighed in on how to bring the perpetually triangulating threesome (monarchy, politicians and Maoists) into the third round of peace talks.

There is an honorable credo among us consultants and ex-consultants that goes: 'If you are not part of the solution, there's plenty of money to be made prolonging the problem'. So there you have it as to why Peace Round III hasn't occurred despite all the dense analysis about fatalism, feudalism, Maoism, the pros and cons of the Kyoto Protocol and Lakisms? (Just kidding, Daniel.)

Oh, and if they are planning to move the capital from Kathmandu, can we put Dailekh on the short-list? Seems like they have real people there. Why am I not surprised it's Nepali mothers raising hell? Let's hope their spirit is contagious. ●

Pravin Rana lives in Virginia and reads *Nepali Times* online whenever he can.



RAM HUMAGAIN

# Against paper pushers

Gaidakot's citizens force closure of polluting paper plant and allow it to reopen after clean-up guarantee

INDRA DHOJ KSHETRI in GAIDAKOT



Ever since the Bhrikuti Paper Mill was built on the banks of the Narayani in 1984 with Chinese assistance, there have been questions about its poisonous effluents flowing downstream into the Royal Chitwan National Park.

But even though environmentalists had been concerned, it wasn't a serious issue because the pollution did not directly affect people. In recent years, the urban sprawl of nearby Narayanghat means there are more and more people living next to the mill. The state-owned factory itself has been privatised and its capacity increased from 11 tons of paper a day to nearly five times that.

Forced to breathe dust and soot, bear the foul smell and incessant noise, anger has been building up. In 2000, two young local lawyers filed a petition in the Supreme Court and its verdict required the government to come up with permissible levels of pollution for both air and water and restrict the plant to those thresholds.

Three years after that verdict nothing happened and the people of Gaidakot decided to take matters into their own hands. Two weeks ago, they barricaded the mill and forced it to close down for 11 days. The mill was finally allowed to re-open on 5 December after management assured it would install dust filters and treat effluent.

But in the week after the plant re-opened, the signs were not good. Toxic effluent is once more flowing into the Narayani in big frothy blobs. The dust and noise is back, although there is less soot and smoke because the mill has stopped burning rice husk as fuel for its furnace.

Sharada Dhakal was a Gaidakot resident who took part in the anti-pollution agitation that stopped the mill last month because the dust and smoke was making her baby sick. "We couldn't even stay in the balcony of our house, the baby's eyes would become red and I would have to take her to the



BEFORE AND AFTER: Toxic effluent from the Bhrikuti Paper mill three years ago (top) and this week after the plant re-opened after anti-pollution protests shut down the plant for 11 days.

doctor," Dhakal told us. Other residents living within a one km radius complained of allergies and noise pollution.

Bhrikuti's effect on the Royal Chitwan National Park and the inability of the government to ensure effluent treatment has been worrying conservationists for a decade. (See: 'Pollution alarm on the Narayani', #139) The Narayani's once abundant fish stocks are depleted, sightings of the endangered Gangetic fresh water dolphins are rare and the population of water fowls and other aquatic birds have dwindled. The depletion of fish has threatened the IUCN's world-famous gharial conservation work in Chitwan and surveys have shown that only seven percent of gharials released into the Narayani from the breeding centre in Kasara, survive.

"We had counted up to 70 gharials in the Narayani where it enters the park, now we estimate there are only 20 left," says the warden of the Royal Chitwan National Park, Shivaraj Bhatt, "This is primarily due to toxic effluents being pumped into the Narayani from the paper mill."

The national park boundary is a few km downstream from the paper mill and a 12 km stretch of the Narayani with its oxbow lakes, flood plains and wetlands, is located inside the sanctuary. For more than a decade, environmentalists have been trying to get Bhrikuti to treat its effluent without success. Finally, it took action by Gaidakot's communities to shut it down temporarily.

Former warden Ramprit Yadab who has worked for 20 years in the park says, "The mill is the single biggest threat to biodiversity in the Naryani river and we are fed up with the mill giving everyone the run-around. It is time to think about the national park itself suing the mill owners."

Confronted with unprecedented people power that actually shut down the plant, the management at Bhrikuti finally appears to be taking the pollution seriously. Madan Adhikari of Bhrikuti's administrative section told us that the company is in the process of refurbishing the plant's machinery and getting rid of obsolete polluting equipment.

"We will repair the water treatment plant and a dust scrubber. That should improve the situation," Adhkari told us, adding, "But it is impossible to have a plant that has zero pollution." According to the agreement with Gaidakot's agitators, Bhrikuti has been given a four month ultimatum to clean up its act.

The people rose up because they didn't see the government taking any action against a polluting factory but Sharada Dhakal and others are still skeptical that the mill will keep its word. For now, at least the laundry hanging out to dry on her terrace is not blackened with soot by the time it dries. But once the furnace is fired again, she is worried about what it will do to her baby. ●



# People's power with renewed energy

It was in the 60s that renewable alternative energy was first introduced to Nepal in the form of a photovoltaic array installed at Bhadrapur airport in 1963.

But by far the most important renewable energy source in Nepal was and continues to be hydropower. It was also in the early 60s that the first small-scale micro hydropower plant was built in Butwal with Swiss assistance. The concept spread quickly: micro hydro as an alternative to big hydro. Soon, improved ghattas and multi-purpose power units spread across the hills of Nepal decentralising power production to small communities not connected to the grid.

It was difficult to convince people that small scale projects was the way to go. After investing a lot of time and money in building the national grid it was realised that not all places would have access. Remote areas especially would have a long wait ahead of them.

As the search for alternative ideas began, solar, micro hydro and biogas emerged as appropriate alternative technologies. Success stories of such projects supported by donors prompted the government to establish an institution to pool such projects and coordinate their execution. That was how the Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEP) came into being in 1996.

AEP is an organisation devoted to the development and promotion of renewable and alternative energy technologies in Nepal. It has an autonomous status under the purview of the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) with nine board members, seven from the officialdom and two from the private sector.

Once established, foreign aid agencies working in the area of alternative energy began to assemble under its umbrella. One of them was the Danish government funded Energy Sector Assistance Program (ESAP) that later received support from the Norwegian government also.

On 26 March 1999, an agreement on the ESAP was signed between Nepal and Denmark with a total budget of around Rs 1.65 billion with AEP and Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), the national agencies for the program. Private commercial sector operators and NGOs implement their components. The total ESAP period was expected to be 15-20 years.

ESAP's developmental objective is to 'improve the living conditions of the rural population by enhancing their access and affordability to rural energy solutions that are efficient, environment-friendly and address social justice'. The immediate objective is to make sure that 'Regulatory and institutional



arrangements are in place, technological solutions are available with quality assurance according to income strata and credit facilities are available to promote investments'.

For the initial five-year phase, the ESAP consisted of five components:

- Support to AEP
- Promotion of improved firewood stoves
- Support for micro hydro development
- Promotion of solar energy and
- Financial assistance to rural energy investments (subsidy to micro hydro and solar photovoltaic home system) and rural electrification of Kanchanpur and Kailali districts.

The first phase of the ESAP program, which began in 1999, is over and it has achieved an incredible 200 percent target, meaning it performed double the work first planned. At the end of the first phase, 45,000 households in several districts had solar systems (against the target of 25,000), 20,000 houses had access to electricity generated by micro hydro schemes (against the target of 18,500) and 110,000 households now use improved cooking stoves (against the target of 40,000).

By July 2001, only 2,048 solar home systems with photovoltaic cells were distributed. Three years later, there are over 46,000 solar home systems with around 1,600 kWp. ESAP's target for micro hydropower was only 1,850 kW but a total of 2,500 kW has been installed from more than 160 micro hydro projects providing electricity to more than 20,000 homes across the country. The success attracted the Norwegian government, which began supporting ESAP's micro hydro component last year.

In the improved cooking stove

segment, the target was to install 40,000 stoves but by last August, 110,000 households had the fuel-efficient and smokeless stoves. The improved chulos cut down indoor pollution improving the health of family members and saving precious fuel. "The results have been overwhelming," says Vishwa Amatya, senior adviser with ESAP. "We have exceeded our target and we are now encouraged to aim even higher."

Buoyed by such overwhelming results, ESAP now has new ambitious targets for its five-year second phase beginning in July 2005. This phase aims at installing 150,000 solar home systems, serving 150,000 households with micro hydropower and installing 250,000 improved stoves.

ESAP says the target is realistic and will transform the lives of rural

households. It will cost some 50 million euros. So far, the project has received commitments for about 30 million euros and officials are hopeful about raising the rest. Says Amatya: "We hope the success of our first phase will convince other donors that this is a good investment. We aim to achieve a real multi-donor assisted national rural energy program that is in-line with national development aspirations, which will promote good governance and harmonisation of donor assistance."

ESAP's Chief Adviser, Arne Winther Andersen, is also confident that money will not be a problem. "At a time when most development agencies are holding back activities because of the insurgency, this project has demonstrated its success. It will certainly get donor support."



## Overshooting targets

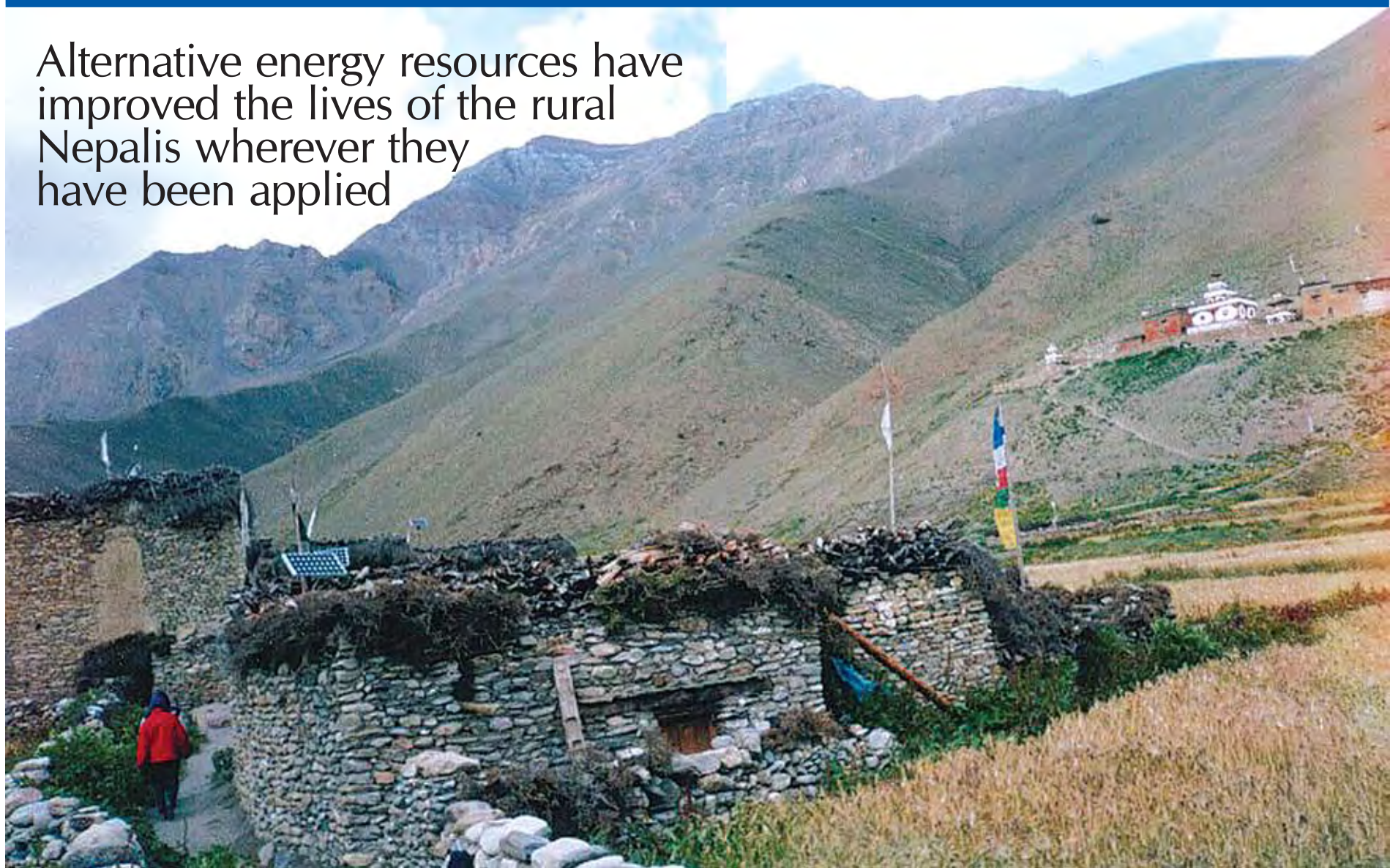
When the first phase of the ESAP program began in 1999, it had aimed to spread solar photovoltaics in about 25,000 homes, bring micro hydro power to 10,000 homes and install smokeless, fuel-efficient chulos in 25,000 households (latter revised to 40,000).

As the first phase of the project comes to a close this year, it has overshoot its target by a staggering 200 percent. More than 46,000 homes now have solar-powered lights that cumulatively generate 1.6 peak megawatt of power. At the end of four years, 110,000 households have improved stoves and 20,000 houses are connected to electricity generated by micro hydro schemes totalling more than two megawatt in terms of production capacity.



# Life-changing alternatives

Alternative energy resources have improved the lives of the rural Nepalis wherever they have been applied

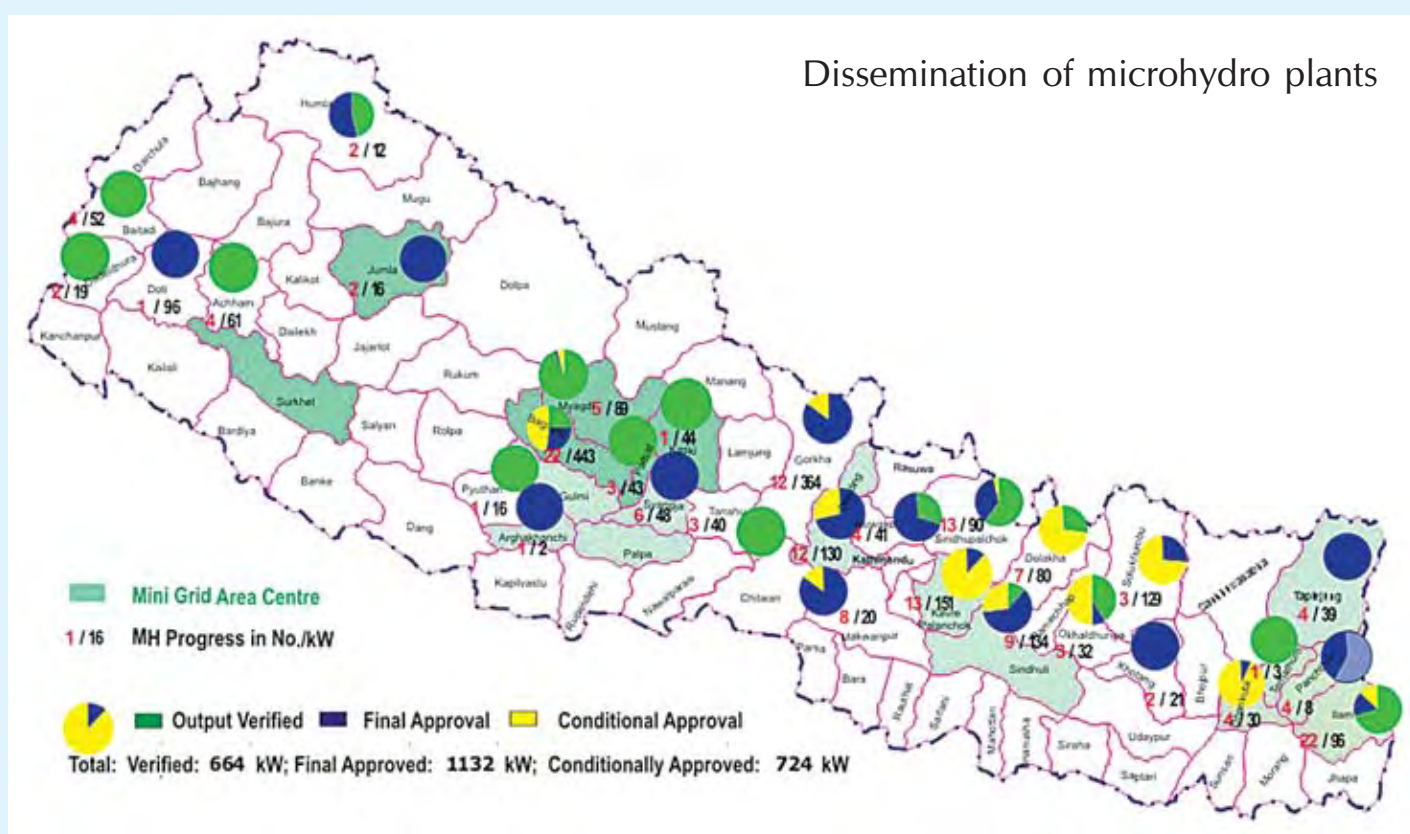


If Nepal waited to tap its 6,000 rivers for power generation through big and medium projects, it would take decades to bring power to all the people. But through decentralised micro hydro it is possible in a much shorter period of time.

For people living in remote areas, solar electricity is an immediate possibility. And biogas has emerged as a remarkable success story wherever farmers have installed them: providing fertiliser for their fields, reducing firewood consumption and indoor smoke. Improved chulos are so simple and show such dramatic results in reducing smoke and firewood consumption that villagers can't wait to have them installed.

Nepal's energy use patterns still show a traditional dependence on biomass. But things are changing dramatically as the winds of change blow across the countryside. Conventional energy use increases deforestation resulting in desertification, ecological instability, loss of biodiversity and diminishing the water table. Use of firewood also poses a direct threat to health, which is why the incidence of acute respiratory infection is higher in the mountains, where people are exposed to smoke and dust in their homes for longer periods than people in the hills.

Considering the huge potential to generate hydropower from Nepal's fast-flowing rivers, big and medium hydropower projects would sound logical. But these are expensive, take decades to build and have big ecological footprints. Alternative renewable energy is clean, green, can be managed by



decentralised local communities and are much more effective in reducing poverty.

The good news is that the use of renewable energy is increasing at nearly 21 percent a year. More good news: the use of traditional biomass fuel is only increasing at the rate of two percent a year, according to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Population and Environment.

Take the village of Shey in Upper Dolpo. It will be decades before it is ever connected to the national electricity grid. Yet villagers in this trans-Himalayan region have electric lights thanks to solar panels on the roof. Almost all the houses in Shey have the photovoltaic systems—even the Bonpo monasteries in the settlement.

The lifestyle of the villagers has

changed. Once a village has electricity, it is difficult to keep up with the demands from neighbouring villages. Electricity means people can work at home, children can study at night without harming their eye sight, farm work is easier and small scale industries can grow.

One survey has even shown that introduction of electricity reduces outmigration from villages. "The transformation from subsistence economy to economic activities because of the people's demand for power is obvious, it changes their lifestyle," says Arne Winther Anderson, ESAP's chief adviser.

Another dimension of the alternative energy sector is the production of trained human resource in the private sector. "The

private sector has grown significantly because they deliver the services in all areas," says Madan Basnet of Alternative Energy Program Centre. "The equipment, technology and skill required for alternative energy has developed as an industry in itself."

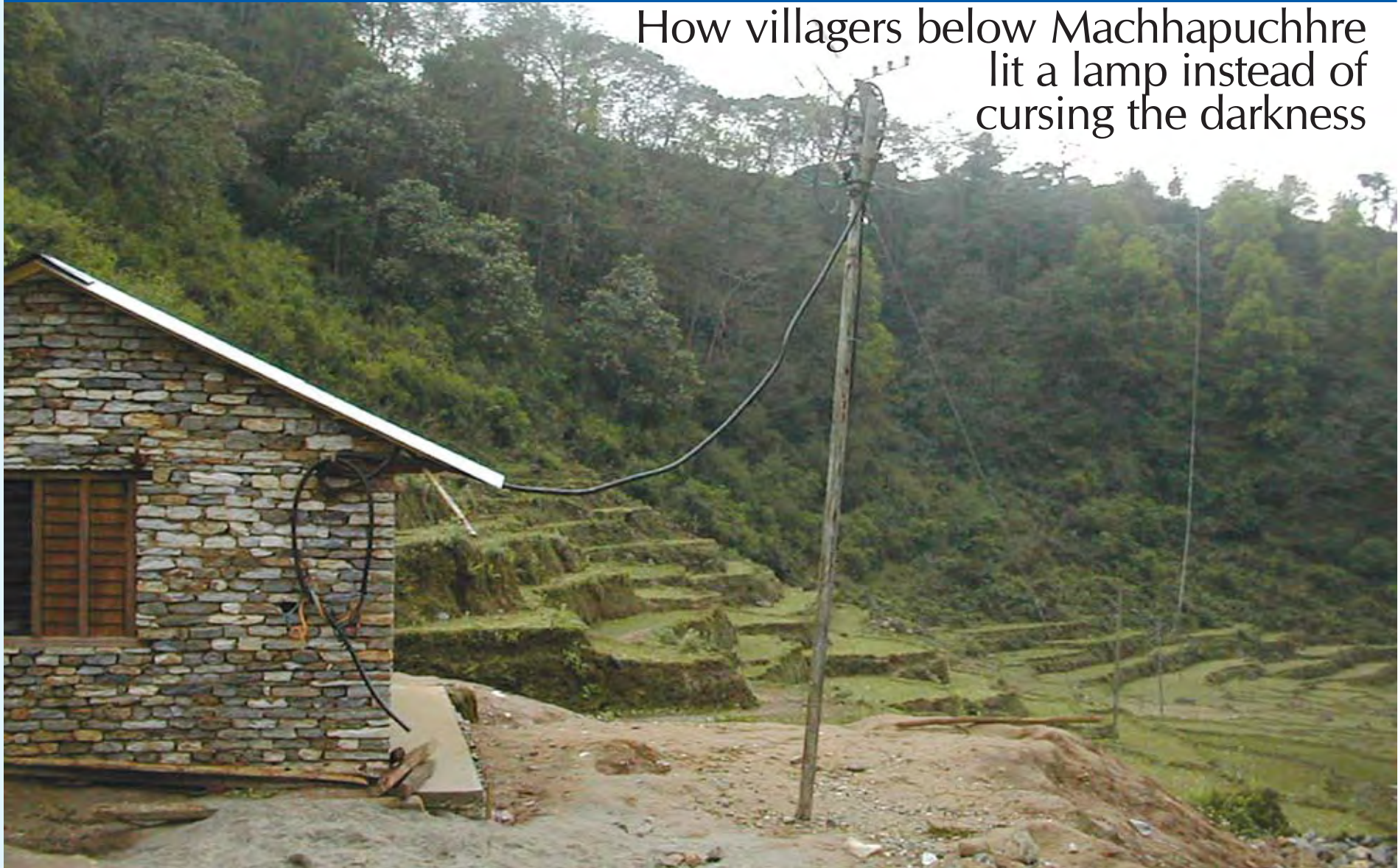
Had it not been for the private sector, the concept of alternative renewable energy would have perhaps not been used in the rural areas during these times of conflict. "If it was any government agency, the Maoists would not have allowed the projects," says an AEPC official. "But since the projects are owned and run by individuals and communities and served by private companies and NGOs, things have become possible."





# Let there be light

How villagers below Machhapuchhre lit a lamp instead of cursing the darkness

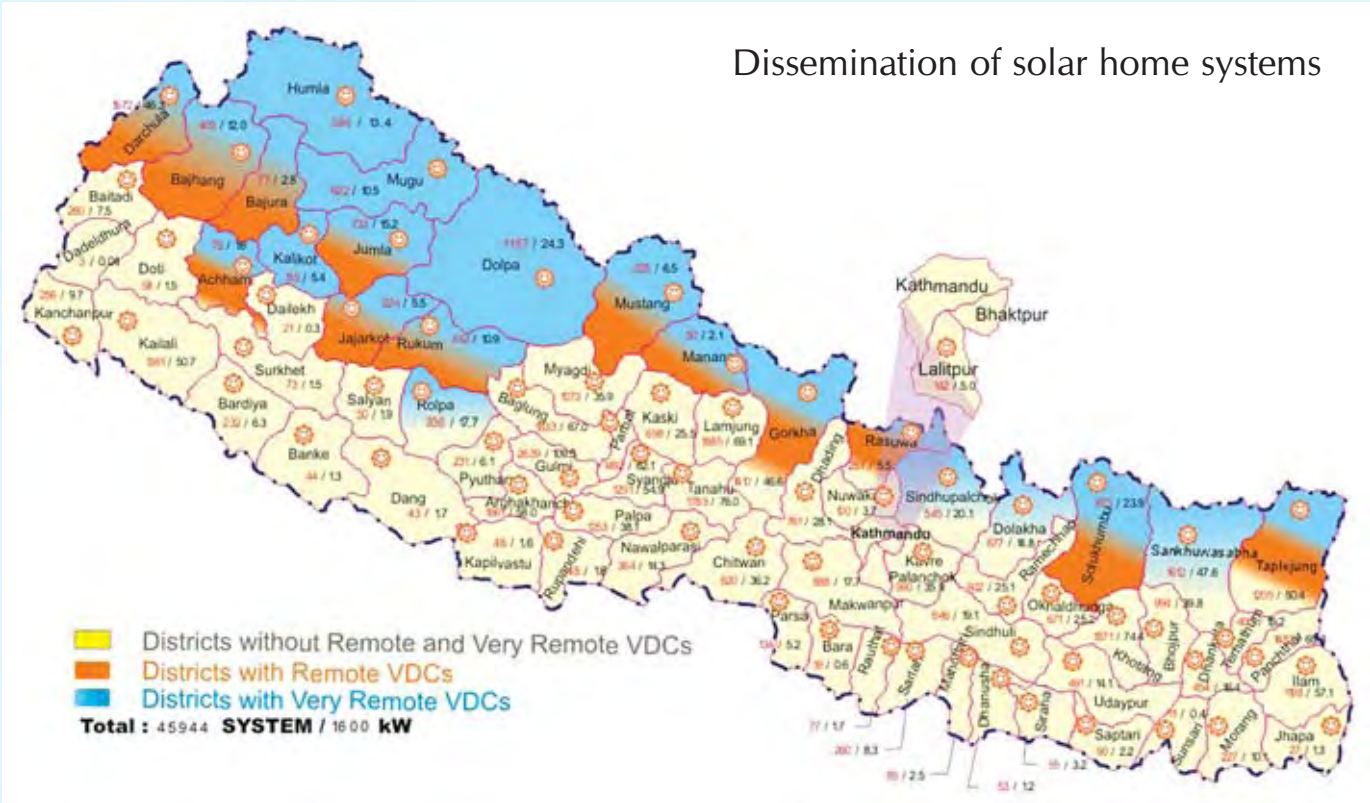


With Machhapuchhre towering above it, Lwang Ghalel village in Kaski district is one of those bucolic Himalayan villages. But every night as darkness envelopes the hamlet and the light goes out on the snows, villagers here used to look across the Saiti Khola at the twinkling lights of neighbouring villages with envy. They had something that Lwang Ghalel did not: electricity.

Villagers couldn't stand the darkness. They approached the local office of the Agricultural Development Bank, which suggested they contact the Dhaulagiri Community Resource Development Centre, an NGO, operating a Rural Renewable Energy Centre for the Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEP) of HMG Nepal. A deal was clinched.

To their surprise, the villagers were told that Saiti Khola, the stream they had seen since their birth was their power resource. Work began and within six months, villagers helped build the small dam to divert water through a 610 m long canal to turn a turbine that could generate 44 kW of electricity. It was enough power to light up Lwang Ghalel's 230 households.

This success story was no



small achievement. The locals offered free labour per person per house for 150 days. They even collected Rs 2 million for the micro hydro project that cost over Rs 7.2 million. The determination was local, and it was supported by the Energy Sector Assistance Program (ESAP), a joint venture of the Danish government and Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEP) of HMG/Nepal, which granted Rs 3 million as subsidy for the implementation of the project.

"If the villagers had not shown the interest, it would not have been possible," says Tek Raj Shrestha, chairman of the village's Electricity Consumers Committee. "Of course, support from organisations like the AEP was equally important." Before the Saiti Khola micro hydropower project, only Shrestha's

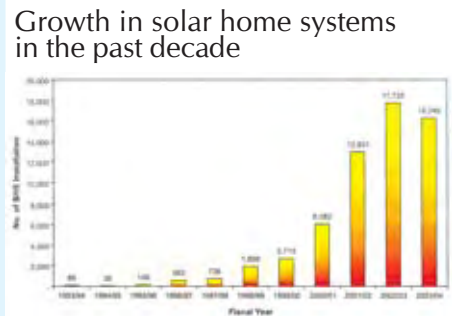
house had electricity generated by a water mill.

Today, electricity has brought more than light to the villagers of Lwang Ghalel, it has changed their lifestyle. Housewives use rice cookers, students can study late into the night and access to media such as television has broadened their horizon. Even the micro economy of the village has begun expanding. For instance, the only mill run by diesel has been replaced by three that run on electricity. "Business has increased because of the efficiency of these machines," says Raju Gurung, owner of one of the mills. "I earn more than Rs 200 a day."

The locals feel the benefit of the electricity even as they walk

in the hills. The stones they step on now weren't chiselled by hand, they were sliced and shaped with electric power. Carpentry is another small-scale industry thriving in this village thanks to micro hydropower. Already blessed with nature, modern amenities have made this scenic village confident about its prospects as a tourist destination. The enthusiastic villagers are already planning lodges and cafes.

Hydropower has empowered the people of Lwang Ghalel and many villages like it across Nepal. These days, when the final shade of pink fades on the Annapurnas every evening, there are a thousand points of light that shine on.







In ESAP's phase one, which ended in September 2004, the solar energy component of the Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPCC) and Energy Sector Assistance Program supported only solar home systems. The Solar Energy Support Program (SSP) carried out its activities through the private sector for what it called 'proper commercialisation and perpetual service delivery'.

There are 15 qualified solar companies under AEPCC and ESAP now through which alternative energy is being made accessible to low-income families. The government, too, formulated a comprehensive renewable energy subsidy policy and its delivery mechanism in

## Here comes the sun

2000. Under this, subsidy for SHS comes to Rs 10,000 for remote and Rs 12,000 for very remote areas as defined by the Local Development Ministry. The subsidy in accessible villages is Rs 5,600 per household for the current fiscal year.

These subsidies are provided only for systems with a minimum capacity of 10 watt peak, it cannot exceed 50 percent of the total price at the user's end. The requirement states that a qualified company must install at least 10 solar home systems in an area where the national grid or micro hydropower project does not exist. AEPCC/ESAP has been providing subsidy for solar homes systems and micro hydropower projects through the Interim Rural Energy Fund.

ESAP officials realise that most Nepalis cannot afford the technology. "That was the major challenge," says Saroj Rai, the Solar Energy Support Program component coordinator of ESAP. "In the next phase, we will focus on making it even more accessible to the poor."

The price of photovoltaic technology has been falling but its electricity is still expensive in

comparison to electricity from a grid or a micro hydro plant. But in remote and sparsely populated areas like northwestern Nepal, it is competitive. "People in rural areas spend an average of Rs 120 on kerosene and Rs 22 on batteries in a month. The PV technology can save them that money, which can be used to repay the installation cost in five years," explains Rai.

The program supports a photovoltaic panel that converts sunlight into electricity during daylight hours and is stored in a deep cycle lead-acid battery to be consumed at night when light bulbs or other appliances are switched on.

Besides electricity for small electrical appliances such as radio and tv, this technology has brought change to households in 71 districts and 1,700 Village Development Committees. ESAP officials say solar energy can also be used for other purposes in the form of heat energy. Solar driers are one of the distinct possibilities that can increase the value of local products for which the market is not easily accessible.

## Macro benefits from micro

After experimental micro hydro plants in the 60s, the decade that followed saw micro hydropower projects being used mainly in the agricultural sector in Nepal with improved ghattas. As it grew popular in agro-processing, the government introduced a grant facility for 'add on electrification', meaning using the power to light homes also.

Homemade peltric sets like those made by award-winning Nepali pioneer entrepreneur, Akalman Nakarmi, were in high demand for small micro hydropower projects. Nakarmi forged ingenious tiny turbines in his workshop in Kathmandu and designed many hundreds of small power plants for Nepali villages over two decades.

But although the designs were simple, many of the schemes broke down because locals didn't know how to fix them even if the problem was simple. Taking this lesson into account, AEPCC/ESAP launched its own entrepreneur and community-run micro hydro component under the alternative energy program.

"We conceptualised service centres to

maintain micro hydropower plants," says Devendra Adhikary, coordinator of the micro hydro component under ESAP. The first centre was set-up in Jumla where 26 micro hydropower projects were installed. Most of them were not operating and had to be made operational. The average capacity of these plants was 12 kW. As the security situation deteriorated, the service centre had to be closed down and leased out to a group of local technicians. But the service centres have worked well in other areas of Nepal.

So far, 20,000 households in 36 districts have benefited from the AEPCC/ESAP supported micro hydro projects. As the coverage area expanded, the hydropower network grew. A federation of 16 networks in 16 districts was established and a Nepal Micro Hydropower Development Association was formed. Put together, ESAP's micro hydros now generate more than two megawatts of power. ESAP believes it can easily double this installed capacity.

This year alone, 40 small power projects were started where local people contributed 75 percent of the work. Generally, micro

hydropower produced power costs Rs 150,000 per kW, of which around Rs 70,000 is provided as subsidy by (Interim) Rural Energy Fund. The government (10 percent) and donors (90 percent) are providing funding to the Rural Energy Fund to provide subsidy.

ESAP officials are well aware that the investment may well be wasted if the national grid reaches areas that have developed their own micro hydros. But Adhikary says ESAP has already approached NEA to buy power from such plants. The latter has agreed to pilot test the concept in the existing micro hydros. "Both the village and the nation will still benefit because locals can sell their power and the country gets more electricity," he says.

As the micro hydropower market picks up, private Nepali investors and manufacturers are gearing to meet demands. Companies have begun to survey feasible sites and 34 consulting firms have been pre-qualified by ESAP. Out of them 15 are working for program. "The market grew to develop quality standards and assurance system," says Adhikary.



The interesting part of Nepal's success with the improved cooking stoves is that its demand from families across Nepal, unlike biogas or solar, is spreading even without subsidy. People are so impressed with the firewood saved and the smoke removed from kitchens that they have readily adopted the technology. As a component of the Alternative Energy Promotion Centre, low cost clean stoves have become a runaway success.

The Improved Cooking Stove Program is being run in 32 districts through nine regional renewable energy service centres in Doti, Surkhet, Dang, Syangja, Kathmandu, Kabhre, Udaypur, Ilam and Baglung. The major implementation strategy at this level includes partnership development with local NGOs to build local level capacity and network, targeted information dissemination and expansion of the project.

## Cooking cleanly

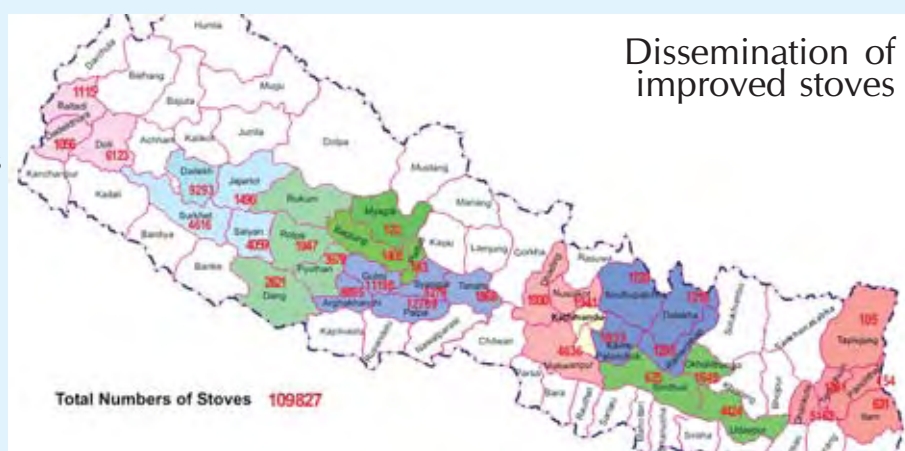
Introduced in seven models, improved stoves are in great demand. "The main reason for the popularity is its health benefit," says Karuna Bajracharya, coordinator at ESAP for improved stoves. "It reduces the risk of respiratory disease caused by firewood smoke."

The demonstrative effects of the improved stoves were such that by last August, 110,000 houses over several districts had them installed. ESAP's target in the first phase had been only 40,000. Encouraged, it plans to install 250,000 stoves in the second phase starting next year. Every year, an additional 50,000 houses will get the improved stove according to the new plan.

An improved chulo costs Rs 200 to 300 and trained local experts show locals how to use it. "We used our principle partners as

service providers and the idea worked," says Bajracharya. The objective of improved stoves has been to reduce fuel wood consumption, indoor smoke hazard and improve health at individual, family and community levels.

An improved chulo can save up to 40 percent wood fuel reducing dependence on forests and saving the environment. The stoves also reduce drudgery and cooking time for rural women, bringing about a smoke-free environment.





# Snm 2004

Last week, the Sun shone on golf in Nepal

Unless there's an exciting new development, this is the last on Surya Golf for a while. Next week we will be back with something else. After months of build up, the Surya Nepal Masters concluded last Sunday with a week of excellent publicity and an astonishing tournament. The event was special in many more ways than I have seen in all these years. Highlights included the unprecedented deluge of news coverage and write-ups in the media (including yours truly via this column), the new tournament partners, the great quality of contesting players, and the exciting conclusion. Three players ended the regulation 72 holes on a tied score of 11 under par 277. Shiv Kapur from India, gold medalist in the 2002 Busan Asian Games, showed excellent golfing skills and tenacity throughout, and proceeded to beat Amritinder Singh and long hitter Gurbaz Mann in the sudden death play off.

TEE BREAK  
Deepak Acharya



I was fortunate to be paired with Shiv on the first two of the four days. On the second day he broke the course record by shooting an impeccable 8 under par 64. I was given an invaluable opportunity to see and learn a great deal on course management and aggression on the golf course. I must take my hat off to this player for his courage and determination, he probably tried every shot during the round and pulled them off with concentration and determination.

As for me, I was pleased to be hitting the ball as well as I ever have. After having a dream start on Day One, going four under after four holes and hitting 16 greens in regulation, I was only able to finish one under one.



Let me interject here and reveal that on all four days, I was totally down in the dumps once I was on the putting green. As they say, the money for professionals is made or lost more on putting than through shot making. On Day Two, once again my putts just didn't find the cup. I had to be satisfied with just 2 under after hitting 17 greens in regulation. On Day Three, I was 4 under after 12 holes and at one point I was just a stroke away from the leaders. I ended up returning a card of 72, bogeying 4 of the last 6 holes, three putting thrice! My attempt to win was foiled and a poor round of 75 on the final day pushed me lower down the standings.

Whatever the outcome was, I feel I have learned many things from the tournament and will strive to improve in my areas of weakness. What I did notice from the tournament was that the Indian players have really raised their playing standards. An example is the tour leader Ashok Kumar. After starting with a four over 76, he came back with 2 sub par rounds and finished with a sizzling course record matching 8 under on the final day to finish the tournament at 7 under, claiming joint fourth place.

My even par score of 288 for the four days gave me 13<sup>th</sup> place, which shows that scoring standards of Indian players on the Amby Valley PGAI tour have improved definitely hand in hand with the increases in prize money offered.

I am sure I echo the golfing fraternity's sentiments when I sincerely thank Surya Nepal for bringing all of this to us. Other corporate houses can now cash in on this excellent medium for publicity and goodwill. We look forward to renewed support for improving the game's standard in Nepal and plenty more pro golf events. ●

Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and Golf Director at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa    prodeepak@hotmail.com



Michel Jolivet with Rupa Upadhaya (left) and another member of his team.



Jolivet and Bloomfield with cross mallets before the game

# The beauty and the beast

To commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Entente Cordiale, France and Britain celebrated the treaty with a friendly elephant polo match in Chitwan

MICHEL JOLIVET  
in MEGHAULI

After the World Buddhist Summit in Lumbini this year, we headed for Chitwan thinking about the need for a French Buddhist temple. But these plans were shelved when we saw that teams from all over the world had gathered here to participate in the 23<sup>rd</sup> World Elephant Polo Championships last month.

Meeting the British ambassador, Keith Bloomfield, had us celebrating quite a different occasion. We decided to have a friendly match between France and Britain, each of us captaining our respective teams to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Entente Cordiale, a peace treaty signed by the two countries bringing an end to centuries of war. It has worked, there hasn't been a war since.

I had ridden elephants and camels before but had never played polo or any other sport while riding them. Initially stressed and hesitant, I quickly found myself enjoying it too much to worry about falling off. Elephant polo is played between two teams while the players ride on elephants with long mallets and a polo ball (see: 'The clash of ivories', #223).

When the idea of the sport

was first established, it was decided that due to the size of the animals involved a football would be used instead of the standard polo ball. This plan worked fine until the elephants discovered that when they stepped on the ball, it burst with a delightful whoosh. And so the elephants proceeded to take great pleasure in doing this during matches, which resulted in the use of standard polo balls after all.

As we distributed teams, I discovered that Rupa Upadhaya, the Miss Photogenic and Talent from the Miss Nepal competition 2003, was also on my team. This turned out to be very smart move.

When the games began, it was a bit disconcerting to be leaning over the side of a large pachyderm holding on with your left hand as you tried to hit the ball, which looks miniscule on the ground, with a long mallet in your right as a another large pachyderm comes charging at you. Elephants, though they look like large ungainly animals, can be surprisingly swift during the course of the game.

It looked like they were having the time of their lives too because at one point, as we rushed towards the goal post, the elephants started trumpeting in excitement. The game can be pretty confusing and at certain times it just ended up being a

jumble of limbs, trunks and mallets. To add to this confusion, the mahouts all wore the same jersey and after half time, the teams exchanged elephants. I believe I hit the ball in the wrong direction a number of times during the game but, hopefully, no one noticed. As the game wore on, the score was 2-1 with the British side winning. The star goal scorer on our side was none other than Rupa Upadhaya herself, the beauty with elephant polo talent. I didn't feel so bad about losing either. It was a friendly match and helped celebrate the Entente Cordiale in a unique fashion this year. To add to the fun, my wife and Mrs Bloomfield had also joined in to try their hand at running commentary during the game. For a short while we even had commentary in French over the PA system. As we left Chitwan, I wished I could have stayed to watch the finals, the most exciting match in the tournament where the mahouts play on their own elephants. Next year, I shall definitely return to watch the entire tournament and if they allow me to participate, we will welcome Rupa Upadhaya on our team anytime. ●

(Michel Jolivet is the Ambassador of France to Nepal.)

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# “The king gave his consent”

Interview with Sachhit Shamsher JB Rana,  
coordinator, Raj Parishad Central Conference  
Nepal, 19 December

नेपाल

**What is the purpose of organising Raj Parishad regional conferences one after another?**

It is not unusual. Even after the restoration of multiparty democracy, our council members used to visit every district to apprise the chairman about the local situation. There was a practice of presenting their findings in the presence of the king. This has not been possible because of the Maoist problem. Due to security reasons, we decided to assemble on a regional basis.

**Isn't it unconstitutional?**

As per the constitution, the Raj Parishad has the authority to counsel the king. We can't do that by just sitting in the office and reading newspapers. We need to be acquainted with the ground reality to give the king proper advice which will eventually be passed on to the government. It is not unconstitutional.

**But the constitution does not mention anything about organising regional conferences.**

The constitution allows the Raj Parishad to make its own norms and rules, which is why we decided to have this conference and we had the consent of the king.

**So the conference was organised regionally on the instructions of the king?**

No, this was decided after a meeting held under the new chairman.

**Did you instigate the king to call for a meeting?**

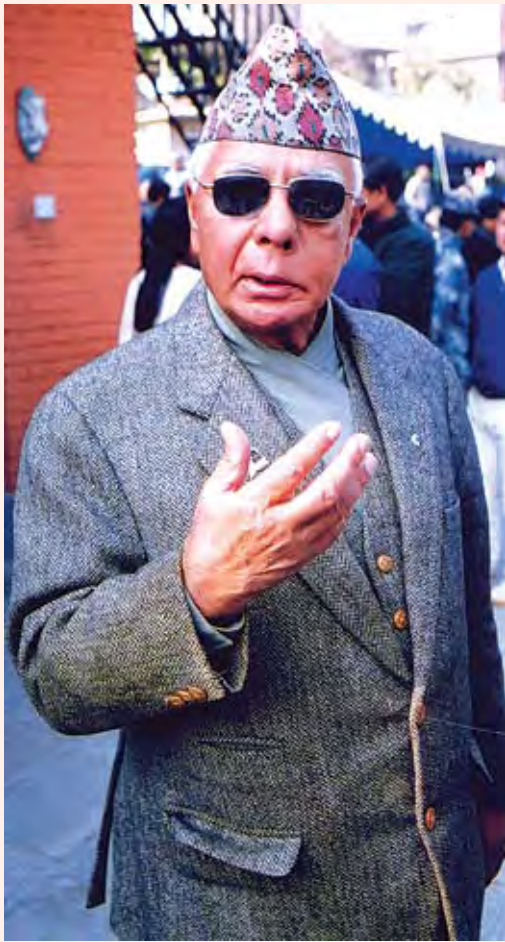
There may be some individuals even among us with radical opinions. But the important fact is that the king has adhered to the constitution and norms of multiparty democracy.

**What do you usually propose to the king?**

Our advice is directed at improving the constitution to prevent the wrongdoings that occurred in the last 12-14 years. We give every advice confidentially.

**But even the ministers who are members of the council protested the regional conference.**

I don't understand why. The ministers would have a better idea about the council activities if only they had studied the constitution. Next year, we will perhaps organise a similar conference at the district and zonal levels.



KIRAN PANDAY

**The Raj Parishad has been accused of behaving like a king's party.**

We have to make such visits so the public know about the important role played by the king in the last 14 years. The king is a symbol of national unity.

**But will this not create controversy for the institution of monarchy?**

I don't think so. We work for constitutional monarchy and for the king. If it creates controversy despite working as per the constitution then this may be a necessary controversy.

**What do you advise the king about solving the Maoist problem?**

The Maoists have constantly demanded that they will have talks only with the king. But if this happens, then the parliamentary parties may accuse the two armed forces of being united. The political parties, civil society and human rights activists should be the ones to request the king to hold talks with the Maoists.



Man: Royal Council  
Tree: Panchayat

Rajdhani, 12 December

## QUOTES OF THE WEEK



The EU sees no alternative to a government with a broad based democratic mandate and urges all democratic and constitutional forces to rally behind the incumbent government presenting a united front.

EU Troika during a press conference in Kathmandu, 15 December



## Trust citizens

Editorial, *Rajdhani*, 13 December

राजधानी

For the last many years, work on local development has slowed down or stopped in many parts of the country. Besides the violent Maoist conflict, other factors like political instability, central government negligence and dysfunctional local government bodies are responsible for lack of development. While the situation is depressing, it has also given citizens a chance to be self-reliant and recognise their strengths by getting involved in local development activities. People in Sankhuwasabha are collecting their own funds and building the Khandbari-Kimathang road. The people of this district have also inspired Nepalis from other districts to follow their example. In Makwanpur’s Palung valley, locals have been engaged in building a road with their own resources. Every family member from each household has volunteered to labour for the construction in Daragaun and Bahungaun villages so that the people living there will have access to motor vehicles. In Girkhutar of Nuwakot, villagers are working together to promote rural tourism. For a long time, the government has neglected this historically and culturally significant district. Locals have been working hard to turn Girkhutar into a tourist village like Madanpokhara of Palpa, Ghandruk of Kaski and Sirubari of Syangja. Already several tourists from the Czech Republic, Germany and Austria have halted here for several days.

## Children

*Nepal Samacharpatra*, 13 December

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

RUKUM—The Maoists have been using children as messengers and porters, luring them to carry their goods from district headquarters. “We, especially, use those children who are too poor or not interested in their studies,” admitted a local rebel leader. “We buy them clothes and food in exchange for their services and they happily work with us,” he added. The children have to travel at least thrice a week to supply the rebels with blankets, dry noodles and medicine. Each child helps deliver letters from one VDC to another. Many orphans end up living with the rebels. About half of the children who have grown up working with the rebels have become militants themselves. “It’s better for non-school going children to get involved in the people’s movement instead of remaining inactive in their villages,” explained Ajambari head of the ‘people’s government’ of the Rukum-Jajarkot area. Many children lie to their parents saying they are going to school and end up working for the Maoists for food and clothes. The teachers don’t inform the parents about the children being

absent from class.

## Mahat on peace

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Prakash Sharan Mahat in *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 15 December



नेपाल समाचारपत्र

The government is ready for peace talks. The common minimum program prepared during the formation of the present coalition government also has peace talks as its main agenda. That’s why the government has agreed to discuss all the issues raised by the Maoists, guaranteeing security for Maoist leaders who appear for talks. Since the government has demonstrated so much flexibility, it is now the rebels’ turn to reciprocate. If their demands are met before negotiations, why should talks be held at all?

The Maoist insurgency is an internal problem involving Nepalis on both sides, which is why we believe we must take the initiative for peace talks. The previous talks resulted from the agreement between both sides. We don’t think we need a foreign facilitator or mediator. If the Maoists want peace through talks, the problem can be solved without external support. We expect cooperation from all sides including the United Nations but there is no guarantee that UN mediation can solve it. We must aim for the future. The dissolution of the House of Representatives is a matter of the past. The only way to activate the House is through elections. If talks cannot be held because of the Maoists, elections will be the only other way out. Indeed, holding elections will be difficult. The number of voters might be low but that does not mean we will not be able to hold it.

It is democratic to activate electoral institutions. This government has no alternative to elections. In the past, the Maoists could force resignation of nominated officials in elected bodies. But once these institutions have their representatives, it will not be easy for the rebels to force their resignations again.

## Janamorcha

*Dristi*, 14 December

दृष्टि

The ideological dispute between Unity Centre-Masal and its Maoist comrades is shaping into a violent showdown.

There was a time when the two communist parties shared an amicable relationship. But after the Maoists attacked Mohan Bikram the Janamorcha Party has started to mobilise a nationwide protest against the Maoists. The rebels have crossed the limits of unjustifiable acts, bringing themselves down to the level of Adolf Hitler. Last week, they tortured a Janamorcha activist by nailing wood onto his chest and drilling into his bones. As usual, the Maoists accused the Janamorcha members of spying on their activities, beating up their activists and seizing their arms. In retaliation, Janamorcha activists have started to mobilise the masses against the rebels in Baglung. Their inspiration mainly comes from the courageous women of Dullu in Dailekh. The anti-Maoist movements in Dailekh and Baglung have been a serious blow to the rebels. This brave action by Janamorcha is an important lesson that large political parties should also inculcate. All these parties have done is give lectures against the rebels even when their workers were killed, abducted and brutalised. They did not have the guts to face up and retaliate or even genuinely mourn their killed comrades. On the other hand, a small party like Unity Centre-Masal has retaliated bravely to protect its party and defend their workers. This



KIRAN PANDAY

Jana Morcha leader Pari Thapa’s wife, Rupa, recuperating in hospital. Maoists tortured her by drilling holes into her legs.

campaign by small parties must have shamed the leaders of major political parties and given them an inferiority complex. When are they going to start retaliating against the Maoists? It will need physical presence but more importantly, it has to be a protracted political and ideological war. No regime can be forever protected by guns. The Maoists are aware that even the most powerful regime has bowed down to the power of people. Maoists might have the idea that the campaign against them by both the people and Janamorcha was instigated by some groups with vested interests. But everyone knows that the protest campaigns were the result of their injustices against ordinary civilians. The Maoists can afford to ignore the people’s voice if they want to go underground forever and live in the jungles. But if they want to lead the people in a civilised and law-abiding country, they have to give up their violent, anarchical and anti-people ways.

## BB blacklisted

*Buddhabar*, 15 December

बुधवार

Nepal Telcom has publicly blacklisted Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai for not paying his phone bills. The outstanding amount will be considered payable to the state, according to Nepal Telecom. Rs 44,595.40 remains unpaid under Bhattarai’s name for 4260105, the telephone which was installed when Janamorcha Nepal was established under his leadership. The telephone number 4252060 with an outstanding bill of Rs 7,589.10 at Janamorcha’s new office in Raktakali is also registered under Bhattarai’s name. This leaves the Maoist leader owing a total of Rs 52,184.50 to the company. Information about the blacklisting has been posted on Nepal Telecom’s website which has warned it will cut off the lines of anyone who doesn’t pay. Even if they are guerrilla leaders. Bhattarai went underground in 1996.



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E-Day looms for Turkey

BRUSSELS—EU leaders will debate Turkey’s move to join the bloc this week but it remains unclear when the negotiations on Turkey’s entry can start and what conditions the bloc may attach to them.



Turkey is widely expected to get a conditional green light to start negotiations to join the 25-member bloc at a Heads of State Summit in Brussels on 16-17 December, but there is growing public and political opposition in Europe to accession for the Muslim country. The most pro-Turkey EU states including Britain, Italy, Spain and Germany, argue that admitting Turkey is a strategic priority as a bridge with the Muslim world. Sceptics, including the governments of Austria, Denmark and Cyprus say Turkey is too big, too different and too poor to join the bloc. These countries insist that the summit should stress that entry talks will be long and are not guaranteed to succeed. There are those who advocate a middle ground also. (IPS)

Stranded without wages

KUALA LUMPUR—Take advantage of the general amnesty and leave before the extended deadline of December 31 or face arrest, fine, whipping and a long jail term. That’s the choice the Malaysian government gave Nepali worker Lokesh Madhu, 28, an undocumented factory worker at a furniture plant in Kota Tinggi town in the southern state of Johore.

But it is an offer that Lokesh and thousands of other undocumented foreign workers in Malaysia are unable to accept. Last month, the Malaysian cabinet agreed to extend an amnesty period, from 17 November to 31 December, for undocumented migrant workers to return to their own countries. Under existing laws, those without valid working documents are liable to a fine of up to \$2,600 or a jail term of up to five years or both and a whipping. Lokesh and about 60 Nepalis entered the country as tourists last December. They paid a Malaysian syndicate to bring them here as visitors and secure work without valid documents at a Taiwanese-owned furniture factory that exports ‘assemble-it-yourself’ chairs and tables to China. Then suddenly last month the factory folded; the manager absconded and all local staff disappeared. “How can I return when I have not earned enough to pay the debts in my village?” asks Lokesh. “The manager disappeared without paying us three months’ wages, the airlines are fully booked till March and ticket prices have sky rocketed. We are starving and don’t have money to even buy instant noodles,” he said referring to the plight of over 300 workers stranded at an overcrowded hostel. (IPS)

OPEC’s pecking order

BUENOS AIRES—The Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) appears to be more concerned about the impact on their economies of measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions than about the potentially disastrous consequences of global warming for developing countries. The stance adopted by the developing nation members of the OPEC sparked conflict within the Group of 77 developing countries (G-77) plus China on the subject of funding for adaptation to climate change. The G-77 plus China met to discuss the issue on the fourth day of the 10th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change underway in Buenos Aires. The oil-producing countries are demanding financial support to compensate for the loss of income that will supposedly result from measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which are largely attributable to the burning of fossil fuels, according to scientists. “Nobody wants to give a penny to Saudi Arabia and Saudi Arabia isn’t asking for it either but they’re using these arguments to complicate the negotiations on an agreement,” said Raúl Estrada Oyuela, head of the Argentine delegation. Estrada Oyuela, who had just left a meeting of the G-77, also commented on the scant participation of Latin American countries in the group’s debates. (IPS)

Drowning in \$\$\$

The plummeting rate of the dollar has thrown most countries into panic

The People’s Bank of China and the Bank of Japan—as well as other central banks in Asia—are in trouble. They accumulated vast foreign exchange reserves estimated at more than \$2 trillion. Almost all of it is in US dollars, a currency rapidly losing its value. All policy options for Asia’s

COMMENT

Harold James

A small black and white portrait of Harold James, a man with short hair, wearing a suit and tie.

central banks appear equally unattractive. If they simply hold onto the dollars, their losses will increase. But if they buy more in an attempt to prop up the dollar, they will have a bigger version of the same problem. If, on the contrary, they try to diversify into other currencies, they will drive the dollar down faster and create greater losses. They are also likely to encounter the same sort of problem with other possible reserve currencies.

The euro has been touted as the replacement for or alternative. Some enthusiastic Europeans encouraged Asians to diversify their reserve holdings. But the same scenario might be repeated with the euro in a few years. Large fiscal deficits and

slow growth might convince foreign exchange markets that there is little future in the euro, fuelling a wave of selling and losses for central bank holders.

There is a historical parallel to today’s concern about the world’s major reserve currency. The interwar economy shattered by the Great Depression of the early 1930s offers a series of painful but important lessons.

In the 1920s, the world economy was reconstructed around a fixed exchange rate regime in which many countries held their reserves not in gold (as was the practice before the First World War) but in foreign exchange, especially in British pounds sterling. During the course of the 1920s, some official holders of the pound grew nervous about Britain’s weak foreign trade performance, which suggested that, like today’s dollar, the currency was over-valued and would inevitably decline.

Foreign central banks asked whether the Bank of England was contemplating changing its view of the pound’s exchange rate. Of course they were told that there was no intention of abandoning Britain’s link to gold and that the strong pound represented a deep and long commitment (in the same way that US Treasury Secretary John Snow today affirms the idea of a “strong dollar”). Only France ignored

British statements and sold off its sterling holdings substantially.

When the inevitable British devaluation came on 20-21 September 1931, many foreign central banks were badly hit and blamed for mismanaging their reserves. Many were stripped of their responsibilities and the persons involved were

discredited. The Dutch central banker Gerard Vissering resigned and eventually killed himself as a result of the destruction wrought on his institution’s balance sheet by the pound’s collapse.

Some countries that traded a great deal with Britain or were in the orbit of the British imperial rule continued to hold reserves in pounds after 1931. During World War II Britain took advantage of this and Argentina, Egypt and India in particular, built up huge claims on sterling although it was an unattractive currency. At the war’s end, they thought of a new way of using their reserves: spending them.

Consequently, these reserves provided the fuel for economic populism. Large holders of sterling balances—Nehru’s India, Nasser’s Egypt and Peron’s Argentina—all embarked on major nationalisations and a public sector spending spree: they built railways, dams and steel works. The sterling balances proved to be the starting point of vast and inefficient state planning regimes that did long-term harm to growth prospects in all the countries that took this course.

Could something similar be in store for today’s holders of large reserves? The most explicit call for the use of dollar reserves to finance a major program of infrastructure modernisation has come from India, which has a similar problem to the one China and Japan are facing. It will be similarly tempting elsewhere. This needs to be removed before they yield. The world should contemplate a way of making reserves less central to the operation of the international financial system. ●

(Project Syndicate)

Harold James is Professor of History at Princeton University and author of *The End of Globalisation: Lessons from the Great Depression*.



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# Remember the Iranian revolution

Twenty five years after the Shah was overthrown and American diplomats were taken hostage, things are still not back to normal

Americans hostage for 444 days.

Sixty years ago, Arak was a humble village known to US troops for its grapes; today, Pentagon officials hone in on it as an industrial city that is integral to Iran’s worrisome nuclear program. And yet few countries have a more paradoxical relationship than the US and Iran. While the Iranian regime continues to be belligerently anti-American, the Iranian people are overtly pro-American. While the governments in Teheran and Washington appear to be strategic archrivals, in the words of former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, “There are few nations in the world with which the United States has less reason to quarrel or more compatible interests than Iran”.

Indeed, Iran has benefited more than any other country from US-led regime changes in Afghanistan and Iraq, as both the Taliban and Saddam Hussain were the country’s sworn enemies. But neither side seized the opportunity to build on this common ground and today US-Iran relations are as antagonistic as they have been in years.

For the US, Iran’s nuclear ambitions, opposition to Israel and support for extremist groups have become increasingly intolerable in the context of the war on terror. Iran’s long-standing opposition to relations with the US is a bit more complex. To be sure, many of Iran’s ruling elites came of age

politically during the anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist agitations of the 1960s -70s and still cling to that worldview. Although their revolutionary zeal may have waned over the years, they still tend to share the outlook of the late Ayatollah Khomeini, who likened the relationship between Iran and the US to that “between a sheep and a wolf”.

Ideological rigidity alone does not explain Iran’s often-gratuitous anti-Americanism. For Iran’s political and military elite, any increased liberalisation that would likely result from an opening of ties with the US represents a threat to their interests. From their perspective, Iran is now a closed party—their party—and the less who join in, the merrier. With America bogged down in Iraq and oil prices hitting record highs, regime hardliners see little reason to compromise these days.

On the other hand, some influential Iranians—led by former president Hashemi Rafsanjani—recognise that relations with the US are inevitable, given Iran’s need to re-integrate into the international community and face its economic deficiencies. Moreover, the Iranian people are overwhelmingly in favour of rapprochement.

As author Afshin Molavi wrote in his incisive travelogue *Persian Pilgrimages*, the Iranian youth of today are not revolutionary idealists like

those three decades ago. Instead, they have concrete demands such as jobs and political and social freedom. They are desperate to enter the global community and rid themselves of a damaged international reputation.

Today’s Iranian intellectuals have undergone a similar maturation process dismissing the ‘utopianist’ and ‘nativist’ political ideals of their predecessors. Referring to Jalal Al-e Ahmad’s 1962 book *Gharbzadegi* (‘West-toxication’), which became one of the manifestos of the 1979 revolution, one secular intellectual in Teheran remarked, “Nobody reads Al-e Ahmad anymore. On the contrary, we long for interaction with the west. If it can bring us more economic opportunities, as well as social and political freedom, let us be ‘West-toxified’.”

Still, despite popular demand in Iran and common strategic interests, it could be years before America and Iran sit down and make amends. After 25 years of living without each other, reconciliation will not come immediately. When it does, there is good reason to believe that the Iranians will greet their long lost friends with the same friendliness and exuberance that they did 60 years ago in Arak. ●  
*(Project Syndicate)*

Karim Sadjadpour is an analyst with the International Crisis Group.

During World War II, Allied soldiers occupied Iran using the country as a station to transport supplies from the Persian Gulf to the Soviet Union. This was Iran’s

ANALYSIS

Karim Sadjadpour

first exposure to Americans. “They arrived in our country with a certain innocence,” said the respected Iranian historian Kaveh Bayat, “and without any colonial pretences.”

The American supply train would regularly pass through my father’s ancestral village, Arak, then a scenic oasis of green gardens and fruit orchards. “Whenever we heard the train coming,” my father once told

me, “all the young boys in the village would run as fast as we could through the apple orchards to greet the passing Americans. They would smile, wave and throw us whatever gifts they happened to have—playing cards, chewing gum, Lifesaver candies...For us they were like heroes from another world.”

So much has changed since then. Iran’s 1979 revolution did away with the pro-American, undemocratic regime of the Shah, bringing in its place the anti-American, undemocratic regime of the clerics. Relations between the United States and Iran have been officially non-existent since a group of radical students stormed the US embassy in Teheran—25 years ago last week—taking six

# What’s up with ‘dude’?

## Not just friends, a linguist unravels the use of the word

MIKE CRISSEY in PITTSBURGH

Dude, you’ve got to read this. A linguist from the University of Pittsburgh has published a scholarly paper deconstructing and deciphering the word ‘dude’, contending it is much more than a catchall for lazy, inarticulate surfers, skaters, slackers and teenagers.

An admitted dude-user during his college years, Scott Kiesling said the four-letter word has many uses: in greetings (‘What’s up, dude?’); as an exclamation (‘Whoa, Dude!’); commiseration (‘Dude, I’m so sorry.’); to one-up someone (‘That’s so lame, dude.’); as well as agreement, surprise and disgust.

Kiesling says in the fall edition of *American Speech* that the word derives its power from something he calls ‘cool solidarity’—an effortless kinship that’s not too intimate. Cool solidarity is especially important to young men who are under social pressure to be close to

other young men but not enough to be suspected as gay.

In other words: Close dude, but not that close. “It’s like man or buddy, there is often this male-male addressed term that says, ‘I’m your friend but not much more than your friend,’” said Kiesling, whose research focuses on language and masculinity. To decode the word’s meaning, Kiesling listened to conversations with fraternity members he taped in 1993. He also had undergraduate students in sociolinguistics classes in 2001 and 2002 write down the first 20 times they heard ‘dude’ and who said it during a three-day period.

He found the word taps into nonconformity and a new American image of leisurely success. Anecdotaly, men were the predominant users of the word but women also sometimes called each other dudes.

Less frequently, men will call women dudes and vice-versa. But that comes with some rules according to self-reporting from students in a 2002

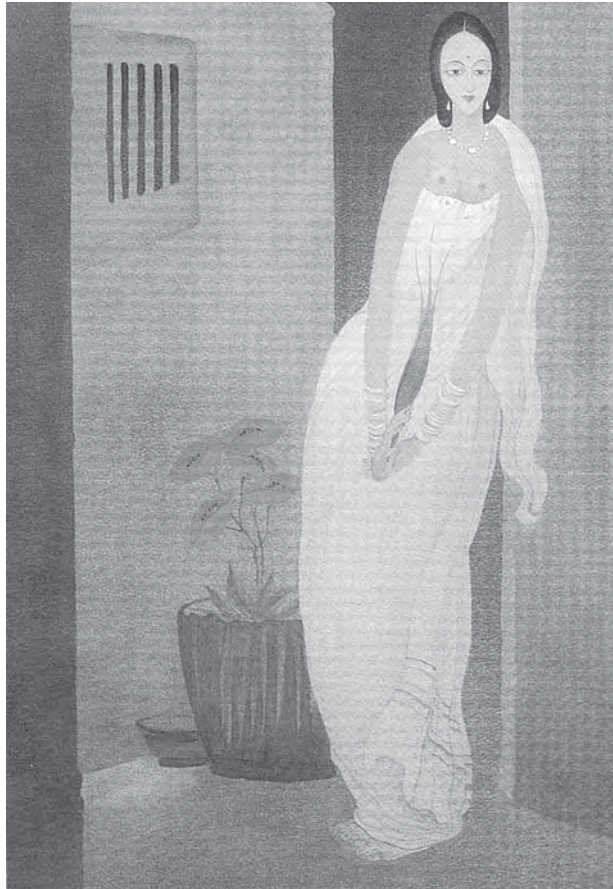
language and gender class included in the paper. “Men report that they use dude with women who are close friends but not with women with whom they are intimate,” according to the study. His students also reported that they were least likely to use the word with parents, bosses and professors.

Historically, dude originally meant ‘old rags’—a ‘dudesman’ was a scarecrow. In the late 1800s, a ‘dude’ was akin to a ‘dandy’, a meticulously dressed man, especially out west. According to Kiesling, it became ‘cool’ in the 1930s and 1940s. Dude began its rise in the teenage lexicon with the 1981 movie *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*.

“Dude’ also shows no signs of disappearing as more and more of the American culture becomes youth-centred”, said Mary Bucholtz, an associate professor of linguistics at the University of California, Santa Barbara. “I have seen middle-aged men using ‘dude’ with each other,” she said. ●







SANGEETA THAPA

Gautam Rana of Baber Mahal Revisited pulled out a book from the treasured selection on his shelf. It was a book on the paintings of the famous Lahore-based artist, Chughtai and one I was familiar with.

Chughtai died in 1975 and his son, who runs an art museum in Lahore, had sent the book to Gautam in an effort to trace missing paintings by his father that had been bought by Chandra Shamsher in Mussorie in 1922.

I was going to Pakistan for an exhibition at the Alhamra Gallery and Gautam wanted me to look up Chughtai's son and his museum. He gave me a sheaf of emails as background.

Subject: Descendents of Rana Chandra Shamsher Jang Bahadur PM of Nepal 1922  
Date: Mon, 18 Oct 2004 15:57:16 -0700  
From: Arif Chughtai  
To: g2  
Dear Gautam Sahib: This is an enquiry out of the blue and concerns your prime minister in 1922 Rana Shamsher Jang Bahadur. Your prime minister had lost his wife and was visiting Mussorie in India at that time and went to an exhibition of paintings. There he saw the works of MA Rahman Chughtai or Abdur Rahman Chughtai and fell in love with them. He bought a few paintings and established contact with the artist in Lahore. We have his letters in our archives.

The painting depicted a king on his deathbed surrounded by his three daughters. It was on paper and watercolour wash and approx size 20 inches by 28 inches. We have a photograph of it as it was made in 1920...In the 1960s a Pakistani in Nepal came across a sale of household effects by a family and the things were the belongings of Rana Shamsher Jang. He bought three or four paintings and brought them here for the artist to see. This was in the lifetime of Chughtai who was astonished to see them after 40 years. However the family who sold most of his things kept a painting to hang in some library, college, auditorium or something. They said that work was very dear to Rana Sahib. This concerns research on our part and we are eager to find the location of the work. If you cannot do it yourself, get us in touch with someone who can and we will gladly assist them. I am the son of the artist and founder of his museum here in Lahore. We think the work may be in Tri Chandra College library or somewhere else. We will pay all charges involved in finding out. If you need more details, please

# Chughtai's Nepali

## Priceless works of art by a Pakistani

ask me. I will be very grateful. I have already sent you a letter by post with more details. Let us revive the relation of our elders. Best wishes

ARIF RAHMAN CHUGHTAI  
CHUGHTAI MUSEUM TRUST LAHORE PAKISTAN

Two important questions came to mind: where were the Chughtai paintings in Kathmandu and what was their value on the art market? Judging from the date 1922, it was easy to conclude that the 'Shamsher Jang Bahadur' in Arif Rahman's email was actually Maharaj Chandra Shamsher. The paintings were probably in the collection of the descendents of Chandra Shamsher's family.

This was a reminder of the fate suffered by so many Ranas who were ignorant about the value of their inheritance, the art, artefacts and jewellery that came into their possession from ancestors who were discerning collectors. I promised my cousin Gautam Rana that I would investigate.

Chughtai was known in Nepal and had influenced the work of Karna Narsing Rana, Kesab Duwadi, Uttam Nepali and Govind Dongol. It took a few days to find out that there were indeed a few valuable Chughtais in private collections in Nepal that dated back to 1922 in the family of Chandra Shamsher. Quite by coincidence, an old dealer of antiques had come by to show me two old works that looked like they were by Chughtai. I called Gautam to tell him about my discovery and asked him to correspond with Chughtai Junior in Lahore again. He wrote:

Dear Mr Chughtai.  
How are you? I would like to inform you that my cousin Sangeeta Thapa (her father is Himalaya SJB Rana who is the only Nepali to receive The Star of Pakistan) has been invited to Pakistan on 20<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2004. She is an art curator and owns the Siddhartha Art Gallery. She will be in Lahore for four days at The Alhamra Art Gallery from 20<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2004. I'm taking the liberty of giving her your email address so she can fix an appointment with you directly. She knows of two Chughtai paintings which are currently in the Nepali market. Though there is no signature, they have been identified as Chughtai's works, it is 20' x 28' in size. Please expect her email any day. Thanking you. Yours sincerely.  
Gautam SJB Rana

From: Arif Chughtai To: g2  
Sent: Thursday, October 21, 2004 10:22 AM  
DEAR GAUTAM SAHIB SHE WILL BE WELCOME A MILLION TIMES I WILL AWAIT TO MEET HER BY THE WAY ALHAMRA WAS FOUNDED BY MY FATHER AND EVEN THE NAME WAS GIVEN BY HIM BEST WISHES ARIF RAHMAN CHUGHTAI

I wrote to Arif Chughtai informing him of my arrival, the show at the Alhamra and my desire to see the Chughtai Museum. Arif Chughtai wrote:

Dear Ms Sangeeta:  
Thanks for your information. The art world at present is allergic to Chughtai and fearful of Chughtai Museum. We are independent people who love our country and are very proud of our ideology. The present

set up does not like the word ideology. Ever since my father died in 1975, the Culture people are trying to bankrupt us or move us out of existence. That is why M A Rahman Chughtai is deliberately neglected by the Govt of Pakistan. It is my efforts internationally which upsets them. The people here love Chughtai and he is the father of art in Pakistan. Alhamra was founded by my father, the insignia designed by him, the name given by him...we will talk more when we meet. You must see our establishment. You will love our efforts and you will love us. Best wishes ARIF RAHMAN CHUGHTAI

Artists in Pakistan seemed to be divided into camps for whatever reasons, like it is everywhere else. I decided to keep politics out of my conversation when

I visited Arif on the second day of my trip to Lahore. Nepali artist, Shashi Shah, who was with us in Pakistan wanted to meet him too. The Chughtai Museum is in the middle of a rapidly expanding city. It has a large holding of land, many old trees and a museum complex that is still being built.

Arif took us to his office, where he generously showed us many paintings by his father and I fell in love with the Chughtai paintings all over again. Chughtai was born in Lahore in 1897 and his paintings are an exquisite synthesis of Persian and Mughal styles.

His love for women, beauty and nature are expressed with sensitive and sensuous lines and colours, his compositions are amazingly varied and reveal a remarkable eye for detail.

The Museum Trust in Lahore has over 10,000 works by Chughtai: watercolours, pencil drawings, aquatints and etchings, block prints, naqashis, calligraphy, stamp designs, coin designs, national and international insignias and illustrations. It was clear we were face to face with the works of a great master whose artistic career spanned 60 years.

There are Chughtais scattered in museums and collections all over the world. I was glad that my ancestor, Chandra Shamsher, had somehow acknowledged this genius and bought his work. Arif shared the intimate circumstances that led to the paintings landing up in Nepal.

Chughtai met Aabindranath Tagore (relative of the famous Rabindranath Tagore) in Calcutta and saw Tagore's famous 'The Last Days of Shah Jehan'. He wasn't impressed and even wrote to Tagore telling him so. He felt Tagore hadn't done enough research, the painting looked artificial, the palace was bleak, Shah Jehan's daughters did not look like they were grieving and the dying emperor looked like a mendicant.

In 1919, Chughtai visited Agra to research the imagery he needed to make his own painting on the death of Shah Jehan. He spent time at the Taj Mahal and at Mussamanbagh where Shah Jehan actually died, to research architectural, physiognomical and costume details before starting his work.

When it was ready, 'The Passing of Shah Jehan' was exhibited in Mussorie along with his other works and



Chughtai's 'On the Threshold' (left), Arif with Sangeeta in Lahore, and (right) 'The Passing of Shah Jehan'.



# a *WAVE* event

## Acoustic Vibes with KUTUMBA

### TOMMOROW EVENING

**Time : 5:30 PM onwards**  
**Venue : Yala Maya Kendra and Dhokaima Café (next to Patan Dhoka Post Office)**  
**Ticket : Rs. 200 (Tickets available at the venue) \*Complimentary drink included**



# connection

master are traced to Nepal



deliberately priced five times more than Tagore’s painting. As destiny would have it, Maharaja Chandra Shamsher, who was himself in mourning at that time, visited the exhibition in Mussorie and was mesmerised by the Shah Jehan painting as soon as he saw it. He bought the painting along with a few others.



The purchase was very important for Chughtai as it created a stir in the art market. He was not a well-known artist yet and the purchase by the Maharaja of Nepal validated his worth. Other Indian royalty followed suit and Chughtais were snapped up by important collectors in India and abroad. Chughtai died in 1975 but the value of his works have never been greater and his paintings now sell for thousands of pounds. But the market for Chughtais is shaky because there are many fake

Chughtais cropping up. Sotheby’s and Christie’s still refer to Arif for authentication of his father’s work. I was moved by Arif’s devotion to his father’s memory and his service to the nation in maintaining the works. However, I was even more moved to learn that Chughtai, the national artist of Pakistan lay buried on the premises of this proposed museum, awaiting a final befitting mausoleum. ●

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Rate 6000/pp full board with a bottle of wine including pick-up / drop

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"Lata ko desh ma gaando tanderi." (In a land of fools, even a woman with un-fair & not-so-lovely skin can be a heroni - as translated by UNACO, the United Nation's Assn. of Cartoonists)



All the Adventures can be seen at [www.extreme-nepal.com](http://www.extreme-nepal.com)

At the Royal Enfield Rave our Heroni discovers that her new boyfriend, who works nights at a local NGO, just doesn't have the "sustainability" that she desires...



**KE GARNE? WHATEVER.**  
But be a Heroni - and "Get This Party Started"

"I have a lot of boyfriends...Every country I visit, I have a different boyfriend. And I kiss them all."

~ Anna Kournikova ~ Russian Tennis Star, currently dating Enrique Iglesias.

**Next change:** Herojigette places an online advert: Wanted, boy for chat & dance, staying power required.

Strip #49 2061 by jiggy gaton - read. love. write.

## ABOUT TOWN

### FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Paintings by Kiran Manandhar** Abstract works at Buddha Gallery, Thamel. Until 18 December. 4441689
- ❖ **Winter Show** Colourful artworks by Shobha Adhikary Wagley at Gallery Moksh, from 12 to 26 December. 2113339
- ❖ **Emerging Voices** Prints by three young artists at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited. Until 3 January. 4218048
- ❖ **Life through the Lens** Photographs by Kishor Kayastha at Indigo Gallery, till 15 January. 4413580, [indigo@wlink.com.np](mailto:indigo@wlink.com.np)

### EVENTS

- ❖ **Annual School Mela** at St Xavier's School, Jawalakhel on 18 December, 10AM-5PM. 5521050
- ❖ **Acoustic Vibes** with Kutumba at Yala Maya Kendra on 18 December, 5.30 PM. 5543333
- ❖ **Zodiac Blast** at the Rox, Hyatt Regency on 18 December, 8.30 PM onwards. Free palm reading with door prizes, drink and music for Rs 400, proceeds go to charity. [infohaami@yahoo.com](mailto:infohaami@yahoo.com)
- ❖ **Putali Ko Ghar** Nepali adaptation of A Doll's House by Henrik Ibsen at Gurukul, Old Baneshwor on 19 December, 5PM. 4466956
- ❖ **I Shall Sing For You** A film by Jacques Sarasin at Nepal Tourism Board, Bhrikuti Mandap, 5PM on 19 December. [icfs@wlink.com.np](mailto:icfs@wlink.com.np)
- ❖ **Reopening ceremony** of Pilgrims Feed n' Read Vegetarian Garden Restaurant, Thamel on 20 December at 12 noon. 4700942
- ❖ **Christmas Festivities** at Hotel Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Christmas Eve Carol Service** by the International Church on 24 December at 6.30 PM and Christmas Day Service on 25 December at 9.30 AM, British School, Jhamsikhel. 5525176
- ❖ **3rd Annual Wave Web Winner 2004** Website designing contest. Entry deadline 15 January. [www.com.np](http://www.com.np).

### MUSIC

- ❖ **Classical music**, 7PM, every Friday and The God Dance of Kathmandu Valley, every Tuesday at Hotel Vajra. 4271545
- ❖ **Jatra** Saturday nights with Looza, 6.30 PM onwards. 4256622
- ❖ **Jukebox experience** with Pooja Gurung and The Cloud Walkers every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at Rox Bar. 4491234
- ❖ **Happening live jazz in town** at Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lajimpat. Every Wednesday and Saturday, 7.45 PM onwards.

### FOOD

- ❖ **Christmas Party** at The Bakery Café, Dharara on 18 December, 12PM-5PM. Tickets available at all Bakery café outlets. 4434554
- ❖ **Christmas Eve at Dwarika's** BBQ, traditional Christmas desserts and welcome drink for Rs 1,000 on 24 December. 4479488
- ❖ **Bethlehem** Christmas Eve dinner with live music at Hotel Shangri-la, Lajimpat. 4412999
- ❖ **Introducing pastas** at Roadhouse Café, Jawalakhel. 5521755
- ❖ **Bakers Basket** Chef Ayub Saleem introduces yummy Christmas pudding and cakes at Hotel Yak & Yeti. Until 28 December. 4248999
- ❖ **The Spirit of Christmas** sumptuous goodies at Hyatt. 4491234
- ❖ **La Soon** Restaurant and Vinotheque, Pulchok. 5537166
- ❖ **Sizzling Weekend Treat** with live music, dance, barbeque and karaoke at Garden Terrace, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Authentic Malaysian Food** at Jalan Jalan, Lajimpat. 4410438
- ❖ **Barbecue-Ban Bhoj** at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **Executive Lunch** at Toran Restaurant, Dwarika's. 4479488
- ❖ **The Tharu Kitchen** at Jungle Base Camp. [junglebasecamp@yahoo.com](mailto:junglebasecamp@yahoo.com)



### GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Merry Christmas Package** with breakfast and dinner. Single room Rs 4,000 and double room Rs 5,100 at Le Meridien. 4445550
- ❖ **Dream Holiday** package tour to Malaysia for Christmas and New Year. Marco Polo Travels and Qatar Airways, 2012345
- ❖ **Getaway package** at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **AAA Organic Farm** Rs 950 with three meals. 6631734
- ❖ **Tiger Mountain Lodge** Christmas, New Year offers. 4361500
- ❖ **Weekend special** at Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha. 4375280
- ❖ **Christmas by the jungle** at Jungle Base Camp Lodge, Bardia. Special package and prices. [junglebasecamp@yahoo.com](mailto:junglebasecamp@yahoo.com)



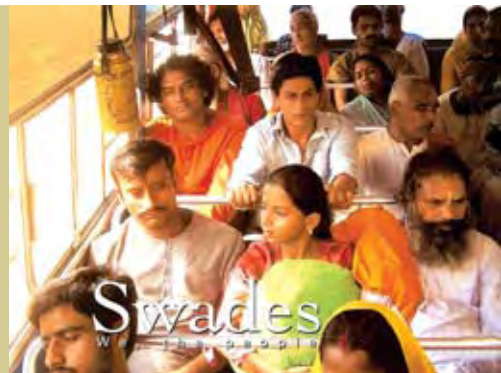
## JAI NEPAL CINEMA

Set in modern day India, Swades is a film that tackles the issues of development at the grass-roots level. It is to this India, which is colourful, heterogeneous and complex, that Mohan Bhargava (Shah Rukh Khan), a bright young scientist working as a project manager in NASA, returns to on a quest to find his childhood nanny. The film uses the contrast between the highly developed world of NASA and this world back home in India, which is at the crossroads of development. Mohan's simple quest becomes the journey that each one of us goes through in search of that metaphysical and elusive place called 'home'.

Call 4442220 for show timings

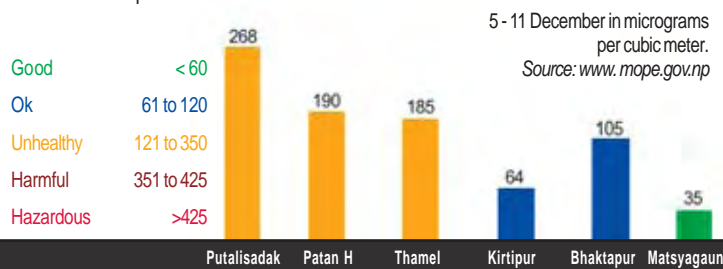
[www.jainepal.com](http://www.jainepal.com)

Now Showing



## KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

On 7 December the concentration of particulate matter smaller than 10 microns in Putalisadak shot up to 410 micrograms per cubic metre, which in most other cities would be enough to sound the alarm bells telling people to stay indoors. Life in Kathmandu, however, ground on. Although the average levels fell off, other parts of Kathmandu weren't much cleaner. The main cause is vehicular emission mainly from diesel cars, which is compounded by winter inversion. The best we can do for now is stay away from busy streets at rush hours to think of a solution to Kathmandu's pollution.



## NEPALI WEATHER



## by MAUSAM BEED

Though December is Nepal's second driest month with 13 mm average rainfall in Kathmandu, it does look like there is some catching up to do. This satellite image taken on Thursday morning shows no sign of immediate relief. The Asian jet stream that drifts southwards over the Himalaya in winter has been weak this year, and the westerlies have dissipated by the time they get to Nepal. But there is a wide cloud front over northern India that is heading our way and could bring partly cloudy days with chances of rain and snow in the higher altitudes. Conclusion: Valley residents expect a sunny weekend with warm afternoons and colder nights.

## KATHMANDU VALLEY



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नेपाल अधिराज्यको संविधान २०४७ ले प्रत्येक नेपाली नागरिकको आधारभूत मानव अधिकार सुरक्षित गरी स्वतन्त्रता र समानताको आधारमा नेपाली जनताका बीच भ्रातृत्व र एकता कायम गर्ने कुरामा जोड दिएको छ। जुनसुकै विचारधाराका भए पनि नेपाली सबै एक हौ भन्ने भावनाले राष्ट्र निर्माणको काममा अग्रसर हुन सके मात्र यस देशको विकास तीव्र गतिमा हुन सक्ने हुँदा विचार फरक भएका विषयहरूमा आपसी समझदारी र सहयोगको भावना लिएर छलफल गरी निष्कर्षमा पुग्नु र संपूर्ण नेपालीलाई भ्रातृत्वको दृष्टिले हेर्नु प्रत्येक नेपालीको कर्तव्य हो।

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KIRAN PANDAY

**REMEMBERING A KING:** Rastriya Ekta Parishad celebrates the 85<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of late King Mahendra on Thursday by garlanding his statue amidst towering billboards at Darbar Marg.



KIRAN PANDAY

**EMERGENCY:** An ambulance caught in a monstrous gridlock at Tundikhel during a strike staged by the Taxi Drivers' Union on Monday.



KIRAN PANDAY

**CARD HOLDERS :** Hotel Yak & Yeti with Standard Chartered Bank launched their Privilege Card on Wednesday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

**CLIMBING TOGETHER:** The climbers, producer and directors of *Daughters of Everest*, a documentary shown at the Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival, at the closing ceremony on Sunday.



ANUP PRAKASH

**BLUE STRINGS:** Nekhvam, a blues band, performed for the WAVE event 'The Blue Note' at the Yala Maya Kendra last Friday.

**A**fter graduating from St Xavier's in Kathmandu, unlike most Nepali men Jaya Thapa decided he liked to cook. It was a passion nurtured since helping his mother around the kitchen. A brief stint as waiter at the Soaltee cemented his commitment and in 1975, the hobby turned into profession when he won a scholarship to France.

In wine country, he studied hotel management and was exposed to the finer points of French culinary culture. It was there that he also met his Chilean wife, Gladys Burgos and accompanied her to South America. Barely three years later, Jaya was homesick and his wife wanted to get to know his family in Nepal. So, eight years after leaving Nepal, Jaya returned with his wife and two daughters, Edna and Carina.

La marmite, a French restaurant that Jaya established in 1982 in Kathmandu became a big hit. Inclined to stay but feeling insecure about his

# Homecoming

children's education, he moved back to Chile in 1987. "I sacrificed my love for my country for my children's future," Jaya confesses, "but the plan was always to come home once they were in college." True to his word, he returned to Kathmandu in 2004. Initially, the Thapas found it hard to adjust but the closely-knit Latino-Nepali family had strong bonds. "It was either all of us or none at all," Jaya says.

The family runs a Hispanic

restaurant in Bhatbhateni called 'Delicia'. There is a certain symmetry in all this because in Santiago, Jaya ran an Asian restaurant called Shangrila.

Jaya is devoted to his children. "I missed their childhood because I was so busy. I don't want to miss the rest of their lives," he says. Happy to be back in Kathmandu, he knows he's made the right decision. His children are discovering their roots and learning Nepali. The eldest daughter has shown interest in the business and Thapa plans to hand it over to her eventually.

Jaya is happy with his laidback life and although his clientele is growing, doesn't want to expand his restaurant for now. ●

(Aarti Basnyat)



Jaya Thapa with his elder daughter Edna, in the kitchen of their restaurant 'Delicia' in Bhatbhateni

KIRAN PANDAY

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# More traffic survival tips

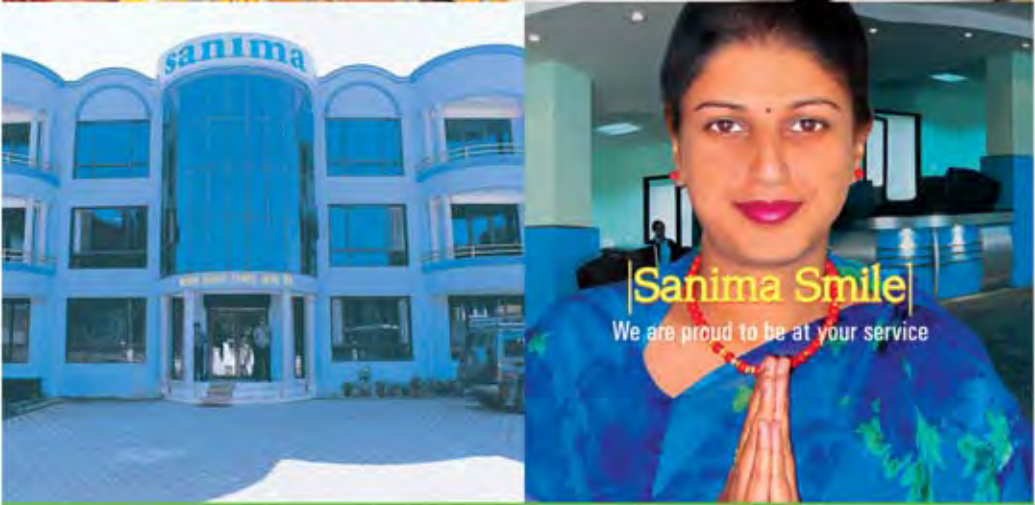
Due to the amazing progress we have made in the transportation sector it is now possible to whiz from Bhairawa to Kathmandu in a jet in 20 minutes and then spend the rest of the day getting into town from the airport. A traffic jam is a sure sign that a country's macro-economic engine is finely tuned and is darting ahead at eight centimetres a year on the Tukucha Bridge.

On a more practical note, the winter solstice is approaching and the nights are getting longer. This leaves fewer hours at the disposal of high school graduates to rob a bank in broad daylight so they can make a swift getaway. In view of the above, there is now a need to amend some traffic rules so that we can get to the Hogwash Conference before dark or before there is peace in Kashmir, whichever comes first.

The Valley Traffic Police is instituting these new rules with immediate effect to ensure the safety and sanity of the travelling public:



1. All sidewalks are hereby declared Motorcycles Only to make more space on the road for cars. In an emergency, motorcycles can also use the pedestrian overhead bridges.
2. You may well ask, so where are the pedestrians supposed to walk? And that is a very good question. During a taxi strike it is henceforth allowed for pedestrians to actually walk on top of agitating Marutis to get to work.
3. Good news. We've just heard from an unconcerned higher authority that pedestrians are henceforth banned from the streets during rush hour for their own safety and because they slow down traffic.
4. Cows, dogs, rhesus monkeys, uncastrated goats, zoo elephants, marriage horses, water buffalos, chicken, and other street fauna can cross the road at their own convenience as long as they can satisfactorily explain why it is that they want to get to the other side in the first place.
5. It has come to our notice that a lot of motorcyclists unfasten their helmets after being stuck for about five hours at Bhadrakali. This is very dangerous. Put them back on right now.
6. A helmet is compulsory only for your wife squatting side-saddle behind you. Your five-year-old daughter sitting on the fuel tank doesn't need it. But she can wear shades if she wants to.
7. A street centreline is just a humble suggestion, you may drive on the wrong side of the road at any time. In America they drive on the right side, so all you DV guys may as well get some practice.
8. In the interest of road safety, seat-belts have been made mandatory at all times, even if your car hasn't moved since approximately 9:30 yesterday morning. This is to restrain drivers who want to get out and strangle someone.
9. Since passengers are going to be spending so much time in their cars, vehicles are required by law to be self-contained and retrofitted with the following accessories by January First:
  - a. toilet with shower
  - b. small restaurant and bar
  - c. gym with treadmill
  - d. broadband Internet connection
  - e. hypertension alarm to warn drivers if their blood pressure is hitting the roof in which case the car automatically turns into an ambulance with flashing lights and a siren which can rush to the emergency ward of the nearest hospital and get there sometime in the new year.
10. For emergencies, all cars must have rocket-propelled ejection seats.



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