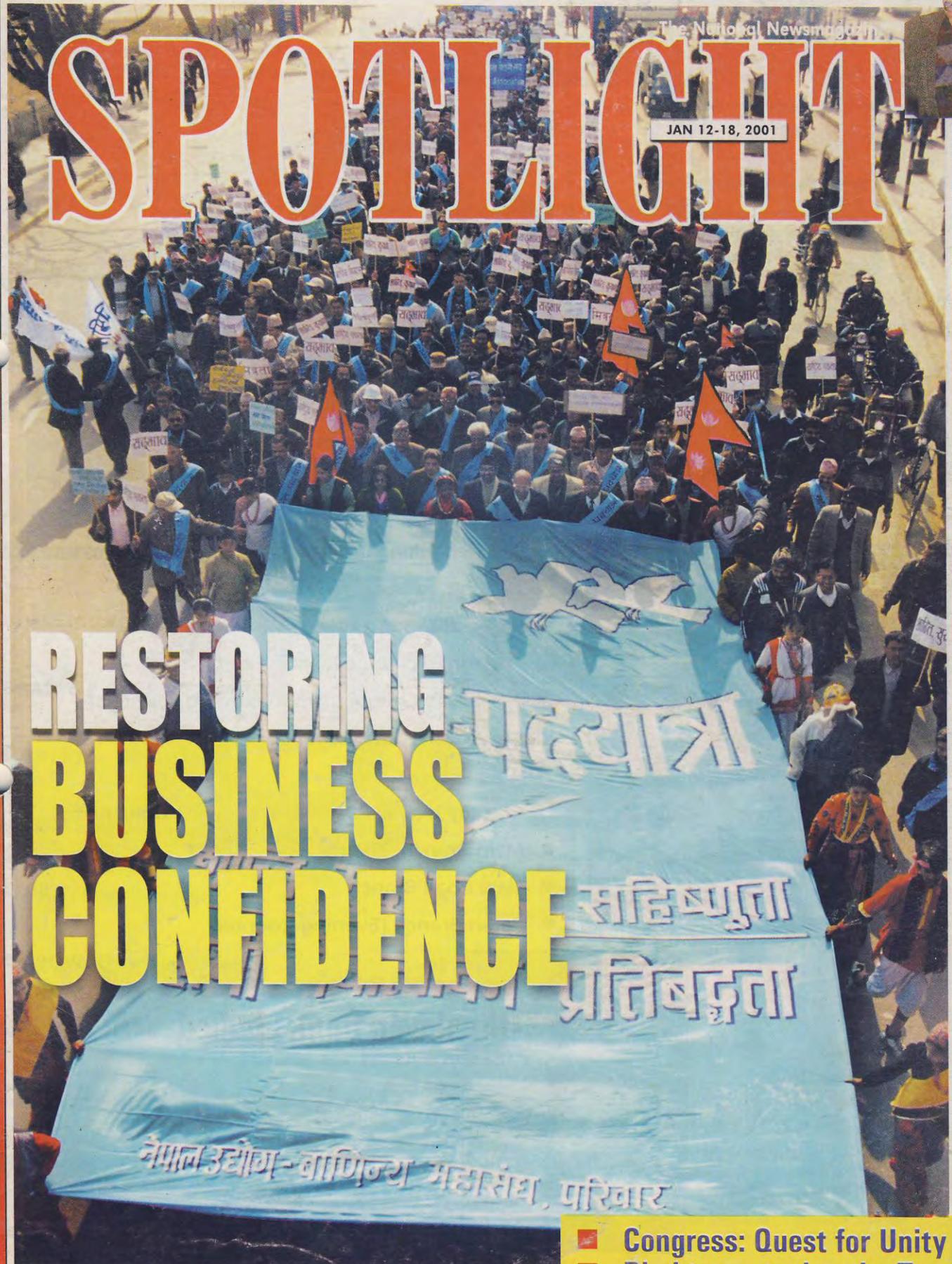




The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

JAN 12-18, 2001



RESTORING BUSINESS CONFIDENCE

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- Congress: Quest for Unity
- Bhaktapur taxing the Tourists
- A Tale of Two Transports

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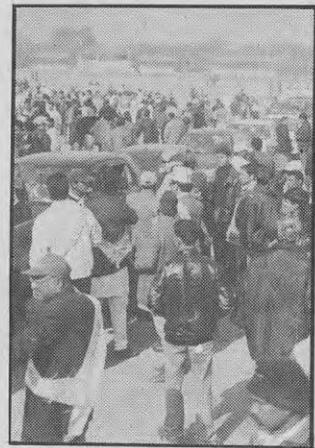
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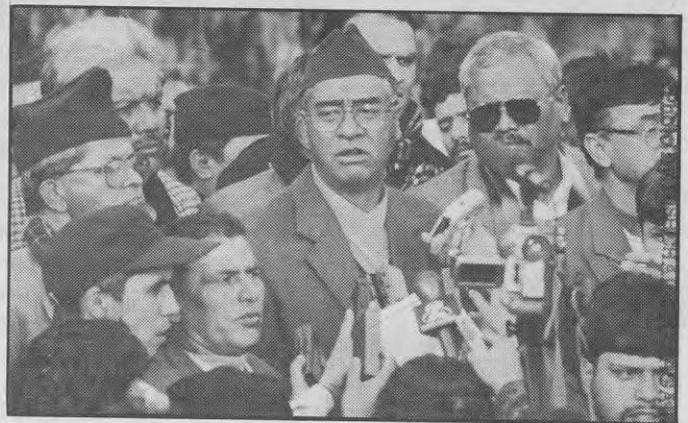
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COVER STORY: Eroding Business Confidence
Frequent 'Nepal Bandh', violent protests and political instability have posed threats to the future of Nepali businesses.

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CONGRESS POLITICS : Trial Of Strength

Despite the ensuing feud among its factions, the ruling party still remains united.

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**INTERVIEW :
SURYA N. UPADHYAY**

The new Chief of CIAA says the probe body has the character of both the ombudsman and the prosecutor.

Page 22

SPOTLIGHT

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EDITOR'S NOTE

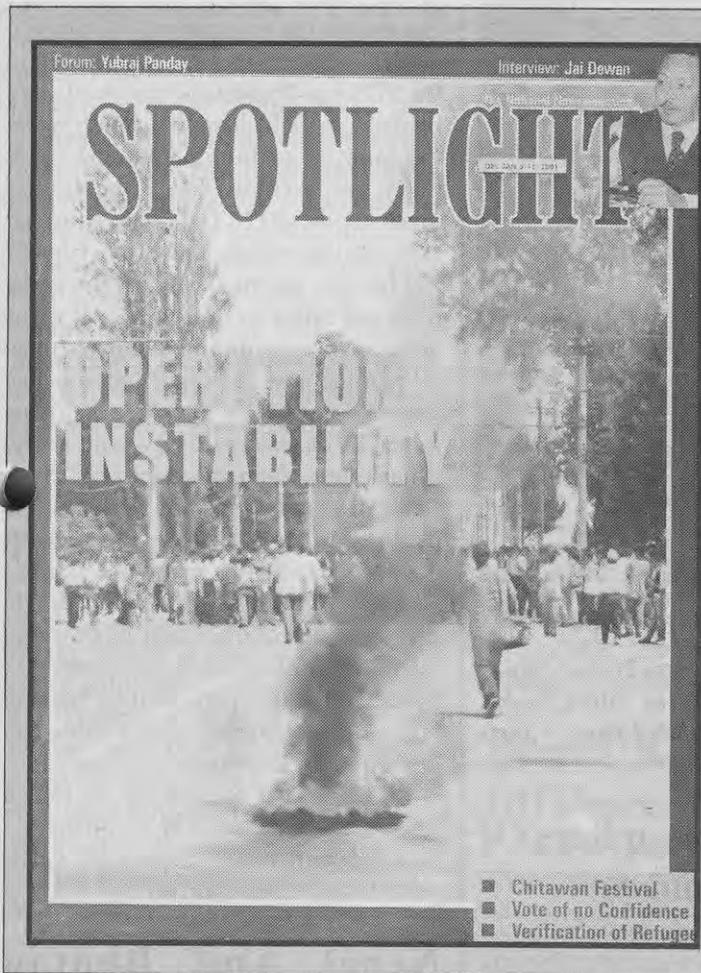
The mayhem generated in Nepal by the statements of Indian cine star Hritik Roshan and Indian politician K.R. Malkani has exposed the fragile nature of Nepal-India relations. The violent reactions shown by some motivated Nepalese which resulted in the deaths of innocent lives could be taken as clear manifestation of sinister implications of elements other than those who could be said to be directly affected. Hritik Roshan has every right not to like Nepal or Nepalese people. No Nepalese should have lost any sleep over such an insignificant statement. But the uncalled for statement of the politician was simply meant to provoke and insult the Nepalese people. Malkani is not an immature green-horn like Hritik. Making an unsubstantiated statement without any rhyme or reason that has hurt the sentiments of a close neighbor and friendly people could not be said to have come from a sane mind. His unwarranted remark has eroded the myth many Nepalese had been suffering from that Baharatiya Janta Party had a softer corner for Nepal. Some Nepalese might have been hurt, some might have become mad but an overwhelming number have taken it as a blessing in disguise. These kinds of pin-pricks that are made periodically by Indian dignitaries and publicized by the powerful Indian media only continue to widen the gulf of mistrust and misunderstanding so strongly entrenched in the minds of Nepalese intellectuals. As it is, the Nepalese intelligensia is finding it difficult to swallow lock, stock and barrel the rhetoric of age old ties and closest of relationship between the two countries. Affinities in culture and religion do not seem to be contributing much towards strengthening the understanding. Nepal's uninterrupted independence and India's checkered history which has given the Indian statesmen and bureaucrats a definite mindset and psyche are greatly responsible in shaping and reshaping their bilateral relations. Since this space would not suffice us to explain, even briefly, the historical background of Nepal-India relations, we will attempt to enlighten our readers in our following issues. In the meantime, if both Nepal and India did abjure from making provocative statements, that would definitely help heal the wounds. Whether we like it or not we both need each other. We cannot undo our geography.

* * *

The no-confidence motion against the Prime Minister and Party President Girija Prasad Koirala by the dissident MPs of Nepali Congress led by Sher Bahadur Deuba has aborted. It had to as we had correctly visualized. Nepali Congress with alien roots, has always suffered from leadership crisis ever since its birth more than five decades back. The Nepali Congress leaders have never been imbued with the noble concepts of patriotism and public service. Whenever they have been able to grab power the leaders and their henchmen have tried to reap all the benefits. As a result, the country and the poor people have always suffered. More than a decade after the fall of the Panchayat regime, the Nepali Congress has held the reins of power most of the time except some brief spells of eighteen months or so. The mis-governance by the Nepali Congress governments have even provoked donors and friendly countries to transgress diplomatic norms and warn the government to mend manners. Unfortunately, such warnings too have been ineffective. Because of maladministration and blatant corruption, the country is being embroiled in severe unrest and if situations go on worsening, may be engulfed in a civil war. If the Nepali Congress leadership is not overhauled by a more dedicated, honest and patriotic younger generation, it is definite to land itself in big trouble and also spell disaster for the country. The power hungry unscrupulous politicians must be sidelined, if Nepali Congress is to contribute to the well being of the Nepalese people. The patriotic younger generation must understand that they must have a strong native base. No amount of foreign support can prop them up for a long time, neither will they be able to create an image for themselves as national leaders. The ensuring party convention of the Nepali Congress is the right forum to oust the corrupt leadership. The younger generation will not find a better opportunity. Can they stand up to the occasion? We will wait and see. ■



Madhav Kumar Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Make Nepal Stable

It is true that a stable and prosperous Nepal is in the best interest of both its neighbors, India and China ("Message From The Mayhem", SPOTLIGHT, January 6-11). That is the most important message we and our southern neighbor - which never tires of pointing fingers at us for every problem it has - can take from the anti-Hrithik protests. Instead of trying to depict Nepal as a playground of nefarious elements, efforts need to be made to make the country stable and prosperous.

Subash KC
Thapathali

gating the mass. Can we ever expect the deliverance of the people from this kind of ruling party and opposition?

Shukra Raj Acharya
Naya Bazaar, Kirtipur

Correct Analysis

The most important thing that I found in your Dec 28-Jan 5 issue was the Editor's Note on the violent demonstrations against the shameful statement attributed to Indian actor Hrithik Roshan. I fully agree with your view that it was not necessary to do all that, causing great loss of life and property. The Nepali people could have shown their outrage in a peaceful manner. What was the result of the violence? We lost so many things, including five lives and much property, but gained nothing except the difficulties three days of bandhs brought. This shows that we are not serious about doing responsible work. We talk more but do less. We should be very careful not to allow such incidents to happen again. I hope you will continue to carry such editorials.

Shatru "Mitru" Pokharel
Pyuthan

Politics To Blame

The ruling and opposition parties are directly responsible for the Hrithik episode and the consequent loss of life, property and international prestige of Nepal. We have proved to the world that we are an archaic society without a trace of modern attitudes. To use a popular Nepali proverb, we just ran after the crow when told that it had flown away with our ear. In its preoccupation with whipping up anti-India frenzy, the leftist opposition, with its concocted version of nationalism that is inconsistent with its internationalist Marxist philosophy, has succeeded in widening the gap between hill and Terai Nepalis, and driving the country further down the road to communal disharmony. Although they proclaim themselves to be anti-feudal, these leaders impose supremacy

on sympathizers by using feudalistic methods of misinformation and superstition. Religion is opium to them, but they attend religious ceremonies to drug the people. Their nationalism was exposed when they were in power and dashed off with the Mahakali package in the platter to get India's blessings. Then they had the audacity to shout hoarse that the package was a smaller giveaway than the individual dams on the Koshi and Gandaki. The louder a Nepalese party shouts about nationalism, the more it gives away when in power. What to talk of the ruling party that never functions? Even with a majority in the parliament, it is always held to ransom by its minority faction. See how its leading dissident Sher Bahadur Deuba plays crybaby? He resorted to all forms of corruption from distributing Pajeros and

bribing MPs to sending away MPs on drunken sex holidays in order to stay in power. Who believes he has the vision to provide effective leadership? As for Girija Prasad Koirala, whenever he is in power, his priority is to provide for his cohorts in cash and kind. He says corruption is an invisible evil. It is invisible only to the blind man on the swivel chair. All of us see the mushrooming palaces of the nouveau rich. As soon as someone's legitimate income is compared with the wealth he or she has amassed, corruption is apparent. The Congress government has developed a trigger-happy police force that fires in the air, but somehow the bullets find their way to the people's chest. Rather than perform as a government of the people, the Congress party is time-frozen in its Rana-era thinking of subju-

Useless Riot

I was going through news about Nepal on the Internet and read about last week's riots. I must say I am a bit confused. Why would Nepalis want to destroy their own city and kill their own people just because some Indian made some nasty remarks about the country and people? This definitely seems weird to me.

Kalyan Pande
Madison, Wisconsin, USA

CORRECTION

Please read as "British India And Tibet" (1766-1910) by Alastair Lamb instead of what inadvertently appeared in the cover story of January 5-11.

“Anti-National, Anti-Democratic Forces Are Active”: Nepal

Leader of the main opposition, Madhav Kumar Nepal, has said anti-national and anti-democratic forces are becoming active at present in the country. In an interview, Nepal said at a time when people remain dissatisfied due to the inefficiency of the Nepali Congress government, forces that aim at dividing the nation have increased their activities. As there is no viable alternative within Nepali Congress, the entire country is looking for an alternative. “If an exit could not be given in such a situation, the country may face even greater crisis,” he said. The UML general secretary said his party had not entered in the issue of taking one or the other faction within the ruling party in the upcoming winter session of the parliament. Prime Minister Koirala is mainly responsible for all the ills in the country. His government has totally failed. Nearly 50 percent of the country’s problems will be automatically solved as soon as Congress gets out of the power, he claimed. *Gorkhapatra Jan. 07.*

NBL Board Opposes The Govt. Decision

The members of the board of directors of the Nepal Bank Limited (NBL) representing the private sector have opposed the government’s decision to transfer management of the bank to international management company. Addressing the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the Parliament Friday they said they would, instead, accept technical assistance to improve the ailing bank. The private sector holds majority of shares (59 percent) in the NBL, which has been described as “technically insolvent” by an international audit firm, the KPMG Barents Group, a few months back. After receiving the report, the government had decided to hand-over the management of NBL and Rastriya Banijya Bank (RBB), another government-owned bank, to the private operator. The World Bank is providing support to Nepal government under Nepal



Nepal Bank Ltd.

Financial Sector Reform Project, which includes, reforming the ailing banks, among others. *Compiled from reports Jan. 05.*

Police Nab Suppliers Of Arms To Maoists

Police in southern terai district of Parsa have arrested two people allegedly supplying arms to Maoist rebels and has also seized a huge cache of arms from them, reports said. Police recovered five pieces of powerful pipe bombs; seven pieces of .12 bore gun, nine pieces of revolvers and bullets from the Everest Printing Press at Mohan Market near Nepal-India border. Police also took into custody an Indian national, M. K. Mahacharya, and a Nepali national, Mohammed Sagir, from the press. The owner of the press, Khurshid Alam, is absconding. Police said Alam was supplying arms to Maoist rebels for quite sometime now. They said they were planning to raid godowns of illegal arms in India with the help of Indian police. *Nepal Samacharpatra Jan. 05.*

Shah Protests The Govt’s Decision

Jamim Shah, managing director of Space Time Network Pvt. Ltd., the largest cable operator in the country, has

alleged that the government’s decision to cancel license to operate earth satellite to the STN was “biased and politically motivated.” In a statement issued last week, the Ministry of Information and Communications (MoIC) said the license given to the STN for establishing an earth satellite system, among other things, had become automatically invalid as the STN had failed to fulfil the legal terms and conditions within the stipulated time. “When the news of cancellation of the license is aired by Zee TV, a private Indian TV channel, before I was informed, it must be a planned conspiracy,” Shah said. He also said that his company had paid fees to the Ministry every year but the Ministry did not renew the license. Shah was interrogated by Kathmandu district administration early this week in relation to publication of a news report in Space Time daily, published by Shah, in relation to violent protests in Kathmandu against alleged derogatory remarks toward Nepal and Nepalis by an Indian actor. “The interrogation was unnecessary and prejudicial,” Shah said. *Compiled from reports Jan. 05.*

Nepal And Bhutan Nominate Members

The governments of Nepal and Bhutan have nominated five members each from their side to form the Joint Verification Team (JVT) to verify the nationality of nearly 100,000 refugees residing in refugee camps in eastern Nepal for the last one decade. According to the Foreign Ministry, the Nepal government has nominated a five-member team led by joint secretary at the Home Ministry, Ms. Usha Nepal. Similarly, Dr. Sonam Tenzin, director at the Bhutanese Ministry of Home Affairs, will lead the Bhutanese team. The nominations were made as per the agreement reached at the 10th meeting of the Joint Ministerial Level Committee held in Kathmandu last week. During the meeting, both the sides had agreed to nominate their officials for JVT within a week and start field verification within January this year. This is the first time over the last several years that Bhutan has agreed to kickstart the

verification process. The JVT had to be formed as Bhutanese authorities had claimed that most of the people residing in the refugee camps were non-Bhutanese. Bhutanese refugee leaders, however, claim that more than 95 percent of the refugees have documents to prove that they are bonafide Bhutanese citizens. They blame the Dragon kingdom of adopting the policy of 'ethnic cleansing' to drive out southern Bhutanese of Nepali origin under the so-called "one country, one culture" policy. *Leading dailies report Jan. 05.*

Transporters Call Off Proposed Strike

Transport entrepreneurs have called off the nationwide 'chakkajam' (general strike), in view of what they said deteriorating political situation in the country. The Federation of Nepalese Transport Entrepreneurs (FNTE) said Tuesday that it has withdrawn all the strike programmes that were scheduled to kick off from Wednesday. "We have called off the strike looking at the present political scenario," said FNTE General Secretary Hom Prasad Adhikari. "But that does not mean that we have given up our protest programmes," he said. The FNTE had called for the strike in protest of the government's decision to ban operating of 20-year-old public vehicles from next year. The FNTE said the government's latest decision will affect around 5,000 vehicles in the country. *Compiled from reports.*

UML Brings Out A Rally

Hundreds of supporters belonging to the main opposition Unified Marxist-Leninist party brought out what they called a "good will rally" in the capital Thursday urging people to maintain social harmony and peace in the country. Senior UML leaders and workers belonging to its sister organizations took part in the rally. A number of professional groups, business community and political activists are bringing out similar rallies in different parts of the country next week urging people to maintain social harmony. The rallies are being organized after some protestors targeted businesses and prop-



UML's goodwill rally

erties of Indian nationals and people of terai origin in the capital last week. More than half a dozen people lost their lives during the protests in different parts of the country. *Compiled from reports Jan. 05.*

'Nepal Bandh' Passes Off Peacefully

The second day of the two-day 'Nepal bandh' — the nationwide general strike called by the nine leftist parties — passed off peacefully Tuesday with no reports of violence from any part of the country. In Kathmandu, shops, businesses and schools remained shut for the second consecutive day and vehicles stayed off the roads. Few motorcycles and private cars could be seen in the streets during the afternoon. Police detained General Secretary of CPN-ML, Bam Dev Gautam, along with dozens of his supporters as they tried to come out of their party office to demonstrate in support of the strike. A ML leader accused the police of taking into custody more than 300 people in the capital alone. The Home Ministry said the detainees would be released after interrogation. Different political parties and interest groups have organized shutdown strikes for more than 50 times over the last nine years. *Compiled from reports.*

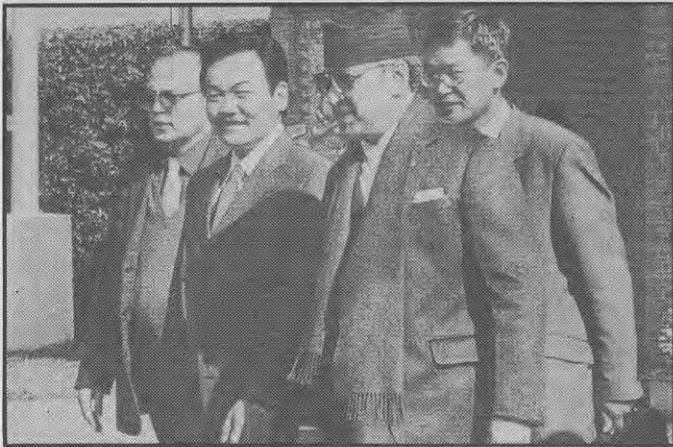
Two Rebels Killed

At least one person was killed and three others, including a policeman, were injured when suspected Maoist rebels

hurled explosives at a police patrol team at Khaireni in Chitwan district Monday, police said. The rebel died when the bomb exploded before they could hurl it at the police from the speeding motorcycle, reports said. Meanwhile, one more rebel died while undergoing training for laying down ambush Saturday afternoon at a jungle hideout at Thulo Dhading VDC in Sindhupalchok district, police said. *Compiled from reports.*

NRB To Study Magnitude Of IC Circulation

Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), the central bank of the country, has said it has launched a comprehensive study to analyze the magnitude of circulation of Indian Currency (IC) and its impact on the Nepali economy. Dr Yuba Raj Khatiwada, Chief Economic Advisor at NRB, said the use of IC in domestic transaction was growing in Nepal. NRB officials have estimated that nearly 25 percent of demand for money in Nepal is being fulfilled by the Indian Currency. "This means that NRB is slowly losing its control over major economic variables such as inflation and interest rates," said Dr Mohanman Saiju, an economist. Experts said open acceptance of the Indian currency in bordering towns and low interest rates offered by Nepali commercial banks were mainly responsible for the surge of IC circulation. Nepal maintains a fixed exchange rate with Indian currency and it is widely circulated in domestic market. *Kantipur Jan. 03.*



King Birendra welcoming Mongolian President Natsagiin Bagabandi

THE SUPREME COURT HAS PASSED AN ORDER to invite 'amicus curie' (friends of the court) to advise the court on a writ petition filed by ex-British Gurkha soldiers. The bench comprising Chief Justice Keshav Prasad Upadhyay and justices Govinda Bahadur Shrestha and Kedar Prasad Giri requested the Nepal Bar Association to send three amicus curie to help the court. The apex court is hearing a petition that claims unequal treatment to ex-British Gurkha soldiers by the British government.

THE DIVISION OF THE SUPREME COURT (SC) PASSED an order Friday that the case challenging the formation of the Special Court be presented to the special bench. The division bench comprising justices, Top Bahadur Singh and Bhairab Prasad Lamsal, issued the order. The court order came in response to a petition filed by advocate Jyoti Baniya last week challenging the legality of the government's recent decision to set up a Special Court. "The formation of the Special Court impedes the jurisdiction of the general court," the writ had stated. The government established a Special Court, after issuing a notice in the Nepal Gazette on December 25, to look into the cases related to crimes against the state, drugs, foreign exchange transactions and women trafficking. Analysts say the officials were pleading establishment of such a court to expedite cases related to Maoist insurgency.

OPERATORS OF SAFA (ELECTRIC-RUN) VEHICLES have demanded that the government prepare a different policy for the electric Vehicles. They said the policy is necessary to promote the environment-friendly transport service exclusively being operated and managed by the private sector. Federation of Clean Locomotive Entrepreneurs Association of Nepal organized a special general assembly on 31st December to discuss the current status of the safa tempos in Kathmandu and sort out the problems being faced by the EV operators. Addressing the function, Minister of State Shiva Raj Joshi said discussions are being held between his Ministry and Ministry of Water Resources to lower the electricity tariff for the EV charging stations.

HEAVY SNOWFALL IN HUMLA HAS DISTURBED THE normal life in the remote northern district and out of gear and has cut links to the district headquarters, Simikot, from adjoining areas, reports said. Simikot is currently under one and a half feet of snow. The snowfall, which began on December 28, is continuing. The snow has also led to a complete halt in air services to the district.

NECON AIR, A LEADING PRIVATE AIRLINE, HAS phased out its second aging HS-748 on New Year's day and inducted an additional ATR-42 into service on its domestic and international sectors, reports said. The airline will replace its third HS-748 by April to modernize its fleet, which also has a single engine Cessna208. The airline serves seven domestic destinations besides Varanasi and Patna in India. NECON Air is the only Nepali private airline operating international flights.

A TOTAL OF 42 NEPALI CONGRESS MPS, INCLUDING former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, have demanded that the government take all possible steps to maintain social harmony in the country. In a statement issued Saturday, two days after the no-trust motion against premier Koirala filed by the dissident group was rejected by majority, the group said activities fomenting unrest to hurt the sensitivity of ethnic and regional identity have thrown all economic activities including the tourism sector into disorder. As the role of the governmental security and communication agencies is ineffective and not far-reaching, the complexity has increased, they said. They have also called upon the government to provide due compensation for the loss of life and property during assault and government action at various places in the country.

PRESIDENT OF MONGOLIA N. BAGABANDI AND Madam Bagabandi laid foundation of a monastery to be built in Mongolia at Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha, amidst a religious ceremony Saturday. King Birendra and Queen Aishworya graced the function. The Mongolian dignitaries offered prayers at the Maya Devi temple and were apprised information about the development plans of Lumbini. Nepal has allotted land to various countries, including Mongolia, to develop monasteries at Lumbini. ■

Banira's Collection Released

A collection of poems by renowned poetess Dr. Banira Giri, titled "From The Lake, Love," was recently released in the capital amidst a function. Minister for Foreign Affairs Chakra Prasad Bastola released the collection. "Her poems testify in her culture and society to what can no longer be as it was," writes Wayne Amtzis, the editor of the collection. Translated into English by Amtzis, Ann Hunkins, Michael Hutt and Manjushree Thapa, the collection includes dozens of Giri's selected poems.

“Could there be class struggle by burning the cycles of terai people and burning vehicles of Marwari community that is living in Nepal for the past several years? This is a bankrupt thinking and a mis-attempt to direct ‘class struggle’ toward the wrong way. We want to stop unnecessary conflict so as to direct the ‘class struggle’ in the right direction.”

Madhav Kumar Nepal, UML general secretary and leader of the main opposition, responding to Maoists’ charges that his party was adopting the policy of ‘class coordination,’ in Gorkhapatra.

* * *

“Sri Madbhagavad Gita” is the best book in the world. Everyone should read it.”

Dr. Tulasi Prasad Bhattarai, member-secretary, Royal Nepal Academy.

* * *

“Are you trying to please us though these cups of sweet tea?”

Sher Bahadur Deuba, former prime minister and leader of Congress dissidents, bantering with Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, at a tea party organized by the premier, in Kantipur.

* * *

“I stood neutral for the sake of party unity.”

Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, former minister, who did not participate in the voting for the leader of the Congress parliamentary party, in Bimarsha.

* * *

They refused to allow secret ballot, so we boycotted the vote. It wasn't proper to split the party openly.



“I don't think it is appropriate to name him. What is important is he approached me offering Rs 1.5 million saying it was on the order of the prime minister.”

Mangal Prasad Tharu, Congress MP, accusing the prime minister of trying to buy his vote during the election of the Congress parliamentary

party leader, in Ghatana Ra Bichar.

* * *

“When you fire a bullet in order to maintain law and order, that bullet does not differentiate between a minister or a child.”

Laxman Prasad Ghimire, central member of the Nepali Congress, in Jana Aastha.

* * *

“Pressures come from both sides and it is quite difficult to strike a balance. But we have been managing that to great extent.”

Durga Nath Sharma, general manager of Nepal Television, when asked how state-owned television reacts to pressures from those in the government and in the opposition, in Chhalfal.

* * *

“Many Nepali artists are living there. What can they do when there is no environment to work in their homeland?”

Kumar Basnet, senior folk singer, who recently paid a visit to the United States, in Gorkhapatra.

* * *

UML Felicitates those giving shelter during underground days.



shelter-givers



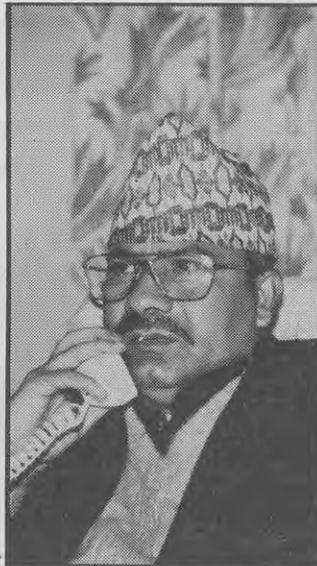
shelter-takers

Deuba On Camera

There are few leaders in the Nepali Congress who seem to get things their way. Former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba can be counted among those lucky ones. Last week, when the situation in the Congress parliamentary party took a dramatic turn over the procedural wrangling on the no-trust motion, Deuba was frantically searching for a stage to perform his next act. Luckily, he got an empty stage outside parliament where he led his 41-member rebel squad in a high-risk performance. Flanked by the key actors in his script, Deuba waited for the two cameramen there to focus their lenses on him. With the kind of performers the party has, the Congress tamasha can only more and more entertaining.

Nepal's Interest

There were many politicians, journalists and officials present to witness the latest act in the Congress spectacle. Opposition leader Madhav Kumar Nepal was one of the more conspicuous members in the audience. As the UML's parliamentary party office is next to that of the Congress, Nepal did not lose the opportunity to get a first-hand look into what was brewing. It's hard to tell whether Nepal's arrival was a coincidence or a calculated move, but his interest in Congress' internal politics surprised many. The UML general secretary, however, had good reason to be there. If the Nepali Congress splits, Nepal stands a good chance of throwing around some extra political



Nepal: Peeping at Congress

weight. So, what was wrong in having a dekko at a tamasha that could turn him from opposition leader to king-maker?

Dirty Attraction

Politics seems to be a profitable preoccupation for many Nepalis. This is why people from all walks of life, including senior bureaucrats, student leaders, musicians and film actors, were gathered at Congress parliamentary party office. The worry of political appointees and senior bureaucrats was understandable, as they would have had to resign had their mentor Koirala been voted out. But what could have attracted those creative minds to the dirty game of politics?

Pushed To The Wall

They were already suffering from the onslaught of electric vehicles and minibuses. Now they are being subjected to another government decision that wants them out of the valley from next year. Already nervous from

REVELATION

'Tourism Industry Crippled By Bad Publicity'

—NARENDRA BAJRACHARYA

NARENDRA BAJRACHARYA, president of the Hotel Association Nepal, is one of the well-known hoteliers of the country. Bajracharya says Nepal's tourism sector is in a dire situation following continuous disruptions. He spoke to the media on various issues. Excerpts:

How do you evaluate the present situation in the tourism sector?

The situation is not good. Nepal's tourism industry has faced numerous crises in recent years. Bad publicity generated by the Indian Airlines hijacking, bird-hits at the airport and Nepal Bandhas has crippled the industry. The hotel employees' dispute has sent another wrong message to the world.

What is the tourist arrival rate?

As you know, a report prepared by the Nepal Tourism Board shows that tourist arrival has declined by 10 percent. It is bad news for the industry.

How do you see the hotel employees' demand for a 10 percent service charge?

As Nepal's tourism sector is already overburdened, a service charge will further increase costs for tourists. We are opposing the demand because it will harm the total tourism industry.

What is the stand of hoteliers on the service-charge issue?

A high-level committee under the chairmanship of the vice-chairman of the National Planning Commission is working on the issue. An expert committee set up by our association under the chairmanship of Pravakar Sumsher Rana has tackled many aspects of the issue. ■



Crowded Minibus: Scene from the past

the dwindling number of passengers, the decision was the proverbial last straw that broke the back of the minibus-wallahs.

The government's decision to remove all vehicles

older than 20 years from the valley will affect these minibuses the most. That's why they are vehemently protesting the decision. Interestingly, the passengers are sniggering at the recent turn of events. Only a few years ago, these minibuses ran in the city in a virtual monopoly carrying people in the hundreds - wildly exceeding their capacity. And now they do not find passengers even in the dozens. On top of that, the government is pushing them to the wall. All this must be driving them to tears. ■

DISTURBANCES IN TERAJ

Who Benefits?

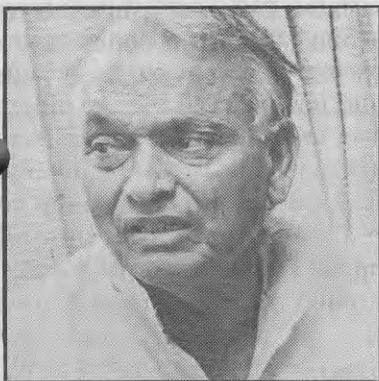
Violence in Kathmandu valley sparks an outcry in India. Can a repetition in the terai be tolerable?

By KESHAB POUDEL

The shock waves unleashed by rumors of insults allegedly made by Indian film star Hrithik Roshan are gradually fading in much of the country. But the situation in the southern terai region still remains volatile because of the Nepal Sadbhavana Party's threat to launch more protests.

At a time when all major political parties have agreed to work toward restoring law and order in the country, the NSP — portrayed as pro-Indian by the Indian media — and eight left parties are yet to make a clear stand.

As anti-Indian activities in Nepal are regularly blamed on foreign conspirators, it is unclear who will benefit from the



Singh : Pressing demand

NSP's latest threats. Few can fathom why NSP leader Gajendra Narayan Singh is bent on fanning tensions in the terai, which could only cause greater instability in the country. The violence that gripped Kathmandu valley last month following what was just a rumor destroyed property worth millions of rupees. The possibility of similar violence in the terai during pre-planned demonstrations led by the NSP cannot be ruled out.

The government has apologized for the incident in Rajbiraj and a high-level commission is looking into the attacks on people of the terai. The NSP's threat to launch an agitation even after the government made those assurances is being viewed with some suspicion. The NSP has called strikes in several southern districts to protest against attacks on people of, and property belonging to, Nepalis of the terai.

Limited violence in the capital created a barrage of comments in the Indian media. The repetition of such activities in the terai has been greeted by a complete silence by India's print and electronic media.

The recent violence has already given a message to Indian policy makers that instability in Nepal will harm their interests. Whether the instability originates in the terai or in the hills, the impact on India will be the same.

A strong and stable Nepal alone can guarantee the security of its neighbors.

"Nepal has seen a growth of radical political ideology in the last 10 years, which has been gradually destroying India's traditional and dependable allies in Nepal. The monarchy is gradually weakening along with traditional forces like the centrist Congress and rightist Rastriya Prajatantra Party," said a political analyst.

"As long as Nepal has a strong Hindu cultural and religious base, anti-Indian sentiment cannot last long," another analyst said. "Unfortunately, efforts are being made to destroy the base in the name of opposing Sanskrit education and calling for a secular state."

The British colonial government in India always stood for Nepal's stability as it understood the country's position to exercise a powerful influence on India's internal stability.

If Nepal continues to descend into periodic phases of instability, it cannot be good news for the neighborhood. ■

ORDINANCE

Security Risk?

After the recent mysterious violence followed by a two-day Nepal Bandh, King Birendra has reportedly accepted Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's proposal to issue an ordinance to set up an armed police force.

As Nepal already has a 40,000-strong Royal Nepalese Army and 35,000-member police force, the formation of separate armed police force is questionable. Strategic analysts hold the view that the armed police will not be used to contain the Maoists insurgency but to create a rift between the armed forces in Nepal.

Although Prime Minister Koirala's coterie used all means, including influencing major newspapers, to create a favorable situation for setting up the armed police force, few believe such a force would be able to quell the Maoists. "Setting up the armed police is not in the interest of Nepal. What prompted Koirala to hurriedly issue the ordinance just a month before the regular session of parliament?" asked an analyst.

The decision to set up the armed police will remain one of the controversial decisions at the end of Prime Minister Koirala's political career. Strangely, Koirala, who survived a leadership challenge from within his party last week, disowned the suggestion of the high-level commission chaired by his main rival, Sher Bahadur Deuba, which sees the Maoists insurgency as a political problem. With the confluence of these events, those who saw the confrontation between Rakshya Dal and Royal Nepal Army in the 1960s are worried. ■



PM Koirala : Did he win?

CONGRESS

Divided They Stand

Congress leaders once again demonstrate that internal rebellion has its limits

By KESHAB POUDEL

When Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala received his predecessor Krishna Prasad Bhattarai at his official residence at Baluwatar for a tea meeting earlier this week, Bhattarai lost no time in embracing Koirala, showing his deep personal feelings for a friend of five decades.

The tea reception, which started at 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, January 8, 2001, saw an unprecedented gathering of all party leaders, including former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and his band of 40 Congress MPs that had mounted a stiff challenge to the prime minister. After defeating a no-trust motion in the parliamentary party office on

Thursday, January 5 amid walkout by most of the sponsors, the tea meeting marked Koirala's first initiative to heal the wounds. As usual, Congress leaders chatted, laughed and hugged each other, trying to cover their bitterness.

The meeting seemed unnatural. The rival groups had gathered just a couple of days after a deep division in the parliamentary party meeting where many predicted the possibility of a split in the ruling party. A formal split was averted, thanks in large part to Bhattarai's disappearance from the meeting, showing his disapproval of splitting the party.

"Why should I split the party when I myself need a strong and united party. We are now preparing for the next round of the battle with Girijababu in the gen-

eral convention at Pokhara," Deuba said immediately after leading 40 other MPs in boycotting the vote on the no-trust motion.

Although Deuba was angry and frustrated, his cautious remarks represented the importance Congress leaders attach to party unity. Amid the tense and fragile situation, Koirala also emphasized the message of party unity, expressing profound respect for his rivals, including Deuba.

"I will accommodate all my party colleagues, even Sherbahadurji," said Koirala, after retaining his previous support tally of 69 MPs in the parliamentary party. "We need to consolidate the party to fight against anarchy and disorder."

The remarks of the two Congress rivals showed where the half-century-old party is heading. Despite the bitter war of words, neither faction can avoid stressing the cause of party unity. "Prime Minister Koirala is our leader of the past, present and future. There is no doubt about it," Deuba said.

When Deuba's group walked out of the Congress parliamentary party meeting at Singha Durbar in protest against the voting procedure on the no-trust motion, few believed they would get together to settle the leadership issue. Thanks to the role played by different political lobbies, the situation did not reach a point of no return when MP Benup Raj Prasai announced the elections results at the parliamentary party office.

This is not the first time the Nepali Congress devised a patch-up formula after a serious rebellion. In 1994, some Bhattarai supporter even threw shoes on Koirala's effigy and supreme leader Ganesh Man Singh went to the extent of quitting the Nepali Congress. The Congress leaders averted a party split in 1994 after the announcement of mid-term elections.

Nepal does not have a long tradition of democratic practice nor an industrialized culture to run a party organization. In this stage of metamorphosis

of political parties, such events cannot be ruled out. Congress has always survived because it has so many lobbies that are activated in times of crisis.

As an open and democratic party, these lobbies are actively functioning within the Nepali Congress. In the process, individuals may quit the party but the lobbies do not allow a vertical split. If people feel uneasy, it is not difficult for them to cross over to other camps within the party. "The painful transition in the Nepali Congress is understandable because it is now transforming from a group of agitators into a party of governance," said a political analyst.

In the recent melodrama, the equation within the party saw a drastic change, as some Koirala loyalists shifted to Deuba camp and some Deuba loyalists crossed over to the Koirala faction. But on the question of a split in the party, all chant the same mantra of unity. Infighting in the Nepali Congress is largely influenced by personality.

Although Koirala has changed his style of functioning and personal behavior drastically in the last decade, he is yet to accommodate all of his critics. Many opponents say they still find it

difficult to meet Koirala. Everyone in the party has an interest in the infighting because they need space for survival. The revolt by Deuba and his supporters is part of a ploy to occupy room in the party. "Their fight is just to occupy their place in the party rather than to fight to the finish," said a political analyst. If Koirala's supporters agree to share power with the rival faction, the rift in the party will subside.

Despite his unpredictable actions, Bhattarai's role was important in easing the tension in the party. Thanks to Bhattarai's absence, Deuba loyalists easily gave up their claim in the elections.

"The Nepali Congress is a mass-based party which keeps everything open. Every issue come out in the open in contrast to the secrecy maintained by the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist and Leninist," said a political analyst.

It is not easy for any Congress member to work toward splitting the party. Moreover, the history of the Nepali Congress and the plight of breakaway groups have discouraged Congress members from exercising that option. In Nepali politics, all breakaway parties have lost their identity soon after they split. The

Nepali Congress split many times but those who walked out were rejected by the national mainstream. Even Ganesh Man Singh was isolated after he quit Congress. From Dr. Dilli Raman Regmi to Bamdev Gautam and Lokendra Bahadur Chand to Hridayesh Tripathi, no one has succeeded in surviving as a formidable force following a split. Deuba and his colleagues are shrewd students of this reality.

Then why did Deuba and his band choose to mount an insurgency? Although Deuba is a natural successor to the current leadership, he wants to establish nationwide legitimacy. This rebellion provided him best way of doing so.

Deuba also got the support from all those who feel uncomfortable in the party because of the arrogance of Koirala loyalists. As Deuba is easy to meet and talk to, strong rebel leaders like Khum Bahadur Khadka, Purna Bahadur Khadka and Chiranjibi Wagle find solace in his sanctuary.

As they do not have any differences on such ideological or policy issues as socialism, globalization or liberalization, personal differences among Congress leaders can easily be sorted out.

As it is still governed by a feudalistic leadership, senior political leaders see themselves as guardians of the party.

Unity between Koirala and Bhattarai changes the dissidents' stand. If Bhattarai and Koirala join hands, no one can open their mouths. As the leadership is gradually emerging from the grassroots-level democratic exercise, more and more members have become assertive.

Formed by a group of educated middle-class youth in India 53 years ago, the Nepali Congress has seen many ups and downs. But it retains grassroots support within a mainstream leader. The recent episode showed that Congress has to learn to face many rounds of instability in the transition to a full-fledged democratic set-up. ■



Deuba : Still defiant

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Uncertain Future

For the first time, the business community has come out with a proactive strategy

By KESHAB POUDEL

A gathering of industrialists at the auditorium of the Hotel de la Annapurna underscored their strategy shift: they have started going public with their grievances. The proactive approach of the business community is a response to the failure of their hitherto reactive stand.

threatened to call a new phase of strikes. The last-minute intervention by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala averted a prolonged strike in the hotel sector last year, but the dispute remains to be settled permanently. As long as the deadlock between hoteliers and hotel workers continues, Nepal's tourism sector will remain unstable. As two trade unions backed by political parties have issued a new threat to



Bandh day : Hitting hard at economy

Addressed by president of the Hotel Association Nepal Narendra Bajracharya, former president Prabhakar Sumsher Rana, vice-president of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Rajendra Khetan, president of the Travel Agents Association Nepal Bhola Thapa, among others, the interaction program between journalists and almost all senior business leaders of the country covered many issues.

This proactive approach has taken shape at a time when trade unions have

resume their strike if their demand for the introduction of a 10 percent service charge is not met, hoteliers and tourists may be on the verge of a new bout of instability.

Both sides have dug in their heels. Hotel employees say the service charge would also help make transactions in the hotel sector more transparent.

Hoteliers say it is impossible to introduce a service charge because of the problems the tourism sector is already in. "If we add an additional 10 percent service charge, we will not be able to compete with other

destinations of the world," said Rana. "At a larger level, the government has to decide whether they want more foreign investment or not."

If the ruling Nepali Congress and the main opposition CPN-UML press their respective trade unions, the problem can be settled with little effort. After all, Laxman Basnet, a close relative of Prime Minister Koirala, and Mukunda Neupane, a senior CPN-UML leader, are leading the strikers. But question remains, will they do so?

Tourism is one of the largest sources of foreign currency earnings in the country as well as one of largest employers. If political leaders do not force their labor wings to find an amicable solution through negotiations, it will damage the national economy.

According to the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), the country saw a sharp decline in the arrival of the tourist in the country. Compared to 1999, tourist arrival by air in 2000 decreased by 10.61 percent.

The NTB's data shows that there has been a slight positive growth in third country arrivals during the period, but Indian tourist arrival has dropped drastically.

Nepal's tourism sector has never seen this kind of uncertainty. Following the hijacking of an Indian Airlines aircraft in the end of 1999, the tourism sector has seen a series of negative incidents, including frequent Nepal Bandhas organized by various political parties.

Whether it was the exaggerated news of bird-hits at the airport or the demand of hotel workers, the only intention seemed to be the destruction of the tourism industry.

"The hotel sector has hardly overcome its existing problems. If it has to face new ones, this strong and promising industry will die," said Bajracharya, addressing a press conference.

Industrialists are also calling for amendments to some acts, including the Labor and Company Act, to facilitate foreign investment. "We always want to establish a cordial relationship with employees," said Khetan. "Employees should understand the compulsions and problems of industrialists."

The business community's proactive strategy may bring some changes in the industrial sector. ■

PUBLIC Vs PVT TRANSPORT

Sajha Loses Speed

As private operators are overtaking it, state-owned Sajha Yatayat struggles in the face of government indifference

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Only 10 years ago Sajha Yatayat had a firm public reputation. When its fleet of azure blue buses plied their routes, the streets and highways looked impressive. People waited in queue for Sajha tickets.

Things have changed. The otherwise bustling ticket counters of Sajha Yatayat wear an almost deserted look. And this is not because people do not prefer to ride its buses anymore. It is because Sajha no longer has the number of buses it had in the past.

Ten years ago, more than 120 buses of Sajha used to be running around the country at any given time. This number has dropped to around 40 today, as most of its 183 buses have broken down and are in the garage and workshops. Because of the lack of resources to repair these buses and buy new ones, Sajha is now forced to ply around 40 buses (of private operators) on contract. "We have no choice. We are running losses and have liabilities worth Rs 30 million," said Brahmananda Upadhyaya, executive director of Sajha Yatayat.

Most of its fleet consists of standard Japanese buses donated by the Japan to Nepal. They are costly to repair. "Repairing a single bus can cost up to Rs 400,000. As we don't have that kind of money, we are forced to lease private buses on contract by paying 20.5 percent of their total income as commission," Upadhyaya says. He adds that if the government does not come to its rescue in the next three or four months, the organization will have to start leasing more such private buses to survive.

Set up in the model of a cooperative



Makalu bus : Speeding ahead



Sajha bus : Lagging behind

in 1961 with five buses, Sajha Yatayat was later taken over by the government, which now has 94.5 percent of ownership. For a few years after the government took over the management of Sajha Yatayat, things looked rosier and the buses were plying smoothly. But gradually their speed was down as the government turned it into a place for dump-

ing staff. At present, there are 745 employees in Sajha Yatayat — 50 percent more than needed, according to Upadhyaya. "Ideally, a single bus can sustain seven staff, but here we have too many employees depending on too little buses. For the last three months, we have not been able to pay salaries," he adds. The annual income of Sajha Yatayat is around Rs 70 million.

Compare this with Makalu Yatayat. Established just three years ago with 10 buses, Makalu has witnessed a meteoric rise. It now has 50 buses plying in the different parts of eastern Nepal. "We want to expand our services to western region, too, but there are obstructions from the transport entrepreneurs' committees there," says Tulsī Man Singh, managing director of Makalu.

Makalu was started with an investment of Rs 20 million by seven promoters associated with the transport sector. It

now employs 250 people. "Because of our network, punctuality and accident-free record, we are gaining popularity," Singh says. He declined to divulge information on profits, preferring only to say that the operating profit is reasonable.

While it is not bad to have the private sector taking a lead in transportation, the indifference of the government in rescuing Sajha Yatayat, the only public

sector transportation in the country, from the present mess is strange. In a welfare state, the government does have the responsibility to provide basic service like transport to its people at reasonable price. "Definitely, private operators will not ply vehicles in sectors that are not profitable, such as far-flung villages. So, is it not the responsibility of the government to cater to the demands of its people there?" asks Upadhyaya, citing the example of India where State Road Transport Corporations under the state governments operate buses which are very much the mainstay of public transport there. ■

EDUCATION

Old And Modern

Through a novel project, Durbar High School moves to bridge the digital divide

BY AKSHAY SHARMA

Nepal's oldest school is one of the most modern when it comes to computers. Two overseas charities, the Nepal Trust and Project Initiate from Singapore, are working with Durbar High School to provide equipment and training to ensure that students are given comprehensive and relevant lessons in computing. Unlimited recently added

second room has older 386 computers, used to teach subjects required by the SLC syllabus such as DOS and Q-Basic.

A pilot teaching project has been running for the last year with great success, observers say. Students of Classes 9 and 10 have received an intensive course in basic computing skills, with an emphasis on modern software such as Microsoft Office.

"Prepare them for working life" is the theme of the program. "Teaching



Students using computers : Embracing new technology

its support to the project by providing complimentary Internet and e-mail access.

Two rooms, furnished by the school, have been stocked with computing equipment provided by Project Initiate and Nepal Trust.

One room has modern Pentium machines, which are used with Windows 95, Microsoft Office, multimedia CDs, touch typing, e-mail and Internet. The

materials have been written and refined during the pilot stage and will be supplemented from other sources in the coming years," according to an expert.

From the start of the next academic year, computing will be made compulsory for all students of Classes 7 and 8, and will be offered as an SLC option at Classes 9 and 10.

"One of the most interesting and exciting developments is the use of mul-

timedia CDs as a teaching tool. Students can learn many subjects and conduct research projects using CD-based encyclopedia such as Microsoft Encarta or IBM World Book. As well as text, these contain pictures, sound and video clips, which bring learning to life," says an expert at Unlimited.

The recent Internet connection provided by Unlimited seems to have been a big hit with the students. Now, under supervision, they can surf the Net and learn more about subjects that interest them.

An e-mail pen friend project has also been started, and Class 8 students now correspond with their counterparts in a school in England. "Hopefully, lasting friendships will be formed," the Unlimited expert said.

Another initiative is a job placement scheme. "We are looking for organizations that are willing to take on one or more students for a few weeks and give them experience in the work environment while they wait for their SLC results or during the school vacation," says an expert.

The next year will be both exciting and difficult for the oldest school, as teachers get to grips with the new teaching environment and begin to integrate computing into their normal lessons, teaching methods, and working practices.

"There are still obstacles to be overcome. For example, obtaining modern course books is especially difficult, so many teaching materials will have to be developed in-house," says an expert.

And equipment breaks down, especially with heavy use in a teaching environment, so money is needed for repairs. However, as more local support is achieved, everyone is optimistic that these difficulties will be overcome and that the project will continue to flourish.

If you would like more information about the job placement scheme or would like to help with the computer project in some other way, please contact the school on durbarhs@unlimit.com or telephone 249890. ■

TOURISM

Tax Burden

Bhaktapur Municipality's decision to double tourist fees irks tour operators

By A CORRESPONDENT

The number of tourists visiting Bhaktapur has drastically declined following the city's decision to double the entry fees. If last week's tourist arrival trend is any indication, Bhaktapur Municipality stands to lose millions of rupees in revenue.

The municipality's fee hike came just a few weeks after hoteliers and hotel workers announced a truce over the demand for an introduction of a 10 percent

service charges. Bhaktapur's decision to increase entry fees by 100 percent came as a setback to an already-frail tourism industry.

As many new venues around the world are opening up for tourism, it is becoming harder for Nepal to maintain an edge in tourism marketing. The additional charges imposed by municipalities and religious shrines raise the total cost of package tours.

"It is too much on the part of [Bhaktapur] municipality to have raised entry fees. If other municipalities fol-

low suit, there will be more hassles for the tourism industry," said Bholu Bikram Thapa, president of the Travel Agents Association Nepal.

Bhaktapur Municipality has fixed revised rates of Rs. 50 for citizens of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries and Rs. 750 for citizens of other countries effective from January 1. The previous rates were Rs. 30 for a citizen of a SAARC country and Rs. 375 for nationals of other countries. Tourism entrepreneurs see this as another burden to tourists.

In the last five years, Bhaktapur Municipality has accumulated Rs. 170 million, which was spent on

renovating cultural sites of the city. Bhaktapur is not alone in taxing tourists. The religious sites of Swayambhu and Baudha have joined Lalitpur in charging tourists for tours. A visitor has to open his or her purse in at least half a dozen places.

This has led many tourists to choose their itineraries carefully. Tourism entrepreneurs maintain that the time has come to evaluate the overall taxation system.

But Bhaktapur officials don't see the fee hike as an obstacle to tourism. "Since the service charge collected from tourists goes to the renovation of temples, tourists are not hesitant to pay," said Prem Suwal, mayor of Bhaktapur Municipality. "It's the Nepali tourism entrepreneurs who are opposing the fee increase."

Tour operators insist they are in trouble when all municipalities in the valley are trying to impose service charges advancing similar reasons. The fact remains that the tourism industry is badly hurt by over-taxation. If all the increases are added in a single bill, a tourist has to increase his budget by more than 50 percent.

Nepal's tourism industry has been facing a series of setbacks after the hijacking of Indian Airlines Flight 814 on December 24, 1999. Tourist arrivals fell drastically last year. Although the industry saw frequent disturbances before the hijacking, it never faced a crisis like today's.

The tourism sector survived the violence and uncertainty of the People's Movement of 1990 and the political instability generated by 1995-1999 hung parliament.

Tourist arrival figures saw a dramatic growth after the restoration of democracy in 1990, averaging a 15 percent annual increase.

As the octroi system was dismantled after a long controversy, municipalities having tourist attractions found service charges for visitors as a profitable alternative — ignoring of course, the possible negative consequences on tourism. ■



Stone-spout in Bhaktapur : Pay your way

BUSINESS CONFIDENCE At The Lowest Ebb

Political instability, deteriorating law and order and frequent 'Nepal bandhs' are going to create a deadly cocktail in which no business can survive. Restoring business confidence is a long process which must be initiated before it is too late.

By BHAGIRATH YOGI

It was a colorful scenario on Sunday morning. Thousands of people, including top government officials, opposition leaders, prominent businessmen, professionals and people from various walks of life had gathered at Tundikhel, near Shahid Gate, in the capital on January 7 to take part in a "peace rally." Organized as per the call of an all-party meeting at the initiative of the main opposition UML and brought together at the initiative of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), the nearly two-hour-long 'silent rally' that

passed through major thoroughfares of the capital carried a very simple and straightforward message: "As an ethnically diverse country Nepal needs social harmony. Peace and stability is essential for economic development."

Two weeks after violent protests in the capital that claimed the lives of five people, concerned citizens took to the streets, albeit peacefully. "The rally was also a way of telling people that you can convey your message in a peaceful manner," said Pradip Kumar Shrestha, the FNCCI president, who looked happy with the overwhelming response to the peace rally. "You don't need to adopt violent means or call 'bandhs' to put your de-

mands or pressure the government," he said.

Only if a section of Nepali political leaders had listened. Only a week back, a group of Nine Left parties had called a two-day-long 'Nepal Bandh' (nationwide shutdown strike) on January 1 and 2 coinciding with the beginning of the New Year. The parties called the 'bandh' demanding the resignation of Home Minister Ram Chandra Poudel, holding him morally responsible for the deaths of five people, including two minors, in police firing during the violent protests late last month.

Poudel did not oblige. But the government formed a high-level commission



Businessmen at the peace rally : For social harmony and industrial security, unity is must

to investigate into the violent protests on Christmas Eve in the capital to protest against the alleged remarks by a young Indian actor, Hrithik Roshan. Roshan said he had never made any such comments that could harm Nepali sentiments. The protests that were 'carefully' orchestrated against businesses owned by Nepali businessmen of Indian origin and Indo-Nepal joint ventures had already caused huge losses.

"Property worth nearly Rs 50 million belonging to business community was destroyed during the riot," said Rajendra K. Khetan, ex-officio vice-chairman of the FNCCI and the president of the Marwari Youth Forum. "The national economy has suffered a loss of an estimated Rs 500 million due to the violent protests."

More than physical losses, the sentiments of the business community got hurt in a way incomparable to the past. "Though our forefathers had come to Nepal nearly 800 years ago, those who came here from

Marwad in India within the last 200 years are known as Marwaris," said Shanker Kedia, a prominent businessman and social worker. "We are first Nepalis, only then Marwaris. This is our 'janmabhoomi' as well as 'karmabhoomi.' Those who want to spread hatred against a peaceful community like Marwaris want nothing but disintegrate this country."

People are at a loss to explain why vested interest groups targeted business communities of specific origin in Kathmandu. But it was obvious that some unscrupulous elements were out to harm industries and business, both domestic and joint ventures, taking benefit of the lax security environment.

"The government is committed to provide adequate security to businesses," Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala assured industry leaders who called on him in the aftermath of the violent protests in the capital. "The government will take all measures to bring the situation under control."

Within a week of this assurance from the chief executive, around one dozen armed people attacked the godown of Balaji Petrochem Industries in Birgunj and set it on fire early Saturday, causing a damage of an estimated Rs 50 million to Rs 60 million. According to Vice President of Birgunj Chamber of Commerce and Industry Satya Narayan Agrawal, owner of the factory, the armed gang had assaulted the security guards at the factory and tied them up before setting it on fire. A day later, unidentified persons threw a 'petrol bomb' at Jayasawal Wood Industry in the same town destroying properties worth around Rs 1.4 million in the fire. "About a month ago I had received a

threat call from people claiming to be Maoists," said Ramchandra Prasad Kurmi, manager at the industry.

Sources said rebels belonging to the underground party were targeting those businesses that refused to pay them "donations." Attacks within industrial district of Hetauda and godowns of Surya Tobacco and other factories in Simara seemed to be motivated from larger motives.

"The government has failed to provide security to business and industry," FNCCI President Shrestha told SPOTLIGHT Tuesday before flying to Birgunj to assess the situation. "Such incidents have taken place despite the local business community's initiatives to set up 'mobile security force' in Birgunj. If we have to take up the entire burden of security on our own, why should we pay taxes to the government?" he asked.

Unfortunately, as the law and order situation was deteriorating in the country, the ruling Nepali Congress was involved in its never-ending internal feud. The dissident group within the Nepali Congress registered a no-trust motion against Koirala at the Nepali Congress parliamentary party last month even before the Kathmandu streets could return to normalcy.

Experts warn that political uncertainty, indifferent bureaucracy, deteriorating law and order and frequent 'Nepal bandhs' are going to create a deadly "cocktail" in which no business can survive.

"Businesses can develop and economy prosper only when there is a guarantee of peace and stability," said Dr. Govinda Bahadur Thapa, an economist at the Nepal Rastra Bank. "The present environment of insecurity and instability has had serious impact upon all the sectors of the economy." (See: Box)

The effect of prolonged instability is already being seen in the market. "There is massive slackness in the market and sales have slashed down significantly. Investors (both domestic and foreign) have put on hold their investments and existing industries are also facing crisis," said Mahesh K. Agrawal, former president of Nepal Chamber of Commerce. "As the farmers are not finding adequate price to their produce in the market, the demand for goods and services has declined. The

'Nepal Can Gain From Its Strengths If Politicians Stop Messing Up Everything'

— PADMA JYOTI

Industrialists may have different hobbies. But for PADMA JYOTI, former president of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI), weekends, too, come with reading and writing assignments. Known more as an academic than a businessman, the vice-president of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industries is worried by the latest developments in the country. The chairman of Jyoti Group spoke to BHAGIRATH YOGI on Sunday. Excerpts:

How do you assess the fact that the recent violent protests also targeted businesses?

We have had many bandhs in Nepal in recent times, but the last protest took an uncharacteristically ugly turn. What we saw is not at all in keeping with the true character of the Nepali people, who are tolerant and peace loving. This was disturbing. Every right thinking Nepali condemns such behavior. Apart from the physical vandalism and the economic losses resulting from closure of business, the psychological shock was greater this time than in the past. It exposed our fragility for which we ourselves are mostly responsible. I don't agree that the alleged remarks of a film actor were the reason. Pent-up frustration with the state of the country and anger with all unfair treatment meted out to us when sparked by a few instigators just exploded. It was directed as much inwards as outwards. But all loss has been Nepal's. Business, especially investment, needs a climate of confidence, order and predictability. Once the confidence in future is shaken further, investments will be put in cold storage, if not totally abandoned. A few bumps are expected in a developing country like ours. It is normal and can be taken in stride. But a consistent pattern of disorder, mismanagement and violence with

no improvement in the offing will finish Nepal as far as foreign investment is concerned. Even Nepalese investment will shy away from value adding long-term sector and divert to less risky quick business.

What could be the fallout of such protests and frequent bandhs?

Let me deal with the bright side first. One positive fallout is the realization by all segments of our society of the folly and danger of such self-destructive behavior. Most political parties, a cross section of the citizens and civil society suddenly woke up. The outpouring of feelings for harmony, peace and brotherhood are encouraging signs. Genuine nationalistic feelings of unity of the country also surfaced. The surprisingly overwhelming response to the call for a peace march by FNCCI this week is an example. Now we should try to channel these positive feelings into constructive and lasting areas. Next, let me mention the negative aspects. We have to realize that continuation of divisive politics, infighting, senseless violence and mindless pursuit of selfish interests will push Nepal into an abyss. Constant vigilance by all citizens is absolutely necessary. A New Year is a good time to make resolutions. Let all of us make a few personal resolutions to work diligently without only politics in mind in our respective fields and resolve to make a few sacrifices to accommodate each other. The time has come to think deeply about the epidemic of bandhs in our society. People are fed up. To start with, let us declare a bandh-free year, I am sure that the results will be happy for everyone. We should also draw up norms for bandhs to bring some order and accountability. I am preparing some suggestions for consideration by everyone.

What has been the impact of political instability on our economy and



businesses?

This is our biggest tragedy. In spite of a majority ruling party, the public perception is that of chronic political instability. The common citizen does not sense that all wheels of the state are moving in unison. His faith in the capability of the government to manage affairs is shaky. These are not pleasant things to hear or say, but this is what the man on the street feels today. For healthy growth of business also, this is very harmful.

In such a situation, don't you think investors — both domestic and international — will lose confidence?

I would not go to the extent of saying that it is the end of the world for investors. Shaken for the moment, yes, but if we can provide an assurance that we are taking steps to take matters under control, investor confidence can be restored. In the end, economic potential and viability is what determines investment. Nepal has strong points and competitive sectors. I only wish that we, especially the politicians, do not make a mess of everything we attempt to do.

What should be done to regain investor confidence?

What needs to be done first is to fulfill promises we have made to the investors in the various acts. Nothing is

more damaging than finding out that the government does not implement what it says. Secondly, bring accountability in decision making in bureaucracy. No one seems to be under anyone's control. Most agencies seem directionless. The ministers have to provide good leadership and become better managers of their jobs. Checking the cancer of corruption from spreading should be at the top of the agenda. Finally, politicization of every segment of society must be stopped. For example, most of the organizations of teachers, workers, students, farmers, even professionals, are a front for political parties. Instead of being concerned with their main job, they have become tools of parties to be used for political aims. We are fast losing a work culture where loyalty to the institution for which we work, and to the work that provides us our livelihood is paramount. Merit, productivity, efficiency, hard work are not the measuring yards any more, but political muscle, use of coercion, divisive tactics are taking over. For example, can anyone today take a decision based on performance or ability of a worker in any industry? I am afraid not. What can you expect except mediocrity and more politics from such enterprises in future? This kind of culture will doom our economic sector, which has to face competition from the world.

How would you evaluate the implementation of the 2000/01 budget so far?

I don't have the figures with me to make a factual analysis. But I wonder where does anyone have time out of politics to monitor and take corrective steps? I heard complaints from FNCCI representatives to the Revenue Advisory Board that many suggestions are made but none implemented. To make a subjective comment, I do not think that the business community is happy with the business environment this year. It is true that some initiatives in the right direction have been started, but what can one minister, one planner or one expert do? The entire government machinery has to get behind any effort. FNCCI calls it a lack of economic vision and wants to see that all political

parties give an economic agenda.

Is Nepal's private sector ready for global competition at a time when we are trying to enter the World Trade Organization (WTO)?

I had a chance to visit the WTO recently. I realized how little I knew about it. In our part of the world, perception of the WTO has been like that of seven blind men, each touching a different part of an elephant and then describing the beast. I am afraid this is especially true of our business community. However, let me offer some consolation. We are not alone in this ignorance; 80 percent of the 110 countries that signed WTO agreements in Marrakesh in 1994 did not know what they were signing.

The time to debate whether to join the WTO or not is wasted time. Do we want to get in and row the boat with the world or sink by staying out all alone in the world?

WTO principles cannot be faulted. Yet there is so much to learn in the complex maze of rules and regulations. For countries like ours, it is a bitter reality that the rules are already framed without our participation. Even though the WTO looks like a lion's den, we have to get inside and try to influence the lion not to eat us alive. We have to get inside the WTO to negotiate important provisions critical to our needs, especially under the Integrated Framework for LDCs. There is simply no other way.

What about the proposed South Asian Free Trade Arrangement (SAFTA)?

SAFTA is a regional initiative. If we proceed according to the schedule, the SAFTA draft agreement should be finalized by the end of this year. But the parent body SAARC itself is on hold politically at the moment. Even after we resolve that knot, some sectors of the business community are bound to have concerns about the effects of SAFTA. Some restructuring is inevitable which will be somewhat painful in the short run. But SAARC Chamber believes that in the long run without cooperating with and opening to each other our region cannot hope to prosper in this world. ■

mobility in the economy is quite slow."

Dr. Thapa also agrees that aggregate demand in the economy has declined at the moment. "As the wealth created in the aftermath of open and liberal economic policies adopted by the government has been concentrated in very few hands and there are no new avenues of employment, popular resentment is growing," said Dr. Thapa. "The government, too, has failed to ensure judicious distribution of wealth and create new job opportunities."

It is common knowledge that such a situation is always volatile in nature that can burst even at a rumor, as was the case last month. As political parties fail to put aside their differences and create an environment conducive for economic development, public disenchantment is likely to grow further.

"No political party has focused on economic agenda over the last one decade," said Shrestha. "They have been too busy with their political games."

One of the positive aspects is that, though belatedly, Nepali private sector has started to assert itself. At the call of the business organizations including FNCCI, ruling Nepali Congress announced that it will never organize shutdown protests in future irrespective of whether it is the in the government or in opposition. The main opposition, Unified Marxist-Leninist party, fell short of making such commitments but went a step forward by making it clear that it did not support the two-day long bandh called by the Group of Nine Left parties early this month. The party condemned the elements willing to give rise to communal violence in the country and vandalism that took place on December 27

"Reactionary forces, in an effort to create uncertainty and confusion in the country, are utilizing the present disenchantment. All Nepalis should be alert about this," the party said, in a statement.

Business communities agreed. "Acts of terrorism, intimidation and creation of a sense of insecurity in industry and business will adversely affect the economy," said Nepal Chamber of Commerce, in a statement. It also urged all responsible forces and political parties to think about the consequences of such violence.

With the formation of a majority Nepali

'Aggregate Demand In The Economy Has Declined'

— DR. GOVINDA BAHADUR THAPA

Vice Principal at the Bankers' Training Center at Nepal Rastra Bank, Dr. GOVINDA BAHADUR THAPA, keeps a close watch on latest trends in Nepal's economy. He spoke to SPOTLIGHT on related issues. Excerpts:

What will be the economic impact of the recent violent protests and frequent *bandhs*?

It will have a serious impact, especially on the tourism sector. Hooliganism in the heart of the capital will not send a positive message. Businesses can develop and the economy can prosper only when there is a guarantee of peace and stability. The present insecurity and instability have had a serious impact on all economic sectors.

Are there signs of slackness in the economy?

Aggregate demand in the economy has declined. As wealth created in the aftermath of the government's open and liberal economic policies has been concentrated in very few hands and there are no new avenues of employment, popular resentment is growing. The government, too, has failed to ensure judicious distribution of wealth and create new job opportunities.

What could be new areas of investment?

With the commissioning of new power projects in the private sector, a message has gone that we now have excess power. This might discourage potential investors in the hydropower sector. If we could create an environment for long-term investment, then we could invite investment in the infrastructure sector. Given the volume of vehicle traffic to and from Kathmandu, we may need another road, besides the Banepa-Sindhuli road, within a few years. Investment has not come to the Hetauda-

Kathmandu tunnel road. But for all this, we must have stability at the political and policy level.

How serious is the unemployment problem?

An estimated 300,000 people enter the job market every year. But we don't know what are they doing. Most are illiterate, unskilled and partially employed in agriculture. Whatever jobs have been created over the last decade have gone to urban, educated youth. Majority of them may have gone to India or abroad in search of jobs. As the present policies of the government are not creating and expanding jobs, there is a situation of chaos.

Could a six-percent economic growth rate be sustained this year?

Except agriculture (production of paddy, to be specific) no sector of the economy has expanded. Tourist arrivals have declined. We are yet to get figures from liquor industries but production of cement, sugar and cigarettes have declined. In international trade, exports to India are encouraging but there is a negative growth in exports to third countries. The government-owned banks are in the doldrums. Credit from banking sector to the private sector has failed to pick up. We can't anticipate progress in most economic sectors.

How can the situation be improved?

Our political leaders must practice self-criticism. If they are really committed to the country, democracy and people, they must give up their traditional way of governing. ■



Congress government after general elections in May 1999, Nepali business community, as well as the society at large, had anticipated a stable government, long-term policies aimed at a sustainable, high growth and their effective implementation. The economy registered a growth of more than six percent last year and similar growth has been forecast this year. The ruling Nepali Congress, however, failed to provide a sense of stability to the people. Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai was forced to resign amidst a rebellion from within the party after completing only nine months in office. Prime Minister Koirala, who replaced Bhattarai, has been facing disidence from day one.

"Business, especially investment, needs a climate of confidence, order and predictability. Once the confidence in future is shaken further, investments will be put in cold storage, if not totally abandoned," said Padma Jyoti, former president of FNCCI. "A few bumps are expected in a developing country like ours. But a consistent pattern of disorder, mismanagement and violence with no improvement in the offing will finish Nepal as far as foreign investment is concerned. Even Nepalese investment will shy away from value adding long-term sector and divert to less risky quick business." (See: Interview)

And, if the present situation continue to prevail, this may happen sooner than later, warn leading business people. "Around half a dozen multi-national companies are considering their withdrawal due to rigid labor laws and lack of industrial security," Prabhakar Shumsher J. B. Rana, President of the Soaltee Group, told reporters Monday.

Foreign investors, too, insist that these issues are quite important to attract foreign investment. "Overall economic environment, industrial security and labor related issues are quite important for any investor," said Sandip Ghose, managing director of Nepal Lever Limited (NLL), a subsidiary of Hindustan Lever Limited. "Once you destroy the industrial culture, nobody comes back."

We need not go too far to see what happens when the industrial environment is disturbed. The then Indian government

provided tough security to the industries and businesses in Punjab in the eighties amidst fatal assaults from Sikh militants. As the government could control the insurgency over a few years, industries continue to thrive there. But, in West Bengal, where the Communist government itself encouraged 'hartals and bandhs,' most of the industries packed their bags and never returned.

The situation in Nepal may not be that bad but it is at a critical juncture. Irresponsible acts on the part of the government, opposition parties or businesses themselves would hurt the economy most. The daylong shutdown of their hotels by hotel owners last month, amid a controversy over the issue of introduction of 10 percent service charge as demanded by the hotel workers, did not send positive signals to international travelers.

"Tourism is the most sensitive sector and it gets hurt when there is any instability," said Dr. Thapa. Reports said the number of tourists visiting Nepal by air declined by more than 10 percent in recent months. It was mainly due to decline in the number of Indian tourists in the aftermath of hijacking of New Delhi-bound Indian Airlines aircraft on the Christmas Eve in 1999. Analysts say recent media reports regarding violent protests in Kathmandu and the message that Indian tourists and

businesses are not safe in Nepal might result in further decline in the number of tourists.

Officials say the government is quite aware about protecting businesses and safeguarding the tourists. "These reports are quite exaggerated," said Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Ram Chandra Poudel. "Nepal is still a safe destination for tourists and investors."

The government, political parties and private sector need to work hand in hand to create a conducive environment where



Shrestha : "Security First"



Agrawal : "Slackness in economy"

economy could grow. The main responsibility, of course, lies with the government which was elected to the office promising to maintain law and order in the country and economic well being to the people. Of course, restoring business confidence is a long process. But it can be shattered overnight, as was the case last fortnight.



२०५७ पौष २६ गते

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मङ्गलमय शुभ-कामना

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'The CIAA Has A Constitutionally Defined Role'

— SURYA NATH UPADHYAY

Chief Commissioner of the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) SURYA NATH UPADHYAY is a well-known former senior bureaucrat. He also served as member-secretary of the panel that drafted the present constitution. Upadhyay, who holds an LL.M. degree, is also a prominent water resources expert. He spoke to KESHAB POUDEL on Saturday evening at his residence on various issues concerning the CIAA. Excerpts:

There is confusion over the precise role of the CIAA. How do you define the body's role?

The role of the CIAA is clearly defined in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990 and emanates from the constitution. If you look at the Act, it elaborates the provision of the constitution. The Supreme Court, while interpreting the constitution, also interpreted provisions of the CIAA Act. The court found that some provisions were against the constitution and it annulled those provisions. To define the role of the CIAA, one has to look at the constitution, Act and the decision of the Supreme Court. Combining these three elements, one finds the CIAA emerging legally and constitutionally as one of the effective institutions to control and prevent the abuse of authority and corruption in the country.

Critics say the CIAA chooses cases arbitrarily. On what basis do you decide to pick a case?

There is no prescribed procedure of picking cases. We can pick a case from newspaper reports. We can act on a petition from the aggrieved person. We can proceed from any information we receive on allegations of corruption. As for cases of abuse of authority pertaining to irregularities and violation of the law, the person affected files a petition and we start an investigation.

If you happen to make mistakes in pressing or dropping charges of corruption or misuse of authority, who will judge you?

The evaluation and the performance of the CIAA should be judged by parliament because that is where the report of CIAA is tabled. That is the institution empowered to impeach the commissioners. Therefore, the whole performance is evaluated technically by parliament. Public opinion expressed in the media is also a way of evaluating the performance of the CIAA.

The prime minister, ministers and members of

parliament are accountable to the people. Who are members of constitutional bodies like the CIAA accountable to?

If you look at the constitutional provision on the appointment of the chief commissioner and commissioners of constitutional bodies like PSC and EC, as well as the Auditor General, you shall find that they are appointed by His Majesty the King on the recommendation of the Constitutional Council. This council consists of the prime minister, chief justice, speaker of the House of Representatives, chairman of the National Assembly and leader of the main opposition party. The CIAA chief and members can be impeached by the House of Representatives.

On what basis are you saying that you are accountable to parliament?

The fact that the report of the commission is tabled in parliament and the way it is constituted and functions show that the CIAA is accountable to parliament. If the members of CIAA are inefficient fail to fulfill their responsibility honestly, they can be impeached by parliament.

What programs do you have to curb the growing cases of corruption and misuse of authority?

There are basically two ways of attacking these problems. First, we should try to develop a system and mechanism to prevent the occurrence of corruption. We have several ways to do that and various activities can be done to prevent corruption. For instance, corruption easily takes place in a situation where you don't have a system and mechanism in doing things. If you don't have procedures and laws and arbitrariness or subjective judgments prevail, then there are greater chances of the occurrence of corruption. Therefore, one way of doing that could be to develop the mechanisms and procedures for public officials to follow.

What do you mean by certain procedures?

I mean a strong monitoring mechanism to see whether these procedures and rules are followed. Transparency is another mechanism. Whatever public officials do should be made transparent. So people can know how things are being done. Public officials will have to be made accountable to the people. That way you could develop a system whereby you could prevent the occurrence of corruption. There is another way in which the CIAA is empowered to prosecute people accused of taking bribes or of indulging in

The evaluation and the performance of the CIAA should be judged by parliament because that is where the report of CIAA is tabled.

corruption. We are improving the system in collecting evidence and investigation to charge them with anti-corruption charges and take them to court for conviction. The role of the CIAA in future shall be developed along the above lines.

You have the authority to take action against any public official, including the prime minister. But no top politician has ever been booked for corruption. Why?

Your are right. Those who are in public office come under the purview of the CIAA. Now there is concern among the public that in all these years people who have been at the top levels of decision making, particularly politicians, are not charged. People want to see that corrupt people at the top are prosecuted and given due punishment. There is an expectation among people that any politician or bureaucrat taking bribes should be charged and convicted.

Why do most cases fail to stand in court?

In the past, some politicians were charged with corruption and were taken to court. The court did not find the charges sustainable and the CIAA lost the case. In some cases, the CIAA was successful. In future, if the CIAA works in a more professional and effective way, there is no reason to believe that the corrupt would be able to go unpunished. You are right. This has not always been the case in the past.

It is said that the CIAA was conceived as an ombudsman body, but you are acting like a prosecutor.

In my opinion, it has got the characteristics of an ombudsman as well as a prosecutor. The CIAA is a prosecuting authority because it investigates cases of abuse of authority and corruption, prepares the charge-sheet and takes the case to court.

Which elements show that it is an ombudsman?

Another element is that the CIAA tables its report to parliament and makes the report public. It also suggests measures to improve the situation in the public authority so that the incidence of corruption is checked in future. It does everything in a public manner. So it also has that element of ombudsman.

Are the existing laws adequate to contain corruption?

I would not say that they are adequate. There is a lot of room to improve them. The government has already tabled bills to amend the CIAA Act and introduced an anti-corruption Act. After parliament passes these two bills commission shall turn into a more powerful institution.

What are the major challenges before the CIAA today?

There are many challenges. We need to work in accordance with the expectations of the public, who want to see the CIAA to take vigorous action against corruption. The people want a corruption-free society and want to get their work done without having to pay



bribes or seek favor. Our challenge is to establish a system which helps in controlling corruption. To meet these expectations, the CIAA has many challenges. These challenges are also within the institution itself.

What type of institutional challenges are you talking about?

The capacity to investigate a case, to prepare the charge-sheet and to function properly are major challenges right now. There is also a need to enhance the whole capacity of the CIAA. Corruption and abuse of authority are very endemic in the country. Until and unless the CIAA is successful in curbing these ills, people will not feel satisfied.

There are rumors of corruption within the CIAA. Are you aware of them? What steps are you taking to improve the situation?

Yes, I also hear such rumors. They might be true, but I cannot say anything conclusive now. People have the right to allege that there is corruption within the CIAA. But this allegation has not been proved. However, I do not mean the CIAA is something where corruption cannot occur. After all, this is an institution being manned by people coming from the same pool that staffs other institutions of government.

What do you mean?

I mean all employees work in the same socio-economic milieu. So I cannot guarantee hundred percent that there is no corruption in the CIAA. Frankly speaking these allegation has not been proved. It is a feeling expressed by the people. Now we have been working to develop a procedure in such a way that such things don't occur in the CIAA, particularly while taking a decision. If you have a system where decisions are taken in an arbitrary way or by a single person, then you might suspect that something could have happened. ■

However, I do not mean the CIAA is something where corruption cannot occur. After all, this is an institution being manned by people coming from the same pool that staffs other institutions of government.

HISTORY

Royal Counsel

King Tribhuvan's advice to Nepali politicians remains relevant today

By AKSHAY SHARMA

BJP leader K.R. Malkani's recent lament that Delhi lost a major opportunity to tame Nepalis half a century ago — which he retracted following strong protests from Kathmandu — continues to dominate political discussions in both countries.

The Indian media has been framing the discussion by ignoring the other side of the story. Nepalis, too, have failed to properly probe events of that period from their own perspective.

A few paragraphs from the book "Contemporary Nepal", written by Daman R. Tuladhar and published by Laxmi Publications in 1980, on the 1945-1955 decade provide insights that put the 1951 revolution in a realistic context. Moreover, they give a clear picture of what King Tribhuvan believed Nepali politicians should do to strengthen independence and nationalism.

In the chapter "An Experiment in Democracy" and under the title "King Tribhuvan in Sorrow", Tuladhar writes: "It was mid-March. At the time, the author was secretary to Tanka Prasad Acharya. He, in the company of Acharya, Khadga Man Singh and Mathura Lal Shrestha had an audience with King Tribhuvan that lasted for about 90 minutes. It should not be out of context to put on record the noble exhortations that His Majesty made on that occasion.

"He had said, 'Let me tell you this, I did not seek political asylum in the Indian Embassy at the spur of the moment. I was ever hesitant to take such a drastic step, for fear of putting the sov-

ereignty and independence of Nepal in jeopardy. The Indian ambassador had given me so much assurance about the altruistic motives of Jawaharlal Nehru in espousing my cause. But he never overcame my suspicion that the Indian prime minister could never be a friend of Nepal at the expense of being a patriot of India.

'Later circumstances drove me to hold the hand of friendship extended by Nehru with full faith in the sincerity of his purpose. The moment I landed in Palam (Delhi), I knew how matters stood. (Pause) I became a pawn at the hands of the Indian prime minister. (Pause) I was segregated from all contacts with the leaders of the Nepali Congress (pause).

'Now I am back home. I have brought with me one Indian gentleman to work as my private secretary and two officers of the Indian Army to look after my security. These are the special gifts from Nehru, which I could not have the heart to reject. I foresee many more

such gifts to come. I am no more under the bondage of the Rana Ministers. But am I free yet? Am I not under the tutelage of the Indian prime minister?"

'Look at all the Congress leaders taking all their troubles to the drawing room of India's prime minister. When things get rather hot for them, they should not mind taking a trip to New Delhi to seek for guidance, succor and what not of the Indian prime minister.

'To tell you the truth, the Indian prime minister has done me a good turn. When the British government brought much pressure on him to recognize a boy king, he would choose to walk out of the British Commonwealth rather than toe the British line of action. For this act of friendship I shall remain always beholden to him.

'Now I have only one request to make to you gentlemen. Rise above petty individual or sectional interests. Have a broader outlook on political issues. Form a strong well-knit political party to play a constructive role of an opposition. So whatever the Indian prime minister would come out with any friendship and assistance I would refer him to my prime minister of my people's choice.

'If you continue... in your pursuit of self-interest dividing the body politic into political splinters... the fate of the land would be sealed beyond the power of anybody to redeem. Goodnight! ■

Mobile Internet

For the first time in Nepal, Worldlink Communication, an Internet Service Provider (ISP), has started the service of WAP — Wireless Application Protocol. "It is a standard by which wireless devices can communicate with the Internet," says Arbinda Rajkarnicar, web director at the Worldlink. Simply put, the technology can enable the mobile phone to access the Internet. Although only a small amount of data can be observed in the mobile, it is useful to the people who need precise data. This technology will turn a mobile telephone into a miniature computer with Internet connections. WAP facility was introduced in Nepal by the Worldlink some two months back. "At present, we have already provided this technology to 15 persons," says Rajkarnicar. "We expect 50 to 60 more people will avail of this facility in a year." The facility is provided free-of-cost to customers of Worldlink.

ANFA ROW

Ground In A Mess

As the question of the legitimacy of ANFA lingers on, doubts persist whether Nepal can host the World Cup qualifying matches

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Last year's delight of Nepalese football fans is fast giving way to disappointment, as there are strong doubts whether the scheduled World Cup qualifying round matches scheduled to take place in Kathmandu in March will ever materialize. It was just over a year ago when FIFA had decided that the qualifying match among Nepal, Kazakhstan, Iraq and Macau for the 2002 World Cup would be held in Kathmandu.

However, as the tug-of-war continues between Ganesh Thapa and Geeta Rana over the legitimacy of their respective All Nepal Football Associations (ANFA), the future of the important international tournament has been put on hold.

"We have corresponded to FIFA and AFC (Asian Football Confederation) that we are ready to host the tournament and we are hopeful they will give us the opportunity," says Rana, the president of ANFA ad hoc committee. But the problem here is that Rana's ANFA,

although backed by the government, is not recognized by FIFA or the AFC.

Thapa, on the other hand, whose ANFA has been recognized by both the governing bodies of international football, says he will host the tournament if the government provides him the stadium. Thapa's association, however, is not recognized by the Sports Ministry or the National Sports Council (NSC).

A classic irony emerged after Thapa held the election of ANFA in October 16, 2000 in defiance of the government

(under the observation of AFC representative where he won the presidency unopposed) in an exercise that was boycotted by Rana's faction. Rana was later established as president of ANFA ad hoc committee by the NSC.

Sports analysts think that given the turmoil here, FIFA will in the end take away the tournament elsewhere and could even ban the country from playing the game for a certain period in retribution.

The fears of football fans find more ground given the atmosphere in which



Thapa (right) and Rana : Locked in a battle

the ongoing Birthday Cup tournament is being held. Apart from three fringe clubs from India, none of the international clubs took part in the match as directed by the AFC, amid the mud-slinging between Thapa and Rana. Apparently, clubs from Korea, Bhutan and the Maldives despite having confirmed their participation, pulled out in the last minute, thanks to the ensuing confusion.

While Rana accuses Thapa of trying to sabotage the tournament by exploiting his contacts in the AFC/FIFA

and asking them to prevent any international teams from participating in the Birthday Cup, the latter denies doing so.

"Why should I ever want to sabotage the tournament? I will always support anything that is positive for Nepalese football," says the former national captain. Thapa says that since Rana's ANFA is not recognized by FIFA/AFC, it is natural that international teams would not participate.

Thapa further charges that the ANFA under Rana is gradually transforming into a political body. "They are stooping so low in hurling allegations that they are blaming me for anything they cannot do. I will not be surprised if they blame me if smaller audiences come to the stadium or if some disturbances take place there."

The most surprising part in this whole drama is the apparent indifference with which the government is treating the issue. "Football is the most loved of all sports by the Nepalese. And look how the authorities are behaving when they should be taking decisions," Thapa says. "The government should make its views public. What does it want?"

Because of this indifference, Nepal could also lose the \$1 million Goal Project which FIFA awarded last year. "That apart, Coca-Cola has already withdrawn a Rs 5 million assistance and so has Surya Tobacco," Thapa says.

Rana says she has the package to put an end to this confusion. "We are planning hold the election of ANFA sometime in February and where everyone can put their candidature," says Rana. But Thapa has other ideas. "We are recognized by FIFA and AFC. If any election is to take place, it is us who will decide." A tough gridlock indeed.

As the crisis of recognition haunts Nepalese football, an important international tournament like World Cup qualifying round that are seldom held here, is in peril of being snatched away. ■

BOOK

News Narrative

An account of key issues and developments in Nepalese journalism

By A CORRESPONDENT

The history of journalism in Nepal is fairly recent, but it has seen many vicissitudes. After the overthrow of the Rana regime in 1951, a new era of press freedom was ushered in the country. But that could not last for more than a decade.

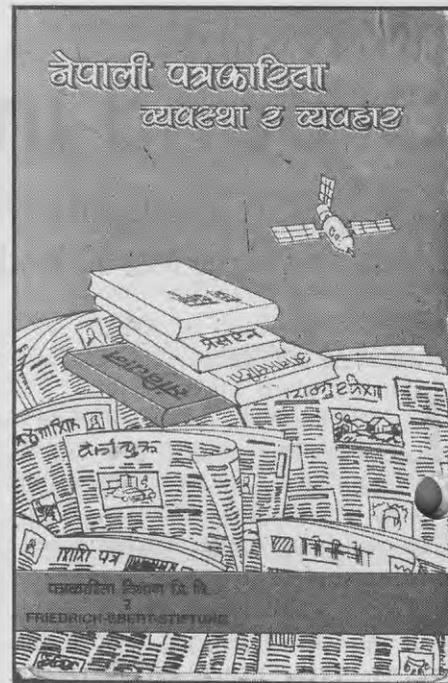
Following the introduction of the Panchayat system in 1960, the Nepalese press found itself constrained by many restrictions. Until 1979, when anti-government protests culminated in the announcement of the national referendum, the media was under the total control of the government. Some private newspapers did exist but they did not have significant influence.

The months preceding the referendum and its aftermath saw a liberaliza-

tion of the political system and opened up opportunities for bringing out more newspapers. In the 1980-1990 decade, Nepal's press went through another phase of development - a process that gained momentum after the restoration of multiparty democracy.

A number of books have come out chronicling the development of Nepalese journalism. "Nepali Patrakarita Byabastha Ra Byabahar" brings to light some hidden phases of this history. Written in Nepali, the book explores the historical development of Nepalese journalism.

History has shown that the more liberal the political system, the more dynamic the media becomes. This book advances that thought through its examination of constitutional developments and practical realities relating to press freedom in Nepal. ■



*Nepali Patrakarita:
Byabastha Ra Byabahar*
(Nepalese Journalism: System and Practices)
Published by Journalism Department,
Tribhuvan University and
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
Pages: 210
Price: Not disclosed
Edited by Lal Deusa Rai, Parsuram
Kharel and Chiranjibi Khanal

Poet's Story

Those who have not seen the historical film Bhanubhakta may enjoy reading the narration in this new book on the pioneer Nepali poet. Written by a renowned director of Nepal's film industry, Yadav Kharel, the book provides a clear depiction of the life and times of the poet.



ADIKABI BHANUBHAKTA
By Yadav Kharel
Published by Bhanu Birthplace
Development Committee,
Chundiramgha, Tanahu
Price: Rs. 200
Pages: 273

Poetic Profile

In the course of publishing a new collection, young poet Ramesh Kshitij has come out with an anthology. "Arko Sanjha Parkhee Sanjhama" is a collection of poems describing different situations.

Born in Salyan district, Kshitij has won many prizes in poetry competition as well as in lyric writing. In 1995, he was declared the best poet by the Royal Nepal Academy. Kshitij was also declared best lyricist in 1994 by Radio Nepal.

In his new collection, the poet explains his inner feelings in a clear and emotional manner. Winner of the Children Singing Tournament and BBC Poetry Competition, Kshitij is one of the better-known poets of the present generation. This book allows readers to get to know him better. ■





TRANSITION

APPOINTED: Kenichi Ohashi, as country director for the World Bank's office in Nepal. A Japanese national. Dr. Ohashi was working as country coordinator for Nepal and Sri

Lanka at the WB headquarters.

Dr. Nirmal Kumar Bista, as general manager of the Family Planning Association of Nepal.

LEFT: Foreign Minister Chakra Prasad Bastola, for Dhaka, Bangladesh, at the

invitation of his Bangladeshi counterpart, A. S. Azzaj. Nepal and Bangladesh are likely to sign on a transport accord to begin the first direct bus service between the two countries through a narrow strip of India.

RETURNED: Natsagin

Bagabandi, President of Mongolia, after completing a three-day state visit to Nepal.

NOMINATED: Purandar Ghimire, chairman of Gorkhapatra Corporation, as a member of the advisory committee of Nepal Press Institute. ■



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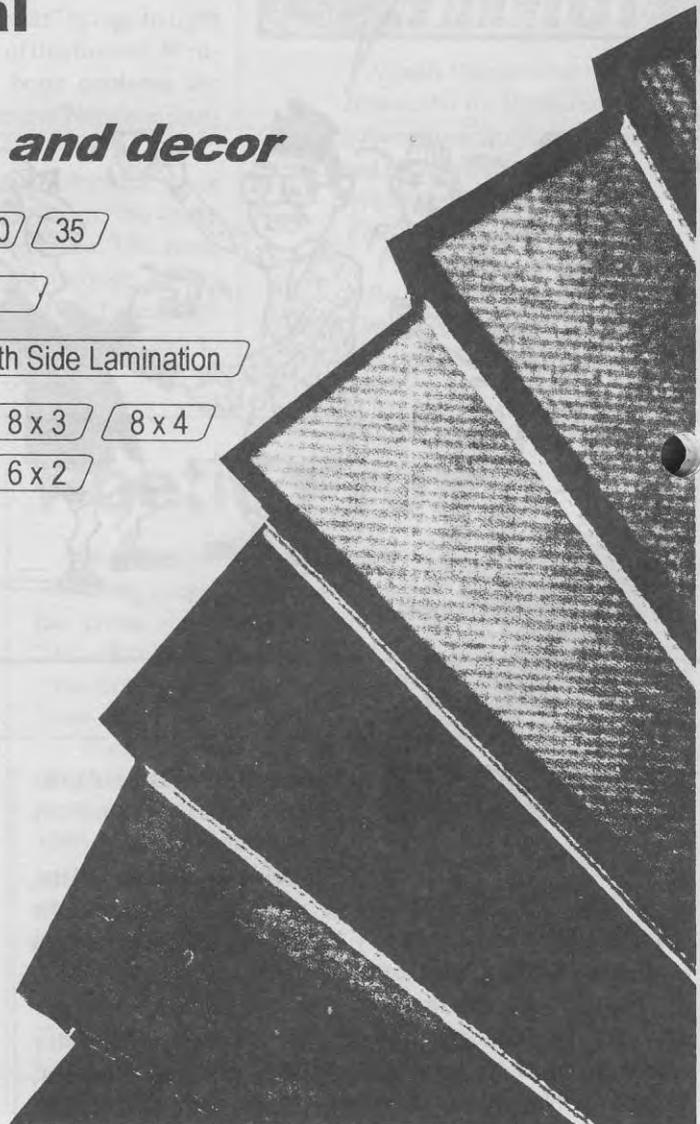
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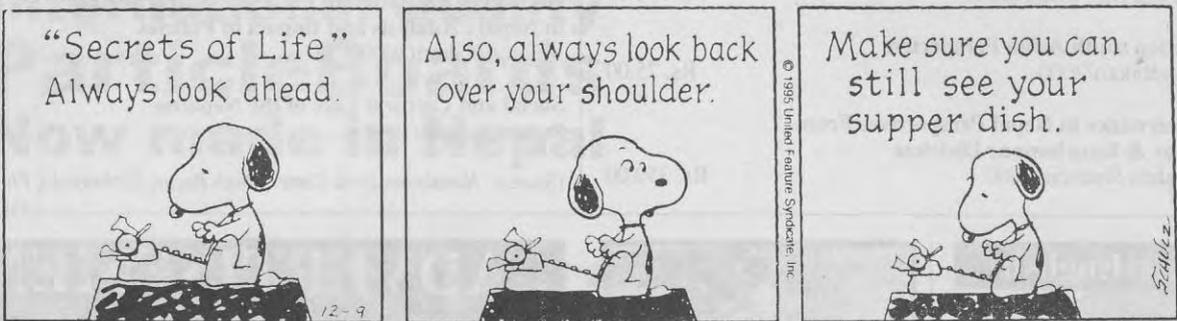
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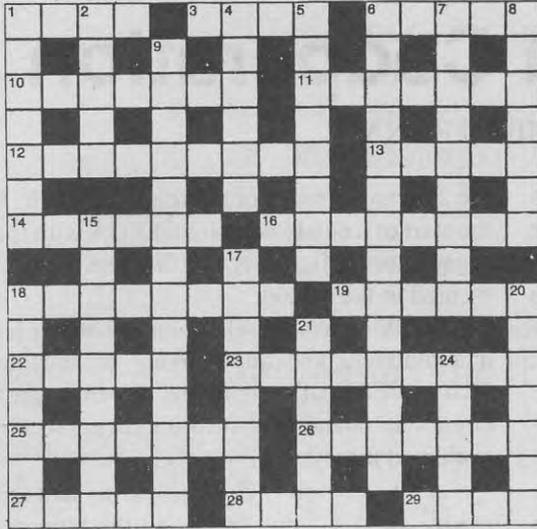
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1. Right time, on reflection, to make choice (4)
3. Crude painting without a name (4)
6. Cast out of never-ending paradise (5)
10. WI leader, one with love for opera (7)
11. One of the pack's very big and fit (7)
12. Advice to angler catching tiddler or woman's shoe? (5-4)
13. Sweetheart welcomed by kind relation (5)
14. Greek character wanting a sexy dance (6)
16. He runs to get free in this direction (8)
18. Ban Shute novel? One who likes Brown-ing might (8)
22. Arrange for bishop to lead march (6)
23. Honour a husband? It works like a charm (5)
25. One in position to catch out Conservative and Labour leader, say (6,3)
26. Different girl always being embraced (7)
27. Anchorite's corrupting influence recalled by half of sect (7)
28. Still not finished going on about magis-trate (5)
29. Shock announcement from the Times? (4)
29. Bird's tail talked about (4)

DOWN

1. No choice? (7)
2. Bones set differently at last (5)
4. Frank statement in a letter read out (6)
5. Officer in parliament found in bar repeat-edly (5,3)
6. Severely modified UK contract presented tricky problem (4,3,2,5)
7. Fear capture (9)
8. Old record on writer and sculptor (7)
9. Vainly try to sell commercials about En-glish shire? (4,1,4,5)
15. Fellow works to get into an advantageous position (9)
17. Sounded like ref in the game was in charge (8)
18. Search around London area for Liverpudlian (7)
20. Especially good and varied collection of hymns (3)
21. Announced measures needed to find min-eral (6)
24. Scream coming from Slaughter-house 5 characters (5)

Down : 1. Refusal 2. Rad!!! 4. Avoval 5. Black rod 6. Hard nut to crack 7. Apprehend 8. Epstein 9. Flog a dead horse 15. Manoeuvre 17. Whistled 18. Scouser 20. Rigveda 21. Quertz 24. Laugh
 Across : 1. Rare 3. Daub 6. Heave 10. Fidelio 11. Apropos 12. Sling back 13. Niece 14. Lambda 16. Southern 18. Sunbathe 19. Border 22. Obeach 23. Squareleg 25. Several 26. Recluse 27. Reeve 28. Daze 29. Rhea

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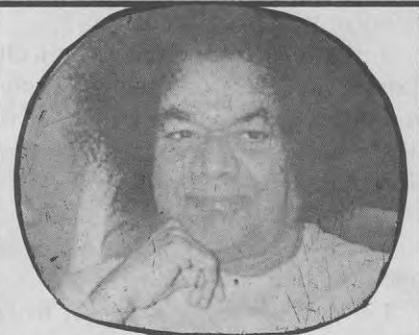
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“Using the mind, the body and the senses, the Karmayogi constantly performs action in a dispassionate manner as a means of self purification.”

SATHYA SAI BABA

An Enduring Symbol Of Nepal-Japan Cooperation

By SHAMBHU RANA

The Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) was founded in 1965 as an agency under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, for the purpose of providing official technical assistance to developing countries. Since then, JOCV has despatched over 20,000 volunteers on two-year assignment to 61 countries in Asia, Africa, Middle East, Latin America, Oceania and Eastern Europe. From 1974, the JOCV secretariat has been integrated into the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

In 1970, the JOCV office was established in Nepal. The Japanese government despatched volunteers for the purpose of contributing to the social and economic development of Nepal. Since then, more than 700 young Japanese have shared their skills, expertise and technical know-how in different key development sectors of the country.

From its establishment, the JOCV has played a pro-active role as a strategic and reliable partner in Nepal's socio-economic development process, which is underlined by the increasing demand of Japanese volunteers each year. The increasing goodwill and popularity of JOCV volunteers can be attributed to their capability to adjust and work sincerely in the remote areas by sharing the problems of the villages and helping to fulfil their needs.

The JOCV is involved in agriculture, forestry, health services, education, community development, drinking water, transport, telecommunication, civil engineering, sports, manufacturing and other sectors. The first batch of agriculture volunteers assigned to the then Rapti Agriculture Model Farm, Bharatpur, in Chitwan district, undertook intensive research into the types of vegetables appropriate to the climatic condition of the district.

The positive result led them to encourage farmers to cultivate vegetables on a commercial scale. Since then, many volunteers have been engaged in such fields as fruit orchard, livestock, food crops, seed plantations in the country's vital agriculture sector. They have helped to motivate farmers to use modern tools, techniques and the 'learning by doing' method.

Altogether 226 volunteers have shared their professional and technical knowledge with the Nepali people in the agriculture sector alone. Their dedication, dynamism and performance are lauded by Nepalis at all levels. The JOCV has been supporting Nepal's development efforts with its highly motivated and skilled human resources. The volunteers have been playing a vital role in Nepal's economic development at the grass-roots level in different parts of the country. 1999 marked

the 25th anniversary of the founding of JICA. It also marked the start of a newly constituted JICA with the most extensive organizational reforms and modern programs ever implemented in the agency.

JOCV official development assistance has increased both quantitatively and qualitatively to new levels in the key sectors of Nepal's economy. Japan is the world's largest donor nation and its contributions to this country have been evaluated highly.

As the central agency providing and managing aid programs, JICA is contributing to the human development of Nepal, especially by despatching experts. It has hosted technical training in Japan, thereby promoting a participatory approach to development cooperation.

The history of Japan's own economic development serves as a model for nation-building for developing countries. From this perspective, JICA/JOCV have played a very important role in transmitting this Japanese model to Nepal.

Japanese Alumni Association of Nepal (JAAN) has been implementing programs with the active participation of our members to enable a more participatory promotion program with greater collaboration with JICA's new implementation system. Cooperation from these agencies is important while promoting programs. Regular meetings and contacts are held with the heads of JICA/JOCV and other agencies in joint programs to observe the volunteers' activities. These activities serve to enhance an understanding of the volunteer program and to strengthen a cooperative relationship with JICA.

Members give important pre-despatch training orientation to Nepali participants going to Japan for training programs. Emphasizing the importance of studying from actual experience, these activities provide plenty of opportunities for learning. Over the years, trainees have gained a lot of knowledge, technical expertise and experience. With this expertise, it is hoped that JAAN members would help JICA to find new programs by working in a positive spirit of partnership that would help the overall development of Nepal.

Such collaboration would be of great importance to promote the activities of JAAN through new ideas and to enlarge members' participation to implement attractive programs that can make a positive contribution to the country, and to help increase the membership network. It would indeed be a matter of great satisfaction for us if such efforts could give further boost to the friendly relations between Nepal and Japan. ■

The writer is the executive member of JAAN

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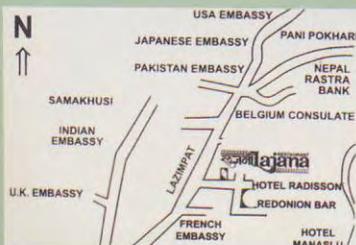
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