

FACE TO FACE: Dr. Ian Mckendry

INTERVIEW: Rabi Bahadur Bista

SPOTLIGHT

The National Newsmagazine

March 16-22, 2001



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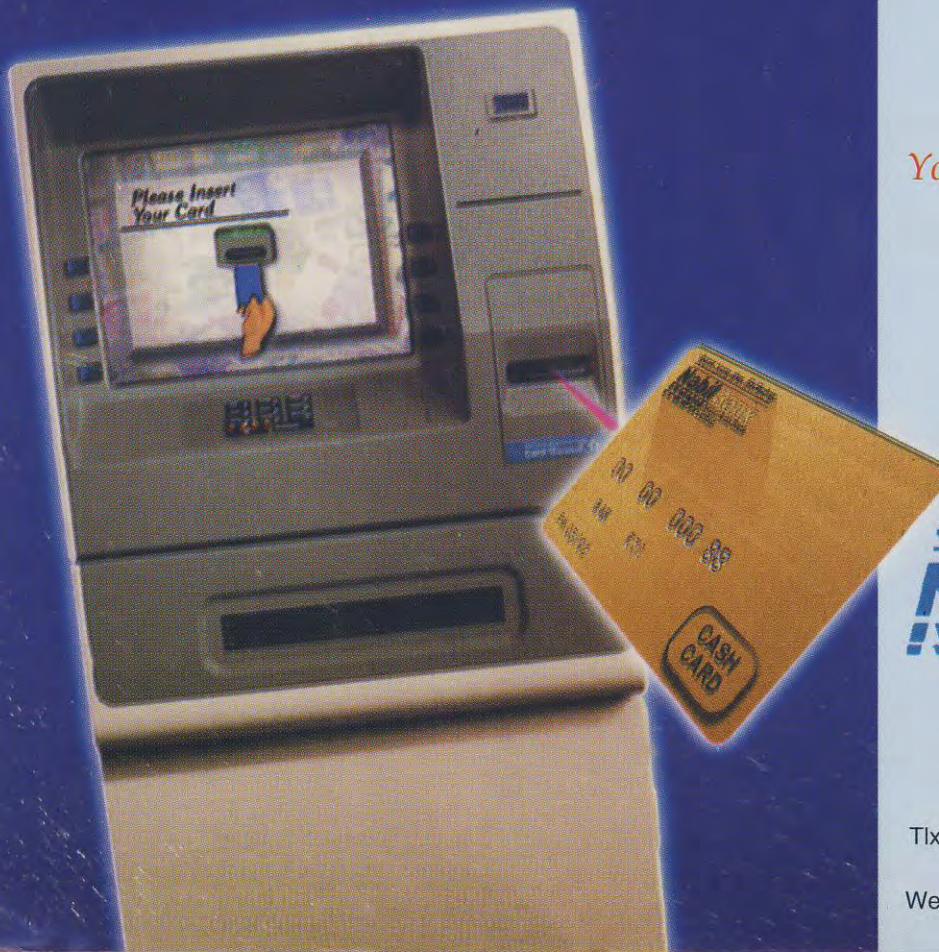
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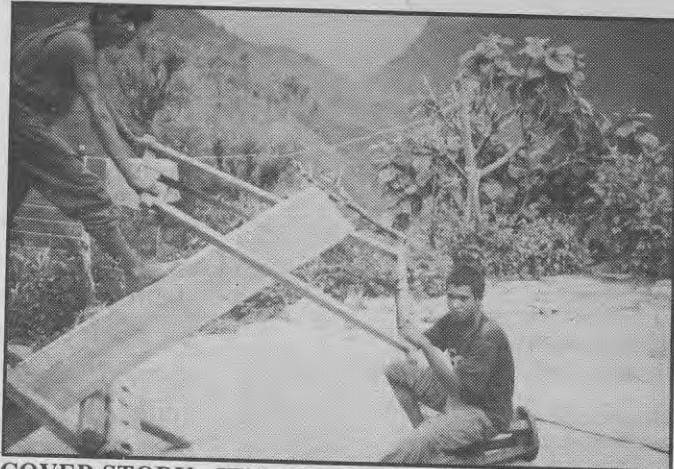
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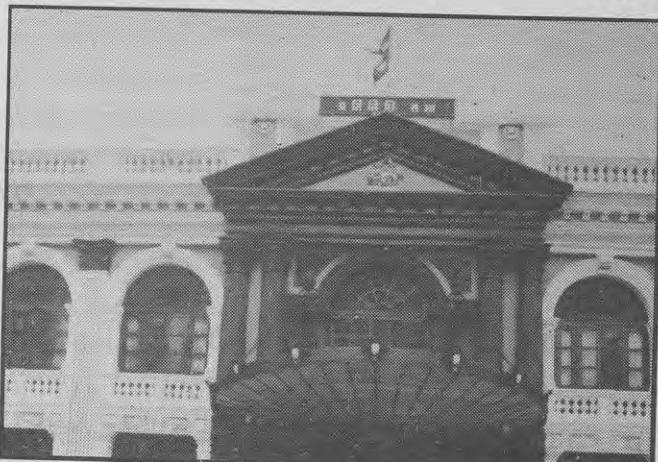
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COVER STORY : IT'S A JUNGLE OUT THERE

If accountability and transparency are maintained in their management, forests can become a major source of income.

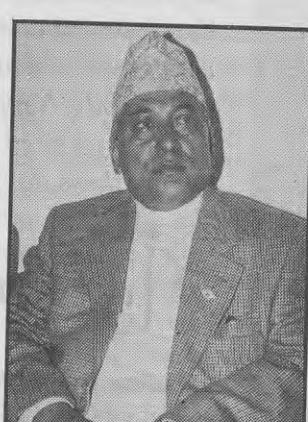
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PARLIAMENT : Strange Bedfellows

One whole month has passed since the 19th session of parliament convened — without a single day of business

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INTERVIEW :

RABI BAHADUR BISTA

Secretary at the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation Bista talks about the issues of managing Nepal's forests.

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SPOTLIGHT

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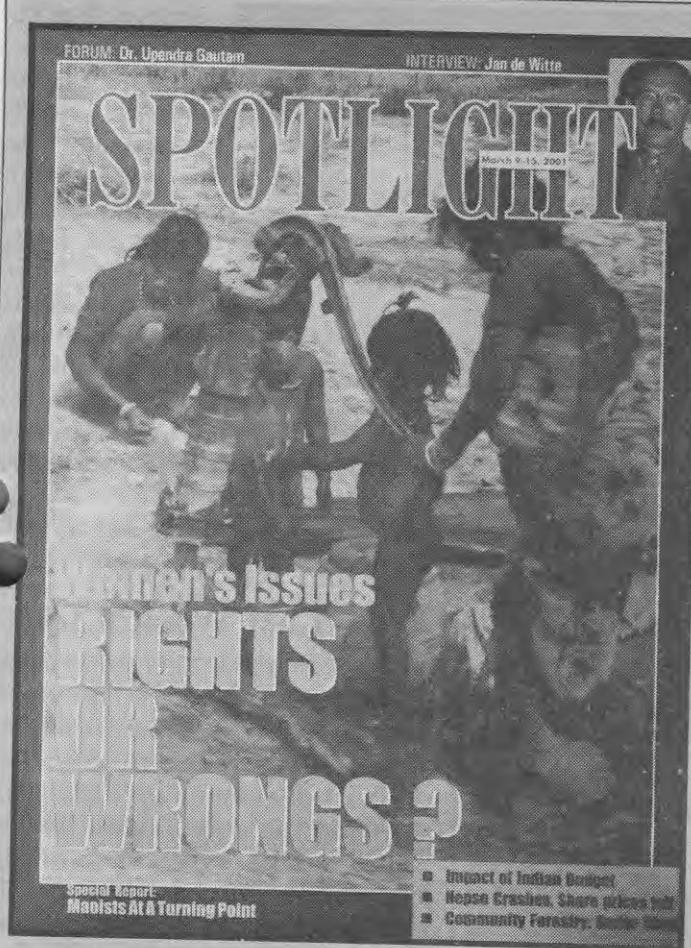
EDITOR'S NOTE

More than a month after the 19th session of parliament was convened, the legislative deadlock is far from resolved. It doesn't matter now whether Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala or the opposition is right. But the costs the country and its poor people have to pay for a non-performing parliament are enormous. If these corrupt leaders don't listen to the public sentiments, the Nepalese people will ultimately pull them down. Ironically, neither the ruling nor the opposition parties are willing to go to the people for a fresh mandate. It is obvious that they are well aware of how the people would respond to their grave crimes this time around.

As predicted by us, the jaunt by Prime Minister Koirala to France has turned out to be a total fiasco. The visit took place not only at an inopportune time, given the domestic political problems, it also failed to translate the generous feelings of the French authorities toward Nepal into concrete development assistance. It is all because of lack of adequate homework on part of the Nepalese officials. While Koirala's cronies may have benefited from this trip, the poor Nepalese did not find anything to cherish from a visit that took place nearly 150 years after Rana Prime Minister Jung Bahadur visited Paris.

Though it was a brief stopover, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan exhibited his love and respect to this country and people by visiting Nepal early this week. Nepal's commitment to world peace is second to none. Though he may not have had enough time to have a full look at various development projects being carried out by different development agencies, he may have felt Nepalese sentiments from close quarters. As a peace-loving country, we want peace to prevail in this region and the world. We know very well that in the absence of peace, development can't take place. Hence, Nepal's growing aspirations to contribute to world peace is well justified. As an active member of the world body, Nepal needs to play a more proactive role in global affairs. For this, we need a visionary and committed leadership - which is in short supply these days.

Madhav Kumar Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Property Issue

The issue of equal property rights to daughters is a very tricky one ("Rights Or Wrongs?" SPOTLIGHT, March 9-15). Given the social structure and traditions of Nepal, it would be unwise to pass any bill on this issue without convincing the people beforehand. Otherwise, such laws will end up being flouted by everybody. Are the Nepalese people even aware about giving rights to their daughters? Those in the women's movement need to ensure this first.

Jitendra Lamsal
Thamel

Towards Reform

In this twenty-first century, it is unfortunate Nepalese women still lack laws that give them equal rights to ancestral property ("Rights Or Wrongs?" SPOTLIGHT, March 9-15). There can be no justification against giving women what they deserve. In this male-dominated society, there is a clear need to bury some old ideas. Property rights are one of them. If we really think we are a democratic society, what is stopping us from giving half the population their right?

Binita Thapa
Naya Baneshwor

No Discrimination

Unlike claims made by women activists, there is no

discrimination against women as far as property rights are concerned ("Rights Or Wrongs?" SPOTLIGHT, March 9-15). Any unmarried daughter is entitled to her father's property while married women are entitled to their share from their husband. So, where is the discrimination? In fact, if the law giving daughters the right to ancestral property is enacted, they will enjoy dual rights. Therefore, it is unnecessary to prolong the debate on this subject.

Binaya KC
Balaju

Academic Slavery?

"Politicization of Education" (SPOTLIGHT, March 2-8) was an excellent write-

up that portrayed the exact conditions of some of our educational institutions. It is heart-breaking to know that some of our educational institutions have become centers of political activities. It is a matter of shame that political parties are exploiting students who should be studying for a secure future. Youth comes once in a lifetime and is the time when people should be free to enjoy life, and make choices without falling victim to manipulation and power games. Our political parties are exploiting the young to fulfill ulterior motives. Isn't this a form of academic slavery? Many young Nepalis are fleeing the country because of the sorry state it is in. Those who stay back succumb

to the power tactics and games of political parties. The youth are the future of the country — don't our politicians realize this fact. Or are they knowingly robbing the young of their innocence and exploiting them?

Moheindu Chemjong
via email

What An Irony?

In the film "Tan taBadri" ("Incisive Humor" SPOTLIGHT, March 2-8), the actor Bhuvan KC gives a long lecture to Hari Bansha Acharya about the virtues of staying married to single partner. He links all of Badri's problems to his polygamy. While this scribe does not intend to offend KC or anyone, it is interesting to note that KC, in real life, is married to more than one wife. Didn't the director of the film get any other actor to play that role? KC doesn't look convincing in the role, as one is bound to compare that with his real life.

Anup Bhattarai
Jawalakhel

End The Stalemate

The differences between hotel employees and owners are taking a big toll on the country's tourism sector ("Time To Mend Fences" SPOTLIGHT, February 23-March 1). The hotel employees' demand for compulsory tips from tourists is absurd. Tips should be voluntary and should not be made compulsory under the guise of service charge or any other name. If the current stalemate is not ended quickly, it will bleed the country's economy.

Shyam Bahadur KC
Thapathali

UML Leaders Differ Over Mid-Term Poll

The top two leaders of the main opposition CPN-Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), have voiced diametrically opposite views regarding the party's position on the possibility of a mid-term election. UML standing committee member Khadga Prasad Oli, addressing a gathering of party cadres in mid-western Nepal last week, asked them to prepare for a mid-term election, saying it was likely to



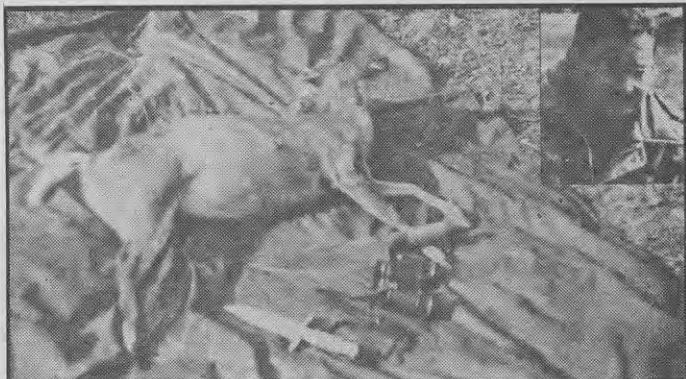
Oli

be declared thanks to the continuing stand-off between the prime minister and opposition parties. UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal quickly refuted Oli's views the following day. In a separate program organized in Sindhupalchowk district, Nepal said his party was not prepared for a mid-term election. While Oli reportedly said a mid-term poll was the best way of solving the problems facing the country, Nepal said the party was against any such move. Because of the persisting deadlock in parliament over the controversial Lauda Air deal, a section of analysts predict that Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala could declare a mid-term poll any time.

Compiled from reports.

Army Colonel Accused Of Killing A Barking Deer

Officials from the Chitwan District Forest Office (DFO) arrested Dilip SJB



Dead deer

Rana, a Royal Nepal Army colonel, accusing him of shooting a barking deer around the national park area. An army jeep, binocular, knife and torchlight were also confiscated from the accused. Meanwhile, armymen from the nearby Pashupati Prasad Battalion took away the colonel and equipment from the custody of the DFO. *Leading dailies report.*

Four Nepalis Die In Malaysia Ferry Capsize

Four Nepalis died after a boat carrying illegal immigrants capsized in the northern sea of Malaysia. Fourteen dead bodies were recovered after the boat turned upside down. Four of them were identified as being Nepalese nationals while

others were from Pakistan and Myanmar. The fishing boat was believed to have left Tammalang in Thailand's Satun province and was heading for Kuala Sanglang in Malaysia's Perlis state when it capsized. A number of Nepalese youths go overseas in search of

employment every year. *Leading dailies report.*

NEPSE Recovers After Last Week's Jolt

After falling by 22.71 points in the previous week (February 28), the Nepal Stock Exchange (NEPSE) index seemed to be heading toward a recovery. The stock exchange gained 4.67 points during the period. This is the first time that the NEPSE witnessed a slight rise in weekly index averages after a continued downfall in the last couple of months. From the peak of 545 points in mid-November last year, the NEPSE began to slide head-on to reach the lowest of 375.29 in February 28. Analysts said that the recent rise in NEPSE

Gupta Resigns

The woes of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala seem to be far from over. As the septuagenarian leader is fighting an uphill battle for his political survival both within the party and outside, one of his trusted lieutenants, Jaya Prakash Prasad Gupta 'Anand,' resigned from the cabinet Tuesday. Though Gupta was not immediately available for comment, sources say he was unhappy with the change in his portfolio—from high profile Information and Communications to low-profile Agriculture and Cooperatives. In an interview to Himalaya Times daily last month, Gupta alleged that some elements close to Koirala were pressurizing him to do some 'unethical job.' No sooner was Gupta shunted out, his controversial decision to cancel the license of Space Time Network, the largest private cable television operator in the country, was renewed. Though his resignation may not have come as a surprise to many, analysts say the timing of the resignation, which came full two-weeks after the STN decision and nearly a week after Koirala's return home after Paris, could be significant.



index was not sustainable because it was fueled by speculations that the commercial banks, which cover almost 90 percent of the trading at the bourse, were about to issue bonus shares and rights issues. *Compiled from reports.*

Prachanda Rejects Govt. Overtures

In what is seen as a blow to the government's effort to make peace with the Maoist rebels, the chairman of Nepal Communist Party (Maoists) Prachanda accused the government of trying to divert public attention from the controversial Auda Air deal by floating the idea of peace talks. He was reacting to the government's decision to make public the names of 294 Maoists held in custody. Prachanda, in a press release issued on Wednesday, criticized the government for making public the names of only three rebels from the list that they had given. He asked the government to furnish details of those rebels who have disappeared in custody and those against whom the authorities have not initiated legal proceedings. He cited the formation of Armed Police Force and the appointment of regional administrators as new government moves to suppress the Maoist insurgency. Prachanda, however, called upon the government to create a congenial atmosphere for talks. Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Ram Chandra Poudel has denied knowledge of missing rebels. *Compiled from reports.*

Food Corporation To Supply Food Via Tibet

Amid the growing food scarcity in the northern remote districts, the government-owned Nepal Food Corporation (NFC) has for the first time decided to supply food to Dolpa via the road in Tibet. Earlier, the NFC had supplied food to Lomangthang region of Mustang via Tibet. As the Karnali zone of the country is yet to be connected by any terrestrial road, the people there depend on aerial route for even the basic commodities like food. Supplying food via air is quite a costly affair and experts have been pointing to the possibility of making use of roads in Tibetan side to transport food and con-

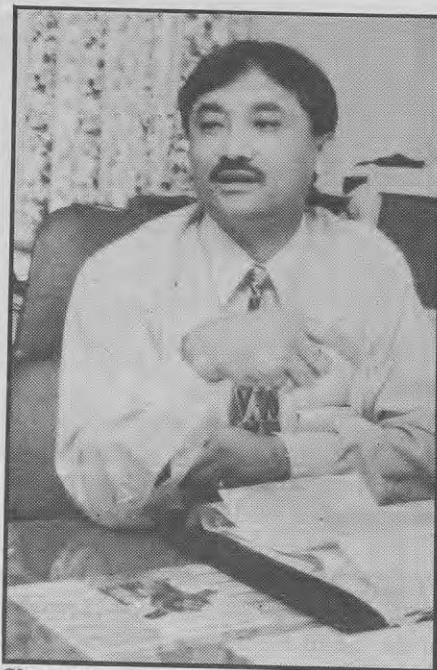
struction materials to the remote districts. *Leading dailies report.*

Fire Guts 61 Houses

A sudden outbreak of fire gutted 61 houses and cattle-sheds at Harasapani settlement of Khairwa Village Development committee in Nawalparasi district Sunday night. Early estimates put the loss of property at around Rs. 1.8 million. No injuries or deaths have been reported. *Compiled from reports.*

FNCCI Delegation In France

A six-member delegation of the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) led by its President Pradeep Kumar Shrestha accompanied Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala on a visit to France. During the four-day official visit, Koirala addressed the French Institute of International Relations and Federation of French businessmen — MEDEF International. The Nepalese business delegation expects the visit to boost economic



Shrestha

ties between the two countries by increasing French investment in Nepal in various areas and attracting more French tourists. *Leading dailies report.*

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King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya at a program organized to mark the silver jubilee of Mrigendra Samjhana Medical Trust

PRIME MINISTER GIRIJA PRASAD KOIRALA HAS requested his French counterpart Lionel Jospin to include Nepal in the list of French aid-recipient countries, which the latter agreed to consider, during formal talks between the two held at Matignon Palace, Paris. While Koirala said the talks were satisfactory, officials of his entourage conceded that Nepal failed to convince French officials to include the country in the list. Before he embarked on the France visit, Koirala had said he would try to include Nepal in the list. Following the talks with Jospin, Koirala addressed the French Institute of International Relations where he spoke about the cause of landlocked and least developed countries.

MINISTER OF STATE FOR WOMEN AND SOCIAL Welfare Kamala Panta said the government has drafted legislation to curb domestic violence and girl trafficking. Speaking on the eve of the 91st international women's day, Minister of State Panta said the government was positively considering the concept of a family tribunal, which could speedily settle cases arising from conflicts and disputes within the family. The family tribunal would be responsible for dealing with issues of marital relations, divorce, maintenance, dowry-gifts, adopted children and guardianship of minors.

FOLLOWING WARNINGS OF A STRIKE BY HOTEL workers beginning next week, the government is making a fresh bid to bring hotel owners and workers to the negotiating table. The workers have demanded a compulsory 10 percent service charge. A couple of months ago, hotel owners had closed down the star hotels across the country for one day refusing to accede to the workers' demand. The government had formed a panel headed by Prithvi Raj Ligal, chairman of the National Planning Commission (NPC), to recommend ways to settle the dispute. Minister for Tourism, Culture and Civil Aviation Omkar Prasad Shrestha released the panel's report Wednesday. The report has not made any specific recommendations on the imposition of ten-percent service charge.

THE DANISH GOVERNMENT HAS AGREED TO PRO-

vide a grant assistance of Rs 294.7 million for the implementation of an air quality management program in Kathmandu valley as the fifth component of Environment Sector Program Support (ESPS), according to the Ministry of Finance. The assistance is aimed at improving the air quality in the valley by reducing pollution caused by vehicular emission. Under the agreement, the grant will be used to strengthen institutional support to electric vehicles, establish cleaner promotion fund, set up efficient vehicle emission control and enforcement procedure and monitor other methods to check air pollution.

THE DEATH TOLL FOLLOWING A MEASLES OUT-break in various parts of Kailali district rose to 40 until Tuesday. According to the Kailali District Development Committee President Deep Bahadur Shahi, the disease that broke out from Chilkhiya Village Development Committee has now spread to many more villages. Shahi said measles together with gastro-enteritis has affected 4000 people in the district. The absence of doctors at the district hospital has worsened the situation.

ACCORDING TO A PRESS RELEASE BY THE BRITISH Embassy, Kathmandu, British Gurkha ex-servicemen are to benefit from another substantial pension rise, building on the increases of over 100 percent introduced in April 2000. From April 1, all ex-British Gurkha service pensioners and their widows will receive an increase of 10.9 percent. This increase, the press release states, ensures their pension keeps pace with Nepal's cost of living and once again demonstrates the continuing commitment of the British government to the welfare of their ex-servicemen. This commitment is not only reflected in the excellent pensions that British Gurkhas enjoy but also in many other areas, including the Gurkha Welfare Scheme (GWS), Medical and Key Hospital Scheme, the press release adds. ■

Nepal Participates In ITB

Nepal participated in the International Tourism Exchange (ITB) held from March 3 to 7, 2001 at Berlin, Germany. ITB is the world's largest travel trade fair held annually. Taking into consideration the importance of Germany as one of the major markets for Nepal, Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) led a delegation of 23 travel-trade entrepreneurs at the fair this year. The visitors appreciated Nepal's stand. Renowned mountaineer Kaji Sherpa and two Lama monks were the star attractions at the Nepal stand. Another big draw at the stand was the national award-winning "potter" who mesmerized the audience with his spinning wheel. The NTB distributed various promotional materials in German and other languages and gave away gifts like Nepalese hats, wallets, pots and bags to visitors. A special reception was held with typical Nepalese cuisine at the stand for trade and media invitees on March 5. ITB is growing in size and prominence every year. This year, the fair had 10,149 exhibitors from 179 countries and territories. More than 60,000 trade visitors, 65,000 general visitors and 6,500 media representatives from 190 countries visited ITB 2001.

I will resign immediately if the CIAA or the Supreme Court implicates me in the [Lauda Air] case."

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, talking to reporters.

* * *

Given the problems facing the country, a mid-term poll would be the best alternative."

Khadga Prasad Oli, senior leader of main opposition CPN-UML, urging party cadres to prepare for fresh elections, in an address to a gathering in mid-western Nepal.

* * *

Our party is against any such move."

Madhav Kumar Nepal, leader of the main opposition and general Secretary of the CPN-UML, refuting Oli's contention that the party was ready for a mid-term poll, speaking at a program in Sindhupalchowk, in Kantipur.

* * *

Quite like the Hrithik Roshan episode, there are baseless allegations flying around about the Lauda Air deal, too."

Omkar Prasad Shrestha, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Civil Aviation, in Himalaya Times.

* * *



The prime minister will not resign based on (opposition's) noise."

Baldev Sharma Majgaiya, Minister for Water Resources, in Gorkhapatra.

* * *

We are ready to allow the prime minister to speak in parliament."

Bharat Mohan Adhikary, leader of CPN-UML, in Bimarsa.

* * *

I take satisfaction in having been part of the team that safely landed the 1990 People's Movement."

Pashupati SJB Rana, former minister and leader of RPP, asked about his major achievements in politics, in Bimarsa.

* * *

We didn't believe that even the government intervention would solve the problem now. That's why we have knocked the court's door."

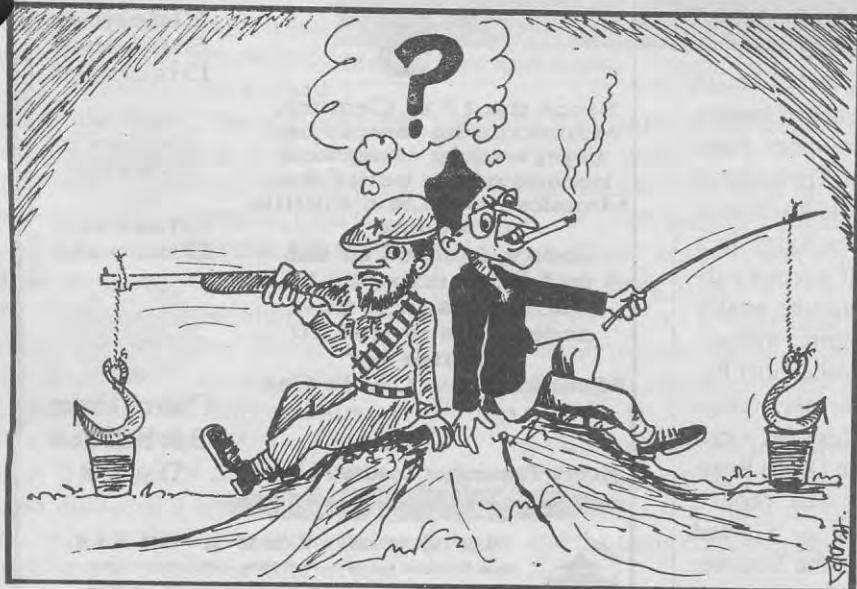
Narendra Bajracharya, president of Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN), justifying the hoteliers' move to file a court case against workers threatening to close down hotels unless their demand of a ten percent service charge is met, in Gorkhapatra.

* * *

For name, fame and money."

Samita Rai, up and coming actress, on why she decided to join the film industry, in Ghatana Ra Bichar.

* * *



Distant Dwelling

Nepali Congress leaders seem to be tired of receiving party workers at their houses. This seems to be one of the reasons why Congress leaders are physically distancing themselves from party workers. Following in the footsteps of former prime minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, Sher Bahadur Deuba has moved his residence from the city center to the edges of the valley. Although Deuba has reaffirmed that he would continue to maintain contact with



Koirala: Confounded by leaks

days, Koirala is said to direct his aides to scan the following day's newspapers. From the power of media tycoons to the sources of go-getting reporters, Koirala seems to have been sparing a lot of thought on the state of nation's news business.

Spouse House

There are different ways of projecting a 'clean' image of a political leader. All political parties are in various stages of perfecting this art. Former prime minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai has been living at a house in

Bhainsepati owned by loyalist and former minister Sarat Singh Bhandari. The leader of the opposition, Madhav Kumar Nepal, has been living in a rented house. If a report published in a vernacular weekly is true, former prime minister and Congress leader Sher Bahadur Deuba has taken refuge in the house of his wife, social activist Dr. Arju Deuba Rana. According to the report, Deuba's spouse — a grand daughter of Juddha Sumsher Jung Bahadur Rana — has

constructed a two-storey house at her own expense.

History's Man

As noted by the leader of the main opposition party, Madhav Kumar Nepal, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has again shown that he is Nepal's second Jung Bahadur. Although he has not mentioned the name of his predecessor in any public pronouncements, Koirala's supporters are busy describing the prime minister's visit to France as historically significant as Jung Bahadur's visit was a century and a half ago. Krishna Prasad Bhattarai made every effort to claim that feat last year when he was prime

minister. In the eyes of history, however, Koirala seemed more suited to claim the mantle of the man who brought the position of prime minister

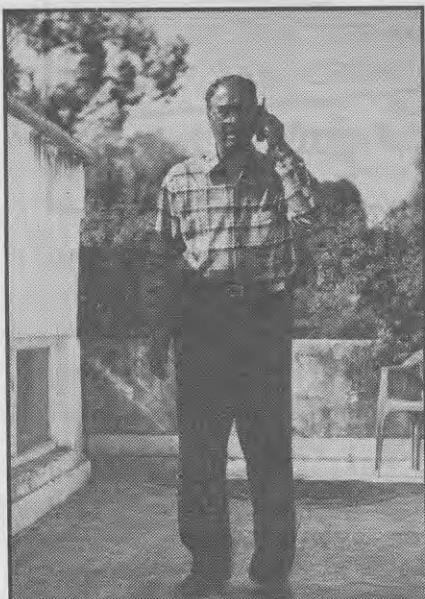
within the confines of his family (no pun intended).

Shaha's Century

Renowned Nepalese film producer, director and actor Nir Shahā recently marked the 100th-day screening of his historical saga Basanti. Shahā has produced a couple of art films in his career and achieved reasonable success. His co-production Caravan was nomi-



Shah : Century man



Deuba : Escape from crowd

supporters at his Baneshwar office, many worry that it might be difficult for him to attend his office regularly from his outpost.

Pressing Matter

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala is worried about people who appear to manage to listen to his one-to-one conversations with party colleague Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and leak the contents to the press. Whenever he returns after a meeting with Bhattarai these

nated for an Oscar for best foreign film last year. With Basanti, he has brought a critical juncture of Nepalese history into popular focus. ■

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ANNAN'S VISIT

Peace Proposal

Nepal expresses its willingness to open a regional peace-keeping training center with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan

By BHAGIRATH YOGI

At a time when Nepal is lobbying hard with the international community to seek support for its efforts to establish a regional peace-keeping training center in Paanchkhal, Kavre, the visit by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has injected fresh enthusiasm among policy-makers.

"Nepal plays very important role in the international peace-keeping operations," said Annan, talking to reporters upon his arrival. The UN chief praised Nepal for providing outstanding peace-keepers in international missions.

These words are clearly seen as a boost to Nepal's effort to establish the regional training center for the blue-helmets, especially in view of Annan's association with the UN Department for Peace-keeping Operations before he assumed his current position in 1997.

Although secretary-general Annan paid a brief two-day trip, it was significant for a small country like Nepal. The visit gave the country an opportunity to highlight its problems and concerns first-hand to the head of the world's primary global body.

UN Secretary-General Annan held talks with several Nepalese officials and also called on Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala. King Birendra also granted audience to the UN chief.

During his talks with Prime Minister Koirala and Foreign Minister Chakra Prasad Bastola, UN Secretary-General Annan discussed a whole gamut of issues, including the impasse surrounding the Bhutanese refugees in eastern Nepal,

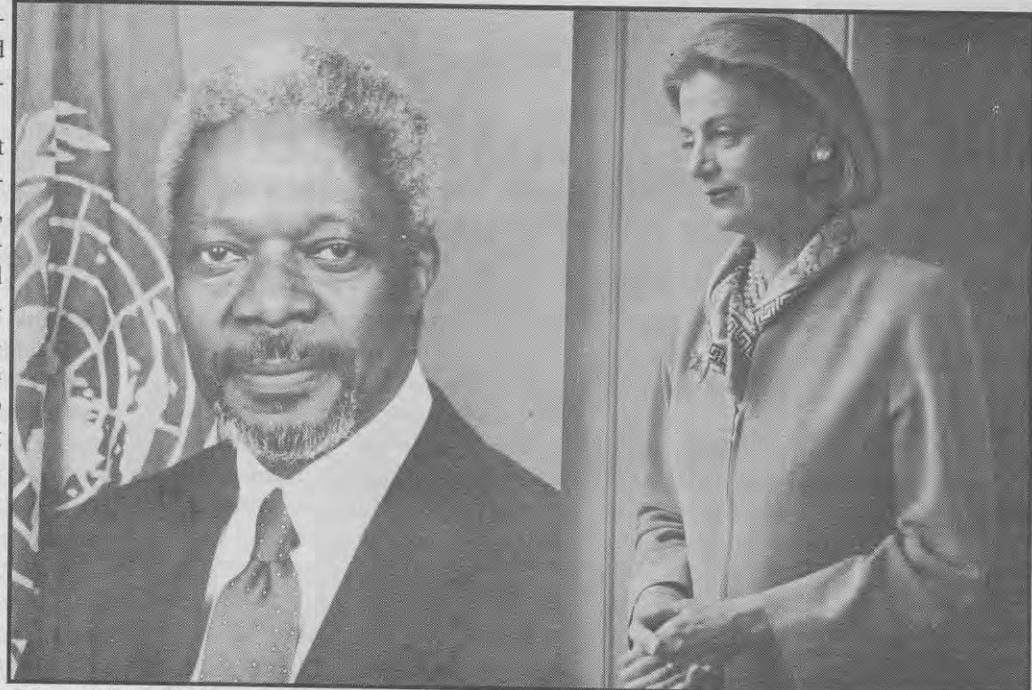
protection of human rights, promotion of the interests of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) along with the issue of UN peace-keeping operations.

Nepal is demanding an increase in the number of Royal Nepalese Army

Nepal has also raised its plan to physically position the office of the director of the UN Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament for the Asia-Pacific region. That office currently operates out of UN headquarters in New York.

"Annan held talks on a broad spectrum of issues ranging from Bhutanese refugees to peace-keeping and disarmament," Foreign Minister Bastola said.

As one of the largest contributors of contingents for UN peace-keeping, Annan's visit to Nepal was very significant as the international environment is building for more extensive involvement



Mr and Mrs Kofi Annan : Fruitful visit

UNDP

officials who go for peace-keeping duties around the world.

In the last four decades of involvement in UN peace-keeping operations, Nepal has already sent more than 40,000 soldiers. According to the UN statistics, Nepal has altogether 1,030 personnel on peace-keeping missions abroad, comprising 22 observers, 24 policemen and 884 troops.

Nepalese blue-helmets are currently deployed in East Timor and Lebanon and there is a plan to send them to Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo soon.

of the UN in peace-keeping and conflict prevention.

Initially, Annan's South Asian itinerary did not include Nepal. But after some constructive lobbying from Nepalese diplomats, the secretary-general landed in the Himalayan kingdom. He is the fourth UN secretary-general after U Thant, Kurt Waldheim and Javier Perez de Cuellar, to have come to Nepal.

Fresh from his visit to Pakistan, Annan arrived here in March 12 and after a 24-hour stay, he left the country for Bangladesh. He is expected to wind up his South Asian tour after visiting India. ■



NSP's chariot rally : Raising issues close to its heart

NEPAL SADBHAVANA PARTY Mechi To Mahakali

The terai-based party organizes a nation-wide rally to expand its base

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

As its opposition colleagues were busy in stalling the parliament, the Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP) chose to organize a nation-wide chariot rally along the southern belt of the country.

In the aftermath of the Hrithik Roshan episode last December, which evoked a surge in the hills-plains sentiment among the Nepalese, the terai-based NSP had announced a series of programs to cash in on the conflict. The party found the opportunity too good to resist and began to drum up for the support of the people of terai, popularly known as Madhesis.

Interestingly, the only remaining ally of the G. P. Koirala government in the House, NSP was busy in a nation-wide chariot rally as the parliament remained stalled for more than a month.

Led by party's national chairman Gajendra Narayan Singh, top NSP leaders toured the southern belt of the country — from Bhadrapur to Mahendranagar — whipping up the Madhesiya sentiment and calling for greater participation of the community in the national affairs.

Maintaining that there have been discrimination against Madhesiya community since the unification of Nepal more than 200 years ago, the NSP has been demanding for the equal treatment and the inclusion of the community in the national mainstream. Among others, the party criticizes the provisions for citizenship in the present constitution. It calls for the constitutional amendment to provide citizenship to millions of Terai people who, it claims, currently do not have citizenship.

"The so-called nationalism flared up by major political parties in the aftermath of the Hrithik episode must be condemned," said Rajendra Mahato, an NSP lawmaker and spokesman of the party. "How can you strengthen the national unity when nearly half of the country's population is totally cut off and is treated like a foreigner in their own country?"

The party currently has six members in the parliament. Its chairman Singh is the member of the Upper House. Although NSP claims to be the sole savior of the Madhesiyas, its votebank among the Terai electorates has not been improving in the recent elections. The 17 Terai districts send around 40 percent of representatives

to the parliament. This volume of representation has left every political party salivating at the prospect of being close to the voters there. That could be one reason why the NSP jumped into the chariot immediately after the Hrithik episode slightly disturbed the ethnic harmony among the hills-plains people. Mahato, however, clarified that the rally was not targeted against any race or community. "We want that the Nepali nationalism should accommodate feelings of all the people within the country," he added.

For a full 18 days, the party took out the chariot procession in different cities. In a typical Terai-style, the party organized colorful rallies attracting hundreds of people to its programs at the district headquarters. Its tour in a decorated chariot was a new idea to hit the Nepalese political parties — though not original if looked at political parties from India.

"Our rally was a grand success," said Hridayesh Tripathy, general secretary of NSP. "We managed to promote the cause of Madhesiya community."

The unilateral characteristic of the state has been apathetic to a huge community, which has resulted in social tensions, he said asking for the creation of a balanced state.

The NSP claims to be the only political party that genuinely takes up the issues of terai people. "NSP is always committed to the unity among Madhesiyas," said Tripathy.

Coinciding with the National Democracy Day on February 18, the party kicked off its rally from Bhadrapur in Mechi zone. It made many stop-overs in major cities like Rajbiraj, Biratnagar and Lahan where the party leaders addressed the public.

While mostly the leaders talked about uplifting Madhesiya community and amending the constitution to make it easier for the people from the community to get citizenship, its chairman Gajendra Narayan Singh did give Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala some respite by terming the current opposition move of stalling the parliament as unconstitutional.

At a time when there is a clear short supply of Koirala supporters, Singh's soothing words must have brought some relaxation to the beleaguered prime minister.

OPPOSITION POLITICS

Strange Bedfellows

A month after the 19th session of parliament was convened, there are few signs of an end to the legislative gridlock

By KESHAB POUDEL

NePAL's parliamentary experience is facing one of its most crucial tests as legislative proceedings are being stalled by an alliance of opposition parties whose aggressiveness is matched by the intransigence of the government.

It seems unusual, but this alliance — comprising remnants of the former partyless Panchayat system and leaders who are still ideologically wedded to the principles of one-party rule — are desperate to establish their own political conventions by continually hitting at the underlying tenets of the present multi-party system.

Moreover, the silence of key Congress leaders, including former prime ministers Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Sher Bahadur Deuba, makes it look like the dissidents in the governing party are willing accomplices in the opposition's strategy.

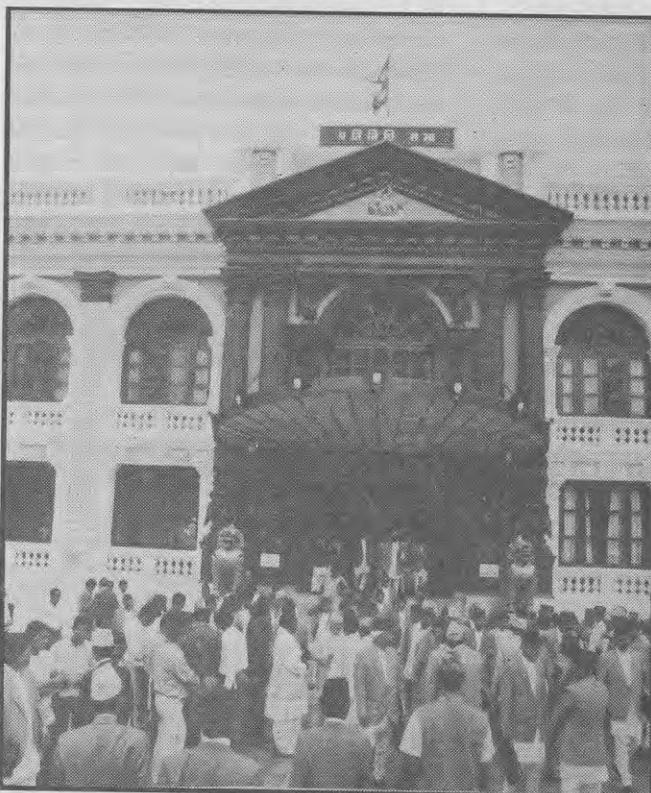
Strangely, the task of defending the multiparty system appears to have fallen solely on the shoulders of the leader of the terai-based Nepal Sadbhavana Party, Gajendra Narayan Singh, who has been consistently describing the opposition's activities as wholly unconstitutional.

"If the opposition parties are indeed committed to the political process, they have no reason to hold parliament to ransom for such a long time," said a political analyst.

The alliance of four factions of communists — the CPN-UML, Nepal Communist Party (Masal), Nepal Workers and Peasants Party and United People Forum — and the Rastriya Prajatantra Party — dominated by former panchas — seems to have become too strong for the government to break.

Despite repeated efforts to find a so-

lution, the deadlock in the House of Representatives shows no sign of abating, with the opposition refusing to budge from



House of Representatives : Stalled!!

their demand for the resignation of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala.

Nepal is going through a very difficult transition from the partyless Panchayat regime to a parliamentary system of government under majority rule. The role of the opposition parties and the tendencies of a section of the ruling party show that Nepal is still unprepared to follow a political system that puts a high premium on rule of law and adherence to established conventions.

"We will not allow parliament to proceed until Prime Minister Koirala hands in his resignation," said Bharat Mohan Adhikary, chief-whip of the CPN-UML in the House of Representatives.

The Nepali Congress holds a comfortable majority in parliament, but that fact has not deterred the opposition. "If nobody is in a mood to abide by parliamentary procedures, there is no reason to continue with this system of governance," said senior advocate Mukunda Regmi.

As the opposition and ruling parties continue to lock horns, the system will ultimately become the greatest loser. ■

A Tale Of Two Democracies

Although he made the following remarks on the current situation in Indonesia, Singapore's senior minister Lee Kuan Yew's observations are equally relevant to the Nepalese context. In an interview published in the February 26 issue of Newsweek magazine, the architect of modern Singapore said:

Indonesia is going through a very difficult transition from one-man rule by president Suharto to a form of government as yet unsettled. The media is open and free. Anything you can say is immediately published. The result is that army officers' reputations have been tarnished, former leaders have been damaged. And now attacks are going on against all leaders in the government and in the legislature. [Moreover,] the executive and legislature are boisterously uninhibited in their attacks on each other. It's a vast and complex country. There are demonstrations going on every other day. In the midst of all this, they are supposed to run a democratic government. How?

EARTHQUAKES

Tremors Of Concern

Bhugol Park, situated at the heart of the city, was built to commemorate that moment in 1934 when nature took its deadly toll

By AKSHAY SHARMA

We were all shocked when a weekly carried a story and pictures of the devastation caused by the earthquake that struck in 1990 BS (1934 AD). Then television channels around the world began showing live pictures of devastation wrought by the earthquakes in Gujarat, India, and Seattle, United States. The calamity nature is capable of inflicting on the world came into sharp focus.

"What are we supposed to do? Wait and bite our nails for the next earthquake to strike?" asks Pravin Shrestha. But we are left biting our nails listening to chilling predictions from experts that a big quake will hit

South Asia within 2006.

The Bhugol Park situated at the heart of the city at New Road was built to commemorate the moment when the earth shook violently in 1990 BS (1934). That was the first biggest recorded and best-remembered earthquake in Nepal.

Today you can see many people basking in the lovely summer sun, gossiping, eating peanuts, reading newspapers some even managing to catch some sleep. In his famous work Kopila, Govinda Malla Gothale writes: "I still remember how the earth shook. At that time, we kids used to go to study at with a teacher during our winter vacation near Bag Durbar. A sudden loud noise erupted and there was debris and dust flying all around. I barely escaped from a brick that nearly fell on my feet."

"I remember seeing the older Dharahara crumble from the window," Gothale remembers. "My mother and family were sitting around the table and all the people in the neighborhood had debris strewn all over their faces. We didn't go inside the house fearing that another earthquake might occur. We slept all night under a table eating beaten rice (chiyura) and curd [dhai]. We broke up parts of the table to light a fire to keep us warm outside our house. We were too scared to go inside the house."

"The earthquake destroyed the Durbar High School where I studied. Classes were held on the grounds of Tri-Chandra College. The Ghantaghar (Clock Tower) had crumbled and the road was being cleared."

Inscribed on the Bhugol Park monument are the words of the rulers and the money they donated. The landmark tells us that the British, Japanese and Indians donated Rs 2,303,714. Rs 544,489 was distributed to the victims of the earthquake.

The total amount of money spent on relief was Rs 38,422 and the government provided Rs 560,956 in interest-free loans to victims and their families. The money that was lent during the four-year program was Rs 2,982,216, as inscribed in the memorial.

This means the country had a debt of Rs 2,982,316. Rs 560,945 was raised in the form of an earthquake fund and an Rs 2,421,360 was written off. Some people were allowed to pay their debts later.

The ferocity nature showed that day has been explained to the younger generation through word of mouth. "I remember the stories my grandmother told me about the earthquake. She said that our house in Asan crumbled to pieces," said 26-year-old Anish Man Joshi.

Are we prepared for another big earthquake? Even the question sends shivers down the spine.



A rural house : Shaky foundation

5TH NATIONAL GAMES

Sports Mela

The fifth national games are announced amid the controversy over the existence of two football associations

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Even as the tug-of-war between the two football associations in the country continues, the government is preparing to organize the fifth national games in Kathmandu in the first week of May. Originally scheduled to be held in the western Nepalese town of Dhangadhi, the games were later switched to Kathmandu.

While the government has been accused of instigating the division in the football association by openly backing the ad hoc committee headed by Geeta Rana against the FIFA-recognized Ganesh Thapa-led All Nepal Football Association (ANFA), it has now decided to hold the national games without resolving the prevailing dispute first. According to Minister of State for Education and Sports Dilendra Prasad Badu, the games will be a prelude to the upcoming Ninth South Asian Federation Games (SAFG) slated to be held in Pakistan later this year.

The disciplines included in the fifth national games are tallied with the ones included in the Pakistan games. National Sports Council (NSC) officials say 1,425 athletes (male and female) representing seven teams - five development regions, Nepal Police and Royal Nepalese Army - will compete in 14 sports disciplines. There are 771 medals (gold, silver and bronze) up for grabs.

"The fifth national games will provide a good opportunity to the Nepalese athletes to hone their skills as they prepare to take part in the regional games later this year," said Sanu Bhai Thapa, a football player of Jawalakhel Youth Club (JYC), an A-division club. "But it would have been better had the government first resolved the crisis of two ANFAs."

Other sports observers, too, believe that the protracted dispute over which

ANFA is legitimate, has tarnished the image of the country. Nepal was deprived of the unprecedented chance to host the World Cup qualifying match in March after FIFA rescheduled the venue following the controversy. The qualifying match will now be held in April in Iraq and Kazakhstan.

In fact, the persisting controversy is now even threatening the very participation of Nepal in these qualifying tourna-

like karate and taekwondo. Nepal also ended up as the first runner-up in football.

This time, too, the government is giving special emphasis on sports like karate, taekwondo, boxing, football and weight-lifting in which Nepalis expect to win medals at the regional level.

The 14 disciplines included in the fifth national games are athletics, boxing, taekwondo, karate, weight-lifting, men's volleyball, women's volleyball, table-tennis, football, men's kabaddi, swimming, wrestling, shooting, badminton and squash.

The NSC estimates that holding the national games will cost around Rs 46 million. The games will be attended by 283 trainers, 256 umpires and 45 representatives from various sports associations.

Before the holding of the national games, tournaments will be held at district



Football players : Waiting for the row to end

ment. As football is the most loved of all sports in the country, the dispute is certain to overshadow the preparations for the fifth national games, too.

Meanwhile, athletes have welcomed the announcement of the national games, saying they would bolster their motivation and chances during the Ninth SAF Games.

The Eighth SAF Games were held in October 1999 in Kathmandu where Nepal managed to position itself in second place after India by winning 31 gold medals. Most of its medals came from martial arts

and regional levels to select the participants for 14 disciplines at the national level. Though the government's decision to hold the national games has been welcomed by all, there is still a worry that is nagging the Nepalese sports sector - will the government be able to settle the dispute in the football sector or will it allow this to spill over and affect other sports, too?

Sports-lovers around the country are keeping their fingers crossed that the government will resolve the ANFA dispute before the national games begins. ■

CIAA

Emerging Despotism

The Commission of Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) emerges as a despotic institution

By KESHAB POUDEL

When an institution that is supposed to guard against the misuse of authority itself is accused of encroaching upon the authority of others, the consequences can hardly be propitious. Moreover, when that institution is not accountable to anybody — not even itself — the recipe for serious institutional turmoil is complete.

In a situation where the whims and



Minister Joshi : Feeling the heat

caprice of an official dictates the decision making process in institutions like the CIAA, the institution as well as whole constitutional edifice is bound to suffer. This is exactly what is happening in the case of the CIAA. As soon as the CIAA started exceeding its constitutional limits, the institution itself has plunged into a sea of controversy.

Terrorizing a whole state machinery,

the CIAA seems to be turning itself into a despotic institution, intervening in the day-to-day activities of the executive, instead of finding cases of abuse of authority and corruption and pursuing legitimate legal remedies.

Already facing a case in the apex court over whether it can question the opinion and decision given by the attorney-general — the chief lawyer of the state — the CIAA has now become involved in another controversy: Its recommendation to the prime minister to take action against then-minister of education and current Minister of Local Development Govinda Raj Joshi for his purported malafide intention in amending the Education Regulation.

If the CIAA starts functioning arbitrarily and avoids adherence to the constitutional framework, it only helps to damage its own credibility and capability. Joshi has already filed a case in the apex court demanding the declaration of the CIAA directive null and void. "The CIAA has no legal and constitutional rights to direct the government to punish a minister on the basis of a decision made by the cabinet," said advocate Upendra Keshari Neupane, a lawyer for Joshi.

The CIAA last week directed Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala to take action against Joshi for his misuse of authority in amending the Education Regulations. The CIAA also ordered the Ministry of Education to refund fees it collected from candidates for teachers who wanted a re-totaling of their marks. The CIAA even canceled the results of the written examination declared five years back.

After the amendment to the Educa-

tion Regulations, more than 60,000 names were added to the list of contenders for the post of 10,000 teachers. Teachers are left wondering who might be advising the CIAA on important questions of law and the constitution?

Although the decision was taken five years ago, the CIAA started investigating the matter when the Supreme Court also issued a mandamus ordering the completion of the interview of all the candidates.

"We have issued a directive to the government after finding something wrong in the process and involvement of the minister. Now it is up to the prime minister to decide," said a senior official at the CIAA.

It seems that the CIAA commissioners are more interested in grabbing newspaper headlines than in curbing corruption and misuse of authority.

Because of its immature decision to summon then-minister of culture, tourism and civil aviation Tarini Dutta Chataut and recommend the suspension of executive chairman of RNAC Hari Bhakta Shrestha, the CIAA also paved the way for the deadlock in parliament that has continued for over a month.

Continuous political instability has resulted in anarchism and terrorism. The despotism of CIAA has emerged as the latest threat. Every constitutional organ should function within the limits fixed by the constitution.

After questioning on the rationale of the opinion given by the attorney-general, the CIAA has set a new precedent in threatening the very basis of the independence of lawyers.

If the CIAA is allowed to question the opinion of lawyers, every lawyer can be questioned for his or her opinion on cases involving corporations and government institutions. How aware are the lawyers on this strong encroachment upon their independence?

Future commissioners of the CIAA, too, can be questioned for decisions given by the present set of commissioners. If the independence and opinions of the attorney-general can be questioned, every lawyer's decision can be subjected to questioning.

HOTEL ROW Legal Tangle

And the battle goes on at the cost of the hospitality industry

By A CORRESPONDENT

As both sides are sticking to their guns, the ten percent service tax row between the hotel owners and workers threatens to snowball into a major strike. The informal meeting between the two bickering parties brokered by Tourism Minister Omkar Prasad Shrestha last week failed to resolve the deadlock. While the hotel workers are demanding the imposition of compulsory 10 percent service charge on all the services offered by the hotels to the tourists, owners are vehemently opposed to the idea. The workers have warned that they would close down the hotels beginning March 15 if their demands are not met.

The months-long row took a new turn as hoteliers filed a case at the Patan Appellate court last week demanding a ruling to declare the proposed strike as legal. "We don't believe that the problem will be resolved even with the government's mediation. That's why we decided to knock the court's door," said Narendra Bajracharya, President of Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN).

According to HAN, during each day of strike the number of average tourist arrival of 1500 per day will come down to zero; tourism receipts of around 460,000 dollars per day will be lost and the nation will lose about Rs 5 million being collected daily from the tourism sector as value added tax (VAT). Similarly, the daily transaction of around Rs 55 million in the tourism industry will come to a halt as 350 travel agencies, 846 hotels, 400 trekking agents, 70 rafting companies and 600 restaurants will be closed. The strike will put around 1.5 million hotel

employees and their dependants under financial crisis, the Association said.

Backed by the powerful trade unions affiliated to major political parties in the country, the hotel workers have not refuted these figures. But as

they remain adamant to their decade-old one-point demand, the hospitality industry continues to lan-

guish through a phase of uncertainty and instability. ■



Tourists in Kathmandu: Disturbed by the deadlock

RADISSON HOTEL With New Award

Two years after it began operations in Nepal, Radisson has won a top award

By A CORRESPONDENT

Although it came into operation two years ago, Radisson Hotel has proved its ability to stand as a unique hotel in Kathmandu.

This is what Radisson Hotels & Resorts, which annually honors the top-performing hotels and resorts around the world, also recognized by conferring on Radisson Kathmandu the president's award.

From a list of 400-plus hotels, Radisson Kathmandu was chosen for the top honor. By achieving the award, it has demonstrated its commitment to guest service and genuine hospitality in Nepal.

The recipients of the president's award are judged on the quality of food and bar and for the delivery of genuine hospitality service experiences. As only the fourth winner in the Asia\Pacific region, Radisson Kathmandu is now perceived as one the market leaders in the region.

"We are proud to say that it is the hard labor and team work of the staff to qualify us to get the award," said Ian Barrow, general manager of Radisson Hotel.

Along with quality rooms, Radisson Hotel also offers a wide choice of food and beverages.

"We have been offering various types of food and beverages to our customers," said Nirmal Biswas, F&B Manager of the hotel. ■

TERAI'S FOREST Challenge For Management

Forest management in the terai has always lacked accountability and transparency, often sparking controversy. Encouraged by the successful experiment of community forestry programs in the hills, donors are pressing for the introduction of a similar concept in the terai forests. Unlike in the hills, however, users groups in the terai are so large that it is virtually impossible to conduct affairs in an open way. For its part, the government is drafting a Forest Act Amendment Bill that would give greater authority to the District Forest Office to manage national forest in the terai. Whether policy makers can find a way of harnessing Nepal's economically valuable forests without hurting the interests of users groups remains to be seen.

By KESHAB POUDEL

Community-managed forests at the Chula Chuli region in Ilam and Jhapa districts are on the verge of ruin as some members of local users group are allegedly hobnobbing with timber smugglers.

There is a similar situation in parts of Rupandehi, Bara, Rautahat, and Kapilvastu districts, as some members of users groups are allegedly involved in the felling of trees in the national forests and selling them.

Interestingly, community forestry programs in the interior hills that border

all the terai districts are going on without any problem and generating forest products in keeping with the demand of the local community. The illegal felling of trees in the community forests of the terai is understandable. Compared to the hills, forest products in the terai have economical potential because of the easy access to markets across the border and within the country.

This does not mean that all is well with government-controlled forests in the terai. The illegal felling of trees and encroachment of forestland are rampant in areas managed by the government. Senior officials at the District Forest Office are allegedly involved in the illegal cutting of

trees with support from their political masters. The recent incidents in Morang and Banke districts have exposed the vulnerability of government forests. Whether they are national or community based, forests are not free from controversy and mismanagement.

The forests in the terai are facing greater threats in recent times, with many dense forests vanishing fast. The thick forests in the northern parts of Bara district, which were recognized as commercially viable a few years back, have now turned into bushes. Almost all biologically mature trees have either been smuggled out or are in various stages of decay. Although young saplings are com-

ing up and the process of natural regeneration continues, the use of this patch of forest for commercial purposes has now become impossible.

At a time when the national forest in the terai is being successfully managed neither by the community nor by the government, an effective solution needs to be found. By amending existing laws, the government claims it can pave the way for national forest management with the participation of the local community. Moreover, officials say, national treasury would have access to a share from forest products.

"We don't want to disturb the community forestry programs. What we want is the participation of the community as well as a participatory forest development program in the terai," says K.B. Shrestha, divisional chief of the community forest division of Department of Forest. "Natural resources need to be managed and harnessed properly in the terai."

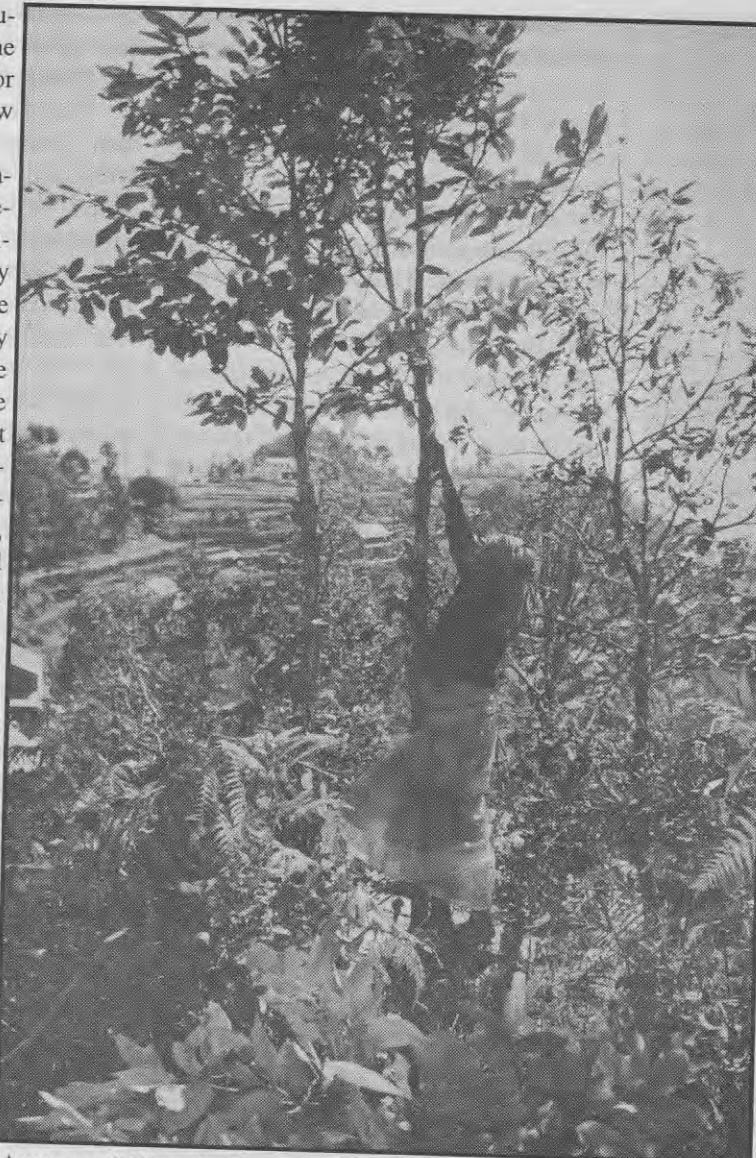
Users groups based in Kathmandu valley are against any kind of government intervention in forest management. They stress the need to hand over the entire forests of the country to local communities. "We will oppose any amendment that would pave the way for greater intervention by the government," says Hari Prasad Neupane, president of the Federation of Community Forestry Users Group Nepal (FECOFON).

Because of sheer lack of resources and poor implementation of well-planned policies, Nepal's valuable national forests in the terai are either decaying or being destroyed by smugglers. Hundreds of cubic feet of timber are being smuggled across the border every day. While forest resources worth billions of rupees are being lost, the Ministry of Forest has to survive on annual subsidies from the gov-

ernment. Because of the dilemmas in policymaking, the forests in the terai are neither used for commercial purposes nor managed in keeping with the objectives of conservation. Even the government does not know how much forestland it wants to hand over to the local communities and how much it wants to retain in its control.

"The government wants to manage the forests in the terai with the support from the community to distribute the resources equally among the users group of the north and south," says Shrestha. "We will also hand over forests to the community, but they have to harvest them themselves."

User groups oppose the move. We



A woman felling the branch : Reaching out for fodder

will not tolerate any effort that restricts the rights of the community," says Neupane. "Some things may be wrong with some users groups, but the same holds true with the District Forest Office officials."

What is the Problem?

One of the major problems in forest-sector management is lack of transparency and sense of accountability among officials and user groups. Although these groups are elected from among the users, many do not follow a proper election process. In the terai, the users groups are so big that holding elections is akin to holding elections for local bodies. In many areas, the general assembly cannot be convened because of the sheer size of the users group. Even a small users group has at least 3,000 members and encompasses a large swath of land from north to south.

The situation is different in the hills, where community users groups are small and homogeneous, so people can easily convene meetings to take vital decisions. However, as the users groups are not accountable

to anyone after the elections, they take decisions on their own.

Transparency is virtually non-existent, as there is no one to monitor the activities of the users groups and their income. In most cases, the users groups are composed of members of all national political parties. It seems that there is a national consensus on the misuse of resources.

District Forest Officials are beset with similar problems. They are not held accountable for the work they do and often do not act in a transparent manner. In the terai, District Forest Officials are changed as soon as a new minister takes charge. There is said to be hectic competition

among DFOs to seek positions in the terai.

As their tenure is uncertain, few care about their roles. Worse, they don't have to face the consequences for having made wrong decisions. No one can question how a DFO decides to clear the forest or how he decides to manage it. Making forest officials accountable and transparent should be the primary goal of an effective forestry plan.

The government needs to establish clear-cut duties and responsibilities for the users groups and District Forest Officials in an effort to make them accountable to the people. If such a system were developed, the possibility of forest mismanagement would be reduced to a considerable extent.

Debate On Amendment

As the government seems determined to amend the Forest Act of 1994, users groups are making an all-out effort to block the move. According to the FECOFON, the amendment would place more restrictions on the mobilization of resources by the community and provide more rights to forest officials.

"This amendment will completely ruin the system of community forestry management. If the bill is passed, it will bring a situation similar to that of the Panchayat days," says Neupane.

The Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation rejects such charges, saying that the proposed amendment would further strengthen the 20-year experience of community forestry in Nepal. "The government does not want to intervene in community forestry. We are still committed to community forestry," says Dr. Udaya Raj Sharma, the ministry's spokesman.

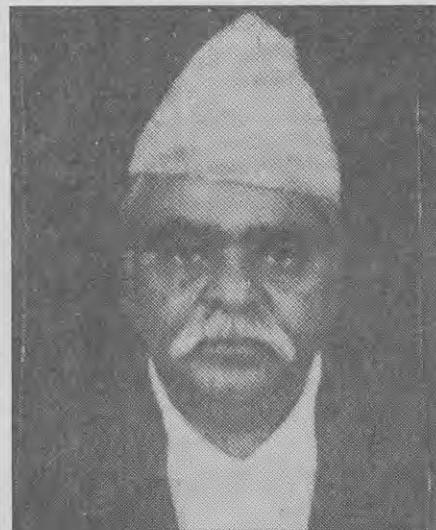
Ministry officials argue that the new act would seek greater participation from the community in forest management. It contains a clause that would allow the sharing of forest resources among user groups, village development committees, district development committees and the government. The government also intends to spend 60 percent of the revenue collected from the forests in the terai and Chure on local development projects. The bill contains similar other beneficial provisions, officials say.

Major Resources

Forests are a major natural resource of Nepal, providing 81 percent of total fuel consumption and more than 50 percent of livestock fodder. For several industries in the country, forest products provide vital raw materials.

Until 1970, Nepal generated more than 30 percent of its annual revenue from forest products. Today that figure has declined to less than two percent.

For many years, the forest of the terai was a major contributor to the national exchequer. After the indiscriminate felling of trees during the national referendum of 1979, the government declared illegal the cutting of green trees. Utilization of forest products was totally stopped.



Neupane : Fight for right

Following the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990, the government began using forest products.

Forest products did not come free for the community even during the Rana regime, although for some time the forest sector was left without any governing laws. Traditionally, villagers had to obtain the revenue collectors' permission before collecting fodder, feed or thatching material or felling trees for timber. With the fall of Rana regime in 1951, the revolutionaries started clearing the terai forests recklessly. The government enacted the Forest Nationalization Act in 1957, which placed forest management under the government's control. Following the eradication of malaria in the terai, the rate of deforestation for shelter and

agricultural purposes saw a rapid increase, causing a major decline in the forest cover.

Forest Management Policy

Forest management practices in Nepal have changed from being exploitative - with major forest products being sold to India - to becoming protective under a program introduced in 1987. At the same time, export of forest products was tightly restricted and a felling ban was imposed. The ban hampered the development of good forest management practices, and the oscillation between exploitation and protection has resulted in a lack of experience in practical forest management.

The government developed 18 Forest Management and Utilization Development projects for the terai. Because of weak implementation, however, they never achieved their goals. The result: continuous depletion of the existing resource base.

During the exploitation period, less attention was paid to regeneration, as the major purpose was to clear land for settlement. Forest management responsibilities lay with the DFOs. The harvesting and transportation was normally carried out by the Timber Corporation of Nepal (TCN), which was operating under the Ministry of Supplies.

Even after the restoration of multiparty democracy, the TCN's monopoly in this sector continues. The Forest Development Board is operating plantation areas under separate rules at Sagarnath and Nepalganj. This effort has turned out to be the best alternative for those tried during the 1990s. However, the DFOs are unable to perform well because they have to face political pressure.

The timber is sold to middlemen much below the market prices and sometimes under political pressure. The Auditor-General's Report for 2000 noted how mismanagement resulted in the loss of wood worth millions of rupees. In many cases, TCN officials sell the timber at throwaway prices. According to a study, the prices of the TCN are up to 50 percent lower than the prevailing market prices. The TCN supplies 40 to 50 percent of the logs saw mills use.

The remainder originates from private sources, including the illegal felling

of the national forest. The total value of Nepal's forest is estimated at Rs. 879 billion, of which fuelwood forms Rs 230 billion.

Forests supply 90 percent of fuelwood needs and about 40 percent of fodder requirements. In 1994/95 about 12 million tons of fuelwood was consumed, of which 96 percent went for household consumption.

South Vs North A major argument of the Ministry of Forests is that there are growing disparities between the north and south in the use of forest products. As most of the traditional users live in the south, the forest is accessible to the northern residents. "We need to manage the forests because the people of the southern areas do not have access to the forests in north," said Shrestha. "If all the forests in the terai are handed over to the community, who will supply fuelwood to the southern population?"

According to a study, dung and agricultural residues form the principal source of household energy in the southern terai, with only 43 percent of the people using wood. This indicates greater fuelwood scarcity in the terai. Siraha and Saptari districts have the lowest per capita forest cover among the terai districts of the eastern region. The Strategic Guidelines for Forest Utilization report prepared with Finland's support also shows growing disparities in the use of forest resources. According to the report, terai households closer to the forests use fuelwood for cooking at twice the rate of households living farther away. Households with less than two hectares of land are reported to supplement their income through the sale of fuelwood collected primarily from government forests.

It is estimated that 68 percent of the people collect fuelwood from government forests and 13 percent from community forests. Sixteen percent harvest fuelwood from their own land and the remaining three percent use kerosene and gas, according to the CBS. In the mid hills, about 77 percent of poor households rely more on government forests compared to the more well-off who depend on on-farm trees and community forestry.

The contribution of community for-

estry in the hills is immense in terms of protecting the environment and supplying fuelwood and fodder. Some users groups are even spending the resources on the welfare of their communities. In the hills, there is no need for additional resources for the plantation and protection of trees.

"Some users groups are even self-reliant and generate a huge amount of resources to run their community work in hills. But I don't think a similar trend can be seen in the terai," says Amrit Lal Joshi, a community forestry expert.

Unlike forests in the hills, experts argue, the national forest in the terai cannot be managed in a simple way because the situation is different. The forests in the terai need intensive management. Experience has shown the need to hand over forests to the community in order to support and manage them properly. However, the community does not have the capability to manage national forests in the terai. As the area is densely populated and the users groups are fairly big, it becomes an impossible task. The terai's forests need a strategy that would encourage equitable distribution, community participation as well as resource mobilization.

Donors have played an important role in supporting community forestry pro-



Shrestha : Committed to community forestry

grams in the hills. But they have not shown similar interest in the terai. Although American and German donors are involved in managing forests in some terai districts, the results have fallen short of expectations.

According to the Forest Resources Utilization Strategy Project-Final Report, every year 10,000-15,000 tons of non-wood forest products are harvested from the mid-hills and high mountains. The terai areas harvest much more than that. The forests in the terai are commercially valuable especially because there is a big market just across the border. However, since they are away from human settlements, terai forests are not accessible to all.

The Forest Resources Utilization Strategy Project found in 1998 that Nepal had 4.2 million hectares of forest representing 29 percent of total land area, compared to the 37 percent figure stated in the Master Plan for the Forestry Sector of 1988. The annual rate of loss is about 0.5 percent in the terai and plains. The annual deforestation rate is 1.3 percent. According to the Forest Resources Information Project, reachable forest in the eastern development region is 112.8 cubic meters. The result shows that stocks per hectare are much higher than previous estimates. The total available saw log volume is 59 million cubic meters. The sal forest of the terai is vanishing fast because of high market demand.



Women carrying fire-wood : Important energy source

Donors in Terai As donors are not heavily involved in supporting forest management in the terai, the primary responsibility rests with the government. Five years ago, Finland proposed to develop a model project for forest resources management and showed a willingness to start it from Bara district. After opposition from FECOFON and other environmental organizations, Finland pulled out of the project. The World Bank, too, later withdrew from community forestry in the terai because government officials opposed some conditions set in the program. One of the conditions put forth by the World Bank was to end the monopoly of the TCN and begin log sales based on market competition. It also proposed to generate resources through the utilization of forest products.

Stung by the bitter experiences of past, when politicians encouraged settlements in government forest areas, officials did not agree to cut green trees and leave forest areas to regenerate. "Actually, it was a major mistake on our part not to accept the limited conditions set by the World Bank. Had we accepted the proposal, the country's forest resources would have started to contribute to the national economy." Since the withdrawal of donors, forest management efforts in the terai have faced a resource crunch.

Although the government has forest management programs for all the districts in the terai, it simply doesn't have the money to implement them. Other donors have been talking about the need for sustainable forest management but have not shown an interest to support such programs in the terai. "We have altogether 18 plans for forest management in the terai. When there is no money, how can we implement them? In the current budget each district has been given Rs.200,000 for forest management, but that is too little to start any task."

"Frankly speaking, we have adequate expertise for community forestry but we don't have manpower for forest management," says Joshi, who has worked for more than two decades in the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation. Because of lack of money and technical expertise,

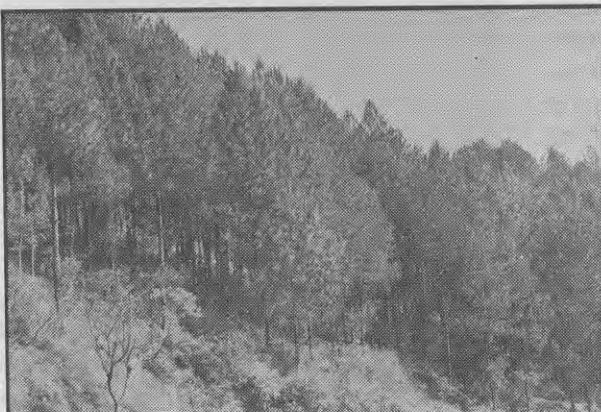
economically and environmentally valuable forests in the terai are vanishing at an alarming rate.

Values of Terai's Forest

The terai's forests are valuable for timber production and cultivation. In the middle hills, the forests are growing very fast because they are attached to households. There they are valuable for grazing, inter-cropping and fuelwood. The mountain forests are valuable in terms of tourism, bio-diversity and herbal products.

The terai's forests are diverse in terms of vegetation and species and have easy accessibility. In the terai, forest and settlements are not closely linked. The people of the northern terai are relatively new settlers, whereas those in the south are older.

Some experts argue that the government should not depend on donor-driven forestry policies, maintaining that those who provide the money often impose their ideas. "Resources are always considered



A community-managed forest : Example of success

in terms of economic value not in terms of physical existence," says Keshav Kandel, a forest resources economist. "Nepal has not made any effort to cash in on the economic value of its forests. The country is losing about Rs 11 billion a year from the forests because of lack of institutional support and distribution. If we view this in terms of market value, the cost will be between Rs 22 billion and Rs 44 billion."

FECOFUN's Role

Although users groups claims that they can manage forests more efficiently than the government, they, too, do not have the kind of manpower and resources needed for the job. Like government officials, the tendencies of some forest users

groups in the terai are questionable. They have not shown new ways of regenerating forests but continue to enjoy exploiting the natural cover that exists.

FECOFON claims it is the sole body set up to safeguard the interests of forest users groups. But others question its intentions. There are allegations that FECOFON often ignores the larger interests of the country while standing up for the cause of users groups. Some argue that users groups should not be allowed to manage the forests in the terai because they have almost become political organizations.

"We are purely representatives of users groups," says Neupane. Officials are using the political label to discredit us. This is the only organization that has a nationwide network of supporters," he claims.

In the terai, 226 forest users groups are managing 35,539 hectares of forests. According to forest officials, many of the users groups are misusing the resources. Officials even accuse users groups of selling trees from national forest areas.

In one users group in Ilam, all members are accused of corruption. Since the group has members representing all major parties, no one can take action against them.

"We want to introduce two models in the terai - collaborative forest management and community forest management. The collaborative effort will be directed by government, whereas the community forestry will be placed under the community," said Shrestha of the community forest division. Solution

The solution to the problem of forest management in Nepal can be found not in identifying who will control and manage forests but in ensuring accountability and transparency in the institutions involved. Even the Auditor-General's Annual Report 2001 points out the need for a proper mechanism for accountability in forest management. Even today, timber worth of billions of rupees is decaying in forest areas and in the yards of the TCN. In such a situation, simply amending the law to provide more authority to the community or the government would not work. ■

BHUTANESE REFUGEES Finally, We Are Here!

As Nepalese and Bhutanese officials start their work, rights organizations seek UN mediation

By A CORRESPONDENT

It was but natural for nearly 100,000 Bhutanese refugees to pin their hopes as the Joint Verification Team (JVT) formally started their job from one of the seven refugee camps in eastern Nepal early this week. Though it's a long process that might take up to one and half years, officials said they would try their best to cut short the time period as much as possible.

The JVT was formed as per an agreement during the ministerial level meeting between Nepali and Bhutanese officials in Kathmandu late last year. Dubbed as a breakthrough, the decision was seen as a right

step forward in resolving the more than a decade-old impasse.

Despite these developments, skeptics are not very hopeful. They suspect that the entire process could come to an abrupt end one fine morning due to



Refugee family : Hoping to return home

differences between the two sides as seen during the protracted negotiations in the past. So, what could be done?

Four human rights and aid organizations have demanded that the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) be also involved in the verification process of the Bhutanese refugees. In a memorandum submitted to Foreign Minister Chakra Bastola and Bhutanese Foreign Minister Jigme Y. Thinley separately, Human Rights Watch, Lutheran World Foundation, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, and Refugee International have expressed apprehension about the process and procedures for the joint verification. These groups have questioned about what they said lack of clarity regarding the documents required for the verification, absence of any independent appeal process and absence of provisions for refugees to be accompanied to their verification interview, if any. The JVT visited seven refugee camps in eastern Nepal in late January but is yet to agree upon a mechanism to kick-start the verification process. ■

MACROECONOMY Mixed Picture

The latest NRB report confirms declining growth rate of development expenditure

By A CORRESPONDENT

Thanks to the ensuing political instability, in the first half of the current fiscal year 2000/01, total government expenditure has decelerated, says a latest official report. It is due mainly to the deceleration in development as well as freeze expenditures despite a significant growth in regular expenditure, said

a report published by Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) last month. During the review period resource mobilization grew by 18.2

percent as a result of higher growth in both revenue receipts and foreign cash grants. However, because of high government spending, budgetary deficit widened. The rate of inflation, on point-to-point basis, was recorded at 2 percent, mainly because of the decline in

the prices of food and beverage group. In the external front, a robust growth of exports

accompanied by a comparatively slower growth of imports helped narrow down the trade deficit. The total exports have grown by 22.8 percent to Rs 28.76 billion during this period whereas total imports have grown marginally by 8.4 percent to Rs 56.12 billion. The total trade deficit stood at Rs 27.37 billion. The foreign exchange holdings of the banking system increased substantially due to a surplus in the balance of payments emanating from the growth in official and miscellaneous capital inflows and decline in the trade deficit. The resulting foreign exchange reserves was sufficient to cover merchandise imports of more than eleven months, the central bank said. ■

'The People Will Continue To Be Part Of Forest Management'

— RABI BAHDUR BISTA

RABI BAHDUR BISTA, secretary at the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, has had a long innings in the area of nature conservation. Bista spoke to **KESHAB POUDEL** on various issues related to the ongoing controversy over community forestry. Excerpts:

How do you assess the ongoing community forestry program?

Community forestry is going on very well and the ministry is whole-heartedly committed to implementing the national community forestry program. We have already said that we want to hand over roughly 3 million hectares of Nepal's forest to local communities by forming users groups. The whole program is going on very smoothly with the commitment of the government and the people's participation.

But some NGOs are accusing the ministry of trying to interfere in forestry programs. How do you see the accusation?

That is not true. Our forestry policy explicitly says, with regard to the community forestry in the hills, that all accessible hill forests will be handed over to the users groups to the extent they are able to use. The policy does not say anything about the low-land forests.

Then what prompted this outcry?

The government has recently outlined the policy statement regarding community forestry in the terai. In the terai, there are many community forestry. Community forestry has been streamlined in the case of low-land forests as well. It has been doing well. Not only that, the whole forest of Nepal at present is one of the resources managed through a participatory approach. So whether we talk of national parks or national forests, Shiwalik forest and community forest, where we have a strong involvement of the people.

What is your experience in the terai in comparison with the hills?

In the hills, forest and settlements are intermingled. So you can rightly say who forms the users group of a particular forest. With regard to the terai, where all forests are accessible and that people are depending on the forest, it is very

difficult to identify the users. The forests are only in the north and settlements are on the south. The forests of the terai are important for other reasons — for regulating the water discharge from the Shiwalik as well as protecting the land of south. We have to protect valuable wildlife like tigers, rhinos and the entire bio-diversity. In the terai, commercial forestry is possible so its utilization needs to be looked from the national perspective.

How do you see the scope for community forestry in the terai?

There is scope for community forestry, but it is not in the manner and style we have envisaged in the hills. In the terai, the community forestry is little modified in the sense that people would continue to receive their requirements, including the income from the forest. We cannot say, as we can in the hills, who the users would be because the resources need to go all the way to the southern areas. That is why the government, through its decision, explicitly spelled out how to manage the forests. First of all, the forest needs to be categorized and the best way to protect and manage it scientifically must be found.

Will the people still be part of forest management?

The people will be made part and parcel of forest management. This means the people will continue to receive fuelwood, fodder and small timber. In addition to all this, we are in the process of distributing the income we get from the forest equally to the VDCs, DDCs and forest management committees. They are better off. We want to implement collaborative forest management in terai.

What was the concept of community forestry when it was introduced two decades ago?

The philosophy of community forestry was developed when there was an influx of people from the hills to the terai. With an aim to stop the migration to terai, policy-makers introduced community forestry to make possible a modest livelihood in hills. So the terai forests were left alone. That is the reason the policy does not say anything about the terai.

Do you mean users groups will not be

allowed to cut trees for commercial purposes?

The underlying principle of community forestry is that it provides basic forest products as per the need of the household. It is not the aim of community forestry to cut green trees from national forests and sell them in the market. When the forest is managed in a sustainable way, the community can get the products they need and they may have some surplus. When one group has some surplus, it can definitely go to the market. The market is not considered the primary focus of community forestry. In many areas in the terai, commercial motives have taken precedence. So much so that extensive areas are handed over to the community. Misguided principles have created some confusion. We want to bring some control in the terai. The whole philosophy is not to go commercial.

What is the mode of decision making?

The decision of community forestry should be based on consensus. In the hills, every household gets an equal share. The users group selects the user community that undertakes day-to-day activities and decides on the continuation of community forestry. The effort is to ensure that the task is performed in best democratic traditions. This should also apply to the terai. There is no conflict when it comes to community forests. The other aim is to encourage the community to produce more forests to reduce dependency on government forests.

It is said that frequent changes of forest officers in the terai discourages accountability among the officers. After being transferred they do not have to bear any responsibility even in the case of mismanagement. How do you look at this complaint?

On the whole, the job of any forest officer is difficult because even if a tree is cut in the middle of the night, he is blamed. Forest officials are only custodians but the resource belongs to the people. It is under certain regulatory mechanisms and certain legislation that district forest officers are managing the forests and controlling illegal activities. I was told that one forest officer has to look at the forest of the whole VDCs. It is beyond his means. It is impossible to manage the forest without the cooperation of the people. On the whole, most forest officers are working 12-18 hours. They have their own limitation.

Why has the government-controlled national forest continued to shrink?

Due to uncertainty and deteriorating law-and-order situation, most of our armed guards are not actively employed and engaged. Basically, we have people that does not know what is right and wrong.

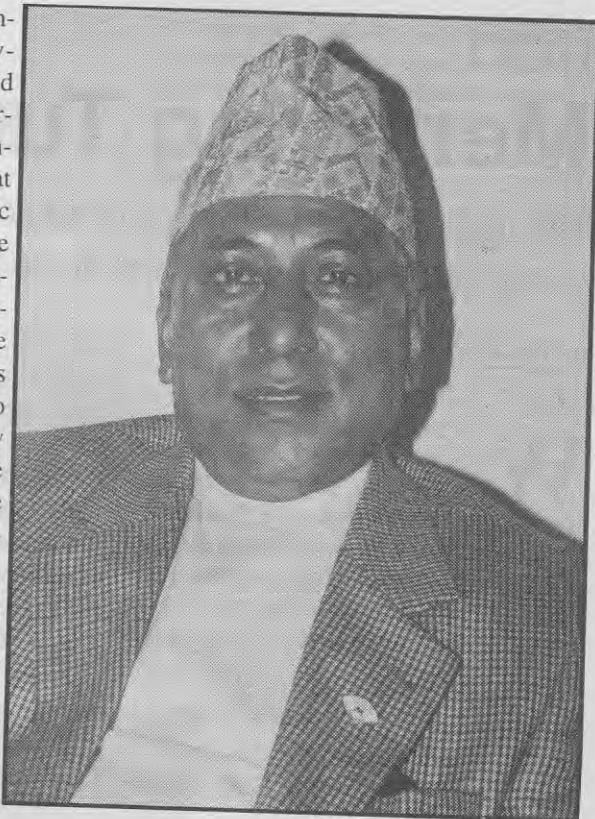
Our job is just to encourage that everybody obeys the law and maintains order. Forests need to be managed and cut so that they fulfill domestic demand. If possible the products can be exported. We are working to improve the quality of the forests of Nepal as well as to manage it accordingly and to conserve the bio-diversity. We know the basic demands.

The forest is said to be one of the precious resources of the country. How can you prove this when your ministry is itself surviving on a subsidy budget?

It is not true that our ministry is surviving on a subsidy budget. We are one of the most organized sectors. If there were no forests, land would be washed away in the hills and terai. They are also needed for internal security. There will be no water resources if there are no forests. Talk of tourism, we absorb 60 percent of tourists. We support agriculture and we provide 75 percent of the energy requirement of the country. If you look at these in terms of their value, it will be much higher. If it is stock forest, we are unable to harness the resources. First we have to see that our forest is best conserved and preserved. It means they are well used.

What is required to utilize forests for the benefit of the country?

We need to improve the quality and intensity of the forest as well. To that extent, you have to wait another five years. We have 29 percent forest and 10 percent is sub-land or degraded forest. Put together in five years, we can reach 40 percent forest cover with the quality of Europe. Productivity will be four times that of Europe. But now we need a moratorium. So are forbidding the cutting of green trees. We have about 2.8 million cubic feet in leftover of logs. We want to use. In five years time, when the forests will be full of stock, we can talk of utilization of forests. For the time being, a moratorium is the best way.



Due to uncertainty and deteriorating law-and-order situation, most of our armed guards are not actively employed and engaged.

HOLI Menacing Turn

The traditional festival of color takes a dangerous turn as young men use it as an opportunity to harass young women

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

When she left home in the morning to take part in a march to mark the 91st International Women's Day (on March 8), little did Sangita Poudel know what was in store for her.

A resident of Dhading district, 18-year-old Poudel had arrived at the district headquarters, Dhadingbesi, to celebrate the day along with her friends. But she ended up falling unconscious for hours in the local hospital.

On the day women around the world marked their movement for liberation, a teen-age girl in Nepal's village became the victim of an enduring form of sexual harassment.

Poudel was the victim of the ugly turn that the Holi festival has been taking in recent years. A misguided youth hit her hard with a water-filled balloon. It hit her chest with enough force to knock her unconscious for hours.

This is but an example how the youth, specially teen-age boys, are destroying the essence of Holi festival. In their perverse view, Holi gives them the license to throw balloons at girls and young women.

What was once a festival of building friendship has now taken an offensive turn. The traditional festival of colors has now become single most-feared festival among women.

A week before Holi actually arrived, girls and young women deserted Kathmandu's streets for fear of being hit with that dreaded balloon. Roadside hoodlums use balloons filled with water and other substances as missiles to hit innocent passers-by - invariably teen-

age girls. Even small boys are seen mimicking seniors and throwing these 'lolos' at beleaguered girls scurrying for safety.

More often than not, these lolos physically hurt the victims. Doctors say that if these water-filled missile land with force on the head or the eyes, they can cause permanent injuries.

Besides, there is no guarantee that these lolos are filled with clean water. In a water-scarce city, people are found to make use of dirty water, mud and hazardous colors.

What is more disturbing is the fact that, with each passing year, the festival is gaining more notoriety. So is the frequency of harassment. This year the festival was celebrated on March 9 (in hills, including Kathmandu Valley) and on March 10 (in the terai). However, the lolos started flying around more than a week earlier.

Although the authorities promise strict action against such wayward behavior, they have failed to stop this disturbing development. Apart from publishing a public notice, the Home Ministry has not done anything.

The increasing sense of lawlessness is more pronounced during the Holi season, when girls and young women fear to walk around the streets. Holi has been celebrated since time immemorial. In India, the festival is celebrated more vigorously. The festival marks the killing of demoness Holika by Lord Vishnu to save his devotee Prahlad.

Sociologists say unless society checks such disturbing tendencies in time, people will slowly begin to dissociate themselves from the festival. And that would be another real tragedy. ■

GURKHA ISSUE The Fight Goes On

With the objective of pressing for their demand of pay parity and equal treatment, Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen's Organization (GAESO) organized an international conference in Kathmandu. According to Dr. Om Gurung, coordinator of the three-day international meet that ended on March 11, the conference decide on a definitive plan to approach the UN Human Rights Court as well as the European Court to resolve the pension and welfare issues. At the conference, GAESO President Padam Bahadur Gurung came down heavily against both the British and Nepalese government for failing to end 'discriminatory treatment of British Gurkha soldiers'.

"Our movement is not against Britain or any British national. We are for equal rights and respect of the Gurkha soldiers. We only want to point out the mistakes made by both governments," said Gurung. According to GAESO officials, at least 1000 foreign delegations from more than a dozen countries attended the conference. Also attending the conference were around 500 Gurkha war veterans.

The organizers said that the conference was held in preparation for the 57th session of UN Commission on Human Rights to be held in Geneva in the end of March and the World Conference Against Racism to be held in South Africa in August, 2001.

Just a day before the conference opened in Kathmandu, British government announced 10.9 percent rise in the pension of the British Gurkha ex-servicemen, building on the last year's increase of over 100 percent. But the GAESO officials say the present increment is not sufficient. ■

GARBAGE DISPOSAL Down In The Dumps

With the monsoon just around the corner, expert worry about the added hazards of garbage mismanagement

By AKSHAY SHARMA

As the monsoon approaches, experts are bracing for the added scale Kathmandu's endemic garbage disposal problem is certain to take. "Solving the garbage problem will be a hard task indeed," says Ashok Shah of the Local Development Ministry's Department of Solid Waste Management.

Rapid population growth and changing consumption habits have made the officials' task more difficult. Kathmandu's population is estimated to be growing by about 5.9 percent a year. Lalitpur's population growth rate is about 3.8 percent. Those are troubling figures, especially in view of the fact that the entire Kathmandu Valley — which includes the cities of Bhaktapur, Lalitpur, Kathmandu, Thimi, Kirtipur and surrounding villages — is already believed to be over 1.2 million.

"It is common to see pedestrians covering their noses they pass rotting mounds of garbage that are on almost every street corner in Kathmandu," says Jawalakhel resident Bimal Khatri. Bonfires of garbage smolder in many parts of Kathmandu and most people find it convenient to haul garbage in the capital's rivers and ponds.

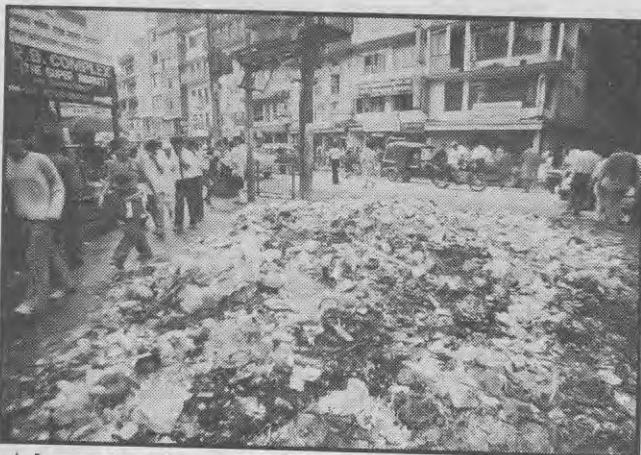
The average annual waste generation in Kathmandu is around 278 tons, and experts predict that figure to go up to 350 tons by next year. Lalitpur generates 68 tons of waste. These numbers make clear the dire need for a central waste processing facility in the valley.

The Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) has a plan for recycling waste with technical support from Bombay-based Excel Industries. The facility is expected to recycle a minimum of 300 tons of solid waste each day and a total of 22,000 tons a year.

Few studies have been done on proper solid waste management. The few findings that have come out become irrelevant be-

cause the nature and scale of waste generations changes quickly. This makes it all the more difficult for municipal officials to analyze the garbage situation and to take remedial action.

The nature of waste varies according to the living standards of the community. The waste in Kathmandu can be characterized as being highly organic, of high density and high in moisture content. Past studies indicate that 60 percent of the waste is organic. In 1978, experts estimated the density of



A heap of garbage : Stinking sight

Kathmandu's waste to be 600 kg/m³.

Another survey conducted by the Solid waste Management and Resource Mobilization Center (SWMRMC) in May 1988 found that the density varied from 300 and 430 kg/m³. The average density taken from samples from six locations were found to be 390 kg/m³. The SWMRMC's survey also measured the moisture content of the waste from six locations, which varied from 38 to 58.7 percent. The average moisture content was 45.8 percent. This may be because the samples were taken in May during which precipitation probably did not have an effect on the measurements, according to experts.

Kathmandu also generates large amounts of non-municipal waste, such as agricultural waste, commercial waste, hospital waste, industrial waste and dead animals.

Non-municipal waste is recycled by the private sector. The waste is generated in huge quantities and sometimes contains contaminants, according to experts. The municipalities manage part of it because it is either placed in containers or dumped in public places, Babu Kaji Shrestha, who collects garbage for Kathmandu municipality says, "We collect garbage from public dumps 2 or 3 times a week."

An efficient system of solid waste management is vital, especially because farmland around the city is decreasing, experts say. Agricultural waste is recycled by the farmers themselves and poses a less serious threat.

The main sources of commercial waste, experts say, are restaurants, vegetable and fruit markets, slaughterhouses, carpet factories and garment industries. Restaurant waste is usually fed to pigs. Bones from slaughterhouses usually end up in containers or are dumped on riverbanks.

"Waste from fruit and vegetable markets is usually dumped into containers. Waste from the Kuleshwor fruit and vegetable market is composted," says Ashok Shah. Some of the waste from garment and carpet factories is recycled, while others are dumped into rivers or containers.

Medical waste from hospitals is a major source of concern because of its hazardous nature. Experts say about 700 kg of hospital waste is generated in Kathmandu and Lalitpur each day. Teaching Hospital, Norvic Hospital and Patan Hospital have incineration plants. Few nursing homes burn their waste in crude incinerators and most of the other hospitals and nursing homes dump their waste in municipal containers or on riverbanks.

Prabin Shrestha, a student of microbiology, says: "The monsoon is around the corner and the risk of disease is growing because different harmful micro-organisms grow in these sites. We have already heard of instances of cholera and dysentery."

Residents normally deposit waste at designated areas along the roadside or in public containers. Workers from the municipalities pick the garbage from these containers. Some people just throw away garbage at vacant plots and public areas, leaving the municipality to manage it. With the scale of the problem growing by the day, officials will have to devise a more safe and efficient system of waste disposal.

BOOK

Aviation Analysis

An exhaustive first-hand account of the evolution of tourism and aviation in Nepal

By A CORRESPONDENT

Tourism and aviation have revolutionized the entire service sector in Nepal over the last five decades. Following the restoration of democracy, both areas have witnessed enormous investments from the private sector. Countless books on tourism have chronicled Nepal's emergence from isolation to a popular destination for visitors from around the world. Despite its major contribution to the national economy, few scholars have made an effort to look at the evolution of the aviation sector in Nepal.

Aviation has proved itself as one of the most important components of the modern tourism industry as well as a basic infrastructure for national development. In the last five decades, the country has laid great emphasis on developing aviation through appropriate policy measures.

In his quest to explore the history and present challenges of aviation and tourism, Maheswor Bhakta Shrestha has come out with a book based on his extensive experience in both fields.

Shrestha, who served for more than 25 years with the Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation (RNAC), has facilitated an enriched understanding of the country's aviation and tourism sectors through detailed — and often rare — information.

As chief of the Planning, Marketing, Sales and Corporate Department at the RNAC, Shrestha has seen many changes in both fields. In his book, Shrestha includes many valuable suggestions on the important issues related to the development of the tourism by integrating it with aviation.

Through its portrayal of analytical data covering the aviation and tourism industry, Shrestha's book has come as a

valuable reference text on the area. "I have tried to cover all important aspects of Nepalese aviation and tourism from the perspective of visitors, professionals, researchers and present relevant facts and figures in a precise tabulated format, leaving, in most cases, the interpretation of the facts to the readers," the author says.

The book is divided into four chapters covering general information on aviation, tourism and some issues related to airline management. As one of the first professional consultants on aviation and tourism in Nepal, the opinions Shrestha expresses in the book are interesting and valuable.

From the early phases of its develop-

ment to the current jet-engine era, the author tries to cover the difficulties and challenges faced by the aviation sector in Nepal. Shrestha also discusses the role of aviation in promoting tourism in different parts to the country. The author clearly makes the case that it is aviation that has been promoting Nepal's tourism industry.

One of the important aspects of the book is that it succeeds in discussing all critical aspects in the areas of tourism promotion and aviation sector. Shrestha also points to how forward-looking policies can make a difference by describing the surge in the number of private airlines following the adoption of an open-sky policy.

The book provides a descriptive account of the annual income from tourism and its contribution to the national economy. As an aviation management expert, Shrestha's evaluation is based on existing trends and information of the tourism sector. Along with discussing facts and figures, he paints a wider canvas that includes such areas as Nepal's culture, landscape and bio-diversity.

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TRANSITION

FELICITATED: Hem Raj Gyawali, chairman of Kantipur Publications, by the Gyawali Trust, for his contributions to literature, journalism and social service.

AWARDED: Nepal Agri-

cultural Research Council (NARC), with the award for scientific partnership for the year 2000, by the International Agriculture Research Consultative Group, for its fruitful partnership with international and regional agriculture research institutions.

Binod Ashrumali, a poet,

with the Basu Shashi Award.

Women litterateurs **Dev Kumari Thapa, Shanta Shrestha, Chandra Kala Newar, Hiranya Kumari Pathak, Bhuwan Dhungana (Koirala), Anita Tuladhar** and **Usha Sherchan**, with the Lokpriya Award.

ELECTED: Dr. Yadav Prasad Pant, unopposed, as president of the Nepal-Japan Friendship and Cultural Association.

Dr. Praveen Mishra, president of the Nepal Dental Association, as vice-president of the South Asian Dental Federation. ■

HEALTH

Joint Venture

Regional experts discuss cross-border initiatives in tackling HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and kala-azar at a conference in Kathmandu

By AKSHAY SHARMA

A four day SAARC-WHO meeting on "Cross border initiatives in HIV, AIDS, TB, malaria and kala-azar" was organized last week by the SAARC Tuberculosis Center, Kathmandu and the World Health Organization (WHO).

More than a hundred years have passed since Robert Koch identified tuberculosis in 1882. Moreover, nearly 50 years have passed since drugs for TB were developed. "Disease, information, diagnostic method, drugs have been available for a long time now, but they have not managed to control this dreadful disease," said Dr KK Jha of the National Tuberculosis Center (NTC) in Thimi, Bhaktapur.

"Discussions from eminent experts in tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, malaria and kala-azar from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, WHO Headquarters (Geneva) South East Asia Regional Office New Delhi, UNICEF, UNDP and SAARC nations provides us with fruitful incentives," said Dr. D.S. Bam, director of SAARC Tuberculosis Center.

Delegates from other pioneer institutions from the SAARC region also took part in the conference. The burden of TB/HIV in the 21st century will certainly be bigger than in the 1950s if proper interventions are not applied, according to the participants.

"The objectives of the meeting were to review cross-border issues related to HIV/AIDS, TB, malaria and kala-azar in the participating countries, and to exchange experiences and lessons learned on interventions to reduce the spread of these diseases across the border and to prepare a plan of action," Dr Bam said.

"Every TB patient has the human right to get free treatment. The government and the community have given their

full commitment."

Dr Jha said integration and decentralization are vital for cooperation and coordination in the battle against these diseases. "Today, in this changing demographic situation, no country can remain aloof."

Dr Shanta Bahadur Pande of the NTC said: "The private practitioners welcome the National Tuberculosis Program (NTP) to develop links between the private and the public sector. Private practitioners are willing to provide TB patients quality care and service that is easily accessible. The referral from the private sector was 10 percent in the first year and has increased to 18 percent in the second year."

Dr B. Shrestha of the NTC observed: "The problem of drug resistance has been a challenge to the revised National Tuberculosis Program (NTP) and DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment Short Course) strategy all over the world. High prevalence of drug resistance may lead to the failure of the DOTS strategy."

The NTC and the German-Nepal TB Project carried out drug resistance surveillance all over the country in 1999.

Dr Shrestha added: "This was the first nationwide survey on TB drug resistance in Nepal. In 1996, initial sentinel site surveillance was carried out. The reports are not alarming but they cannot be ignored. NTP should try to decrease the trend of drug resistance by properly implementing the DOTS strategy. Every effort must be made toward the prevention of the drug-resistance problem."

Dr P. Malla, director of NTP, said: "In Patan, more than 90 percent of the treatment for TB cases has been achieved. The number of TB-related cases in private nursing homes has increased and the patients are getting better quality of service. The longer opening hours of these healthcare

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New Book In Town

Longman enters the Nepalese market with a new series of dictionaries

Nepalese readers now have a wider choice of language books and dictionaries with the entry of the Longman series.

Along with dictionaries and other series, Essential Activator seems to be one of the helpful materials for readers and learners of the English language.

First published in 1993, the book is another revolutionary product of Longman - the first production dictionary which provides a solution to advanced students who do not know how to choose their words in essay writing.

Releasing the book in the Nepalese market, Longman also released the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English with the CD-ROM.

"Our dictionary and other series will provide learners of the English language to find the exact meaning of the word," said Della Summers, director of dictionaries. "Our dictionaries have many characteristics that will help new learners to enhance their skills."

"Our whole set of language books will be available in the market very soon," said Manoranjan Sood, manager, sales and marketing, ELT and schools. "Our products are helpful for new learners of English language."

institutions has been convenient to the patients. The experience we have learnt from Patan should encourage us to involve the private sector. The private sector is willing to provide free services to TB patients if the public sector is willing to provide recognition and guidance."

Experts emphasized that these diseases are preventable through better hygiene, food habits and proper sanitation facilities.

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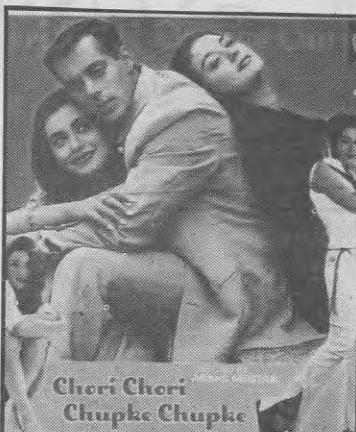
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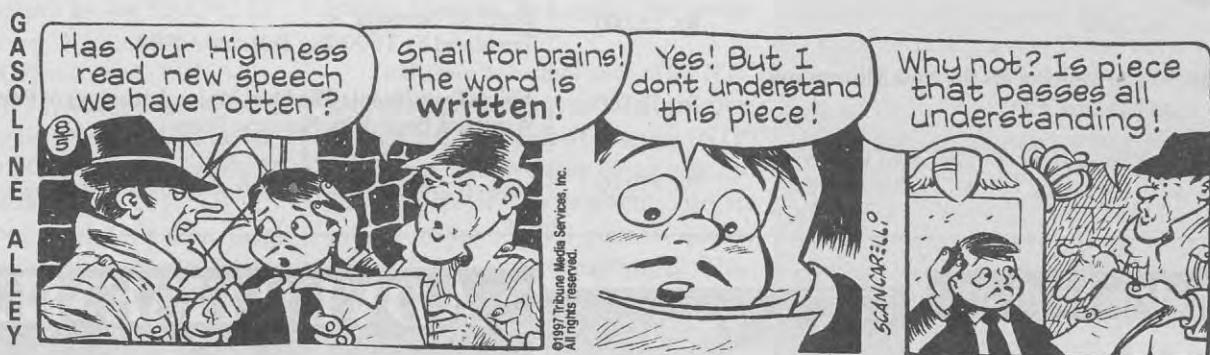
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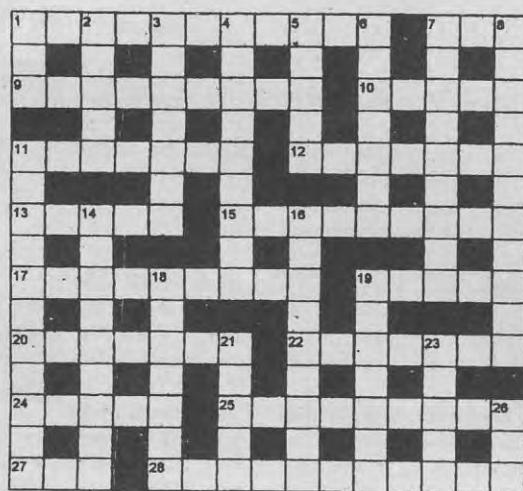
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CROSSWORD**ACROSS**

1. Course picked up by detective (7,4)
7. Reported excessive speed (3)
9. Catch fish moving in a small stream (9)
10. Propose to offer accommodation (3,2)
11. After study order companion (7)
12. I record going in to hear a series of Greek tragedies (7)
13. Was dependent, having thin time (5)
15. Where to put plaster, having to use excessive stock? (9)
17. Poet is to drop round when president receives king (9)
19. Worry over issue (5)
20. Take away place I book in small coach (7)
- Poorly can't help out ñ indigestion remedy needed (7)
- Gallant gentleman one implicated in conspiracy (5)
25. Expression of opinion to the left of our correspondents (9)
27. Cure for effect of mild sunburn (3)
28. Horribly behind with tricky input, but finish off early (3,2,3,3)

DOWN

1. Devised series of games (3)
2. Star group performing outside port (5)
3. Date extract (4,3)
4. Deal, perhaps, going nowhere in particular (9)
5. Metal (not lead) obtained in this form? (5)
6. Very funny first line replaced by quiet poet (7)
7. Tricky situation, breaking a top tooth — might it have been chipped? (3,6)
8. Goldsmith's teacher was certainly not so frivolous (5-6)
11. Little consolation for Flora on this farm (4,7)
14. Died away from place in Yorkshire ñ in American cemetery (9)
16. Nobleness shown by architect's plan (9)
18. Singer formally dressed/ (7)
19. Arrange to marry one March — it's nonsense to intervene (7)
21. Farm animal sticking hard in ooze (5)
23. Get up taking care at first with leg (5)
26. Form of illumination provided guidance (3)

Across: 1. Spotted tick 7. Hie 9. Trickle 10. Put up 11. Consort 12. Trilogy 13. Learnt 15. Over

Down: 1. Set 2. Ofton 3. Take out 4. Drift wood 5. Lingot 6. Kipling 7. Hot potato 8. Empty headed 11. Cold comfort 14. Arlington 16. Elevation 18. Robeson 19. Berroth 21. Sheep 23. Chim 26. Led

in the bud 17. Coleridge 19. Brood 20. Minibus 22. Atticid 24. Oates 25. Editorial 27. Tan 28. Nip

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"Praise the Name of the Lord, the most High who hath created and completely formed His creatures and who determineth them to various ends and driveth them to attain the same."

SATHYA SAI BABA

SOLUTION

'Donors Are Moving For More Local Participation'

— IAN MCKENDRY

IAN MCKENDRY, Governance Adviser of the British government's Department for International Development (DFID), is leaving Nepal after completing a two-year tenure. He spoke to KESHAB POUDEL on various issues related to foreign assistance. Excerpts:

You are leaving Nepal soon, after two years here. It seems a good time to ask you about the main memories and lessons of your experience which you will take away with you.

Before mentioning work-related items, I would first say that I would recommend Nepal as a great place to live! I find the climate, ambiance and, most importantly, the people all very pleasant. So I have many positive memories.

And on the work front?

Well, two years is not long, but nevertheless I have learnt much in my time here. Perhaps the most important lessons concern the role of donors in Nepal.

Do you think the role of donors here is different from the role they play in other countries?

Before working here I worked for DFID on other countries in the region — India and Pakistan. One difference is about the way donors are seen. Because Nepal is a smaller country, because the ratio of aid to the total budget is higher here than elsewhere, and because it is still very centralised administratively on Kathmandu, donors can seem to make their presence felt more strongly here than in those two countries. Whether they are more important or have more influence is another matter. But there are many similarities too. And I think their role is starting to change in all countries, including Nepal.

What sort of changes do you see?

Donors - and this certainly includes DFID - are becoming more concerned about the overall environment in which they are working. The history of aid is mainly about the history of individual projects. A donor would feel they had done a good job if their country project portfolio was performing well. But increasingly they began to question the general policy environment. Just before I came here, I was working on the approach DFID should take to the Sharif government in Pakistan. Many donors had concerns about that government's overall record. Although we felt that many of our projects were doing a lot to help the poor, we were concerned about supporting a government which could have been significantly more pro-poor. And this was only the latest concern donors had had over many years of Pakistan's difficult history. The over-riding question was "Could lots of individual projects really help to transform a country when the government of that country has questionable pro-poor credentials?". Once I got here in April 1999, there seemed an opportunity for a fresh start in Nepal, since elections were

just about to be held.

Do you mean a fresh start in terms of pro-poor policies?

Yes. In 1999, the country could easily attribute its policy failures up to that time to the paralysis which years of minority government can cause. Once there was a new government with a clear majority there seemed a chance to follow a clearer pro-poor path. So in Nepal it seems especially relevant for donors not only to ask "how well are our projects doing", but also "how pro-poor is the policy framework in which our projects are operating?".

But should donors be deciding whether Nepal has pro-poor policies? This sounds like conditionality - the donors saying "Nepal must do this or else..."

I hope - and don't think - that donors are reinforcing or moving back to a conditionality approach. That approach implies a lack of ownership on behalf of the country concerned. Donors are moving to more local participation in the policies which are jointly agreed to be crucial - this is the basis of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper process which Nepal is now going through. But in my view the really important shift is the emphasis which is given to the policy level. This has been helped by the World Bank-funded book "Assessing Aid". This was based on a good deal of research, and said many interesting things about development. The best known conclusion was also perhaps the most obvious: that the better the policy environment the greater the effect of aid money. This led to the notion that if a country had a really poor policy environment then perhaps little or no financial aid should be given at all, and that instead there should be so-called "ideas aid" - that is, aid which aims first to improve the policy environment.

Doesn't that mean that if donors don't like a country's policies then the poor will suffer even more, by being denied aid projects?

I was talking about what the book - and others - have argued. In practice, donors - including DFID - do want to help the poor wherever they are. That is what donor agencies were set up to do, and there is much political pressure within donor countries to spend more on poverty eradication.

So aren't donors ignoring the lessons of the research in "Assessing Aid"?

Perhaps they are not taking a very harsh interpretation of the research findings, but they are not ignoring it either. For example, I see Nepal as having a sound starting point for poverty elimination: it is a democracy with a basically good constitution and many very encouraging policy statements. The main difficulty it has is in implementing policy. A policy is simply a course of action. I sometimes see Nepal as having set out its course but then not really wanting to follow it. But no matter what their judgment about the policy environment, donors are unlikely to stop financial aid to Nepal, because there are too many

poor people here. But they should also not forget about the importance of "ideas aid", about helping to get the policy framework right. I think we all - donors, HMGN and others - need to work harder on this aspect. This is the main lesson I take from my time here.

You have ruled out conditionality as a way of helping to get pro-poor policies in place - so if a country doesn't like the donors' "ideas" surely donors can't do much?

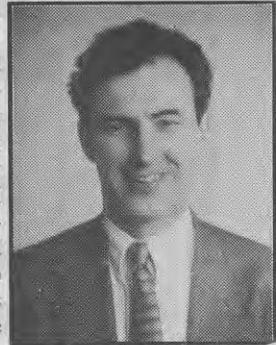
Well you have brought up a really important point: the "ideas" of "ideas aid" shouldn't be donor ideas! Nepal has probably had too many foreign donors trying to tell it what to do. The ideas should be home-grown. And the role of donors in Nepal should be to help nurture those locally-owned ideas. The ideas themselves must not only start with Nepalis but should preferably be developed by Nepalis. In Nepal I have seen the great difference between an idea which a Nepali has had and an idea which a donor has had. In the first case you can see all the enthusiasm which comes with the idea. In the second case there is much less enthusiasm, since there is always a feeling that the idea is being forced on the country.

Surely a donor will not support ideas it disagrees with?

No, they won't. Donors of course will have their own view of what will help the poor and what will not. And it is reasonable for them to hold locally held ideas against that view. For example, if a Nepali came up with an idea which reduced the level of democracy or the poor's involvement in democracy in Nepal, DFID could not support it. But as long as an idea meets the basic underlying concerns of donors then they should be seriously considered. That is very different from a donor itself working out how its basic concerns can be implemented and developed into a project. We have started to back 100% Nepali-owned ideas through funding the "Enabling State Programme". This is very much based on helping to develop Nepali ideas about governance.

Do you think other donors will take this new approach?

I'm not sure I would say it is really all that new. It is more about turning a lot of existing donor rhetoric about "ownership" into reality. Donors have too often in the past interpreted ownership as meaning convincing Nepalis that donor ideas are right. In my view more local ownership means fewer donor prescriptions. And I do think donors are moving in that direction. ■

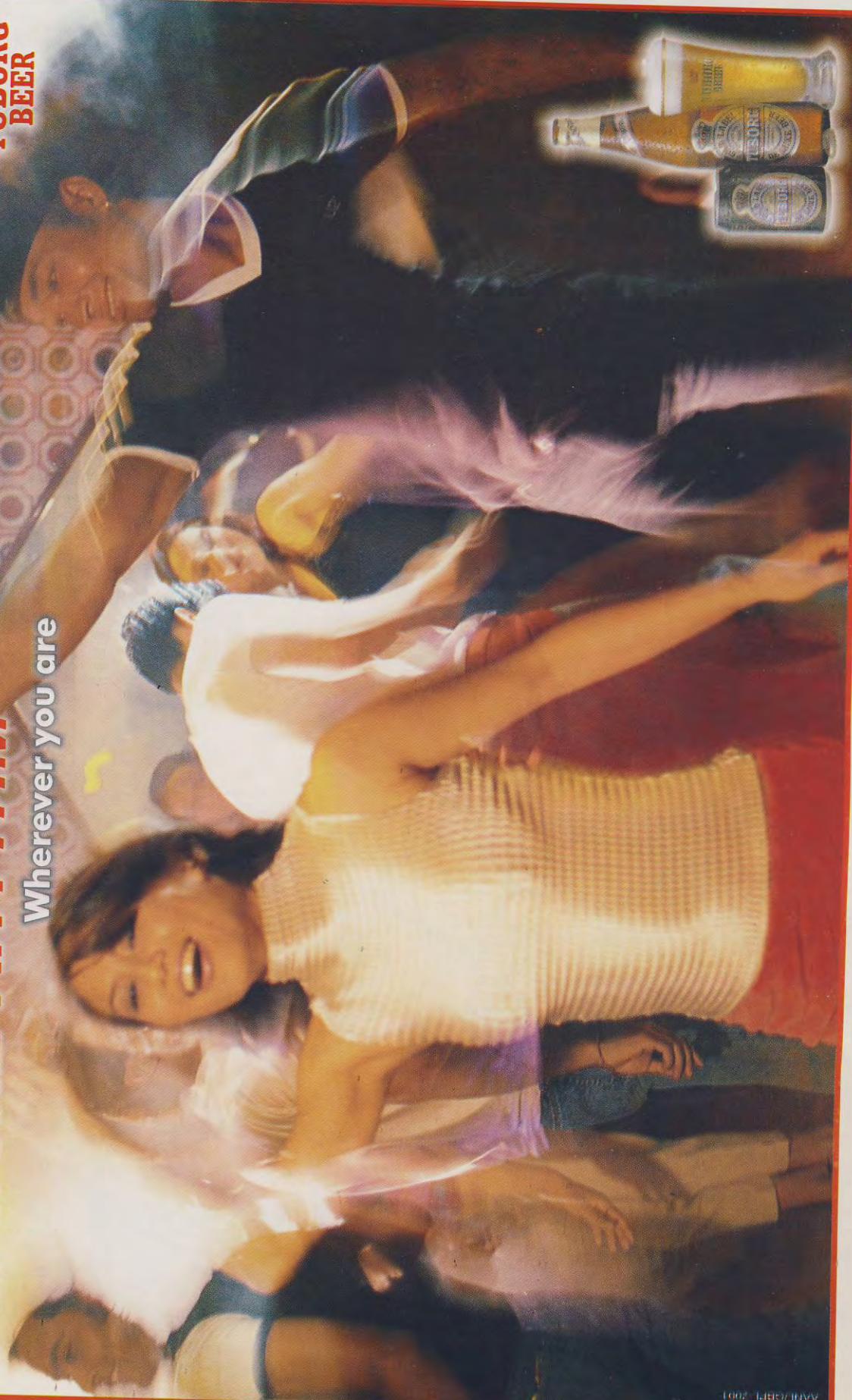


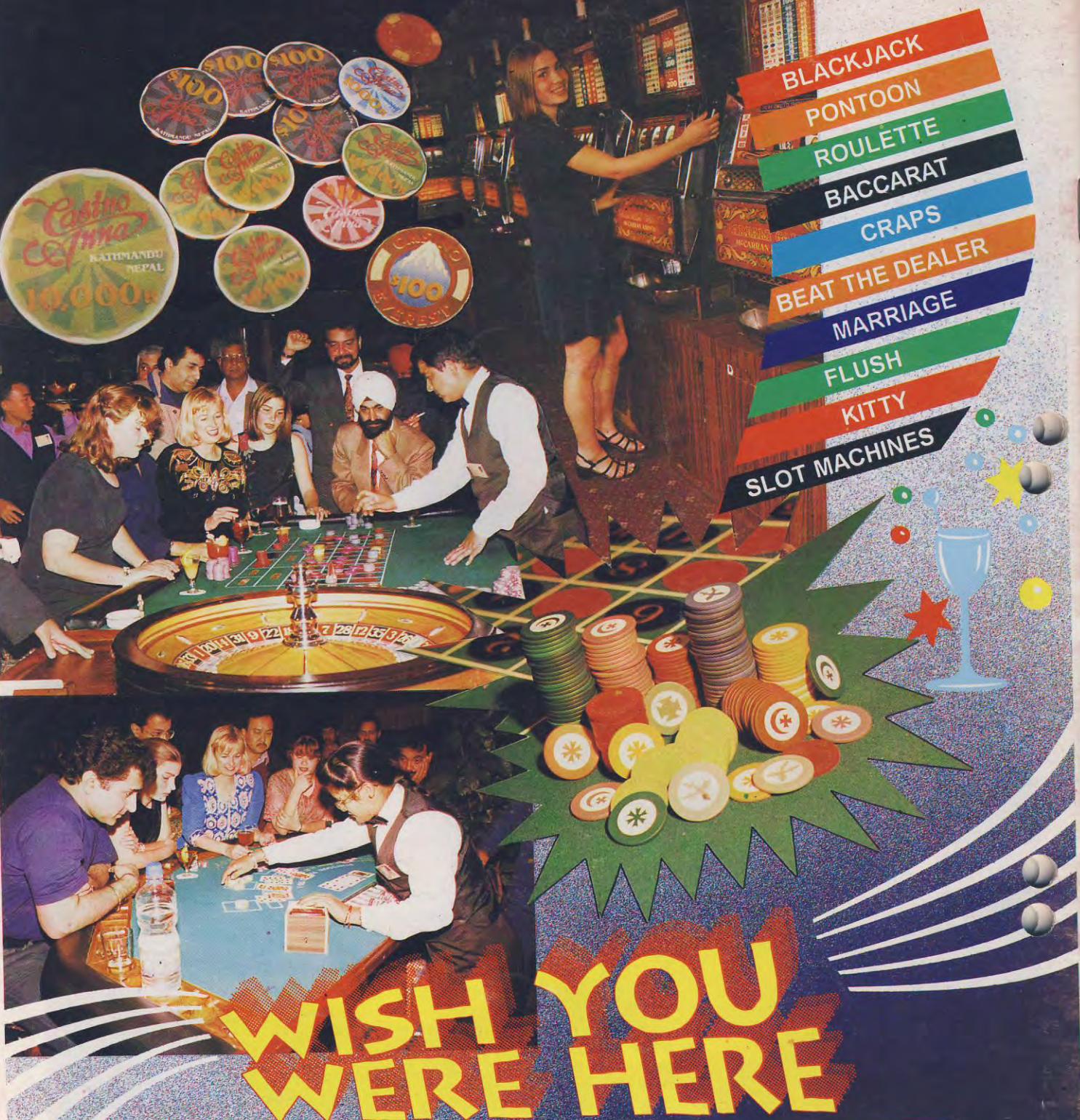

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