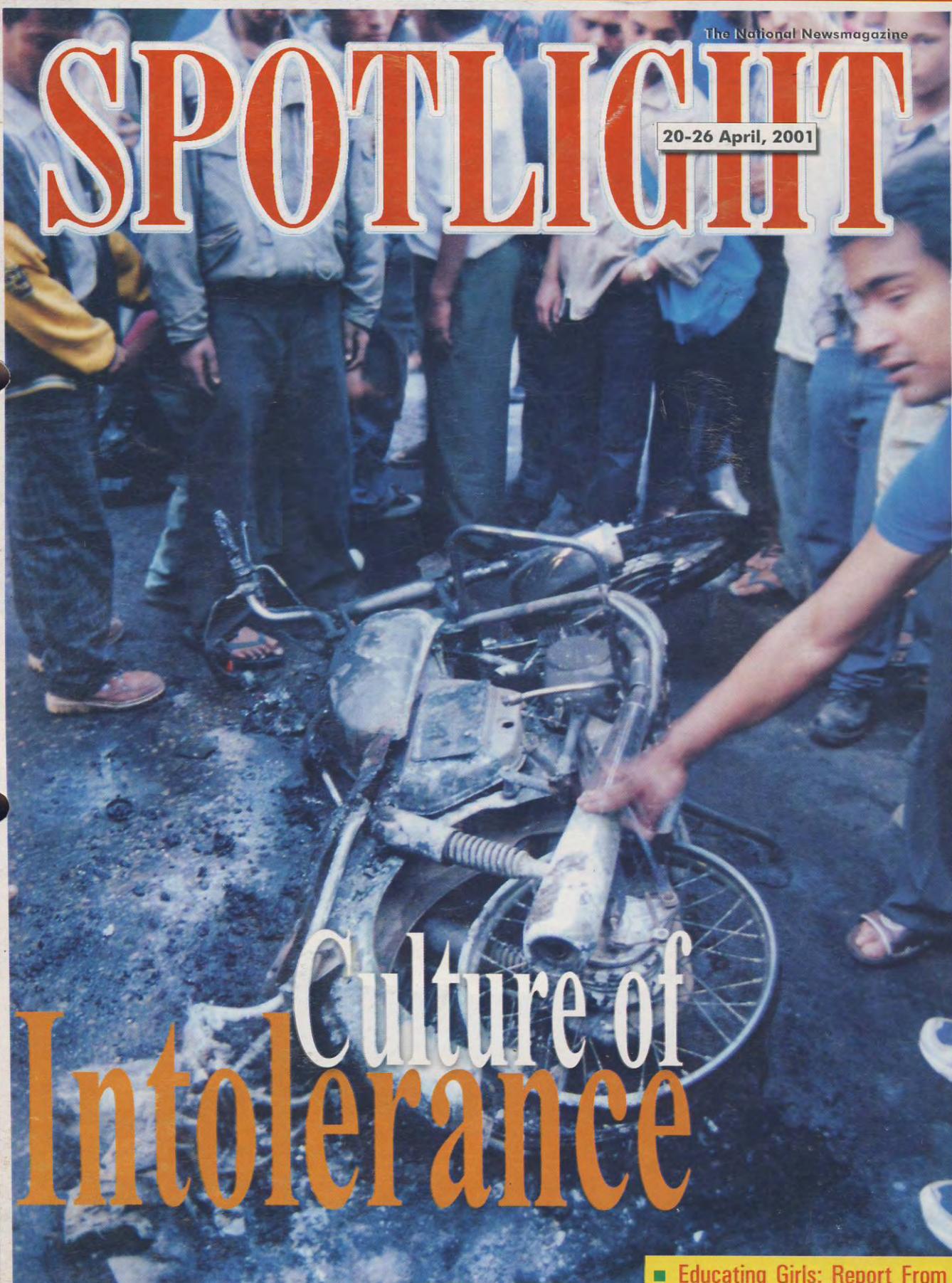


The National Newsmagazine

# SPOTLIGHT

20-26 April, 2001



## Culture of Intolerance

Special Report: UML on a Suicidal Path

- Educating Girls: Report From Dharan
- Nepali Politics: External Dynamics
- Nepal Business Expo

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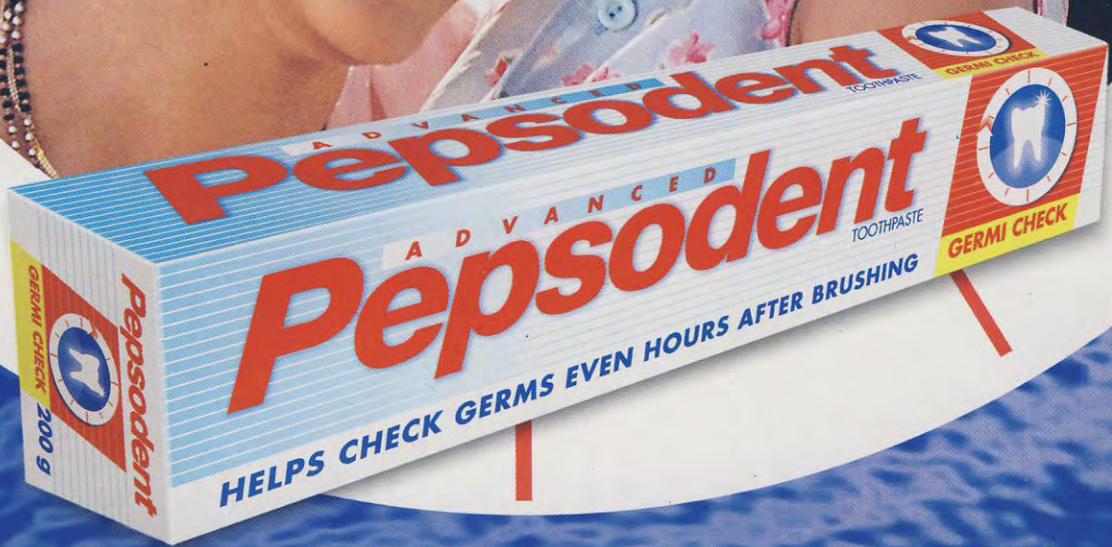
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**COVER STORY : CONFLICT OF CULTURAL INTEREST**  
The past decade of Nepal's rough journey to democracy has seen every kind of political alliance and action, opportunistic, unholy and unnatural.

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UML's street protests erode its credibility as an alternative democratic party.

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RPP leader Rabindra Nath Sharma  
Comments on the current political  
developments.

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# SPOTLIGHT

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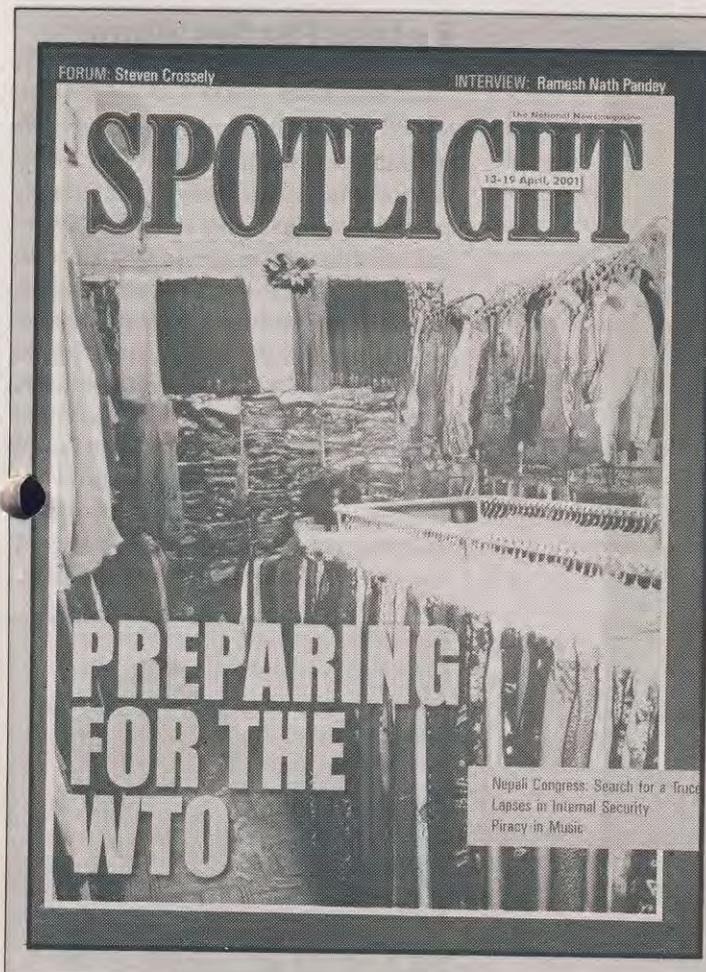
## EDITOR'S NOTE

What an irony of fate? Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala cannot rule. Even an absolute majority in parliament always fails to work for him. The poor people must be wondering why a political party commanding an absolute majority cannot deliver anything. In the past one year after assuming office for the third time, Girija Prasad Koirala announced many packages for the poor people, but his words have never turned into reality for the poor people who have to face all kinds of hardship. The main opposition party, too, do not have anything to boast about its performance. It might be appropriate to write something about the recent violent agitation by power-hungry leaders of opposition party. Whether it is corrupt Girija Prasad Koirala or main opposition party leader Madhav Kumar Nepal, no one seems to be worried about the problems faced by the 20 million poor Nepalese people. As the suffering of the Nepalese people is increasing by the day, Nepali Congress politicians, who prize self-interest more than national wellbeing, refuse to see how things stand. As far as the Nepalese people are concerned, it makes no difference who the prime minister or the main opposition party is, because all of them are busy grabbing the nation's property for their benefit. When the main opposition party is asking for his resignation for his alleged involvement in corruption, Girija Prasad Koirala, if he has any wisdom, would quit without much ado.

The politics of violent agitation provides unequivocal proof that Nepalese politicians are still far from acquiring maturity. Despite the fact that violent agitation is always counterproductive, why do they keep organizing bandhs and other disruptive activities? In countries like ours, where politicians in power pay no heed to the national loss resulting from such agitation, it need not be emphasized that violent demonstrations never manage to put pressure on the government. Moreover, those who call such violent activities must understand that destroying public property, forcing shops to close or keeping transport off the streets will not help fulfil their interest. As such, let's hope, our politicians, if they have any love for their country, will stop organizing bandhs.



**Madhav Kumar Rimal**  
Chief Editor & Publisher



## WTO Woes

Your cover story "Preparing For The WTO" (SPOTLIGHT, April 13) provided interesting information on the country's preparations to join the global trading body. It seems the government, not only our private sector, is ill prepared for WTO membership. Many questions are still left unanswered, especially those regarding the consequences of becoming a member of the global trading regime. The government should issue a white paper specifying the pros and cons of WTO membership.

**Sudhir Lamsal**  
Chhetrapati

turbed by his desire to cling to power at any cost. At this point in history, Koirala would do well by stepping down and giving a way out to the country's politics that is stranded at a critical juncture.

**Binaya Karki**  
Hattisar

## End The Row

Although ANFA officials have reached a truce that allowed Nepalese team to take part in the World Cup qualifying tourney in Iraq, there is a concern that this will not last long ("Brief Respite", SPOTLIGHT April 6). In case the row erupts again, Nepalese football will have to pay an enormous cost. We cannot afford to let a few people sink the whole sport. The higher authorities must intervene and end this difference once and for all.

**Janak Rana**  
Satdobato

## Poignant Story

Your story-cum-interview "For A Fistful of Rupees" (SPOTLIGHT, March 9) was a heart-touching one. It represented the situation of thousands of girls and the plight of family members. NGOs like Maiti Nepal are doing a good job and should be appreciated. However, these problems will continue until more and more people become educated in the true sense. Awareness programmes, seminars, interactions and workshops alone cannot be expected to stop this problem. "Yoshree", the man mentioned in the article, is energetic as well as educated and went to search for his sister. But how many people can do that? The government has to take some strong action to stop this brutal trade and to help the anguished families.

**Subhash Lohani**  
Kalopul

## Survival Tactics

The authorities should be clear to Nepal's business community the measures they need to adopt to survive in the post-WTO days ("Preparing For The WTO", SPOTLIGHT, April 13). As barriers will have to come down, the less competitive industries of developing countries like Nepal stand to lose in international trade. All the provisions that the WTO has for promoting the small industries should be explained to the private sector well in advance.

**Khagendra Gurung**  
Thamel

## No Alternative

Nepal seems to have no alternative to joining the WTO ("Preparing For The WTO", SPOTLIGHT, April 13). Although there are no benefits for

small countries like Nepal from joining the world trade body, we cannot remain isolated. The WTO has come as a rude shock to the smaller countries. There has to be a global movement to force the developed and industrialized countries to consider the grievances of the poor countries.

**Krishna KC**  
Sinamangal

## What About Garments, Carpets..?

Export-oriented industries like carpets and garments are already feeling the heat from preparations under way to join the WTO ("Preparing For The WTO", SPOTLIGHT, April 13). As they are currently dependent on quotas, the enforcement of WTO rules will mean they will lose their market, as there is no

guarantee that current importers will continue to buy after duty-free access is ensured by the WTO provisions. In view of these stark facts, the government would do well to research the probable impact of the WTO provisions on its exports and chart ways to lessen their effects and even exploit them for our own good.

**Kamal Shrestha**  
Dhobighat

## Still Belligerent

Apropos your cover story "Koirala Under Attack" (SPOTLIGHT, April 6), it is astonishing to find how much our prime minister can bear when it comes to digesting the opposition's voices. He is surrounded by hostile forces but refuses to bow down. While one can marvel at his confidence, one is also per-

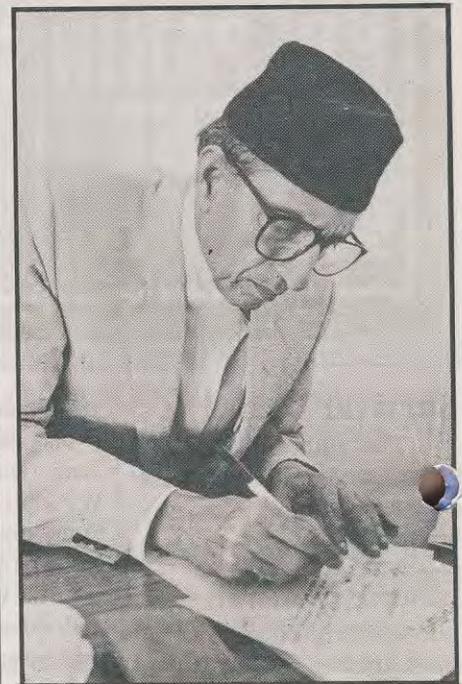
## Royal Message On The New Year



In a message to the nation on New Year 2058 B.S. Saturday, King Birendra has said as peace with security is essential for development and for society to progress, development becomes necessary. His Majesty stressed that the primary responsibility of the state is to function within the framework of a just and equitable polity, safeguarding the lives, property and freedom of its citizens. It has now become imperative to overcome the prevailing economic anomalies and social aberrations through good governance and political stability and provide the people a credible basis for optimism towards a prosperous and secure future, the King said. Analysts say the royal message carries a significant meaning as it comes amid growing violence and attacks upon security personnel by Maoist rebels in different parts of the country.

## Leftist Parties Slam 'External Interference'

Six left parties, including the main opposition Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist), have strongly protested against what they call "external interference" in the domestic affairs of Nepal. In a statement issued Saturday, they alleged that some national and international forces were out to protest the "corrupt" government of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala crossing the limits of diplomatic decorum. Stating that the whole country was united to throw Koirala government out, the left parties said they strongly objected to any wrong attitude toward the Nepali people's united



PM Koirala

## PAK Diplomat Leaves Nepal

The first secretary at the Pakistan Embassy, Mohammed Arshad Cheema, left here for Pakistan Friday after the Nepalese government ordered his expulsion in connection with the seizure of 16 kg of RDX from the ground floor of the house he was residing in. Police, who took Cheema into custody Thursday, did not provide further details.

"Since it is incompatible with his diplomatic duties and inconsistent with the Vienna convention on diplomatic re-

lations, the government has decided that Mr. Cheema should leave the country within 24 hours," a Foreign Ministry spokesman said Friday. The government of Pakistan has assured that following the investigation, action will be taken against Cheema, if found guilty, the ministry said.

Cheema is the second official at the Pakistan Embassy to be expelled from Nepal within a year. A junior embassy official was expelled from Nepal last year in connection with a racket of fake Indian currency. *Compiled from reports April 15.*

and lawful protests. The left parties' statement came in response to statements by the European Community, and the US and Norwegian governments that they would not support any violent act to overthrow a legitimate government elected by the people of Nepal. *Compiled from reports.*

## EU, US Express Concern

The European Union (EU) has expressed its profound concern at the seri-

ous escalation of violence and loss of life in the context of the Maoist insurgency in Nepal and has extended its condolences to the families of the bereaved. Condemning recent attacks upon police posts by Maoist rebels in Nepal, the EU said it supported the democratic government and process of democracy enshrined in the constitution of Nepal. It has urged all parties to exercise full respect for human rights in the search for a solution to the Maoist issue, to strengthen democracy and rule of law in Nepal. In its significant message, the EU stressed its belief that citizens have a legitimate right to expect to live in safety, and governments have a legitimate right to provide for the security and well-being for the people. The EU urges all parties to redouble their efforts to find a negotiated and peaceful solution to the current conflict, to promote stable and continuing development in Nepal. The US and Norway associate themselves with this statement, a press release issues by the EU said. *Compiled from reports Apr. 13.*

## UML Criticizes US Ambassador's Remarks

The main opposition Unified Marxist-Leninist has protested against media



Jhala Nath Khanal

reports referring to comments made by the US ambassador to Nepal, Ralph Frank. In a statement, chief of the party's foreign affairs department, Jhala Nath Khanal, said Saturday that the Nepalese people always want to resolve their problems themselves and always reject any foreign interference, pro-UML Chhalphal weekly reported Sunday. He, however, did not mention what were his party's specific objections. Meanwhile, Kantipur daily quoted UML lawmaker and chairman of the Public Accounts Committee of parliament, Subash Nemwang, as saying that it was unfortunate on part of Nepal to see foreign diplomats commenting on the country's law-and-order situation and other matters. *Compiled from reports Apr. 16.*

## New Strategy To Fight Poverty

Nepal has prepared a country report outlining its strategy to fight pervasive poverty in the country. The report, to be presented at the third international conference on Least Developed Countries, has stressed on the need to increase agricultural production by at least 4 to 5 percent annually. Similarly, the action plan made public here at a function by member of National Planning Commission Dr. Shanker Sharma Friday, the government has also given emphasis on the growth of non-agriculture sector and continue financial sector reform program. The proposed strategy also aims at encouraging export-oriented and import-substituting industries with emphasis on their backward and for-



Dr. Shanker Sharma

ward linkages. *Compiled from reports April 15.*

## Inter-Cultural Film Society

Our aim is to bring diverse feature films from different cultures around the globe to our audience for the "promotion of inter-cultural understanding". The richness of cultures is one of the beauties of our world which is reflected in our logo that symbolises unity in diversity.

Every month a film will be shown at the Russian Cultural Center in Kamal Pokhari on a screen 4x6m. The films are mainly from southern countries, spoken in their original language with English subtitles.

### "The Cup"

A film by Khyentse Norbu, Bhutan/India, 1999

**SUNDAY 22 April 5:00 pm**

A delightful comedy about the lighter side of life in a Tibetan Buddhist monastery.

### "Children of Heaven"

A film by Majid Majidi, Iran, 1998

**SUNDAY 20 May 5:00 pm**

When Ali loses his sister Zahra's school shoes the pair plan to share his shoes and keep it a secret from their parents! Charming!

### "The Knowledge of Healing"

A film by Franz Reichle, Switzerland, 1996

**SUNDAY 17 June 5:00 pm**

A documentary about the secret of Tibetan medicine and how it found its way to Switzerland, challenging Western medicine.

### "Mukundo"

A film by Tsering Rita Sherpa, Nepal, 1999

**SUNDAY 22 JULY 5:00 pm**

The story of a couple involved with a Jhankrini who is deeply ambivalent about her shamanic role.

### "West Beirut"

A film by Ziad Doueiri, Lebanon, 1998

**SUNDAY 19 August 5:00 pm**

A cheerful and touching story of three beaming youths in the city of Beirut and their love for their Super 8 Film camera.

The Inter-Cultural Film Society is a registered non-profit NGO. This programme is sponsored by "Helvetas Nepal" as part of their interest in promoting the positive side of national cultures and to encourage a better understanding and affinity among the people of the world. Helvetas is committed to striving for a fairer world and for greater respect between nations.

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- Pay Rs. 600 which allows you to see 12 films from March 2001 up to February 2002.



**Their Majesties accepting royal salute at Royal Nepalese Army headquarter**

**KING BIRENDRA HAS PROMULGATED THREE ORDINANCES** submitted by the government. According to the cabinet secretariat, the King has, with the advice and consent of the Council of Ministers and in accordance with the country's constitution, promulgated the "Armed Police Ordinance 2057," "Local Administration (fourth amendment) Ordinance 2057," and "Ordinance designed to amend some Nepal Acts concerning health 2057" as parliament is in recess. The government had sent these ordinances with some amendment to King Birendra for approval after the recent 19th session of parliament could not ratify them because of continued disruption by the opposition parties.

**THE CENTRAL WORKING COMMITTEE OF THE RULING Nepali Congress** has asked the government to implement the "integrated development and security program" proposed by it. At the end of the extended meeting Thursday, the ruling party called upon all the political parties in the country to unite to safeguard democracy by rising above petty partisan lines. The party also asked the government to maintain law and order in the country by using all the security measures available.

**SAARC EDUCATION MINISTERS HAVE AGREED TO** focus on action-oriented programs and promote regional cooperation to tackle problems of illiteracy in South Asia. The meeting adopted a joint statement stressing its commitment to attain the goals of providing compulsory and quality primary education to all the children by 2015 as proposed during the Dakar conference last year.

**THE SECURITY EXCHANGE BOARD HAS ENFORCED** the Security Registration and Issue Approval Guidelines, 2001 with effect from Monday. The guidelines aims at making the process of registration and issuance of securities simple, transparent and more systematic, officials said. The guidelines also lays down the conditions that corporate institutions would require to meet prior to making stock issue and the various conditions it has to fulfill once it makes a public issue. ■

## NEPAL BUSINESS EXPO

# A Good Beginning

The first-ever expo gives an opportunity for district chambers to showcase their products

Amid the glamour and attractions at the Nepal Business Expo 2001, Pramod Gauli, member of Sankhuwasabha Chamber of Commerce and Industry, was busy last week explaining curious visitors about his products including hand-made paper. "I am quite happy here for the exposure this exposition has given to me," said Gauli. "I wish such an expo would have been organized least a decade ago."

Business exposition are not new in Nepal. With House of Rajkarnicar launching Himalayan Expo 11 years back, a number of business and trade exhibitions have become a regular event in the capital. The latest entrant in the show is none other than the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI). The apex private body, together with its district chambers, organized the wee-long expo for the first time that concluded



**People at the Expo : Having a look**

Sunday.

"We organized this event to provide an opportunity for our members to showcase their products and services and benefit customers," said Binod Bahadur Shrestha, Vice President of FNCCI and coordinator of the event. "We have had very encouraging response from the visitors." Nearly 150,000 visitors visited the expo that had more than 200 stalls had separate pavilions for agricultural products and engineering goods and services. Now the challenge for the FNCCI is to give continuity to its efforts. ■

**“T**he issue of changing the leadership should not be made a priority now. I am confident that Girijababu will give a way out that is acceptable to all at the proper time.”  
*Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, former prime minister, in Bimarsha.*

\* \* \*

**“O**ur program will be a peaceful one.”

*Madhav Kumar Nepal, leader of the main opposition and general secretary of the Unified Marxist Leninist, speaking at a public program about his party's campaign to oust the prime minister by denying him the entry to Singh Durbar.*

\* \* \*

**“T**he prime minister will definitely enter Singh Durbar.”

*Sushil Koirala, central member of the Nepali Congress, speaking at a program at the Reporters Club.*

\* \* \*

**“I** will take rest only when the contry gets rid of political crises.”

*Prime Minister Koirala in Gorkhapatra.*



**“S**top the bloodshed. I am willing to mediate.”

*Dr. Dilli Raman Regmi, senior politician, calling on the Maoist rebels and the government to talk, speaking at a public program.*

\* \* \*

**“T**here are big irregularities in the distribution of assistance funds for political victims. In the name of political victims, even thieves have been given the assistance. By accepting the assistance I cannot remain witness to such irregularities.”

*Khadga Prasad Oli, standing committee member of UML, who recently announced he was giving the assistance he received to a social charity, in Budhabar.*

\* \* \*

**“T**here is no talk of getting married any time soon. I can only say that he is my good friend.”

*Manisha Koirala, Bollywood actress and grand-daughter of NC leader B.P. Koirala, when asked if the rumors that she was in love with the Australian Ambassador to Nepal were true and if she was considering marrying him, in Ghatana Ra Bichar.*

\* \* \*



Budhabar

## Bhattacharai's Politics

The moods and musings of former prime minister and Congress leader Krishna Prasad Bhattacharai undergo drastic change in almost no time. This was the reason why everybody turned suspicious when Bhattacharai decided to organize a New Year's reception at his Bhainsepati residence. Just a few weeks ago, Bhattacharai was in the news for demanding Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's resignation in the presence of major opposition leaders at the same venue. However, Bhattacharai took a different approach at the New Year's party. He backed Koirala's refusal to step down, describing the opposition's demand as irrational. It is clear that Nepalese politics defies reason. With Bhattacharai, the intensity of the defiance gets stronger and stronger.

## Gachchedar's Theory

Former minister and powerful Nepali Congress rebel Bijaya Kumar Gachchedar re-

vealed that part-time politicians are responsible for creating havoc in Congress politics. Addressing last week's Congress parliamentary party meeting, Gachchedar cited dozens of such politicians who were giving the Congress a bad name. Pointing a finger at Dr. Ram Baran Yadav, Gachchedar went to the extent of questioning his commitment to politics. If Gachchedar's conclusions are true, what would be the future the dozens of Ph.D.s and professionals that are making much more than a living by their association with the governing party?

## Study Abroad

It seems that some student unions in the country are working as promoters of schools in foreign countries. This was demonstrated when different outfits of left students declared their program to shut down private schools for a month. Coincidentally, the announcement came at a time when the admissions process at foreign schools begins. Because of the uncertainty posed by the call of the students group, many parents have already started looking for schools in India. In the name of the poor children of Nepal, are the student leaders actually working as promoters of foreign educational institutions?

## Comradely Doublespeak

Like all communist leaders, CPN-UML leader K.P. Sharma Oli does not fail to show his dual personality. Democratic principles are

worthy of adherence as long as they suit his interest. Whenever Oli meets a western diplomat or scholar, the deputy leader of the CPN-UML expounds on the ideals and principles of democracy and his party's commitment to them. Strangely, when he addresses his fellow communists, Oli sounds sound every bit of a hard-line comrade. His real obstructionist character was exposed when he declared he



Gachchedar : Loyal or disloyal ?

would lead a blockade of all entry points to Singha Durbar in the UML's bid to force Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala out of office.

## Endurance Test

In Nepal, few partnerships last more than a year. Madan Krishna Shrestha and Haribansha Acharya have remained an enduring excep-

tion to that rule by having joined hands in the humorous business for more than 15 years. However, it appears that the duo have come to the end of their joint action. It is rumoured that the two are in the process of divvying up their enterprise. If the rumor is true, it would be another confirmation that no partnership is eternally enduring.



Acharya : Divided we stand

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# KOIRALA'S ADDRESS Without Political Agenda

Prime Minister Koirala's address to the nation lacks political commitments

By KESHAB POUDEL

In his 15 minute long message to the nation, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala spared much of his time to urge the people and political workers to follow democratic norms.

At a time when Koirala is facing violent demonstrations from the main opposition party CPN-UML, he should have challenged them to face fresh elections.

Everyone knows that it is impossible for Koirala to dissolve the house at this juncture, but he could have challenged the opposition by offering elections as an alternative to end the political stalemate.

"What is the use of listening to the rhetoric of Prime Minister Koirala. Had he spoken about the elections, he would have gained more sympathy from the people," said a political analyst.

Prime Minister Koirala's intention to avoid the word "election" is understandable as he might have been advised by his speechwriter not to weaken the internal dynamics in the party.

Nobody has found anything appealing in his speech. Amid continual violent agitation and unconstitutional methods adopted by the opposition, seeking the mandate from the people would have been the only option for any democratic government.

In any democracy, it is the people who can decide who has the mandate to govern. "If the prime minister had challenged the opposition to face the elections, his stature would have risen. Unfortunately, Prime Minister Koirala has lost a big opportunity to threaten the main opposition," said a political analyst.

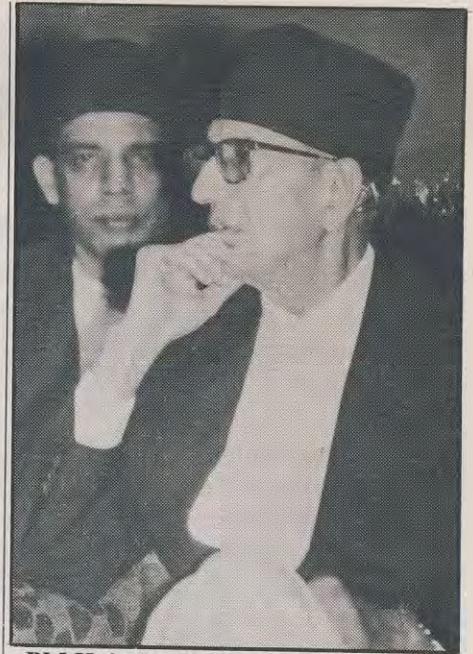
The prime minister's statement was not inspiring as it did not mention any clear-cut political terms to correct the

distortions in the political process. In his last leg of political career, Koirala could have taken a bold decision.

"Koirala's statement has some political meaning as he has called the Maoist to the table. I don't think Maoist will respond to him on just that ground," said RPP leader Rabindra Nath Sharma.

The main opposition party termed the prime minister's plea as a hoax. "We have not seen any words that is inspiring to the people," said Bharat Mohan Adhikary. "A prime minister tainted with corruption charges should have no option other than to quit."

Although Prime Minister Koirala also urged Maoist leaders to start the dialogue and give up their weapons, he did not



PM Koirala : Failing to inspire

make any comment on how that would be possible.

"Had the prime minister given some indication, it would have been beneficial to ending the violent Maoist insurgency in the country," said Sharma. ■

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## UML POLITICS

# Suicidal Move

The CPN-UML's street protests erode its credibility as an alternative democratic party

By KESHAB POUDEL

The street at Putali Sadak was filled with pieces of broken stones and the air was filled with the toxic effect of tear gas on Monday (April 16). Communist workers broke off sidewalk railings and pulled out drain covers to block the streets. The area turned into a battlefield when police used force to disperse the agitators who were trying to block Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala from entering his office in Singh Durbar.

It was not only the party faithful

who were out on the streets. Liberal UML leaders like Madhav Kumar Nepal, K.P. Sharma Oli, Jhal Nath Khanal, Bharat Mohan Adhikary and other were on hand to support the agitators.

The UML leaders, along with leaders of other radical communist parties, led a wave of violence that saw windows smashed, tires and government vehicles set on fire, stones pelted against police in what was billed as "peaceful" demonstrations.

The event proved that the CPN-UML is still suffering from the hangover of communist militancy that much of the world discarded over a decade ago. Party leaders seemed happy to ruin themselves, like they did in 1993, when the streets of Kathmandu were turned into a battlefield for a month.

If the ongoing political agitation is any indication, it shows that the CPN-UML seems to be following a more radical path and encouraging unconstitutional practices. Despite repeated claims of the opposition that they would organize peaceful protests, violence almost instantly crept in.

But the organizers of the protests remained defiant. "The government is responsible for all violence in the street. If our workers were not provoked by the police,

they would not have been forced to damage public property," said Lilamani Pohkhrel, leader of the radical United People's Forum.

For the small left outfits, the protests came as a boon, since they received a higher level of publicity the CPN-UML's involvement inevitably brought.

In the end, it is the UML which has emerged badly bruised. "The violent agitation in support of unconstitutional demands has done more damage to the UML's credibility than other left forces," said a political analyst. "The CPN-UML cannot continue as a moderate communist party as it is increasingly veering towards radicalism," the analyst said. "If this agitation is the peaceful protest the UML promised, one wonders what methods the party would use if it had called for violent protests."

CPN-UML's hobnobbing with radical communist forces is not a new development, as the top leaders in the party have been competing with one another to acquire a militant image to establish themselves within the party. As a closed organization, no one can see the power struggle that goes on in the CPN-UML.

In their quest to strengthen their leadership positions, general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal and deputy leader K.P. Sharma Oli are the main competitors in the race to claim the radical mantle.

A few weeks back, Nepal even indicated that his party would be ready to go underground to launch a violent struggle. Going one step ahead, Oli declared that party workers were capable of overthrowing the present system from the street.

As the CPN-UML is tilting in a militant direction, it has been suffering in terms of its credibility as a liberal alternative democratic party which they have painstakingly built in the last ten years.

Although street agitations are nothing new in Nepal, the way communist leaders are encouraging violence is strange. Ever since the restoration of democracy in 1990, when demonstrators overthrew an autocratic political



**UML leaders:** Are they faithful to democracy?

system through street agitations, all political parties have resorted to similar methods.

The Nepali Congress and communist parties, in effect, encouraged their workers to break the law to overthrow the partyless Panchayat system.

In an open and liberal polity, there is no justification for continuing with violent street demonstrations. Whether they are thrown by supporters of Girija Prasad Koirala or Madhav Kumar Nepal, stones damage public property and disrupt peace.

Some of the western friends of the CPN-UML have already expressed displeasure over the party's unconstitutional methods to overthrow the government, but CPN-UML leaders seem to be ignoring them.

"The CPN-UML is damaging itself and sending the message to the world that it does not have any democratic commitment," said a political analyst. "What has compelled it to adopt violent means."

The UML's agitation has not received internal or external support. For the police force, it seems that they have to fight a lone battle with the communists in the urban and rural areas.

The difference for them is that they have to face Maoists' bullets in the rural areas and the sharp stones of the CPN-UML in the urban streets. For the common people, the CPN-UML's agitation has brought more inconvenience.

"The CPN-UML has already been trapped in a political game and it is very difficult for them to exit from it," said a political analyst.

Except for some die-hard communist followers, no one is justifying the UML's decision. "The UML is not following parliamentary norms and values. It is very unwise on the part of the CPN-UML to destroy public property worth of million of rupees," said Hridayesh Tripathi, leader of Nepal Sadbhavana Party. "Sooner the UML calls off their violent agitation, better for their future."

Street agitations have already crippled Nepal's economy as the major

political parties regularly call violent street demonstration to express their dissent.

The CPN-UML and other nine left parties called violent street demonstration hundreds of time in the past as if it is a way to pressure the government.

This time, too, they are leading an agitation with a group of extreme left, including United People Forum, Unity Center, Nepal Communist Party Masal and Worker and Peasant Party.

CPN-UML, which holds 69 seats in the House of Representatives, is hobnobbing with small extreme left outfit which do not have more than half a dozens of representatives in the legislature

"Street demonstration is also a part of democratic exercise. As long as Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala continues in power, we will continue street demonstrations," UML leaders say.

Interestingly, it is the main opposition CPN-UML which emerges as a main opposition party in the last three elections. The party even formed minority government and joined different government as a coalition partner.

Although the activities of the CPN-UML seems to be a suicidal game, the leadership does not seem to be bothered about it. "The CPN-UML is in a suicidal phase and does not want to listen to rational arguments," said a political analyst.

No body understand the rational behind the agitation to the CPN-UML



UML street agitation : Trying violent means

"When ruling party does not listen our voice, CPN-UML is compelled to go to the street to pressure the government. There is a solution of the agitation but it must come from the ruling party which is running the government," said professor Harsha Narayan Dhaubadel, a pro-UML intellectual.

Unlike in the ruling Nepali Congress where everything is flared up in politics as soon as it starts. The situation is different within the UML where the leadership challenges are happening in covert manner.

The latest story doing the rounds is that the UML, which had openly declared its half-hearted commitment to the democratic constitution when it was promulgated (they extended only critical support with strong reservations), now seems to have withdrawn the remaining part of its support — whatever it meant and implied.

## FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

## Frankenstein Reaction?

As it seeks to turn the heat on the government, the agitating UML-led communist opposition gets caught on the wrong foot over American ambassador's comments

By KESHAB POUDEL

## SCENE 1:

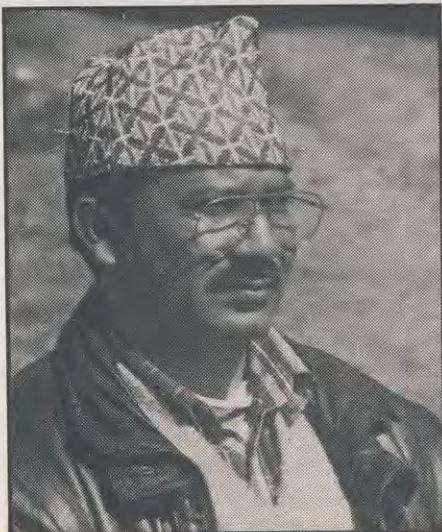
Date: January 30, 2001

Venue: Kathmandu

In his statement at a USAID function, American ambassador Ralph Frank makes a vague reference to the problem of corruption in Nepal and emphasises the need for good governance.

Newspapers including the country's "number one" daily "report" him the following day as directly castigating the government. The opposition parties bank on the ambassador's statement to lambast the government, without even bothering to check if the ambassador had been correctly quoted. The main opposition leader and the general secretary of the Nepal Communist Party (UML), Madhav Kumar Nepal, takes the lead in launching a tirade against Prime Minister, Girija Prasad Koirala.

Ambassador Frank also reiterates the American government's support for "a



Nepal : Double speak

democratically elected government and the non-violent opposition." The opposition including the main opposition leader is not bothered by this statement. They keep quiet.

None of the above remarks by the envoy of the world's only super power is seen as "interference" in Nepal's internal matters.

## SCENE 2:

Date: April 12, 2001

Venue: Kathmandu

In a rejoinder to reports about him in a pro-UML vernacular weekly, American



Ambassador Frank : Candid

ambassador Ralph Frank says, "under no circumstances does the United States support or advocate the overthrow of an elected government through violence or non-constitutional methods. Ultimately, of course, the problems facing Nepal need to be resolved by Nepalis."

The remarks create a big uproar in the opposition circle. The communist opposi-

tion gets angry. They denounce the Frank remarks. Again, the main opposition UML takes the lead. Politburo member and Foreign Relations Department chief, Jhalnath Khanal, issues a formal statement. He accuses the American ambassador of interfering in Nepal's internal affairs.

## TIMING:

When ambassador Frank made his first statement, the UML-led communist opposition was preparing to start agitation against the Koirala government. Their main issue: rising corruption. To the communist opposition, "capitalist and imperialist" American envoy's (non)statement came in handy.

Frank's second statement came just before the joint street agitation of the UML and more radical leftist outfits. The communist opposition stopped short of admitting that they wanted to overthrow the democratically elected government through non-constitutional means.

But as they vowed to depose Koirala's majority government on the strength of a hammer-and-sickle flag-waving mob, a mere restating of his government's policy by the American ambassador became anathema to them.

Three months ago, ambassador Frank was a hero. Today, he is a villain. That's how the communist opposition sees him. The issue is not: if the American ambassador was right or wrong in making such statements.

The issue is: if the communist opposition has acted and reacted rightly. The government and the ruling Nepali Congress did maintain one standard, that of keeping quiet on both occasions. Wisdom of their silence may be debatable. But can there be a debate on the double standard of the opposition?

The communist opposition was loud and noisy in reacting to the American ambassador's both statements. But, for different reasons. It was happy and did not see "foreign interference" when the Frank statement suited it.

The communist opposition was angry and saw "imperialists' injection" to the "ailing" government when the Frank words did not go well with the "revolutionary" ways of breaking the street-railings and torching the cars. ■



A scene of political agitation : Where is its origin ?

## NEPALI POLITICS

# Hands That Rock The Cradle

Conflicting interests of its giant neighbors and politicians without integrity continue to make Nepalese politics unstable

By BHAGIRATH YOGI

Nepalese politics is known for its complex nature. Not only laymen, even seasoned analysts find it difficult to explain the 'ridiculous' behavior exhibited by Nepalese political actors time and again.

Why would the main opposition UML, that has pretty fair chances of forming a government, would disrupt the parliamentary proceedings for nearly two months? Worse, why would it choose to lead violent street protests with other non-descript left parties when opinion polls say more people would vote for it than the ruling Nepali Congress if the elections were held now?

Contradictions in Nepalese politics do not end here. 'Republicans' Dr. Baburam Bhattarai and Comrade 'Prachanda' confirmed that they had had secret parleys with a royal nominee in the

parliament, Ramesh Nath Pandey. If it were in Sri Lanka, the police would have summoned Pandey to know about his motive in meeting the underground leaders that are waging a five-year-old rebellion to throw the constitutional monarchy and parliamentary polity. Or, Pandey himself would have been forced to resign for bringing the monarchy into unwarranted controversy. Not in Nepal.

In a statement issued early this month, the European Union condemned recent attacks upon police posts by Maoist rebels in Nepal and said it supported the democratic government and process of democracy enshrined in the constitution of Nepal. The governments of Norway and US also supported the EU move. Interestingly, none of the communist parties in the country, including the UML, condemned brutal attacks by the rebels upon the security personnel.

Opposition leaders, however, criti-

cized the concerns raised by the international community. "The international community, including the US, has no right to interfere into our domestic affairs," said Narayan Man Bijukchhe, chairman of Nepal Workers and Peasants Party, a communist outfit. "In fact, we strongly believe that the US imperialism will come to an end sooner than later."

More than the international concerns, undeclared 'cold war' between two giant neighbors, India and China, may have had its impact on the prolonged political instability in the country, say analysts. Writes Ganesh Raj Sharma, a noted lawyer and political analyst in the latest issue of *Himal khabarpatrika*, "Nepal lost its long-found stability from both of its neighbors after Chinese army took the control of Tibet in 1950. Looking at the military power of China in Tibet, India has been launching several covert and overt operations in Nepal to bring this Himalayan kingdom under its security system. That's why, Nepal has fallen victim to all-round instability over the last several decades."

According to Sharma, India would find it suitable to launch its operations under communist cover whereas China would find it appropriate to use people of Indian origin or under Indian influence to further its interests. "If there were no foreign conspiracies, Nepalese people and its leadership had capabilities to run a democratic polity," said Sharma.

Interestingly, analysts say communist rulers of China see the monarchy and centrist Nepali Congress as their dependable friends in Nepal rather than more than a dozen communist parties including the one holding guns in the name of Mao. Nobody should be amazed, hence, to see that none of the Communist parties welcomed the move taken by the Koirala government a few months back to open an alternative land route to Tibet autonomous region of China to link Kathmandu via Kerung.

This could naturally irk the 'security sensitive' southern neighbor. For the last 50 years, Beijing has not changed the way it looks at New Delhi. The decades-old mistrust anchored in a volatile past and a present conditioned by India's nuclear tests in May 1998 continues. Beijing has

been one of the most stringent critics of Pokhran2, viewing it as India's grand "hegemonic and expansionistic" design.

Experts say India expects others to fight for its cause. So, instead of squarely facing the Chinese threat, it has tried to continuously play it down. It has gone out of its way each time to placate China. India recognized Taiwan as a part of China as far back as in 1950. In 1954, New Delhi accepted Chinese authority over Tibet. On the other hand, China refused to recognize Sikkim as a part of India and continues to claim parts of Arunachal Pradesh as its territory. China still considers Kashmir as a "disputed territory" to be resolved bilaterally between India and Pakistan.

Both India and China are immersed in radical economic reforms and are competing to capture the global market. China's sway over South East Asia stands undisputed. Its growing economic clout, military strength and political stability are way ahead of India, which would like recognition as a major player. It is no secret that China has been listed as the world's second largest military power. In India's perception this is alarming.

Besides diplomatic finesse, growing interaction between Nepal and China over the last few years has drawn international attention. Considered as a buffer state between two Asian giants (India and China) Nepal has been adopting a principle of equi-distance with both of its great neighbors for the last several hundred years. But due to its geographical compulsion and socio-cultural reasons, Nepal has to maintain close relations with India.

As more than 16 percent of Nepal's territory lies north of the Himalayas, Nepal not only belongs to South Asia, it also shares geographical features of China's Tibet, which touches Central Asia. Nepal has hence always possessed strategic importance. The British considered Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim as buffer states. Nepali people continued to preserve Nepal's independence and sovereignty by pursuing a policy of balance and equidistance with both China and India. The concept of

depicting Nepal as a yam between two boulders is the reflection of this geographical reality.

The establishment of diplomatic relation with China in 1955, the cross-border transit treaty with autonomous region of Tibet and the Peace and Friendship Treaty between Nepal and China in 1960 had opened the way for promotion of friendship on the basis of 'Panchsheel.' Nepal has treated the Tibetan affair as an internal matter of China and has consistently supported the policy of one China.

Till 1950 the Himalayas were considered as the secure boundary of India as there existed the buffer zone of Tibet, which prevented the Chinese army from coming face to face with those of India.



**Former Prime Minister Bhattarai (right) with Indian Defence and Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh : Cementing ties**

But the situation in 1950 changed completely with the Chinese considering the Himalayas as their outer line of defense and Tibet as falling under their sovereign jurisdiction.

In 1959, the entire scenario changed with the escape of the Dalai Lama to India. India's offer of political asylum to the Dalai Lama added fuel to the fire and resulted into the border conflict of 1962. Within one year of the escape of Dalai Lama to India, then King Mahendra devised a partyless Panchayat polity for Nepal, independent of political systems in India or China.

The 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Nepal and India has established the primacy of India in Nepal in exclusion of any other country calling for consultations in the event of either coun-

try was threatened. This treaty was signed in virtual perpetuity.

The 120-km long Arniko highway was constructed in 1962-64 period with Chinese assistance despite India's objection. The then King Mahendra had argued to silence the Indian critics by saying that, "communism does not come by taxi cab." The construction of highway was the opening of the first Chinese gateway to South Asia. The Arniko highway has remained a militarily strategic point for both India and China while Nepal has considered it as politically important in its policy of balancing the neighbors. Recently, China has agreed to support Nepal to construct an alternative route, Syaprubesi-Rasuwa-Kerung highway, as an alternative to Kodari highway. Interestingly, Nepali communist parties, instead of welcoming the bold decision taken by the centrist Nepali Congress government, chose to stall the parliament with a view to pull down the government.

Nepali leaders have always been susceptible of Indian intentions in the past. India's annexation of Sikkim in 1974 was enough to give rise to a sense of insecurity to Nepal. Within six months, with a view to preempt any Indian attempt to limit Nepal's sovereignty Ki

Birendra proposed that Nepal be declared a zone of peace. More than 100 countries of the world, including China, supported Nepal's proposal, not India.

Nepal's relation with China was further strengthened but its relation with India became strained as a result of the Peace Zone proposal. The Indian government considered that this proposal was virtually an attempt to nullify the 1950 Treaty. Although the proposal was endorsed by China within one year of its announcement, India continuously said that it was studying the proposal.

To show its friendship with China, Nepal completely routed the Khampa rebels who were active in Nepal in the early seventies. As an appreciation, top-ranking Chinese leaders including supreme leader Deng Xiaoping visited Nepal.



Prime minister Koirala (left) with Chinese leader Li Peng : Honoring friendship

Except for the secret military agreement of 1965 between Nepal and India, the two countries had developed slightly divergent views on the patterns of their relation. Nepal's national interest could be equated with its interest of survival.

During the cold war, India was too sensitive to China's activities of developing even normal relations with its South Asian neighbors. Now, with the increasing improvement of Sino-Indian relations, this kind of sensitivity should have been reduced day by day.

On its part Nepal has never encouraged nearly 30,000 Tibetan refugees residing in Nepal. The refugee community, actively engaged in commercial activities including carpet business, is considered one of the affluent refugee communities in the world.

Thanks to the hospitality offered by the Nepalese people over the last four decades, they are on the verge of assimilation, say experts.

But there still are grey areas. "The government of Nepal, despite the request of Chinese government authorities not to allow anti-China activities from Nepali soil, has failed to stop Free Tibet Movement, said Dr. C. K. Tiwari, a political scientist based in Washington D. C. "The

flight of Karmapa Lama into India in the winter of 2000 through the territory of Nepal has made Beijing unhappy with Kathmandu."

Nepal procured weapons from China in 1988 to which India objected heavily. India unilaterally imposed trade blockage against Nepal in 1989-90, during which a pro-democracy movement flared up resulting into the restoration of multi-party democracy in the country.

"Nepal has been trying to expedite development of its northern areas by opening more passes across Nepal-China border. But external powers have been applying pressure against opening any such routes," said Hiranya Lal Shrestha, a former MP and leader of the CPN (ML). "After 1949, China has adopted a new foreign and security policy, whereas Nepal's southern neighbor has given continuity to the same British-India's foreign policy characterized by hegemonistic behavior against small neighbors."

As long as security interests of big neighbors continue to clash in this Himalayan kingdom, foreign diplomats would continue to be found with huge cache of explosives a day before their departure and streets of the Nepali capital would continue to look ugly. ■

## INDUSTRY Security Concerns

### Industrialists ask the government to provide security to businesses

Nepalese business leaders drew the attention of the authorities last week toward the deteriorating law and order situation in the country and its adverse impact upon the economy. During the Industry-Commerce Day organized by the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) last Tuesday and the 48th AGM of Nepal Chamber of Commerce two days later, they expressed their dissatisfaction over the present industrial and trade policies of the government and demanded that the government introduce investment-friendly policies.

Addressing the meeting, Minister of State for Industry, Commerce and Supplies Krishna Prasad Sitaula said the government was ready to extend every possible cooperation to boost up economic activities in the country. He said the government was working hard to provide security to the industry and businesses. A few days back, a delegation led by FNCCI President Pradip Kumar Shrestha met Deputy Prime Minister Ram Chandra Poudel and strongly demanded improvement in the law and order situation. The delegation also demanded that the government make public actions taken against those arrested in connection with involvement in incidents such as theft and robbery. During the meeting, DPM Poudel assured the business leaders that the government will take necessary steps to improve the situation. But with the streets of the capital itself turning violent, whether the government will be able to keep its promise remains to be seen. ■

## POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

# Conflict Of Cultural Values

The past decade of Nepal's rough journey to democracy has seen every kind of alliance and action — opportunistic, unholy and unnatural — as a short cut to power. It seems that means and manner do not matter to our political actors. Agitations, street demonstrations, violations of the rule of law appear to be well-accepted features of politics. After more than five decades of democratic experiments, Nepalese politicians are yet to cultivate the core of the culture and character of democracy: tolerance, patience and respect for the rules of the game

By KESHAB POUDEL

**I**n an effort to force Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala to resign, the main opposition CPN-UML and five other opposition parties stall parliament for more than 45 days.

Former prime minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, a founding leader of the ruling Nepali Congress, demands the resignation of his party colleague during an all-party meeting convened at his residence.

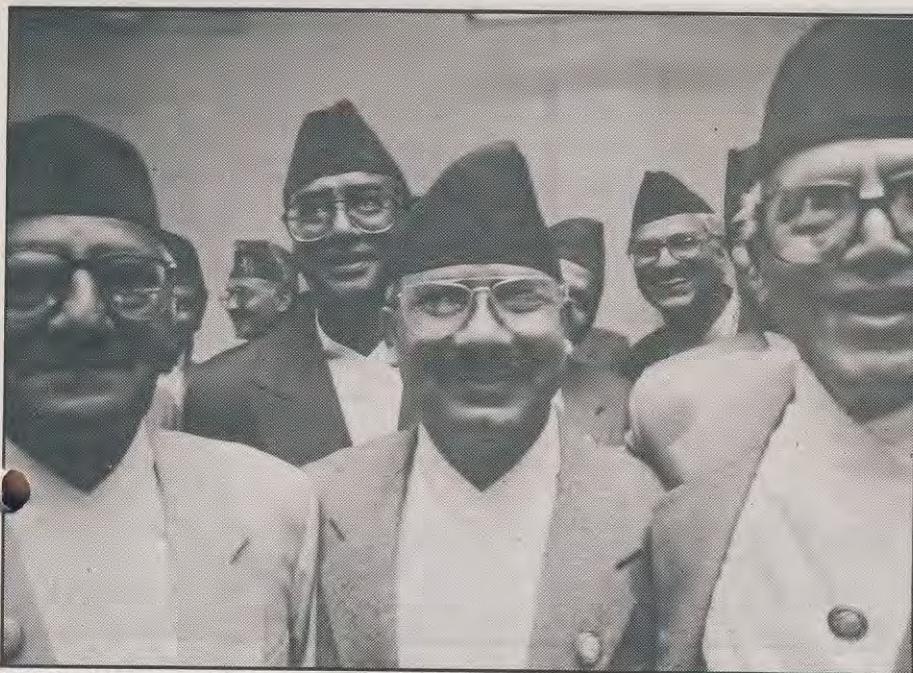
If democratic values were still alive in Nepalese politics, the use of force and

intimidation to oust a prime minister chosen through elections — if they were used at all — would have been held in abeyance until he was proved guilty of something. For communist opposition parties, who are schooled in authoritarian methods of governing, stalling the house, paralyzing the streets and creating a national sense of anarchy could be seen as a natural extension of their beliefs.

However, when a politician like Bhattarai, who has sacrificed his entire life to uphold democracy, chooses to deviate from democratic ideals in asking

for the resignation of the prime minister, it reflects the depths to which Nepalese politics and politicians have degenerated.

Nobody knows what Koirala might have done to Bhattarai if their roles were reversed. What is clear, however, is that all Nepalese politicians — be they Benaras-educated Bhattarai, Thakur Ram Campus graduate main opposition party leader Madhav Kumar Nepal, Allahabad-educated RPP leader Surya Bahadur Thapa or Oxford graduate RPP leader Pashupati Sumsher Jung Bahadur Rana — have shown their adeptness in espous-



**Political leaders** : Shifting alliances

ing the same political culture.

The culture of Jung Bahadur and the values of the Rana regime are still active in the bloodstream of Nepalese politicians. The only difference is that while Jung Bahadur physically liquidated his rivals while today's politicians are trying to inflict the same damage through a sustained process of character assassination.

Although all leaders claim that their current behavior and character is democratic, the common people seem to be frustrated at the emerging undemocratic tendencies at the political level. The people are gradually losing faith in the political leaders who they revered and supported to the hilt during the people's movement that brought about the political change of 1990.

"Threats to third-wave democracies are likely to come not from generals and revolutionaries who have nothing but contempt for democracy, but rather from participants in the democratic process," wrote Samuel P. Huntington, renowned political scientist, in his article "Democracy for the Long Haul", published in the *Journal of Democracy* (Volume 7, Number 2 April 1996).

"These are political leaders and groups who win the elections, take power,

and then manipulate the mechanisms of democracy to curtail or destroy democracy. With third-wave democracies, the problem is not overthrow but erosion: the intermittent or gradual weakening of democracy by those elected to lead it."

If one evaluates the decade-long political development in Nepal, one can understand how political leaders themselves are posing a serious threat to the democratic process. Whether in the name of street agitation or unholy alliances with rivals, political leaders are making every effort to destabilize a political system that puts high premium on the adherence to core values and ideals.

The history, culture and religion of a particular society, experts argue, determine the behavior of political leaders and parties. Democratic culture and values need tolerance, patience and respect for the rules of the game. It is impossible to achieve democratic objectives by undermining its basic values. If the mob is allowed to rule, democracy gives way to mobocracy. If the street mob is allowed to play the determining role in changing the government, no succeeding government would be able to gain stability. One cannot justify the use of mob politics to change the political order.

Whether or not Huntington's pre-

dictions have come true in other countries, they have turned into living reality in the Nepalese context, where democracy is not functioning properly because of the actions of the participants and practitioners of the political process themselves. Be it the ruling Nepali Congress or the main opposition CPN-UML, Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP) or the CPN-ML, all have proved that they come from same caste and creed when it comes to the question of playing petty politics.

Each party and leader remains willing to adhere to rules and regulations as long as it suits their interests. Once the party or leader feels that the rule of law cannot fulfil their aspirations, they immediately adopt such undemocratic means as general strikes and street protests.

Leaders of smaller political parties have been leading an undemocratic political process by organizing periodic agitations that disrupting normal life. When the main opposition party, the CPN-UML, joins hands with four other opposition groups in stalling parliamentary proceedings, a sense of bewilderment is bound to set in the public mind. In a situation where the main political players of the day themselves do not believe in the political process, how can they be expected to strengthen it?

"Democratic development occurs when political leaders believe they have interest in promoting it or a duty to achieve it. Such elite are missing from many parts of the world," wrote Huntington in another article, "After Twenty Years: The Future of the Third Wave", *Journal of Democracy* (Vol. 8, Number 4, October 1997).

"Democratization as primarily the product of political leaders who have the will and the skill to bring it about. Clearly, however, both preconditions and crafting have roles to play, and certain preconditions can facilitate democratic crafting. These include a relatively high level of economic development and prevalence of what can be termed Western culture, and values, including Western Christianity."

In countries like Nepal, the condi-

tions favoring democratization are either non-existent or very weak. Institutions are yet to develop and political leaders ignore the practices and values they are sworn to upholding. "Personal behaviour is very important in determining any political process. Tradition and culture always determines the personal behaviour," said Pro. Dr. Sushil Raj Pandey.

Democratization is not impossible in such countries, political scientists say, but it is likely to be more difficult. In addition, many non-Western societies are going through a pervasive process of cultural indigenization. They increasingly resist Western industrialized values and institutions and are searching for an identity and meaning in their own cultural traditions.

The Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1990 visualizes all kinds of modern institutions such as the executive, judiciary, legislature and political parties that are required to run a democracy. However, the behavior and values of the actors assigned to run these institutions have hardly demonstrated the requisite minimum character.

Economic development can alter a country's culture and make it more supportive of democracy. If it occurs, economic development will presumably have impacts on a society like Nepal. Even after achieving economic development,



**RPP and Congress leaders : Marriage of convenience**

however, one cannot guarantee a successful transition to full-fledged democracy.

The difficulties Nepal faces on its journey to democracy include problems related to political culture, a legacy of the undemocratic systems of the past. Following the restoration of democracy, state constraints on individual behavior were removed. Accompanying this was a loosening of the state's inhibitions and uncertainty about the standards of morality.

Amid the weakening of state authority, the parties are encouraging an "anything goes" atmosphere.

"We overthrew the Panchayat system by our own strength and this time, too, we will take similar action," thundered K.P. Sharma Oli, leader of CPN-UML at a recent political meeting. "Agitation always bring change and betterment of life."

Although the political parties are calling for mass demonstrations, the response of the people is so poor that only school children are coming out on the streets. "The opposition parties are selling their remaining goodwill. After this agitation, they will not have anything left to sell," said a political analyst.

People from virtually all walks of life took part in the political agitations of 1990, hoping that the new system would help bring much-needed prosperity to the country. What the people wanted then was a democratic order that would ensure good governance. They believed such a system would encourage economic well being, political stability, social order, communal harmony and an efficient and honest administration. All these hopes have been shattered. The people, who had a choice in 1990, don't see a better alternative today.

Merely conducting regular elections does not necessarily lead to a democratic



**RPP and UML leaders : New found friendship**

government. The expression of the popular will has to be supported by restrictions on absolute power of the executive, by an independent judiciary to uphold the rule of law, by protection of individual rights and liberties of expression, of association, of belief and of parties, by effective guarantees against arbitrary arrest and police brutality, by the absence of censorship and minimal government control of the media.

The new constitution has guaranteed everything in writing. When the constitution starts functioning in the absence of minimum requisite culture, the

character and behavior of the actors resembles those of autocrats. Modern democracy is a product of western civilization. Its roots lie in social pluralism, class system, civil society, belief, commitment and practice of the rule of law, and experiences with representative bodies.

Economic development has a strong positive effect on democratization, Seymour Martin Lipset pointed out decades ago. The evidence has shown that the economic development has a strong positive effect on democratization. Economic growth involves higher levels of urbanization, literacy and education. It also involves a shift in occupational structure, with a decline in the size and importance of the peasantry and the development of a middle class and urban working class.

The latter groups increasingly have a voice in and influence the policies that affect them. With a higher level of educated citizenry, political compromise and tolerance increase. The easing of state control of the economy leads to the creation and growth of independent centers of power, based on the privately controlled capital, technology, and communication. This will change the status of the old feudal order that controlled the country's economy.

Within the multiparty system, Nepal

has experienced majority, minority and several coalition governments, but without any discernible democratic culture over the last decade. "Though there is democracy in Nepal now. It seems that the connection between the vested-interest groups and political and economic elite are so strong and the policy of government does not seem to be effective to change the situation," said Prof. Dr. Ananta Raj Poudyal, in his article "Governance in Nepal" in "Essays on Constitutional Law", published by Nepal Law Society. "Moreover, the vital form of them are the concomitant democratic cul-

CPN-UML has always remained suspicious. At the same time, its critical support to the parliamentary democracy has crated suspicion whether the CPN-UML is adopting a strategy to disrupt the parliamentary system from within," Poudyal said.

Democracy is more than the sum of institutions. A healthy democracy depends in large part on the development of a democratic civic culture. According to political scientists, culture means the behaviors, practices and norms that define the ability of a people to govern themselves. Education plays a singular im-



Chand (left) and Nepal : Close alley

ture of the political parties and leadership. Introduction of democracy is a complex process which involves more than a political transformation."

The transition to democracy concerns the whole body politic — that is, all the individuals that constitute it and their social relationships. Changes in human attitudes are less easily accomplished than remolding the political system.

"No doubt, the CPN-UML is the largest opposition party in parliament, but its ambivalent role, sometimes in parliament and sometime in the street, has created confusion. The role of the

portant role in free societies. In a democratic system, the regime is the servant of the people — people whose capacity to create, sustain and improve that regime depends in large measure on the quality and effectiveness of the educational arrangements through which they pass. Nepal is yet to develop a level of education that a multiparty political system presupposes.

"Social structures are feudal, dominated by a system of patronage and traditional values which permit a special role for influential persons and which make open public dialogue difficult. On the



**Ranabhat and Mohasin : House keepers**

whole, however, Nepal is an agrarian society, with limited accessibility in terms of transportation and communication, and with a very low standard of education," states a report on consolidating Democracy in Nepal, prepared by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

We are undermining the authority of state by hurling abuses at the prime minister. Political parties and leaders seem to have lost the patience to go to their destiny. We are influenced by western model of political process, particularly the British model of parliamentary government. But the nature of its implementation shows that it is running through Nepalese political culture.

**Opportunistic Alliance :** Nepalese politicians have not shown the political culture needed to run a western democratic system. In the last decade of democratization, Nepalese have seen different types of opportunistic alliances between various political forces. Various alliances — RPP-NC-NSP, RPP-UML, RPP-NC-NSP, NC-ML and NC-UML-NSP — have formed governments. This shows that the political system in Nepal is influenced by the West but its infrastructures are indigenous.

Opportunism is not a new phenomenon in Nepalese politics. After the Royal

takeover in 1961, the Panchayat system was run by opportunist politicians like Tulsī Giri and Bishwabandhu Thapa, who deserted B.P. Koirala to join the Panchayat. Communist leaders, too, had shown similar a character. Now the CPN-UML, RPP and the Bhattarai faction of the governing Nepali Congress have entered a new political alliance, but no one knows what common ground they find themselves on.

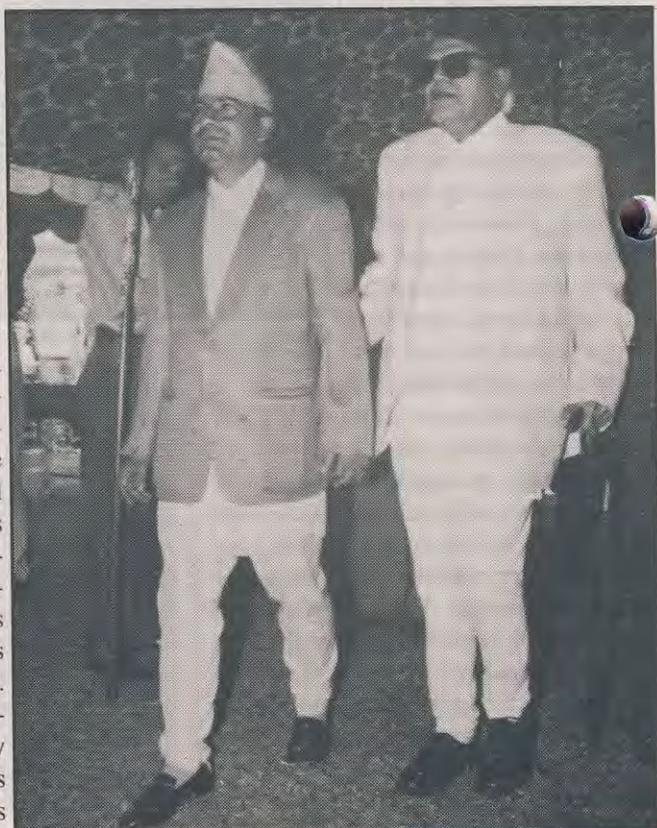
This shows that every nation has its own heritage, which influences the country's political character. The same political model brings different results in different social contexts. Because of cultural factors, Nepal's democratic process has always suffered. Whether it was Panchayat or multiparty polity, both systems have had similar phases and results. Whether authoritarian or demo-

cratic, the characters of Nepalese politics have grown up in the same traditions and have been influenced by the same elements.

Human as well as material factors play an important role in bringing democratic results. Level of education, nature of institutions, quality of disciplines and the independence of the media are vital to running democracy smoothly.

The ability of democracy to function depends on the nation's collective state of mind. In the present circumstances, whatever the system introduced, the result might not be very different. The results of the Panchayat and democratic systems are not so strikingly different. It is not only the political system but also the supporting factors and character of actors that need to be taken into account before evaluating the results.

When society passes through phases of opportunism, how can one find actors with unique characters? "We can change the base of technology but we cannot change the base of culture and knowledge. One has to pass several round of



**Bhattarai and Nepal : Every alliance is possible**

social transformation before achieving perfection," said Dr. Rishikeshab Raj Regmi.

What Nepal has With a high level of illiteracy, rampant poverty, difficult geographical terrain, absence of local communication system, and the majority of people living in isolated villages within small communities, Nepal's transition to democracy is not easy. Nepal's situation stands in marked contrast to industrialized democracies, which consist of fully urbanized societies, almost universal literacy, no poverty and strong institutions.

Countries like Malaysia, South Korea and Singapore, too, have seen varying phases of authoritarian and liberal government. However, they did not have to contend the kind of problems Nepal grappling with because of developed infrastructure and improved literacy rates.

In such circumstances, how long can Nepal wait to emerge out of this sordid state? Nobody can provide a precise answer. Nepal's situation is so fluid that it might plummet even below Afghanistan or it might improve its situation amazingly.

What is also important to note is that Nepal has distinct advantages. There are few countries like Nepal which have not gone to direct war with another country in more than a century. There is no internal breakdown of law and order, no civil war situation, no famine and major natural calamities. Analyzing all the factors related to the political process, it is strange that Nepal has been losing its stability and peace. Governance has become a dreadful task.

As there is no convincing reason internally for this to have happened, one has to see the role of external factors while going to the roots of political instability. After all, it is not easy for a country like Nepal, which lies between the big powers of Asia that are also the world's two most populous countries, to remain free from external influence.

Culture always plays determining role in shaping the behavior of individual actors. As individual behavior determines the functioning of the political process, the mere introduction of a new system cannot bring the desired results.

A liberal political system functions successfully where individual behavior is based on western values. Democracy is the best mode of organized politics, but only if the actors are faithful to its ends.

"Democracy in Nepal has been a painful process because of the contradiction between alien democratic values and native culture of despotism, while the people at large are yet to experience a transition from raiti (serf) and praja (subject) to nagrik (citizen). Contest among elite factions is for self-aggrandizement instead of ideology. Even if one were to allude to mainstream party ideologies, those to the

racy. Indeed, the faster the economy grows, the more likely democracy is to survive.

Democratic development occurs when political leaders believe they have an interest in promoting it or a duty to achieve it, as Prof. Huntington says. Such elite are missing from Nepal. When politicians themselves are stalling parliamentary proceedings for such a long time, are they not extending an open invitation to anarchy?

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, and it was the age of foolishness.... It was the spring of hope, it was the winter



UML leader Oli (left) with Deuba : Comrades in arm

left of the center are tending to the right while accumulated problems call for radical measures. Formalistic change in polity does not necessarily mean change in societal values that shape political culture," said Dr. Harka Gurung, a prominent intellectual and former minister. The democratic exercise in Nepal is beset with the incongruity of the new political system. Formalistic change in polity does not necessarily mean a change in societal values that shape political culture."

Economic crisis represents one of the most common threats to democratic stability. Conversely, economic growth is conducive to the survival of democ-

of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, and we were all going direct to heaven and we were all going direct the other way..."

These few first lines written by Charles Dickens in "A Tale of Two Cities" in 1861 mirrors the present situation of Nepalese society. Because of the unpredictable behavior of political leaders, nobody knows where the democratic and liberal political process followed by Nepal will lead the people. Following the restoration of a liberal democratic system in 1990, Nepalese people are indeed confronted with the best of the times and worst of the times. ■

# 'We Can't Back Any Move That Could Threaten Multiparty System'

— RABINDRA NATH SHARMA

RPP leader **RABINDRA NATH SHARMA** was one of the key architects of opposition alliance in the recently prorogued winter session of parliament. A member of the upper house, Sharma — who has had a long innings in politics — was also the architect of the RPP-UML-NSP and RPP-NC-NSP alliances that formed the government in 1997. Sharma spoke to **KESHAB POUDEL** on Monday on various aspects of the ongoing political stalemate. Excerpts:

**As your party was one of the key allies of the communist opposition in the winter session of parliament, why have you decided not to join their street agitation?**

First of all, we don't want to take part in any agitation that will worsen the law-and-order situation and create a sense of panic among the common people. We do not want to be a direct or indirect part of any kind of violence. This is against the basic spirit of the RPP. Secondly, we don't want to disturb the existing multiparty polity. We are aware that anti-multiparty elements are active and they should not get any opportunity to overthrow the current system. Our party cannot agree with any move — whether it is from street or any other place — that would damage the multiparty system.

**How do you evaluate the ongoing street agitation launched by the CPN-UML and other communist parties?**

It is a very unfortunate event. As a responsible main opposition party, the CPN-UML must realize its limitations and acknowledge its responsibility toward the people. Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala also should try to avoid any kind of confrontation with the opposition.

**Is it not opportunistic on the part of the RPP to have left the alliance with the UML?**

There is no question of political opportunism. As an alternative democratic party, we cannot go for undemocratic methods. It is important to understand that we are ready to support any constitutional method to oppose the government.

**What about the opposition demand that Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala should resign?**

We want the resignation of Prime Minister Koirala and we have not made any kind of compromise on that demand. As long as constitutional provisions for doing so exist, we don't want to follow unconstitutional methods. It is the privilege of the opposition to seek the resignation of the prime minister.

**But what specifically led you to pull out of the street protests?**

Look. We had frankly told the main opposition CPN-UML in the early days of the anti-government alliance pressing for the resignation of Prime Minister Koirala over the Lauda Air deal that we would not take part in any kind of street agitation and unconstitutional activities. We understand well that one cannot fully control the street agitation one launches. The violent events of Monday [that accompanied the UML's bid to block Koirala from entering Singh Durbar] proved our suspicions.

**What do you mean? That the organizers of the street agitation will lose control of the situation?**

We cannot control and guide street agitations because different forces will play against us when the agitators turn violent. We have clearly said that to the UML leaders.

**If violent agitation would only benefit regressive and anarchist forces, why do you think the CPN-UML is leading it?**

Look at what happened Monday morning. The unfortunate events during Monday's demonstration will have a great impact in the Nepali Congress and the CPN-UML. Such violence and anarchy could even lead to a reversal of the democratic process in the country. If we continue to follow undemocratic acts, it would only benefit undemocratic forces.

**Do you see any possibility of ending the violent agitation soon?**

Everything is possible in politics. The RPP believes that a solution to the current political stalemate can be found only through honest dialogue and compromise between the ruling and main opposition parties.

**What role can the RPP play at this juncture?**

*It is a very unfortunate event. As a responsible main opposition party, the CPN-UML must realize its limitations and acknowledge its responsibility toward the people.*

Our efforts will be focused on starting the process of dialogue between the ruling and main opposition parties. As you know, the country is now passing through violence and uncertainty. The government is unable to instill a sense of security in the people. Political clashes between the ruling and opposition parties would benefit neither the country nor democracy. To bring normalcy in the country, Prime Minister Bijja Prasad Koirala has to be prepared to make sacrifices.

**Did you see any political points in the prime minister's address to the nation on radio and TV?**

I could not see any political points in the statement. It was a ritualistic statement any prime minister would deliver

in normal circumstances. Prime Minister Koirala could have given clear hints to the Maoist rebels on starting negotiations.

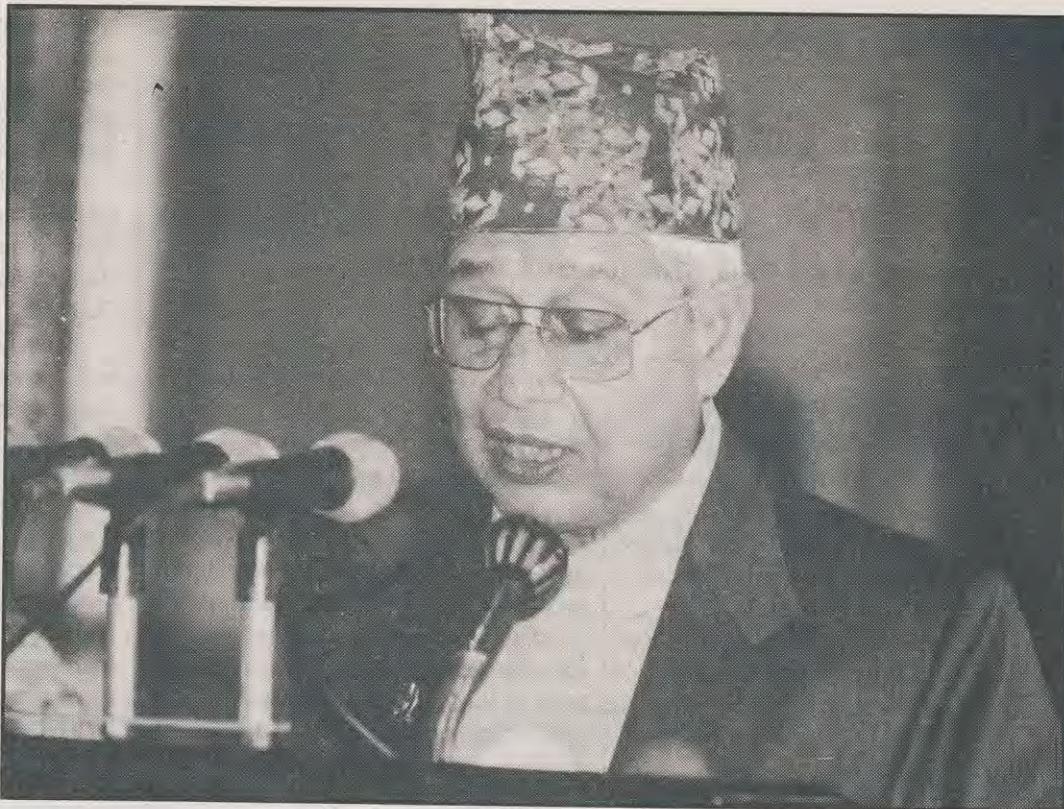
**After it emerged that Royal nominee Ramesh Nath Pandey met with two top Maoist leaders, there has been much speculation in the press. How do you look at the implications of the meeting in the context of the role of the King?**

First of all, a constitutional monarch can do no wrong, and he is above criticism. If someone claims he met with Maoist leaders as the representative of the monarch, it is nothing but a hoax. Such publicity may be beneficial for the individual concerned, but it is not in the interest of the monarchy. Such incident will create more suspicion over the institution.

**At a time when everybody is expressing concern over the democratic process, how do you see the future of democracy in Nepal?**

Democracy is still under threat in Nepal. Different forces are trying to subvert the democratic process. I don't think it would be easy today to dismantle the system because the people are more aware about their right and duties. No citizen is ready to give up the freedom he or she has been enjoying ever since the restoration of democracy in 1990.

**If you say people are aware about their rights and the value of democratic institutions, why do you perceive a threat to democracy?**



Even in such circumstances, you cannot discount the strong section in the country which always favors a closed system. If we give such opportunity to them, they will destroy democracy.

**Many political leaders have been talking about the need to evolve all-party consensus. What is the rationale for this?**

We are not talking about an all-party government. You must understand that all-party consensus does not mean the establishment of an all-party government. Our point of view is that Nepali Congress cannot alone meet the challenge posed by the Maoists.

**What do you want the government to do?**

As you know, the people have given their mandate to the Nepali Congress. The ruling party has to take an initiative to settle the issue. Congress needs to approach all major political parties to develop national consensus. No single government can settle the existing problems irrespective of the size of the majority it holds in parliament. Congress has to be prepared to take any decision in this regard. If this requires a change of leadership in the party, it must be prepared for that. The first and foremost task in ending the present situation is to start negotiations with the Maoists.

**Will the Maoists agree to negotiations?**

The Maoists have already made clear that they are in favor of talks. ■

*Congress has to be prepared to take any decision in this regard. If this requires a change of leadership in the party, it must be prepared for that.*

## EXPOSITION

# All That Glitter

A young Indian woman organizes an exhibition of fascinating gold and diamond ornaments

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Walking down the corridor of Sarosh Art Gallery is quite a mesmerizing experience. Beautifully decorated, the compilation of sparkling jewelry designed by a young Indian woman, Purnima Chainwala, provides for a glittering exhibition.

Titled "Eternal Motifs" the exhibition includes a wide array of designer jewelry, including necklaces, anklets, earrings and so on. The exhibition-cum-sale was opened at the gallery in Chhauni last week.

Intricately designed and masterfully

Designer wear is thought by many to be expensive and considered too classy to be worn in daily life. Be it clothes or ornaments, ordinary people in this part of the world are yet to accept designer things in a big way. "I feel that designer wear should be accepted by the public. I believe in simplicity and that designer wear should be worn for comfort," says Chainwala.

She says that the designer wear is meant for everybody and that the people need to learn to value such stuff. "I am inspired by various shapes and beautiful motifs in natural surroundings like flowers, sky, or even something abstract like

thunder, which I have incorporated in my designs."

Chainwala has undertaken professional training in jewelry making at the Jewelry Product Development Center, New Delhi, India. A skilled artist, Chainwala has also founded a jewelry design studio called Nima-C, which is based in Kathmandu.

"It requires perseverance and thought for making a new piece of jewelry. The effort is to arrive at a design, which can be worn, is not too loud and can be technically made by the artisans. As each of my pieces is handcrafted, great care has to be taken regarding the finish and du-

rability," she says.

Exhibition of jewelry is rare in Kathmandu. Moreover, an exhibition from an artist who hails from the country that is world renowned for its tradition in making and wearing jewelry is a unique opportunity for the Nepalese audience.

The designing of jewelry requires both

creativity as well as painting skills, as the artist has to make sketches first. For Chainwala, who has been interested in this field since childhood, the job has become easier because she is a painter, too.

Already, she has organized four exhibitions including the one at the Australian Spring Fair, 2001 held at the Australian High Commissioner's residence in New Delhi.

The latest exhibition of Chainwala includes gold and diamond jewelry. "Although I love to work in different metals, I chose gold this time as it is currently the in-thing."

Scores of people, especially women, thronged the gallery to have a look at the jewelry collection. The exhibition had a special meaning as it was organized just on the eve of a marriage season. Gold jewelry, traditionally have had a special significance during marriage ceremonies and other festivals in the country. ■

## BRITISH FILM FESTIVAL Time To Enjoy

A week-long opportunity to cherish classic English films

To mark and coincide with the launch of British Pavilion at the Himalayan Expo 2002, the British Film Festival is being organized jointly by the British Embassy and the British Council in the Nepalese capital.

During the week-long event (April 19-25) three films will be screened at the Gopi Krishna Theater at Chabahil. According to organizers, films featured in the festival include Oscar nominated film "Billy Elliot" starring Julie Walters of "Educating Rita" fame. All the films will be screened at the Krishna Hall of the Gopi Krishna Cinema Hall at Chabhil, Kathmandu from 5.30 PM. Entrance is free (no tickets required) and seats will be allocated on first come first served basis. The festival will provide a rare opportunity at making quality British films available to the movie-lovers of Nepal. ■



An object : Creative work

crafted, the jewels in the exhibition speak for themselves. Besides, the jewels are not offensively priced. They are in the range of Rs 35,000 to Rs 150,000.

Chainwala, 23, has a special interest in jewelry and her focus is on "easy-wear, everywhere". She hopes that the public accepts her designs.

# YOUTH Views On News

International events draw a larger audience in Nepal, a survey finds

BY AKSHAY SHARMA

“Do people in Kathmandu watch Nepal Television?” asked Keshav Poudel from Bara, southeast of Kathmandu. Indeed! In a survey conducted by BA Publications in Kathmandu that interviewed 1,248 people last year, most were more interested and familiar with news happening outside Nepal.

When we asked Bhesh Raj Bajracharya, 27, how up-to-the-minute he kept himself about happenings inside the country, he said, “Well, the first priority I give is to the wellbeing of myself. I manage to skip through the headlines of newspapers as I have to rush every morning to work. And when I come back, I mostly watch foreign TV channels.”

“This may be because they every their friends who have reached to some height that they do not have,” explains Surendra Shahi of BA Publications. “Some of this generation have been unmotivated because they get frustrated,” explains Surendra Shahi of BA Publications. “Some were sent abroad for higher education because their parents wanted them to pursue the goals of their own. The middle class seem truly motivated but they are entangled in their own problems.”

“I do not know what my future holds for me,” 19-year-old Bijen Shrestha worries. “I don’t know where my life is headed — to Armageddon or Paradise. I would rather watch MTV than watch some boring Nepal TV programs or Hindi movies.”

Most of the people in

Kathmandu belonging to Bijen's generation share his views. They seem interested in what the Internet has to offer. As one expert puts it, “It's the MTV generation attitude that's causing this feeling in this age group.”

The Civil Code of Nepal defines a youth to be an adult at the age of 16 and allows to vote at 18. The Public Service Commission allows candidates from the 16-35 age group to apply for a government post.



**Youth :** Search for an identity

“I don't usually buy newspapers,” says 23-year-old Kalpana Rai of Bhaisepati, Lalitpur. “But I manage to get a look at some of the stale news. I really prefer to read Hindi film magazines and watch Hindi movies on television.”

In Nepal, Hindi movies are more popular than local productions. Some people just seem to drool over Hindi movies.

But the youth are changing by the day. They seem to survive in a world of their own. And, as Padma Lal Devkota said, “Knowingly or unknowingly, society is transforming in a way nobody had been expecting. Nepal's society is in a transition period due to illiteracy.”

“This is due to the lack of communication between the movers and shakers of the country compared to the population of the country,” the BA Publication's report suggests.

“Most of the big attractive newspaper headlines seem totally irrelevant to the context of their contents. I even spotted some headlines that didn't match the articles,” Rashmi Shakya, who works at Sipradi Trading House. “Some seem so confusing that it makes your head spin.”

The confusion image gripping the youth in urban and rural areas raises a big question for the nation. “Are they to be exploited as anarchists, political activists and other organization which pose a threat to the future of the country?” asks Asim Pradhan. He said political issues seem meager compared to social issues in Nepal.

“I do read newspapers,” says Rajan Sakya, 22, who lives in Nardevi, Kathmandu. “I prefer The Kathmandu Post for my daily news, but unfortunately I only go through very few stories. Perhaps it's something deep inside that commands me skip others. Or maybe it is a habit of an uneducated person. But it seems to me to be a clever choice because the newspapers seem biased.”

BOOK

# Value Orientation

A psychologist takes a close look at the changing values of Nepalese and Indian youth

By A CORRESPONDENT

The changing behavior of Nepalese youth has prompted a deluge of concern from diverse quarters. Although sociologists and anthropologists have done some studies on the issues and implications involved in the area, a psychologist has for the first time closely monitored the reasons behind the change in the values of the youth in India and Nepal.

Dr. Niranjan Prasad Upadhyaya's "Some Aspects of Value-Orientation: A Study of Adults in Nepal and India" sheds light on the various connotations and connections social and cultural changes have on the behavior of the youth.

Nepal and India share many common values drawn from their Hindu traditions.

The growing invasion of western culture, on the other hand, is responsible for much of the trouble an extremely vital segment of their population is facing today.

As communist ideology is gradually replacing Hindu traditions among the youth, one can see a rise in aggressive and militant behavior among them. For its part, the state has imposed certain restrictions to contain the growing influence of modernization, such as making Sanskrit education compulsory in the high-school curriculum. However, these moves have come under heavy criticism from radical communist outfits and non-Hindu groups. Some radical left groups are demanding an end to compulsory Sanskrit education.

While the country is grappling with the threats posed to its youth by changing values, Dr Upadhyaya offers some deep insights into the issue and suggests solutions. Although the discussions and analyses turn

highly academic at times, the book has come as a helpful resource at a time when society is seeking a prompt response to the challenges posed by new patterns of youth behavior.

Culture and values play a very important role in shaping the behavior of the youth, particularly in countries like Nepal, where the transition to modernity is painful. Dr. Upadhyaya has made an effort to study the value orientations of people in an interacting frame of culture on the one hand, and modernization and education as by-products of the techno-scientific strides on the other.

"The multi-variety frame of the study, on the dimension of the stability-versus-

change, of our socio-cultural being provides a dynamic perspective of self-evaluation as well as the meaningfulness of the directions of our growth and development," said Dr. Upadhyaya.

In the last decade, Nepal and India have seen a tremendous changes in human behavior because of the change in the value system. A detailed study of the pattern of changes in culture and values in one country has particular relevance to the other since they share a common social and cultural heritage. The book presents a broad canvas of the multi-variety impact of modernization, duration and culture and points to the importance of mobilization of human and cultural resources in the region.

Dr. Upadhyaya has highlighted his findings that modernization promotes scientificism in lowly educated people in India and promotes the same in highly educated ones in Nepal. According to the author, both modernization and education are expected to go together in the promotion of the value orientation of the people.

The book, based on the Ph.D. thesis of Dr. Upadhyaya, elaborates on the behavior and characters of the youth in their changing society. In terms of analysis and observation, the volume draws useful conclusions on the scope and impact of this process of transformation.



*Some Aspects of Value-Orientation: A Study of Adults in Nepal and India*  
Written by Niranjan Prasad Upadhyaya  
Published by Adroit Publishers, Delhi  
Price: Rs. 400, Pages: 175

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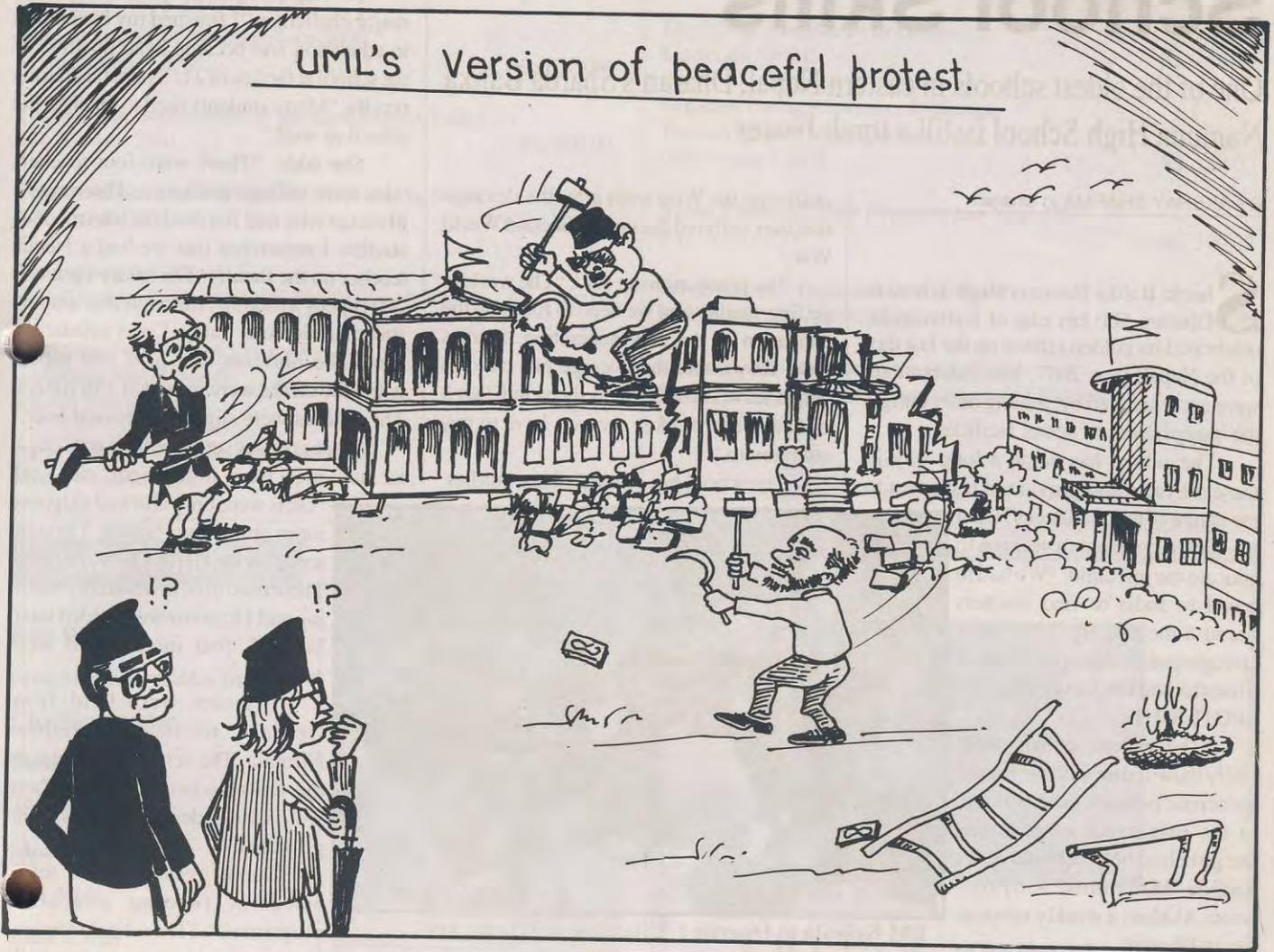
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By M.S.KHOKNA



**TRANSITION**

**RE-PROMULGATED:** The Armed Police Ordinance 2057, Local Administration (fourth amendment) Ordinance 2057 and Ordinance Designed to Amend Some Nepal Acts Concerning Health 2057, by His Majesty the King, with the advice and consent of the Council of Ministers and in accordance with the Constitu-

tion of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990.

**RETURNED:** **Chakra Prasad Bastola**, foreign minister, after completing a visit to India, Denmark and Finland.

**ORDERED:** **Mohammed Arshad Cheema**, first secretary at the Pakistan Embassy, Kathmandu, to leave Nepal within 24 hours, by the

Foreign Ministry.

**SEPARATED:** **Ganga and Jamuna**, Siamese twins from rural Nepal, who were joined at the head, by doctors at the Singapore General Hospital after a complicated marathon operation.

**AWARDED:** **Satya Mohan Joshi**, academician, with the Tribhuvan Pragya Puraskar.

**Rabin Nepali**, with Parijat Pandulipi Award, for his contribution to children literature.

**CELEBRATED:** Nepal Week in Istanbul, Turkey, organized by Events Nepal and Royal Nepalese Consulate.

**FORMED:** Nepal Business and Professional Women executive committee, under the leadership of Laxmi Keshari Manandhar. ■

DHARAN

# School Skills

One of the oldest schools in eastern Nepal, Dharan's Sharda Balika Namuna High School is still a torch-bearer

BY AKSHAY SHARMA in Dharan

**S**harda Balika Namuna High School at Dharan, 500 km east of Kathmandu, celebrated its golden jubilee on the last day of the Nepali year 2057. The celebrations were accompanied by, among other things, the inauguration of hostel facilities.

The school has come a long way in these 50 years and provides a testament to the nature of the challenges Nepal has had to confront in seeking to educate the girl child. "We had to travel to India to find teachers because the country didn't have enough qualified people," Kusum Shrestha and her son Prabhu told SPOTLIGHT.

"The general public, especially those fed up with the Ranas' autocratic policies, who believed in the importance of educating the girl child helped found Shree Sharda Madyamik Vidyalaya," wrote Akhbar, a weekly newspaper in Dharan.

The golden jubilee celebrations also provided a special opportunity to look into the future. "We should focus on the stressing technological knowledge and skills and build a better and a well-educated society," said Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, who took time out of his busy schedule in the capital to attend the celebrations. "I have an emergency cabinet meeting to attend, but the beauty of Dharan — the junction between the Terai and the hills — was too irresistible."

Referring to the challenges Nepal would face in the days ahead, Koirala said: "I asked the Japanese prime minister what a country like ours should stress in order to achieve our development goals. He suggested that we focus on education and technological things first. The Japanese have managed to

challenge the West even after the devastation they suffered during the Second World War."

The prime minister said, "The world is getting smaller and we need to focus on the education of the new generation. Studies have shown that the average girl child in Nepal leaves school when she is in Class 5 or 6, and this is a key area we have to pay attention to."

The school has crossed many hurdles.



PM Koirala at Dharan: 'Educating girls is the key'

"Once we had organized a cultural event and the girls were supposed to dance. Many parents said we were doing something wrong. They refused to send their daughters to school," reminisces Kusum. "I still remember how we had to convince parents and guardians to let their daughters come back to school."

Initially, the school operated out of a pati near the Sinha Devi Mandir. "The residents of Dharan are proud to see the way the school has changed," says Prabhu. Many people have helped the school in different ways.

The massive earthquake that struck eastern and central Nepal in 2045 severely damaged the school. "The buildings and the school ground were devastated," Prabhu

says. "The calamity affected studies and the plight of students was pitiable," remembers Pratima Panday, the current principal.

Finding qualified people to teach was a major challenge. "I finished my bachelor's in education and became head mistress of the school at the age of 21," Nirmala Sharma recalls. "Many students used to teach in the school as well."

She adds: "There were four teachers who were college graduates. There was a librarian who had finished his intermediate studies. I remember that we had a Nepali teacher on the faculty. The salary I got was 200 rupees a month. Although that amount sounds ridiculous today, I was substantial then. The librarian was paid 200 rupees while the clerks were provided 156 rupees. The salaries were slightly increased later."

The expenses set aside for extra-curricular activities were insufficient, she said.

"Girls were only allowed skipping ropes and carom boards. I bought some badminton rackets for them. There used to be a two-storey building and 18 rooms were added later. In 1961, four more rooms were added."

"Classes were held from Grade 1 to 10," remembers Nirmala. The school now runs on the ten-plus-two system. "There were 150 students when I was the principal."

Donor agencies were interested in funding educational programmes. "The school management went looking for people willing

to help the school and the people of Dharan," recalls Narayan Devi Shrestha, another former principal.

Experts brought in by donor agencies concluded that rebuilding the school on the same spot was not feasible. The management planned to go to new premises.

"The principal met well-wishers and donors and got the new land," says Prabhu. The school got four bighas of land from the government. The new and well-equipped premises at Dharan 16 were built with the help of the Swiss Red Cross.

Pratima's efforts to organize the golden jubilee celebrations show her energy and determination — qualities that have driven countless people to build the school into what it is today. ■

**Now In Town**

**BOOK**

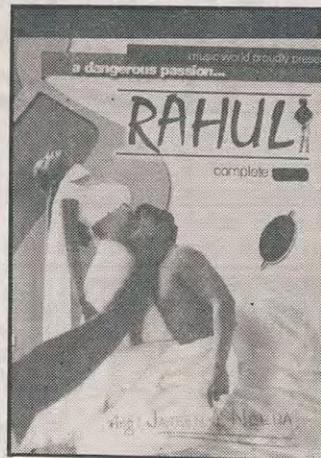
<b>Annual Survey of Nepalese Law 2000</b> Kumar Regmi / 2000	Rs. 250.00
<b>The Ancient Settlements of the Kathmandu Valley</b> S.R. Tiwari / 2001	Rs. 300.00
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(Source : Himalayan Book Center, Bagh Bazar, Kathmandu, Ph : 242085)

**Video (English)**

- Exit Wounds
- Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon
- Charlies Angles
- Bedazzled
- The Mexican
- Monkey Bone
- Kids
- Cast Away
- Vertical Limit
- What Women Want



**Hindi**

- Jodi No 1
- Rahul
- Mithu Maharaja
- Chori Chori Chupke Chupke
- Chhupa Rustam
- Raju Chacha
- Kahin Pyar Na Ho Jaye
- Mohabbatein
- Officer
- One 2 Ka Four

(Source : Super Star Video, New Road)



"Do not yearn for physical joy and, by so doing, discard the more permanent joy of inner calm and contentment."

- SATHYA SAI BABA

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MY WHAT?

BRILLIANT! I HAVEN'T JUST DONE ANY WRITINGS...

'COURSE YOU HAVEN'T. JUST PLAY ALONG... ACTUALLY I'M JUST

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TRYING TO SCOPE OUT THAT TASTY LITTLE NURSE PROGRAM YOU GOT GOIN'...

LUANN

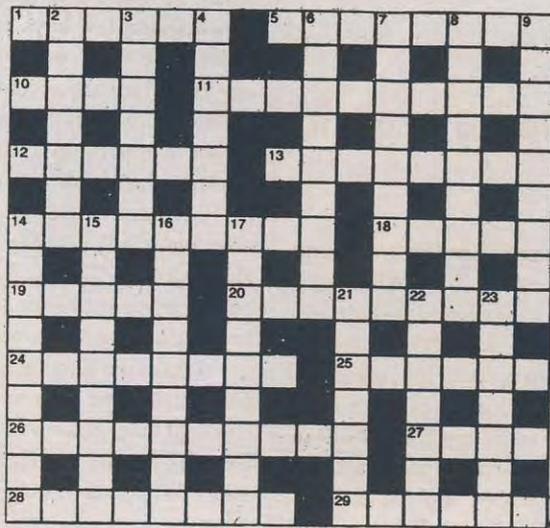
BERNICE, GUESS WHAT! I'M GOIN' TO DISNEYLAND! YEAH! MY WHOLE FAMILY'S GOIN'!

MAN, THE LAST TIME I WAS AT DISNEYLAND, I WAS ABOUT FIVE

I STILL REMEMBER PINOCCHIO, THOUGH. WONDER IF HE'LL REMEMBER ME...

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# CROSSWORD



## ACROSS

1. Jellyfish in sea to west of America (6)
5. Run-down theatre company launches appeal after a month (8)
10. Gibe made by Figaro, say, with out hesitation (4)
11. Yesman offered to kick alcohol, it's said (10)
12. Setter possibly rejected humorist's clue for wading bird (6)
13. Dips initially I not medieval manuscript containing Irish Gaelic (8)
14. He may have a craft and master at sea (9)
18. Italian who made violins in the morning, very early (5)
- Books about a certain music group (5)
20. Understanding an assembly (9)
24. Way one is taken in and so on, arousing pity (8)
25. Opinion about island is unacceptable (6)
26. Fairly good daily leaves room in this state? (3,2,5)
27. Bring down fastening device (4)
28. One who recovers and judges again? (8)
29. In Athens, almost ready for a little liquid (6)

## DOWN

2. Girl endlessly keen to captivate (7)
3. Not curved, like violin parts needing attention? (7)
4. A conspirator right up a tree! (7)
6. Small caft owned by yours truly in terrible state (9)
7. Constantly repeat ceremony, taking ecstasy and speed (9)
8. Asian captain is shaken, about to be replaced by king (9)
9. Hiding article about evidence of disease (9)
14. Can work upset Frenchman? It makes eating possible (3-6)
15. Added commentary to books held by girl and boy (9)
16. Boned steak from croft, oddly served in dish (9)
17. Size of attractive bar, say, due to be developed (9)
21. Flattering husband closely observed on entering (7)
22. Rubbish a French attorney noticed round building (7)
23. Old stone implement misplaced in hotel (7)

**Down:** 2. Enamour 3. Unbowed 4. Arbutus 6. Estaminet 7. Reiterate 8. Pakistani 9. Thrashing 14. Tin-opener 15. Annotated 16. Entrecote 17. Magnitude 21. Honeyed 22. Rotunda 23. Neolith 29. Drachm

**Across:** 1. Medusa 5. Decrepid 10. Barb 11. Bootlicker 12. Godwit 13. Immerses 14. Tradesman 18. Amati 19. Nonet 20. Gathering 24. Pathetic 25. Notion 26. Not so dusty 27. Nail 28. Redemer

NOILUTOS

# BRIDGE

**NORTH** 3-23  
 ♠ K Q 6 3  
 ♥ K J 10 8 3  
 ♦ 5  
 ♣ A 10 7

**WEST**                      **EAST**  
 ♠ 10 8 7 4 2              ♠ A 9 5  
 ♥ A 9 7 5                  ♥ Q 6 4 2  
 ♦ A 3 2                      ♦ 9 4  
 ♣ 3                              ♣ 9 6 4 2

**SOUTH**  
 ♠ J  
 ♥ —  
 ♦ K Q J 10 8 7 6  
 ♣ K Q J 8 5

Vulnerable: East-West  
 Dealer: East

The bidding:  
 East    South West North  
 Pass    5 ♦    All pass

Opening lead: Club trey

**"I wonder men dare trust themselves with men."**

— Shakespeare

"Sorry, partner. I should have given you a ruff," apologized East. "However, whether to lead a heart or a club was a pure guess."

"Had you trusted me, there would have been no guess," replied West. "Had you analyzed the problem more deeply, you would have found the setting trick."

With 12 cards in the minor suits, South blasted to five diamonds at this first turn. Against vulnerable opponents, his huge preempt could lose little and might create a substantial swing for his side.

West led his singleton club to dummy's ace, and South led a trump to his 10 and West's ace. West shifted to his spade four, East's ace winning as South dropped his jack.

With no future in spades, East was at the crossroads. He elected to lead a heart, playing partner for the heart ace because of South's preempt. Unfortunately for the defense, South ruffed and then claimed the rest.

Should East have led a club instead of a heart? West argued that he should have, and we side with West. There are two good reasons for leading a club.

After West won his trump ace, if he didn't want a club ruff, he should have tried to cash the heart ace before leading a spade. More convincing, with a singleton spade in South's hand, South's side suit rated to be clubs, marking West's opening lead as a certain singleton.

# DEWANG MEHTA

## Adieu Forever

India loses an IT wizard and Nepal a good friend

By ALLEN B. TULADHAR

When I first heard the news, my instant reaction was that it was the Friday the Thirteenth virus or prank that some sick people were starting. But alas, it was true and hard to believe. Even harder to believe after reading the stories on Dewang's death was that he was only 38.

My interactions with Dewang Mehta have been on various occasions, and always for very short period. I always found Dewang to be fleeting from one meeting in one city to another. It was in Kathmandu that we first



**Mehta:** Inspiring a generation

met, then in Delhi in the small NASSCOM (National Association of Software and Service Companies) office at Ashoka Hotel in the early days of NASSCOM and later in Hannover, Germany.

With the assistance of Microsoft, Unlimited had sponsored a trip of Dewang Mehta to Nepal. This was when he addressed an inaugural dinner of CAN Info Tech and also the seminar for South East Asian Regional Computer Confederation (SEARCC) in Kathmandu.

I find that I have a lot in common with Dewang. He also started his career as a journalist, as I did. He is also not educated

into the field of computers but later went into it by choice. Dewang is a chartered accountant by education. His insights into the computer industry with the South Asian perspective, his fight against piracy, his 'romance' with the media, Promoting ITes (IT enabled services) in this region, extensive work in the areas of office bearers of an association with him in NASSCOM and me at Computer Association of Nepal (CAN) are all areas that both Dewang and I share the same level of fervor and dedication.

One of the many curiosities I always had was to find out whether Dewang's hair was for real or it was a wig he was wearing... I guess I will never find out.

I was always vocal that we need to 'clone' and create another Dewang Mehta for the Nepalese software industry as well to do the magic of promoting Nepalese software overseas. Now with Dewang nowhere at sight, even that seems to be impossible, even though cloning technology seems to be possible now.

I clearly remember that Dewang used to start his presentations with a photo of Ganesh and start off by stating that in India, they pray to their computers as if they were gods.

I also remember a joke that Dewang used to say: "For the vacancy of a job for an accountant, there was an American and an

Indian who applied. During the interview, the American was asked what two plus two would be. He promptly took out his laptop, punched in a few keys and then answered, four. There was a good display of technology as well as the correct answer. But during the interview with the Indian, the applicant for the job went up to the interviewer and replied, what would you want the answer to be." I remember Dewang saying that Indians cannot only give the correct answer but also tailor the answer to anything that the customer wants, hence Indians were more successful in software and IT sector.

I wish the same was true in the acts of God and that the answer today could also be changed to what we want it to be— to have Dewang among us to tell us more of these jokes. Wherever you are, Dewang, Rest In Peace!

*(Allen is CEO of Unlimited Software Network Pvt. Ltd., a leading IT company in Kathmandu.)*

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