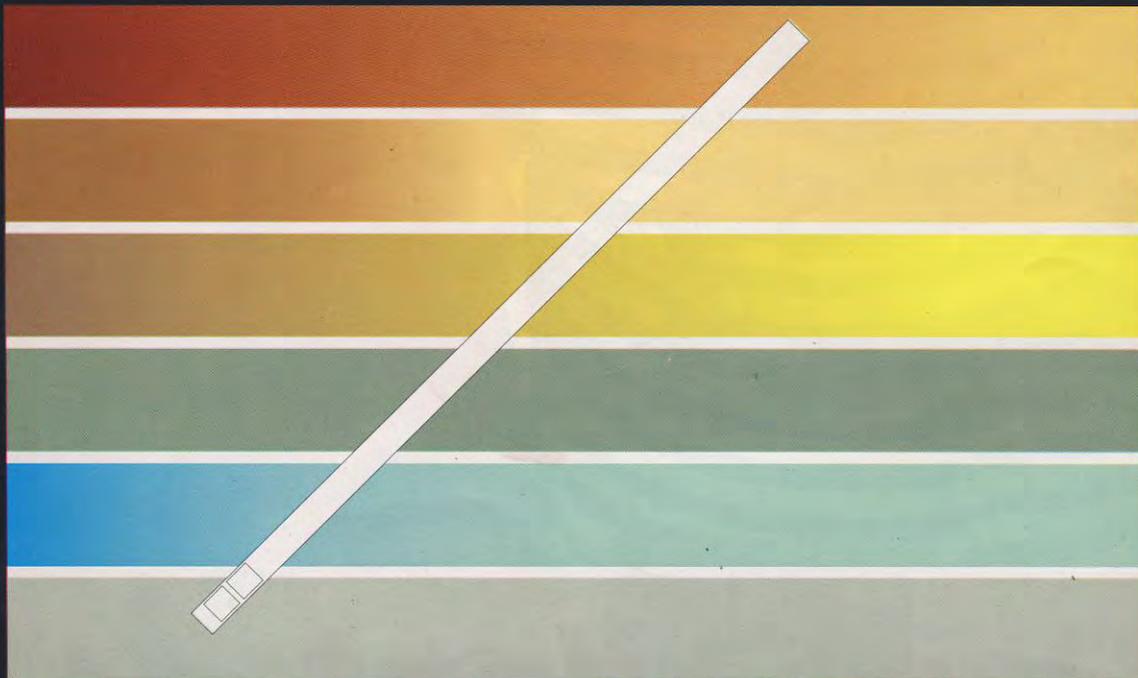


SPOTLIGHT

14-20 Sept, 2001

DIABETES

A SILENT KILLER



- KOIRALA ON A WHIRLWIND TOUR
- GOVT - MAOIST TALK
- VIEWPOINT OF DR. HARKA GURUNG
- ENCOUNTER WITH DR. BHOLA RIJAL

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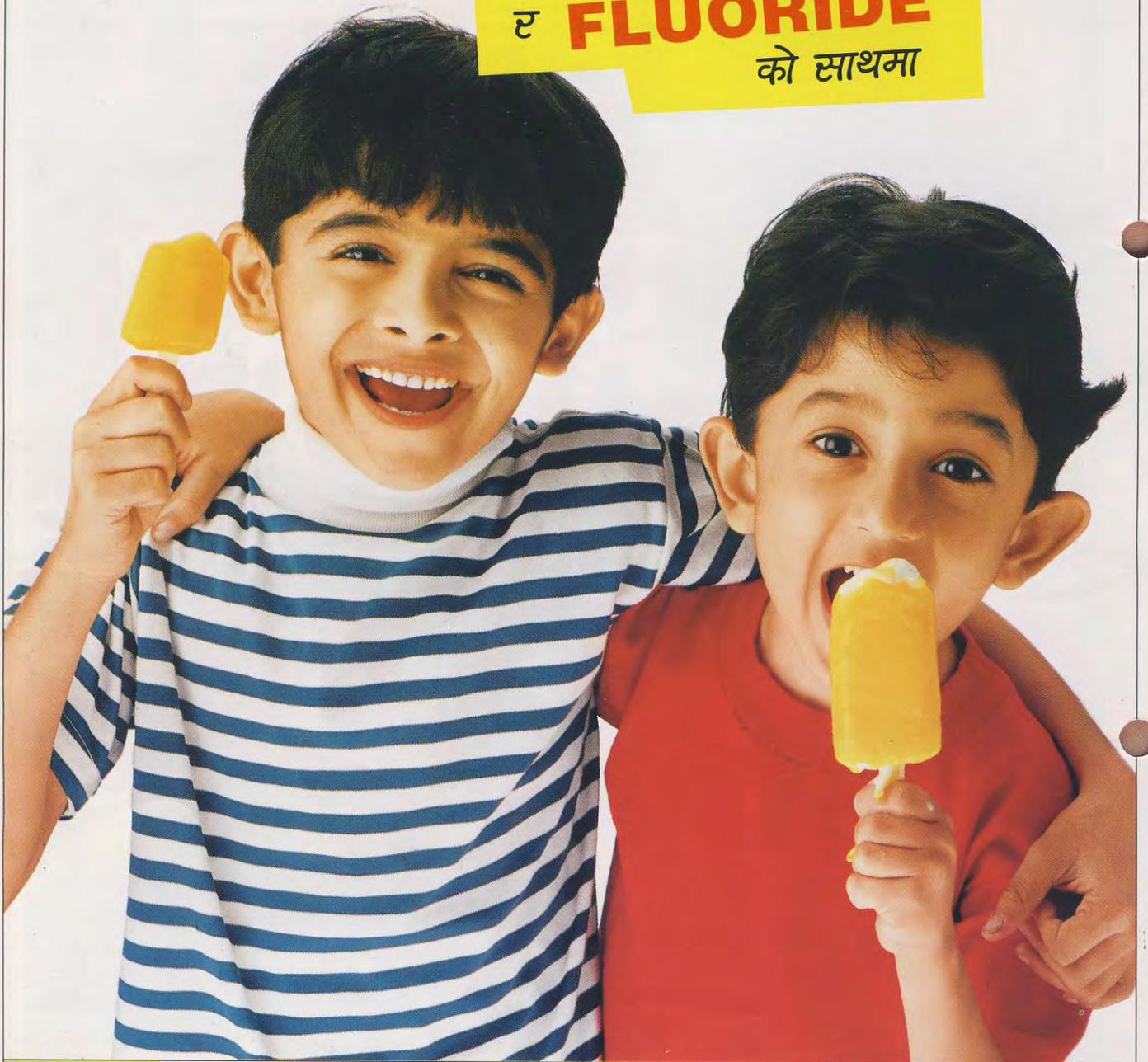
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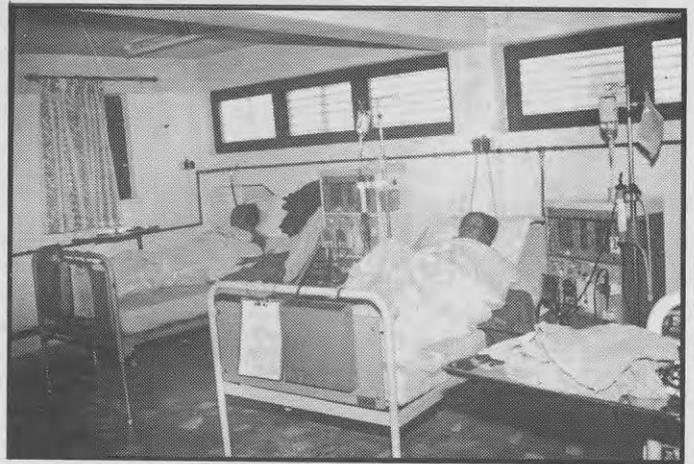


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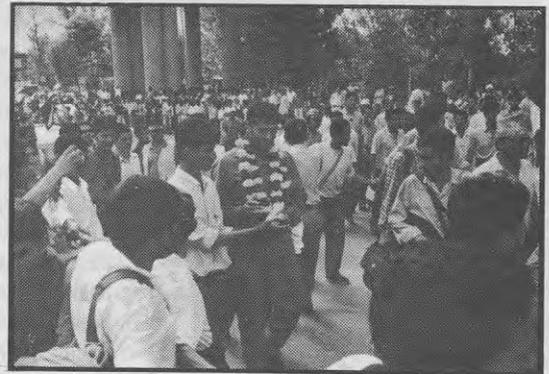
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COVER STORY : A Silent Killer

The sedentary lifestyles of urban Nepalis have triggered the onset of diseases like Diabetes

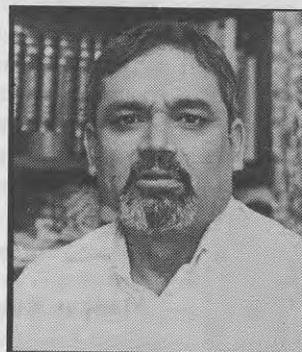
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GOVT. MAOIST TALKS : Crisis Of Confidence

The government and rebels prepare to sit for second round of talks amid building uneasiness on both sides.

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INTERVIEW : Amod M. Dixit

The expert on quakes Dixit talks about tremor hazards and the ill-preparations.

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SPOTLIGHT

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Chief Editor And Publisher
Madhav Kumar Rimal

Editor
Sarita Rimal

Managing Editor
Keshab Poudel

Associate Editor
Bhagirath Yogi

Senior Reporter
Sanjaya Dhakal

Reporter
Akshay Sharma

Design and Layout
Jyoti Singh

Photographer
Nishchal Chapagain

Art
M.S. Khokna

Legal Advisor
Advocate Lok Bhakta Rana

Marketing/Advertisement
Sarit Rimal (USA)

Marketing
Madan Kaji Basnet
Navin Kumar Maharjan
Madan Raj Poudel

Editorial Office
GPO Box 7256, Baluwatar, Kathmandu,
Tel : (977-1) 423127, Fax : (977-1) 417845
Chief Editor's : 435594
E-mail : spot@mail.com.np
Internet Add: <http://www.nepalnews.com/>
spotlight

Cover Design
Wordscape
GPO 8975, EPC 5620, Kathmandu Nepal,
Ph : 263098, 261831, , Fax : 977-1-439386

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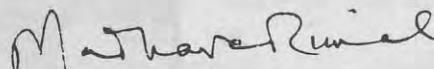
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EDITOR'S NOTE

The debacle faced by the tourism industry of Nepal has hit many tourism entrepreneur's and other infra-structures related with it very hard. It was further aggravated by the unstable law and order situation, the mis-management of the nation's flag carrier by the various governments and the national disaster in royal massacre at the royal palace. The understanding established between the Maoists and the government to end the uprising, the RNAC affair being straightened and the national grief giving way to normalcy have somewhat cleared the dark clouds and the tourism industry seems to be limping back to its track. The greatest setback Nepal's tourism industry has undergone in the last two years must be able to make us wiser not to put all the eggs in one basket. These last two years must have taught all the Nepali many more important lessons how to safeguard our tourism industry which is one of the pillars of our nation's economy.

* * *

The lukewarm reaction of the government to the pernicious publicity by the media of the friendly neighbor had totally failed to arrest the alarming drop in the tourist inflow which at one stage had reached almost 76%. Had it not been for the untiring efforts of the private sector, the scenario would have been much worse. For sometime past Nepal Tourism Board has been making Herculean endeavors to entice the tourists to include Nepal in their itinerary. It is reliably learnt the resources crunch has very badly hampered the Board's programs in foreign countries. If the government is serious about bringing the tourism industry to its former track, they have to sanction sufficient funds to the Board. The more you sow, the more you reap. We trust the government will not fail to take note of our humble advice. And there are a few other things the government has to implement if they want that tourism should contribute not only to strengthen existing infrastructures but expand them and thus generate more job opportunities and encourage new tourism oriented industries to be established. Nepal has a few very attractive religious places apart from Pashupatinath. The Baaraha Kshetra, the Mukti Kshetra and the Ram Janaki temple at Janakipur are popular pilgrimages with the huge Indian religious minded populace. Nepal has so far not been able to exploit them. If necessary attention is paid to make their visits interesting and comfortable, lakhs of Indian tourists are sure to throng these religious sites. And again, the government has to activate its foreign missions to make necessary publicity about Nepali tourism by providing them necessary funds and programs. The third important thing the government has to do urgently is to totally stop official interference in the workings of the national flag carrier — The Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation. But, so far all good advices have fallen on deaf ears as the corrupt politicians have turned the RNAC into a milch cow. No prime minister has taken any steps whatsoever to check corruption in the RNAC. Unfortunately prime ministers themselves have been the biggest culprits. What about Sher Bahadur Deuba in his second stint? As a matter of fact, the government should give serious consideration to privatize the Royal Nepalese Airlines Corporation. And the last but the most important thing the government has to do without a moment's delay is to take this matter up with the government of the friendly neighbor in the South. His Majesty's Government must be able to impress upon its counterpart in New Delhi that anti-Nepal publicity by the Indian media is not only very badly hurting Nepal's overall economy but providing very fertile ground to generate anti-India feelings in the minds of the Nepalese people. If India is really sincere in her protestations about her friendship towards her smaller neighbor, she has to prove it by her actions. Symptoms on the horizon have started becoming favorable. Now, it is upto His Majesty's Government to act and act precipitously for Nepal's tourism industry to blossom. ■



Madhav Kumar Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher

FORUM: Yuba Raj Pandey INTERVIEW: Mukunda Regmi

SPOTLIGHT

Peace Talks Negotiating The Non-Negotiable?

- NEPAL SPEAKS
- EARTHQUAKE TREMORS
- STOLEN ARTIFACTS
- ENCOUNTER WITH K. G. RAJBANSHI

Talk For Peace

Although an overwhelming majority of Nepalis are in favor of peace, the rigid stance adopted by the Maoist rebels could thwart the possibility of the talks succeeding ("Negotiating The Non-Negotiable", SPOTLIGHT, September 7). Both the government and the rebels must put the concerns of the people ahead of their own agendas and do their utmost to reach an expeditious compromise. In fact, by continuing with violence, the rebels are defeating their own objective by obstructing the development process. The talks between the government and the Maoists should, therefore, be guided by the concerns of the majority of the people.

Shishir Basnet
Sanepa

groups. This must not be allowed in the heart of capital. If the Maoists are sincere about building peace through dialogue, they must call off the program. Otherwise, the consequence could be fatal for Nepalis.

Dinesh Shrestha
Patan

Drunken Demand

The demand by the Maoists' sister organization to ban alcohol shows how insensitive they are to the livelihood of the people ("Topsy-Turvy", SPOTLIGHT, August 31). Although nobody can reject their argument that alcohol is the cause of many social problems, there can be no quick solution to this. You cannot just order industries to close down overnight and throw hundreds of thousands of people out of their jobs. The examples around the world, too, show that banning alcohol is not as simple as it is made out to be. In fact, in a country like ours where liquor is required in cultural festivities, a ban makes little sense.

Suraj KC
Chabahil

Hidden Agenda

By calling for the "institutionalization of republic" the Maoists are trying to weaken the only remaining strong institution of the country: the monarchy ("Negotiating The Non-Negotiable", SPOTLIGHT, September 7). Thrown off balance by the palace killings, the institution of monarchy was already in problem. Now this sinister demand by the rebels is causing further aggravation. Any sane Nepali would not want to hurt the monarchy. Hitting the symbol of national unity could jeopardize Nepal's nationhood. The Maoist leaders must understand the importance of this basic institution, which was recognized even by their guru Mao Zedong. Their sudden attack against monarchy smacks of a wider conspiracy to undermine

Nepal's independent identity.

Jeevan Gurung
Balkhu

No Solution

There seems to be no common ground between the government and the Maoists ("Negotiating The Non-Negotiable", SPOTLIGHT, September 7). How can the government accept the rebels' demand for a republic? And how can the rebels step down from their extreme positions on the negotiating table? There can be no compromise in between. The government has no authority to trample with the basic principles of the constitution, whereas the Maoist leadership cannot afford to make compromises that could spark a backlash from their cadres. The talks, therefore, may have been doomed from the start.

Rakesh Lamichhane
Kaldhara

Dishonesty By Rebels

Although the government is showing maximum restraint by avoiding confrontation with the rebels during the dialogue period, the latter are indulging in extortion and displaying their weapons ("Negotiating The Non-Negotiable", SPOTLIGHT, September 7). This clearly implies that the rebels are not committed to what they promised to the government. In the end, this situation would be favorable to the government. In case the talks fail, a large majority of people would blame the rebels and would even support security forces' operations that would eventually follow. The September 21 public program called by the rebels in Kathmandu is a provocative act. Although the constitution does not bar any party from holding peaceful programs, the rebels are exploiting this to organize a rally of armed

Internationalize The Issue

The article "Scarcity of Seriousness" (SPOTLIGHT, August 31) underscores how strong our position vis-à-vis the Bhutanese refugee issue is in terms of international law. It is clear that if we can advocate our case in the international court of law, we could stand to obtain even compensation for being forcibly asked to host refugees from a third country. Our diplomats and officers must study this point of view and pursue it to gain the upper hand in future talks on refugee repatriation. In case Bhutan fails to see our point, we must go for full-fledged internationalization of the issue. Otherwise, the talks would just drag on forever.

Sashi Kumar Chalise
Maharajgunj

King Gyanendra's First Interview

In his first media interview after his ascension to the throne three months back, King Gyanendra has said he will always strive to remove the woes of Nepali people while working within the framework of the constitution. In an interview given to Rastrabani weekly, the King said in a multiparty system, efforts should be made to see if demands being voiced from various quarters are in fact supported by the people. He was referring to the demands for a republican state put forward by the Maoists. In response to another question, the new monarch said there was no ambiguity regarding the role and mobilization of the army. When asked about the June 1 incident at the royal palace, the King said nobody should spread rumors taking advantage of the openness granted by the democratic polity. Regarding the issue of declaring Prince Paras as heir to the throne, the King said such an announcement will be made at an appropriate time. *Nepal Samacharpatra Sep. 5.*

Prime Minister Warns Maoists

In what is seen as his sternest warning after assuming office more than a month back, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has said the upcoming second round of talks between the government and Maoists could be hampered if the Maoists continued with the showing of arms during mass meetings, extortion,



Deuba

forceful collection of donation and seizing public vehicles. Such activities are against the commitment the Maoists made in writing during the first round of talks, the premier said. Addressing a function organized by the former MPs Club Nepal here Tuesday, Mr. Deuba also urged the Maoists to cancel their mass meetings and student gathering scheduled to be held at Open Air Theater on September 17 and 21 respectively. "Why do they need to bring in hundreds of thousands of people into Kathmandu when the Open Air Theater can't accommodate more than 35,000?" he asked. He also said the King was fully committed to democracy and the present constitution. *Leading dailies report Sep. 5.*

'Maoists Preparing To Attack Police Posts'

Taking advantage of the lax security in the aftermath of the truce with the government more than a month back, Maoist rebels have completed the job of gathering detailed information about security systems at different police posts in the country and are likely to mount an assault any time, reports said quoting top government officials. Senior police officers briefed Home Minister Khum Bahadur Khadka at a meeting Thursday on how the Maoist rebels were making use of the lax security arrangements over the last few weeks. The rebels have temporarily halted their assaults at ill-equipped police posts but reports say they are continuing activities including extortion, threats and armed mass meetings. *Compiled from reports.*

Envoys To The US And Belgium Appointed

The Council of Ministers on Thursday has decided to appoint member secretary at the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC), Jaya Pratap Rana, as the Royal Nepalese ambassador to the United States and Foreign Secretary Narayan Shumsher Thapa as ambassador to Belgium, a leading newspaper reported Friday, quoting sources. Former permanent representative of Nepal to the United Nations, Mr. Rana has worked in close

contact with King Gyanendra at the KMTNC and also has family relations with Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, the report said. Similarly, Secretary Thapa is going to retire from Shital Niwas within a few months. There has been no official announcement regarding these important appointments. *Kantipur, Sep. 7.*

Garment Industries Close Down

Nearly 95 percent of the garment industries in the country have been closed down amid threats and extortion by the underground Maoist party and its sister organizations, a leading newspaper said Friday, in its front-page report. "It used to be one of the most busiest time of the year for us. But now we have been forced to close down our factories out of fear," the daily quoted a garment entrepreneur who declined to be named. Industry sources said up to 200,000 workers have lost their employment directly or indirectly due to the Maoist threats. A garment entrepreneur said he has entered into agreement with the rebels to provide free lodging to Maoist activists between September 18 and 21. The Maoists have written letters to businessmen, factory owners, schools, transport operators and gas stations to provide them support in cash and kind to make their proposed mass meeting in the capital on September 21 a success, the report said. *Kantipur Sep. 7.*

Local People, Army Counter Rebels

As Maoist rebels continue acts of extortion, threats and intimidation in different parts of the country, the common people and security agencies have started retaliating against them, reports said. Kantipur daily reported Sunday that four Maoist supporters were injured seriously when local people attacked them in a northern village in the terai district of Parsa Saturday. Thousands of local villagers burned down ten houses in Jhabrahi village belonging to Maoist activists. Police had to intervene to control the violent crowd. In a separate incident, army personnel fired in the air to control an agitating crowd of Maoist rebels in their strong-

hold in western district of Gorkha Saturday. The rebels were demanding release of three of their comrades who were taken into custody by army personnel for carrying explosives. *Compiled from reports.*

All-Party Meet Urges Productive Talks

The all-party meet called by Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba Friday, on the eve of the second round of peace talks with the Maoist rebels, has urged both the sides to make the forthcoming talks successful through discussions. The meeting, participated in by all major political parties in the country, also urged both the sides to advance the process of talks by stopping actions involving force. The decision came amid widespread criticism of the Maoist activists for their activities like extortion, threat, intimidation of entrepreneurs, school owners and businessmen in the run up to their proposed mass meeting in the capital on September 21. Talking to reporters at Singha Durbar after the conclusion of the meeting, senior UML leader K. P. Sharma Oli said the peace talks should arrive at a conclusion as soon as possible. "It will not be in the interest of anyone to prolong talks," he said. Vice Chairman of Rastriya Prajatantra Party, Dr. Prakash Chandra Lohani, said the talks should be held within the framework of the country's constitution. During the first round of talks on August 30, both the government and the rebels had agreed to hold the second round of talks within two weeks (that is, within September 14). Though the venue and date for the second round of talks have not been made public, reports said the talks are likely to take place early next week. *Compiled from reports.*

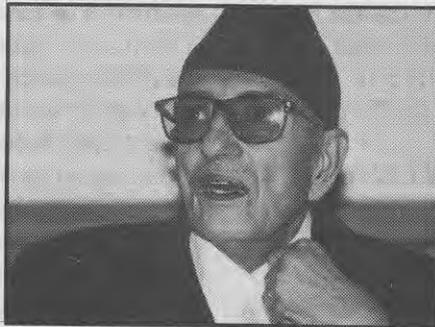
Defense Ministry Warns Maoists

In a statement issued Friday, the Defense Ministry has asked the CPN (Maoist) and its front organizations not to abet the Royal Nepal Army and other security personnel to join their organization. The ministry has also asked them to stop un-called-for pressure on the families of soldiers through threats that they will face action if their men do not quit the army, saying such action will provoke the people

and divert the army from steadfast loyalty to the nation. The ministry further said it was necessary to maintain patience and understanding at a time when the government and the Maoists are trying to resolve the problem through talks. It has urged people to dial phone number 100 in Kathmandu valley and call the district administration office or police post or the barracks of the Royal Nepal Army outside the valley in case of any such pressure. *RSS news agency Sep. 8.*

'Maoist Insurgency Backed By India And Palace'

Former premier and Nepali Congress President Girija Prasad Koirala has alleged that India and the royal palace were extending protection to the six-year-old Maoist insurgency. After inaugurating the photo exhibition on the life and times of late B.P. Koirala in the capital Thursday, the ruling party chief alleged that the palace was the originator of the terrorist outfit to which India has been providing shelter in its soil. "Are Indian intelligence agencies so weak that they don't know about the Maoists



Koirala

taking shelter in their territory?" he asked. After a long study, I came to the conclusion that India is supporting the Maoists by extending shelter to them, said Koirala. Referring to the failed Holeru operation a couple of months back, Koirala asked why the Royal Nepalese Army did not fight the rebels. "If the army had completed its operation (to rescue 70 policemen abducted by the rebels), the Maoists would have been finished off right there," he added. "The Maoists have been launching their terrorist activities to finish democracy and Nepal's national independence, not to establish communism. They have been work-

ing to fulfil the interests of certain forces," said Koirala. *Leading dailies report Sep. 7.*

India To Deploy Paramilitary Along Border

The government of India is going to deploy 70,000-strong elite para-military force along the entire Nepal-India border within the next one month replacing the present Border Security Force and Provisional Security Force, a leading daily reported Monday. The daily quoted an Indian security official as saying that the decision had been taken by the central government in view of the deteriorating security situation in Nepal in the aftermath of the June 1st royal massacre. The daily has quoted Nepali police officer as saying that India had decided to mobilize the force looking at the growing Maoist activities in Nepal and its links with the Revolutionary International Movement. The para-military force will have automatic weapons, tanks, launcher, mortar and armored vehicles under its disposal, the report said. *Kantipur Sep. 10.*

Koirala Announces Campaign

Former prime minister and president of the ruling Nepali Congress Girija Prasad Koirala has launched a nationwide campaign for what he called a "broader national democratic unity campaign" in the country. Addressing a function marked to commemorate 88th birth anniversary of late B.P. Koirala in western district of Syangja Sunday, the Congress president said such a campaign had become urgent to save the country from Maoist terror. He said he had informed all the political parties in the country that believed in the present constitution and also the King. "All of them can take part in this campaign." The septuagenarian leader said he would take a lead in the campaign and asked his party workers to follow him. Koirala said the ruling party had given mandate to the government to hold talks with the government but he said, "Neither the Nepali Congress nor the government could enter into agreement with the rebels on the issues identified as unalterable by the country's constitution." *Himalaya Times, Sep. 10.*



King Gyanendra visits the "Kumari Ghar" for auspicious puja.

A STATEMENT ISSUED BY RAJU ON SUNDAY SAID a new underground party named Communist Center of Nepal (Maoist) has been formed to launch an underground armed struggle based on the ideology formulated by Comrade Mao Zedong. Accusing the Maoist party of heading in a corrupt way and harboring "individualistic tendencies", the new party has called all the communists to move ahead in the path of armed rebellion, Himalaya Times daily reported. Meanwhile, 24 guerrillas including a local Maoist commander, Comrade Firoz, in the terai district of Rautahat, have left the Maoist party alleging the party leadership of ignoring their call for taking action against Maoist cadres involved in financial irregularities.

A STATE-OF-THE-ART CARDIOLOGY CENTER HAS been launched officially in Kathmandu. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba inaugurated the services offered by the Martyr Gangalal National Heart Center (MGNHC) amidst a function here Wednesday. The 60-bed center offers facilities like open and close heart surgeries, ICU, CCU, cath Lab, Angiography and other indoor services. The center was the joint effort of the government, civil society and donor agencies including the Rotary Club of Australia, said Dr. Bhagwan Koirala, executive director of the MGNHC.

NEPAL AND THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA HAVE SIGNED an agreement to operate air services. As per the agreement, airlines of Nepal will use Shanghai and airlines of Korea will be using Bangkok as intermediary points and take on 50 passengers each from both the points on Kathmandu-Seoul sector. The air services between the two countries will have to be operated within the purview of the aviation agreement, officials said. Secretary at the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Barun Prasad Shrestha and deputy minister at the Ministry of Works and Transport of the Republic of Korea Cho Woo-Hang signed on the unified air services

agreement on behalf of their respective governments.

THE JAPANESE EMBASSY IN KATHMANDU HAS provided a grant assistance of US\$ 33,450 (nearly Rs 2.5 million) for the implementation of the Manasalu Conservation Area Project. The grant has been provided under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Project scheme of the Japanese government in the fiscal year 2001. Declared a conservation area in 1998, KMTNC has been carrying out nature conservation activities in the area with a view to improve the socio-economic conditions of the local people leading to the conservation in the region.

GREEN (HARIYALI) NEPAL PARTY HAS DEMANDED the confiscation of unauthorized properties of political leaders who plundered the nation, of bureaucrats who looted the revenue, and of businessmen who looted the banks. The Central Committee meeting held under the chairmanship of Badri Prasad Khatiwoda on September 5, 2001, raised strong objection that the dialogue between the government and the Maoists raised no issue to penalize the looters. The meeting demanded to constitute all parties' government with common understanding to hold free and fair election and with less expense. It is stated in the decision of the meeting that all the parties in the parliament are responsible for the present maladies. The national government made out of these parties, therefore, will not be able to solve the present problem. If the unanimous understanding could not reach among the parties in parliament, parties outside the parliament, civil societies and intelligentsia, the problem of Maoists will not be solved, the meeting decided. The meeting has reaffirmed that the present Land Reform program is not revolutionary. Because of the imposition of land ceiling of ten Bighas, which will bring fragmentation and discourage the investment in agriculture, the agriculture production will not increase. The income from the ten Bighas of land will not be adequate enough to fund proper education to children and as such they will not be able to compete with the children of the urban areas neither in economy nor in education. The economic program, that aids to stop the trade and industries, close the restaurants creating unemployment to the poor, sink the investment and flight of wealth, is not going to be useful, the meeting observed. The meeting believed that the politics that hits the rural feudals and collects fund from the urban feudal is the proper one. The meeting also made demands to end the delay in making decision at the offices and courts, bribery and transgressions of the law, and demanded the compensation to the victims. Also it demanded for the recognition of the able and sincere staffs and making the local government clean and vibrant. The Judiciary is responsible to provide justice over the excesses of the administration, and thus, the party has sent a letter drawing attention of the Chief Justice to the glaring delay in making decision on the registered applications related to land. ■

"I am pledging to initiate the national campaign to free the nation and the people from the terror."

Girija Prasad Koirala, former Prime minister and the president of ruling Nepali Congress party, declaring "massive national unity campaign" against the Maoist violence, in Kantipur.

* * *

"Now it is up to the Maoists to assure the Nepalese people of peace."

Prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, saying that the government has been doing everything to make the dialogue successful, speaking at a public program.

* * *

"The time has not come for amending the present constitution. We should wait for at least 20 more years before doing that."

Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, former Prime minister, speaking at a public program.

* * *

"Is this the double standard of the Maoists leadership or are their cadres beyond their control?"

Madhav Kumar Nepal, leader of the main opposition and general secretary of the Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), expressing concern over the continuation of forcible donations and other violent activities despite the direction against the same by the Maoist

leadership, in Himalaya Times.

* * *

"Maoists should not sit in the dialogue with the demand for republic."

Kirtinidhi Bista, former Prime minister, in Bimarsha.

* * *

"When a youth like me could fall prey

to pick-pocketing so often, I wonder what happens to naive youths who come to Kathmandu from villages."

Kamal Khanal, a youth from Koteswor, expressing the alarming rise in pick-pocketing incidents in the capital, in Gorkhapatra.

* * *

"It is targeted at the large section of people who are unable to get the treatment thanks to poverty and lack of awareness."

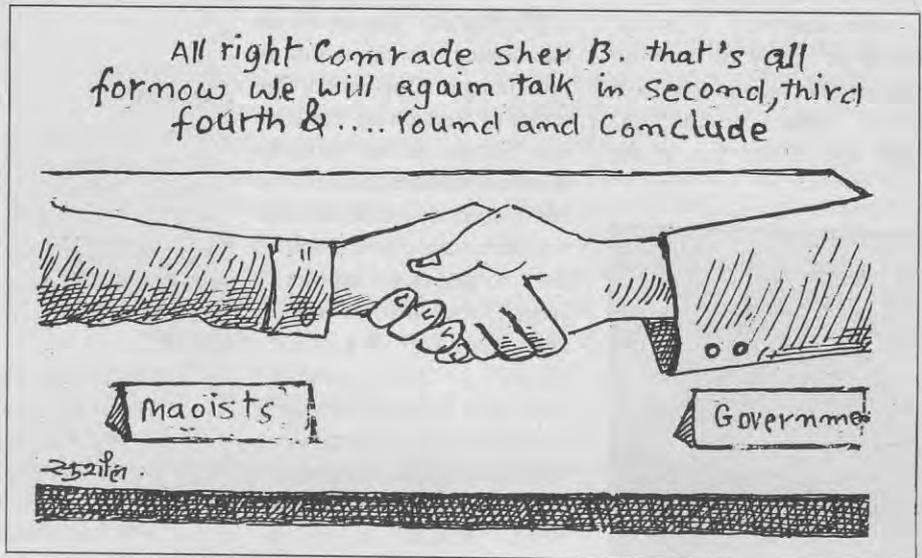
Dr. Shashanka Koirala, executive director of B.P. Koirala Lions Center for Ophthalmic Studies (BPKLCOS), unveiling a program to provide free cataract surgery to poor people in the country, in Himalaya Times.

* * *

"I am now watching the film Andha Kanoon of Amitabh Bachchan so as to solace myself how honest people are put to sufferings by law."

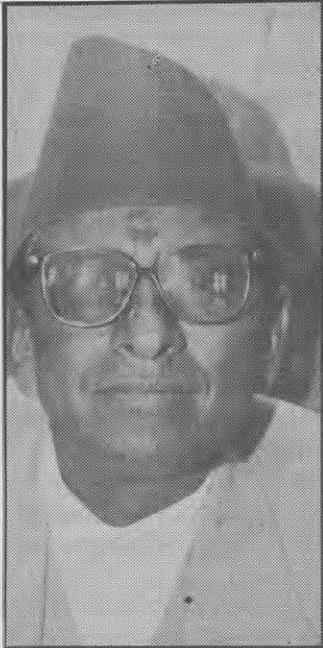
Siddha Raj Joshi, former member of RNAC board of directors, accused of impropriety in Landa air deal, who was recently released on bail after 100 days in jail, in The Kathmandu Post.

* * *



Ranabhat's Junket

If you were to ask House of Representatives Speaker Taranath Ranabhat what his hobby is, he would almost definitely say travelling. At a time the country is facing an unprecedented crisis, Ranabhat seems to be more interested in reaching foreign climes. What else could explain his 18-day trip to the



Ranabhat : Flying politician

West African state of Burkina Faso, accompanied by a jumbo delegation, to present a three-page statement? While the rest of the country spending hours upon hours trying to resolve its multiple woes, the speaker's team decided to take a 20-hour flight to Ouagadougou. Whatever the circumstances the country may have to face, Ranabhat couldn't miss becoming the first Nepali to lead a parliamentary delegation to Burkina Faso. The Rs 5.4 million bill is perhaps a small price for a speaker who wants himself heard far and wide.

Creative Comrade

Among Nepal's communist parties, there is no dearth of fertile minds, particularly when it comes to bestowing new epithets on others. Leader of the main opposition CPN-UML Madhav Kumar Nepal has coined various words in criticizing his opponents. The target of Nepal's ire this time was former prime minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, who announced at a public function that there was no need to amend the constitution for another 20 years. Nepal lost no time in christening the ex-premier's views "Bhattaraipath" (Bhattarai's way). Regardless of whether the Congress septuagenarian liked the name of this new political thought, Nepal's pleasure at his creativity knew no bounds.

Deuba's Duality

After a brief honeymoon, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has come under pressure after the main opposition CPN-UML and other left parties announced that they would not allow the Land Reform Amendment Bill to pass without certain amendments. Within his own party, Deuba is in no position to push through any reduction in the ceiling of land. So Deuba has decided to adopt a two-track policy. When he meets the leader of the main opposition, the premier supports his ceiling. When Deuba discusses the issue with his party colleagues, he backs their proposal. As a result, nobody is ready to predict what the final shape of the bill would be.

Clubbing On

Nepalese leaders are par-

REVELATION

'The Constitution And Laws Are Being Openly Violated'

— RABINDRA NATH SHARMA

Former minister **RABINDRA NATH SHARMA** is a central committee member of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party, the second largest opposition party in parliament. Sharma, who has been involved in politics for the last five decades, is known for his political acumen. He spoke to SPOTLIGHT on various issues of contemporary politics. Excerpts:



How do you see the current political situation?

We need to work to end the political uncertainty as soon as possible. We want results from the government-Maoist talks soon. If we allow the government to continue with this situation for too long, the country's sovereignty will be in danger.

How do you see the activities of Maoists after the first round of talks?

I have not seen the level of anarchy of the past month in the last six years of the Maoist insurgency. The constitution and laws are being openly violated.

Do you see any possibility of ending the Maoist insurgency through talks?

As the Maoists have not changed their stand, I don't think the government is in a position to make compromises. The Maoists are still demanding a republic and the abolition of parliamentary democracy. The all-party meeting has clearly told the government not to go beyond the constitution. I think the government will have to clarify its stand on the issues raised by the Maoists.

How do you see the Maoist rally scheduled for September 21?

The government cannot stop any peaceful demonstration, but the organizers must prove that their activities are not going to be violent. Given the experience, I don't think the rally will be peaceful.

What should be done now?

All political forces that believe in parliamentary democracy should come closer. If politicians are really sincere to the cause of country, they have to take into confidence the King and maintain good relations with India and China. Only then can democracy and country survive.

ticularly adept in identifying where their interest lies. After the Supreme Court struck down the provision of pensions for former MPs, our ex-legislators sprung into action to unite for their cause by launching a club. Although

the organization doesn't look like it would contribute much to the nation, it would provide former MPs a platform to push their own agenda. And who knows what kind of proposals the fraternity would float for its common cause? ■

KOIRALA'S CHARGE

Who Are The Maoists?

Girija Prasad Koirala's criticism of the palace and India for supporting the Maoists revitalizes the debate

By KESHAB POUDEL

After maintaining relative silence since resigning in July, former prime minister and Nepali Congress president Girija Prasad Koirala has fueled a new round of debate on the Maoist insurgency by accusing the palace and India of supporting the rebels.

Koirala, who was prime minister for more than eight of the 12 years since the restoration of democracy 1990, made the allegation as Maoist activists continued with extortion, forced donations and intimidation even after they agreed to a cease-fire with the government.

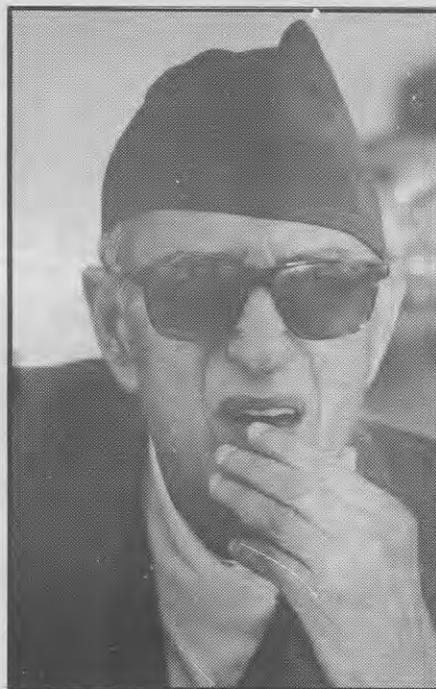
The ruling party chief also announced that he would go on a nationwide whirlwind tour to boost the morale of the people against terrorism. At a time when many Congress leaders are afraid of visiting their constituency, Koirala's announcement underscored his fighting zeal. The political message: he is certainly not a spent force.

Although leader of main opposition CPN-UML Madhav Kumar Nepal, a former defense and foreign minister, also charged India, the palace and the Nepali Congress with promoting the Maoist insurgency two weeks ago, his comments did not create the kind of furor Koirala's have.

The Royal Palace and the Indian Embassy reacted immediately to Koirala's charges (The Kathmandu Post Sep. 8, 2001). The strong reaction to Koirala's statement from various quarters is understandable. The former prime minister, who is described by left political parties as being soft on India, expressed anger over India's decision to provide shelter to the Maoists, who are waging a "people's war" to topple the constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy.

Koirala's statement was widely covered by major Indian newspapers as well. On the other hand, UML general secretary Nepal's statement was ignored, as it did not carry much weight. After all, Nepalese communists have always been regarded as India baiters.

"The palace is the originator and India is the guardian of the Maoists," Koirala claimed at a public function. "Doesn't



Koirala : Again, in the news

India know that the Maoists who have been launching terrorist activities in Nepal are living in India? Is India's intelligence network so weak?" he asked. "I don't know why Indians are giving shelter to the Maoists," he said. (Kantipur/Spacetime September 7)

Koirala's statement came after a group of Nepalese communist leaders, including UML general secretary Nepal, met top Maoist leaders, including Chairman

Prachanda, in the Indian city of Silguri in West Bengal state, which is ruled by the Communist Party of India-Marxists. Interestingly, Koirala made the accusation at a time when the government of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and Maoists completed the first round of peace talks and were in the process of starting the second phase.

The Congress chief made the allegation while inaugurating a photo exhibition organized to commemorate the 88th birth anniversary of B.P. Koirala, who ended his eight-year exile in India by returning to Nepal in 1976 with a policy of national reconciliation.

Supporters of Prime Minister Deuba and some communist leaders accused Koirala of trying to sabotage the talks with Maoists. "As a former prime minister, Girija Prasad Koirala must prove his allegations in parliament," said Lilamani Pokharel, MP and president of United People's Forum.

Others also questioned Koirala's remarks, accusing him with violating the dignity of the prime ministerial position. "This is an aggression against dignity (maryada). When Koirala and Nepal met Indian Foreign and Defense Minister Jaswant Singh during his recent visit to Nepal, both of them were understood to have kept mum on the issue. Did Nepal come to know [of India's involvement] only after his meeting with Prachanda in Silguri? And did Koirala acquire this information only after his resignation? They have to prove their allegations in parliament," wrote Yubaraj Ghimire, editor of Kantipur daily, in his column this week.

Koirala and Nepal are not the first political leaders to raise the issue in public. Former prime minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai made similar allegations while he was in office. Then-foreign minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat brought up the issue, in vain, with his counterpart, Jaswant Singh, two years ago.

Regardless of the impact Koirala's allegation may have on the peace talks, the fact that a leader of his stature has spoken in this way would provide sufficient fuel to extend the debate over the genesis of the Maoist insurgency. ■

EDUCATION

Bitter Lesson

Fake certificates and false hopes have created a class of frustrated families

By AKSHAY SHARMA

Fake certificates have dominated news headlines, especially after parliamentary questioning the credentials of the high and mighty. The following conversation, which took place at friend's house, provides a glimpse into how one family has taken this evident erosion of the value of education.

"Guess, what father? I've been accepted by Kathmandu University, Saint Xavier's College," said the son.

"That's just great, son," the father said. "But are you sure you want to go to college?"

"But, father, you always said the only thing one needed is a good college education," the son said.

"I know a lot of people who are big wheels in the country today never had a university education. You know my very successful friend in Baneswor; he's never entered a college. He's one of the movers and the shakers in the country," said the father.

"But, you went to college," my friend stated.

"If I had known what I know now, I would never have made that mistake. I wasted nearly two decades of my life studying. I would have been driving a taxi then instead of wasting my parents' money on books and fees. Just because I made the mistake is no reason that you have to," the father said.

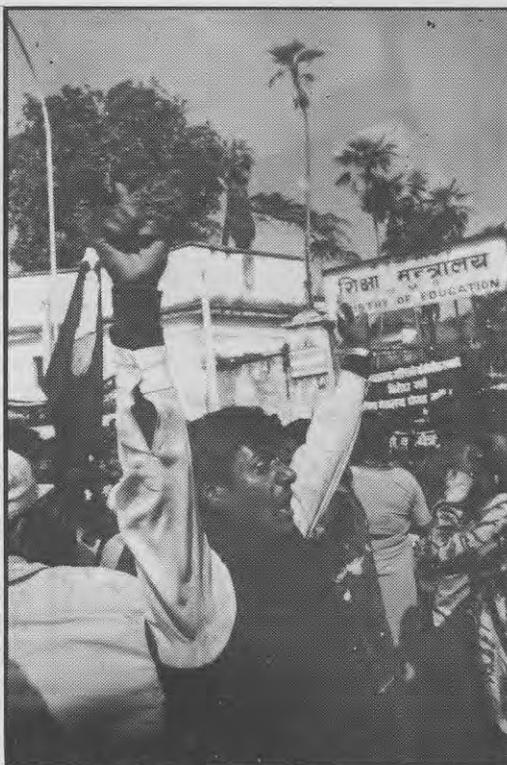
"I expected that you'd be pleased that I got enrolled into an Ivy League of Kathmandu," the son added.

"Just because these colleges accepted you doesn't mean you should join them. I hate to see them load you up with all the intellectual nonsense that can mess you up for the rest of your life. You already have a brilliant mind. Besides, every col-

lege that has accepted you is a part of the elitist establishment. By the time you graduate, you will think that you are better than everybody else." The father's answer had us both perplexed for sometime.

"All I want is to go to a good college," the son replied.

"You say this now because you are young and idealistic. But when you get



Ministry of Education : Rising demands

older, you will discover it is not the college but the man that matters. One of my friend's sons couldn't do well and failed his exams. He is now studying in a foreign university far better than the colleges that have accepted you. He bought a fake certificate from Bihar," the father said.

Except sighing and coughing, I hadn't uttered a sound. I said, "It's a great prob-

lem, these fake certificates, isn't it," a remark I think nobody noticed.

"What do you want me to do, father?" the son asked.

"It's your decision, son. I don't want to influence you in anyway. But if I were your age, I would backpack and trek across the country. I've never seen so many beautiful places in this country. Besides, backpacking across the country will teach you more than any of the fancy institutions," the father added.

"Father, can I ask you a question?" the son said after a while.

"Go ahead," was the gruff reply.

"Are we broke?"

"No, but if you go to one of those institutions we will certainly be."

"OK then I will go to the cheapest public college under the wing of Tribhuvan University," the son said in a barely audible dismal voice. "It had been always one of my choices."

"Thanks son, you just saved the old ship from sinking," the father said.

"There has been a massive exodus of brilliant young Nepalese abroad. Some go to work and some merely to escape from their responsibilities here," the father said.

"What about studying in India?" the son asked

Annoyed by the feeble conclusion of the son, the father added, "You're ---." And then followed a language that a less sweet tempered man than my friend would probably have been offended by.

If I had begun in some other place to tell this story, I would have likely told it to the end. But the topic was education qualifications and the conclusion was, there's a lot to a successful life than degrees. The stairs that lead to success, the stairs that never seem to be the same stairs, from one day to another, now they are steep, and now shallow, and now long, and now short, and now dangerous and now safe.

There are institutions in Nepal and around the world that offer better horizons. But the increase in the number of fake university degrees, usually traced to Bihar, is helping to make certificates valueless in the long run. ■

DURBAN CONFERENCE

Caught In Controversies

Although plagued by contentions and altercations, the UN-sponsored world conference on racism ended with a message of harmony

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

First, the Indians wanted the caste issue off the agenda, saying it was a purely domestic social issue. Then, the Israelis were peeved by attempts to equate Zionism with racism. Officials from the United States and Israel walked out of the conference midway to protest against the attempt to demonize Israel. But most contentious among all the issues was the one on slavery, which triggered fierce debates and intense negotiations. The conference was hardly a smooth affair. It went on for an extra day to reach agreement on a consensus declaration.

While African countries wanted Western countries, which benefited from the practice of slavery, to tender an explicit apology and even forward compensation, the latter opposed, fearing that would unleash the floodgates of lawsuits demanding the same. The final declaration toned down the differences and declared "slavery and the slave trade are a crime against humanity and should always have been so".

Indians lobbied hard and succeeded in putting the issue of caste off the conference's agenda despite the efforts of Dalits (untouchables) and other rights organizations to equate India's caste-based discrimination with racism.

The final text of the conference also succeeded in soothing the jittery nerves of Israelis by toning down the section that dealt with the Middle East — the subject that was in the center of the debate right through the conference.

In the end, the conference — as the Kenyan mediator in the talks, Amina Mohamed, was quoted to have said by the Associated Press — came up with the document that was "far from satisfactory,

is terribly imperfect, but that provides a basis to build on".

Nepal, too, had sent a big delegation to the Durban conference, including representatives of the government as well as the non-governmental organizations (NGO). "Although, it will be difficult to pinpoint how Nepal can benefit from the

speaks volumes about the sea change the world is witnessing towards the restoration of human dignity. "This country has given the whole world a wonderful example. We should never forget that it was civil society that took the lead in the struggle against apartheid. Nor should we forget that it was an international struggle, which mobilised people all over the world. You could almost say that it marked the beginning of global civil society," said Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, addressing a forum of NGOs in Durban.

Annan rejoiced at the participation of oppressed groups like the Roma or Sinti from Europe; the victims of discrimination based on work and descent from



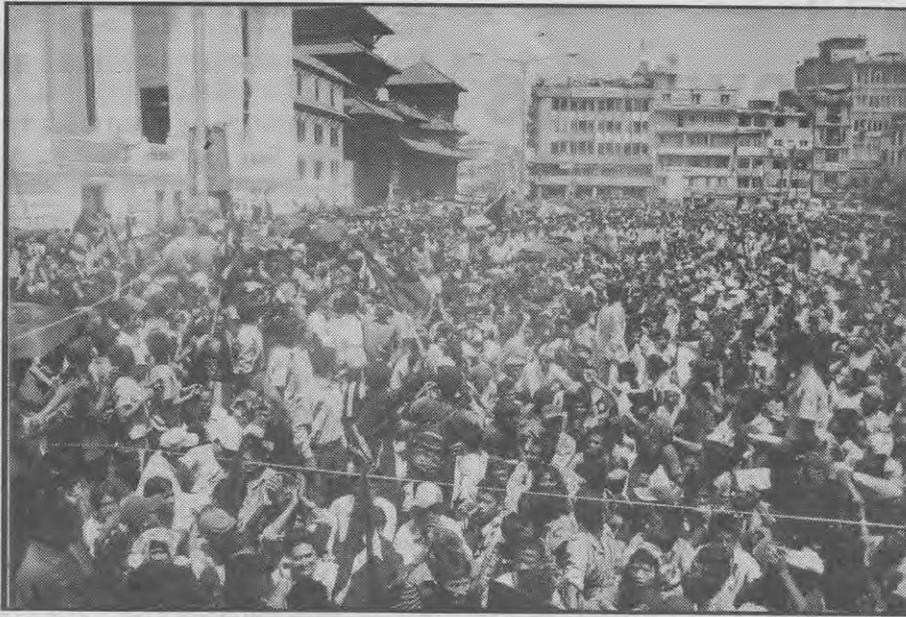
Tharu women of Nepal : Need to address their issues

conference itself, it will definitely help receive the positive messages from the meet. It is great that issues like racism, discrimination and other rights abuses were discussed in such a big international gathering," said an NGO activist.

Krishna Pahadi, President of Human Rights and Peace Society (HURPES) was more emphatic. "In the context of the conference's significance to South Asian region, we are disappointed that the issue of caste-based discrimination and oppression of Dalits were sidelined," he said.

Besides, the fact that the conference was held in South Africa, a country reeling under apartheid until fairly recently,

South Asia, Japan and West Africa; the people of African descent from the Americas and organizations of migrant workers. "I also see groups which up to now have focused on many different issues — poverty; HIV/AIDS or other disabilities; youth; gender; trafficking and prostitution; religious intolerance; conflict; the environment; — and, of course, human rights and the rights of minorities. You are here because you have discovered that racism intersects with every one of those issues. It aggravates every other form of oppression and discrimination. As long as it persists, the disadvantaged have little hope of escape." ■



Maoist's program in Basantapur : Crowded gathering

GOVT.-MAOIST TALKS

Crisis Of Confidence

Despite trading accusations over truce violations, both sides are meeting for a second round of talks this week

By BHAGIRATH YOGI

The hopes that had soared with the first round of talks between the government and Maoist rebels on August 30 at Godavari were dashed as the latter stepped up their campaign to raise forced 'donations' on the eve of their proposed mass meeting in the capital next Friday (September 21).

From big business houses to small-time traders, from schools and colleges to private firms and organizations, from commission agents to retail shopkeepers, virtually nobody was safe from the forced fund raising, intimidation and threats meted out by the Maoist cadres. After repeated statements issued by the Home Ministry failed to restore confidence among people, police had to intervene in the 'people's court' that was delivering 'justice' at the headquarters of ANNFSU (Revolutionary), the Maoists' student wing, at Bhurungkhel early this week and rescued five businessmen, including B.L. Sharma.

The Maoist activities not only invited confrontation with local people in districts including Parsa and Banke, even the Defense Ministry had to issue a stern warning to the Maoists and their front organizations not to abet the Royal Nepal Army and other security personnel to join their organization. The ministry asked them to stop uncalled-for pressure on the families of soldiers through threats. The army even opened fire in the air in Gorkha when a violent crowd proceeded toward the barracks where the army had taken into custody three Maoist activists with explosives.

Throughout last fortnight, it seemed the Maoist activists had a field day to do whatever they wanted, as the government remained a mute spectator. Amid growing resentment, none other than Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba himself warned the rebels to stop such activities. "Though I am still hopeful about the peaceful resolution of the problem, the Maoists' activities don't substantiate that," said the pre-

mier.

The rebel leaders, too, accused the government of using force to harass their cadres. Addressing a rally of Maoist cadres in Rolpa Monday, one of the Maoist negotiators, Top Bahadur Rayamajhi, accused the government of trying to disrupt the talks. Another Maoist negotiator, Agni Sapkota, told the party's meeting in Rukum the same day that talks, too, were a political battle. "Now we are going in the front of talks and will return victorious."

As both sides seem to be using the peace talks tactically (See box), analysts say the outcome of the second round of negotiations will be crucial in determining the course of peaceful settlement in the days ahead. Despite recent problems, human rights activists are optimistic that the peace process will continue. "Maoists have said they will present their agenda and demands in the second round of talks," said Padma Ratna Tuladhar, one of the facilitators in the first round of talks. "The government, too, has expressed its commitment to move forward the peace process."

According to Tuladhar, the present confusion has resulted as the government and the rebels agreed to truce more than a month back but did not make public how it would be organized. "There should be a code of conduct for the government, the Maoists as well as the facilitators," said Tuladhar. "We have asked both sides to be patient."

Peace activists say the failure of the talks would lead the country toward the civil war. "Our country is not in a position to face the situation that would emerge if the peace talks failed," said Sudip Pathak, president of Human Rights Organization and convener of People's Solidarity for Peace Campaign (PSPC). In order to create public pressure in favor of talks, the PSPC is going to organize a nationwide peace rally on September 14.

Despite such efforts from the level of civil society, critics say there is little both sides can agree on. With the Maoists harping on no less than an interim government, constituent assembly and institutional development of republic and the government in no position to compromise against the spirit of the constitution (that has termed multi-party democracy, constitutional monarchy and people's fundamental rights as unalterable) a common platform seems

as distant as ever.

But those watching recent developments within the country and outside and knowing the compulsion of the Maoist leadership to consolidate their gains and prevent their movement from heading toward anarchy say some sort of understanding is inevitable. Recent allegations by ruling Nepali Congress president Girija Prasad Koirala and leader of the main opposition Madhav Kumar Nepal about the forces backing the Maoists have also forced the rebels to bring out their real intentions.

Their withdrawal from the talks will bring them face to face with the Royal Nepalese Army which they want to avoid as much as possible, say analysts. Whether the talks on the table will determine the fate of the six-year-old insurgency or whether a solution will depend on certain give and take at some higher level within the country or even a foreign capital remains to be seen. ■

Govt. Strategy

- Continue to pressurize the Maoists but not to the level that could disrupt talks
- Try to restore people's confidence by mobilizing security agencies
- Isolate the Maoists politically, gain domestic and international support by expressing commitment toward negotiated settlement
- Carefully watch Maoist moves, devise counter-insurgency strategies and put pressure on the Maoists in the table of negotiations

Maoist Strategy

- Organize huge mass meetings to gain political mileage and orient the cadres toward open politics
- Mobilize front organizations in fund raising and other campaigns
- Position the party as the only radical, left party and broad-base its support
- Re-group and re-arrange its rank and file, give impression to the cadres that the leadership will not sell out to the 'old regime'
- Try to control further damage from popular backlash, send message to the international community that the party is sincere toward the talks, at the same time prepare for the 'grand finale'

KODARI HIGHWAY Costly Closure

Nepal's only road link to the Tibet Autonomous Region of China has remained blocked for a month, leading to

By A CORRESPONDENT

The customs point at Kodari has lost millions of rupees in revenue as the export-import business between Nepal and China is virtually at a standstill after the closure of the road link. However, officials are yet to take any significant step toward reopening the vital Kodari highway.

As Minister of Physical Planning and Roads Chiranjibi Wagle is said to be busy with negotiations with the Maoists rebels, the ministry is yet to direct the Department of Roads to expedite work on reopening the highway.

The condition of sector linking Barabise and the border town of Kodari is in a particularly de-

plorable condition, as the government has not allocated sufficient resources for maintenance. After the construction of the Bhotekoshi power plant, the condition of road has deteriorated further. Nepal and China have an annual trade of about Rs 12 billion and Nepal imports over 80 percent of Chinese goods from Kodari.

Strategically very sensitive, the Kathmandu-Kodari highway has faced similar situations in the past. The government does not seem sensitive to need to upgrade the quality of road in order to facilitate Nepal's trade with China.

As China is building a modern rail-road into Tibet by 2005, Nepal may get another easy transit route to the sea via the northern border. The blockade of the Kodari highway also disturbed the trans-

portation of the essential goods, including rice, to the northern Himalayan districts of Nepal. Last year, the government supplied more than 100 tons of rice to Humla, Mustang and Dolpa through the highway.

Because of the closure of the road, Nepal Food Corporation's plan to send more food to the northern Himalayan districts before the onset of winter has been



Kodari check-point : Busy route

badly affected. "If the road remains closed, Nepal's northern districts may have to face a severe shortage of foodstuff in the coming winter," says a senior official at the corporation.

As the road is pivotal to Nepal's economy, many people wonder why the Department of Roads is so slow in acting. Even with 100 trucks full of goods lying stranded, nobody in officialdom seems concerned about reopening the road.

China and Nepal have agreed to build another road linking Syaphrubeshi-Rasuwadhi, but construction is yet to begin. At a time when the government has been unable to clear the debris on the existing road for a month, how quick it would move to construct 24 kilometers of the new road is open to question. ■

INDUSTRIAL INSECURITY From Bad To Worse

The entire business sector is dispirited by law and order crumbling at an alarming pace

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

The mood of the industrial and business sector can be best gauged by the pensive advertisement campaign recently launched by the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI). The major newspapers carried poignant advertisements depicting a serious law-and-order situation and requesting "all concerned" to help abate the growing tension and warning that it would ultimately affect "us" - the general public.

The threats, intimidation and forced fund-raising initiated by Maoist-affiliated organizations have thrown the business sector into confusion and chaos. Contrary to expectations that the situation would improve with the government and rebels sitting down for talks, an upsurge in the activities of Maoists' sister organizations has led to a worsening condition.

"The sector is on the verge of collapse. If there is no respite soon, the private sector has already made up its mind to close shop," said Rajendra Kumar Khetan, a prominent industrialist and second vice-president of the FNCCI.

Last week, the federation organized an interaction program inviting the home as well as finance ministers to listen to their concerns. The ministers tried to soothe the nerves of an anxious business community by saying the present situation would not last long and that the government would take stern action if the rebels continued their terror tactics.

"We are keeping our fingers crossed that the government will do something soon. Time is running out fast," said Khetan.

The business community is particularly concerned by the heightened mobility of sister organizations of the Maoists.

"On the one hand, preparations are being made for a dialogue between the government and the Maoists, while on the other, pro-Maoist workers and women's groups, in particular, are exerting pressures, as a result of which the industrial atmosphere has deteriorated, and they have become insecure," read the statement by the FNCCI. The incidents of arson and vandalism that have occurred in various industries have also shocked the FNCCI.

The federation has also expressed serious concern about the possibility of industrial unrest breaking out in the country as a result of the various demands presented before the hotels, readymade garment, carpet and other industries by the All Nepal Workers Association (Revolutionary).

Apart from pointing fingers at rebels for the present gloom, some have even questioned the role of businessmen who, directly or indirectly, helped the Maoist-affiliated groups reach their current state by agreeing to their extortion demands.

"Ever since the Maoist insurgency broke out, the rebels have clandestinely or openly been demanding funds from local as well as central businessmen. In-

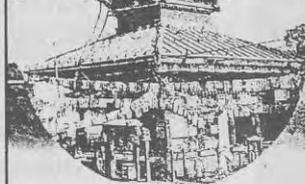
stead of strengthening the hands of the government, some businessmen helped rebels. Consequently they are facing the music now," said one official on condition of anonymity. The official feared such practice could lead to a situation like in Colombia where big business houses employ private armies for security.

"I agree that neither the government nor the business community were serious enough at first. It was widely thought that the problem was a short-term one. But it took a political dimension very quickly and now we are in a quandary. In fact, the business community faces difficulty from both the Maoists as well as the police, who harass them for helping the rebels," said Khetan.

As the crucial talks between the government and the Maoists are going on, the entire business community is anxiously waiting for the result that could "make or break" their future. ■

Picturesque and Peaceful a Pilgrimage with Pleasure

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ATTACKS ON US

Terror Of Terrorism

The devastating suicide attacks in New York and Washington underscore the weakness of the global security system in the fight against terrorism

By KESHAB POUDEL

The massive terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center twin towers in New York City and on the Pentagon, headquarters of the US military in Washington, killing what are believed to be thousands of innocent people, have sent shock waves across the world, including Nepal.

The shock experienced by the Nepalese people is understandable, as they have been facing a drastic upsurge in violent activities in recent years. If the world's sole surviving superpower is not safe from terrorist attacks, can any country feel safe?

Those responsible for planning and executing the worst terrorist attacks on US soil on September 11 have demonstrated the extent of their network and coordination in breaching US intelligence system and attacking the heart of

the US defense and financial centers.

The deadly lapses in the world's best-equipped intelligence network and airport safety system will alter the way in which the international security debate will be discussed in the period ahead. US officials have compared Tuesday's attacks with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, which drew the United States into the Second World War.

Nepal, which saw one hijacking in its five-decade-long aviation history, paid a heavy price for small lapses in its security. Indian Airlines suspended its flights to Kathmandu for six months, expressing serious concerns about security at Tribhuvan International Airport. The hijacking of four aircraft from such high-security airports in the United States proves that no country may be capable of providing fool-proof anti-terrorism mechanisms. This is the first time in US history that a suicide mission,

widely suspected to have been led by a fundamentalist Islamic group, has wreaked such unrecoverable damage in a planned manner.

Till writing this story on Wednesday evening, no casualty figures have been made public, as officials are sifting through the wreckage and piecing together information available in bits in pieces. Nevertheless, thousands of people are believed to have been killed or injured in the three

Tuesday's attacks have underscored the urgency of collective global action in the fight against terrorism.

attacks. The modus operandi seems to have come straight out of a Tom Clancy novel: groups of people hijacked four aircraft from two different airports and used three of them to knock out the two World Trade Center towers in New York and a vital portion of the Pentagon.

As the investigation progresses and events play out over the days, people around the world will be asking a major question: How will the attacks change the international outlook and action against terrorism? "It will depend on how the United States will respond to the terrorist attacks. One thing is certain, there needs to be a global consensus to fight against terrorism," said Professor Panna Kazi Amatya of Tribhuvan University. "If the United States leads a crusade against international terrorism, all states will back Washington."

As US intelligence officials were piecing together information linking suspected

terrorism mastermind Osama bin Laden, the Saudi billionaire said to be hiding in Afghanistan, with the heinous attacks, South Asia appeared set to come under sharper focus of the US anti-terrorism campaign. US President George W. Bush has declared that Washington will not make a distinction between those who carried out the attacks and those who harbor terrorists. The straight implication is that Washington will now act tougher against governments that it believes support international terrorist groups.

Apart from becoming a center for several groups suspected of spreading terror across the world, South Asia also is gripped by terrorism and insurgent activities within the region. Almost every country in the region is gripped in some kind of violent or terrorist activity. Top political leaders, including former Indian prime ministers

Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi and former Sri Lankan president Ranasinghe Premadasa, among other, have been assassinated by terrorist groups or people linked to them.

"After the attacks against the US targets, public opinion against international terrorism will drastically change. It may bring a new wave of action against terrorist activities includ-

ing in South Asia," said a professor at Tribhuvan University. As Washington believes some "rogue" states are directly sponsoring terrorism, retaliatory strikes against these countries can be expected.

During the Cold War, the United States supported some of these movements to contain the expansion of communism. After the collapse of Soviet Union and communism, many of these same groups have turned their guns against the United States in the name of waging a holy war.

Tuesday's attacks have underscored the urgency of collective global action in the fight against terrorism. The remarkable patience and fortitude shown by the American people in rallying behind their leaders provides a lesson for countries like Nepal that political leaders need to be strengthened, not weakened by opportunistic demands for resignation, during times of crisis. ■

DIABETES

A Silent Killer

As the lifestyle and food habits of urban Nepalis have been gradually changing over the years, new diseases are making serious inroads. Diabetes has been growing at alarming levels in cities and towns, leading medical professionals to warn of the emergence of a silent epidemic. However, the government is yet to conduct a scientific study into the scale of the problem. Worldwide trends show that an explosion of diabetes cases, especially among those in the prime of their life, will have a long-term impact on the country. The good news is that the disease can be detected early and prevented through timely intervention. Is the government listening?

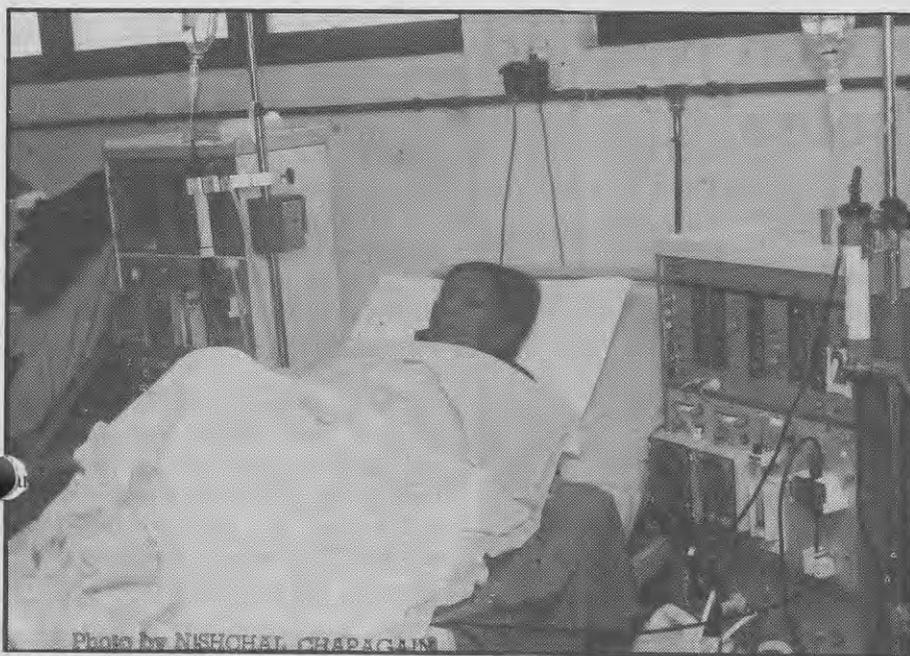
By KESHAB POUDEL

Something terrible was happening to Hari Sharma's eyes. There were being poisoned; the fragile capillaries of the retina were attacked from within and were leaking blood. The first symptoms were red lines, appearing vertically across his field of vision; the lines mul-

tiplied and merged into a haze that shut out light entirely. "The blood vessels inside his eyes were popping," said his son, Suman Sharma, a graduate. Sharma, who is in his late 50s, began experiencing problems four years ago. Because of the complications, Sharma had to quit his job as a teacher. After two surgeries in the southern Indian city of Madras, Sharma has regained vision in one eye, but the other one has become completely useless.

A few weeks ago, Bharat Shrestha, awakening one night in his bedroom, walked into a door, setting off a paroxysm of pain and nausea that has not let up yet. What caused this catastrophe was nothing as exotic as pesticides or emerging viruses. What was poisoning him was the sugar level in his bloodstream.

When Shrestha, 40, went to his physician for a routine check-up, the blood test revealed that the sugar level in his blood was



Kidney patient : Need to change lifestyle

abnormally high. The physician asked him to consult a dietician and regularly monitor his sugar levels through blood tests. It took nearly a year for Shrestha to recover from trauma triggered by that revelation. Physically normal, Shrestha, who still does not believe whether he is really a diabetic, is taking all kinds of preventive measures to control his sugar levels.

Medical practitioners warn that diabetes cases are shooting up in Nepal. This means more and more people are likely to experience the trauma Sharma and Shrestha are facing. "If present trends are any indication, diabetes is going to be a major cause of blindness in Nepal," says Dr. Jeevan Kumar Shrestha, an ophthalmologist with the B.P. Koirala Lions Eye Hospital at Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital. (See box)

Apart from blindness, a surge in diabetes will also bring chaos in other areas of an individual's life. "I cannot imagine that I have diabetes. One of the harmful effects of the disease is that I have to give up all kinds of food, including bhat and dal," says Shrestha, a resident of Kathmandu district.

Sharma and Shrestha are victims of what many public health experts believe will be the next great lifestyle-disease epidemic: diabetes. At five feet and five inches and 85 kg, Sharma is overweight; 90 percent of all diabetes sufferers are overweight or obese. Sharma and Shrestha were born and reared in Kathmandu. Studies have shown that

people living in urban areas are more likely to contract diabetes than rural people are. As the urban population continues to increase and grow obese, the disease is rapidly spreading. According to medical practitioners, the prevalence of diagnosed cases of diabetes in Nepal increased by many folds between 1990 and 2000.

"Even people who have normal weight may be affected by diabetes," says Dr. Ram Prasad Shrestha, a senior surgeon and former director of Bir Hospital. "The actual number of patients is certainly higher, since many cases go undiagnosed for years."

Researchers have revealed that timely detection of diabetes could prevent costly and potentially deadly complications. Experts have found techniques of detecting people at high risk well in advance. Nepal has yet to benefit from such technological advances.

Equally worrisome is the huge financial cost involved in treating diabetes. "It is virtually impossible for the average Nepali individual to spend money to treat diabetes, which may cause blindness, kidney failure and heart attack," says Dr. Rishi Kumar Kafle. "If an individual starts early treatment, the costs could be lower." (See box)

Changing Lifestyle

The lifestyle and food habits of the urban population have drastically changed in recent years. Traditionally, Nepalis had fixed menus containing healthier foods and would walk long distances to work and other

engagements. Today fast-food restaurants at almost every neighborhood corner offer a variety of foods. Members of virtually all city households use public or private transportation. This means city people take in more food and engage in less exercise, which leaves them overweight.

A health report published in the United States recently said that risk reduction is higher in people aged 60 and above who used a combination of diet and exercise. Health experts have been insisting for years that so many problems can be avoided through proper diet and exercise and by making sure people take care of themselves. "By promoting healthy lifestyles, Nepalis can improve the quality of life for all and reduce health care costs," says Dr. Kafle.

Experts argue that those who take a daily 30-minute walk and lower their fat intake to less than 25 percent of their calorie consumption can reduce the risk of diabetes. Those at high risk for Type 2 diabetes need to change their lifestyle and exercise more to prevent this and other dreaded diseases.

"The lifestyle of the urban population in Nepal is different as people have every choice of foods available according to their demand. Fast food are easily cooked and bought. This is the reason most of the people are overweight," says Dr. Shrestha

People in urban areas normally eat food heavy in carbohydrates, which causes their blood sugar levels to soar. Instead of potatoes, rice, legumes, cereals, breads, fruit, yogurt, and milk, patients have to add more low-fat protein (fish, chicken, egg substitutes, small amounts of red meat). Interestingly, in Nepal most diabetes patients had bypass surgery before they were diagnosed with the disease.

Obesity and Overweight

Obesity has been increasing among Nepali urban adults. According to a study done by Kathmandu Medical College, large numbers of adults are now considered overweight or obese. Obesity in children also has markedly increased in urban areas. Overweight and obesity increase the risk of illnesses linked to hypertension, lipid disorders and Type 2 mellitus diabetes, coronary heart diseases, stroke, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea and other respiratory problems and certain cancers.

Adults are now desperate to reduce their weight or avoid gaining it, but a large number of men and women are doing that without consulting medical practitioners. This could generate other harmful effects in the people,

'Integrated Approach Needed To Confront Diabetes'

— Dr. S.K. PAHADI

Dr. S.K. PAHADI is one of the prominent cardiologists of Nepal. Even after retiring from government service, Dr. Pahadi is still very active in his profession. He is the chairman of Nepal Medical College and is also involved in many other activities. One of the well-known senior royal physicians, Dr. Pahadi spoke to SPOTLIGHT on various issues relating to the health status of the country. Excerpts:

From the perspective of your long involvement in the health sector, how do you assess the overall situation of diabetes in Nepal?

We don't have data showing the overall position of diabetes in Nepal. Of course, the incidence of diabetes is rising in urban areas. Different geographical regions have different types of health problems. If you look at the cases in Bir Hospital and TU Teaching Hospital, you may find more patients suffering from diabetes and heart ailments. However, the situation in the hill region may be different, as people there suffer more from infectious diseases. The absence of accurate data makes it difficult to paint an overall picture. When I visited different parts of the country during the regional tours of late King Birendra, I tried to gather data relating to diseases prevalent in those areas. In Surkhet, we had a health camp 15 years ago where we found more than half of the patient had gastrology, respiratory and other diseases. We did not find heart patients and people suffering from blood pressure. Our study showed that infectious diseases were more prevalent in the hills. During my tenure at Bir Hospital, I treated some cases of juvenile diabetes. Most of the patients died because they didn't have money to buy insulin. It was fatal. Now one can survive if he or she can afford to buy medicine.

Are people sufficiently aware that medicines can help control diabetes?

Although many types of medicines are available in the market, many people do

not use those prescribed by us. We always urge diabetes patients who visit us to be sure to take medicine on time, but most of them ignore our advice. A diabetes patient may contract many complications, including kidney and heart troubles. Many people do not take medications because they don't know about the serious consequences of the disease. Even highly educated people are found to show such behavior. As long as the disease does not turn serious, patients do not consult the doctor. We must teach the people that a diabetes patient can survive if he or she takes medicines and follows the advice of doctors.

How do you see the flow of diabetes patient at your clinic?

Diabetes and blood pressure are on the increase, but they are not a major health problem right now. In urban areas, we see a large number of such patients.

What policy needs to be formulated to prevent diabetes?

We need to initiate an awareness campaign. We must generate awareness among the people about the disease and teach them the importance of proper exercise and a balanced diet. Even weight reduction can be effective in preventing diabetes and blood pressure.

What are your specific suggestions?

The government needs to set up a diabetes foundation at the national level. Although there are few diabetes associations, they have been unable to meet the challenge. There needs to be greater interaction among diabetes patients. We have to study what types of diabetes patients we have. Diabetes is a complex disease that affects different parts of the human body, including the eyes and kidneys. So there need to be an integrated approach.



experts say.

Because of a changing lifestyle, the prevalence of overweight and obesity among Kathmandu's adults is set to increase. "The traditional food habit is much more hygienic and healthier than junk food, which is responsible for overweight," says Dr. Kafle.

Other tendencies are lack of health awareness among the population. People usually do not go to the doctor until the disease has affected them seriously. In most cases, diabetes patients have been found to neglect the doctor's advice.

Most patients do not visit the doctor regularly. A diabetes patient needs to check up his kidneys, eyes and other features at least once a year. Unfortunately, most patients undergo such tests when they have severe problems. This tendency costs patients a lot of money as well as unrecoverable health decline.

Internationally, the picture is just as bleak. The World Health Organization (WHO) predicts that diabetes mellitus cases worldwide will more than double by the year 2025 to reach 300 million. Developing countries, particularly those in Asia and Africa, are expected to bear the brunt of this increase. Most alarming, however, is the spread of diabetes across the age barriers. The number of patients in their 40s continues to expand. People in their 30s are getting the disease in large numbers.

If people become diabetic at age 10 or 15 or 20, they could have terrible complications when they are 30 or 40. These people also need long-term expensive health care. Although a number of medicines are available, they are virtually out of reach for the large number of poor people.

What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a disorder of the very engine of life, a subtle calamity at the molecular level. Its hallmark is a failure to metabolize glucose, the ubiquitous sugar molecule carried by the bloodstream to fuel every part of the body. It is not only a disease related to certain parts but also a disease affecting all parts of human life. Deprived of their prime energy supply, muscle and nerve cells slow their function, which is why early diabetes may manifest itself as lethargy and irritability. At the same time, glucose accumulates in the patient's blood, and can reach concentrations two to three times normal and even higher.

The excess is eventually excreted, which requires copious quantities of water as a dilutant. The words diabetes mellitus come

from Greek. Diabetes means "to pass through, or to flow through" and mellitus means "sweet". An excess of sugar in the blood and or urine characterizes diabetes mellitus. Diabetes can be controlled with insulin, proper diet, exercise and careful monitoring.

In fact, many people believe that the diabetes is an old-people's disease because it usually struck people middle-aged or older. Type 1 diabetes is also appearing in large numbers. Getting fat is no longer a prerogative of adults. Even children have similar problems. Diabetes is strongly linked to obesity. Too many calories and too little exercise are the risk factors for Type 2 diabetes. More than 90 percent of the people with diabetes are overweight. "The rise in the disease among teenagers is extraordinarily worrying," says Dr. Kafle. Diabetes can take decades to reveal its most appalling effects, including ulcerating sores, blindness, kidney failure, strokes and heart disease.

Once people start drinking water virtually non-stop, one can assume it is a symptom of diabetes. A lot of people are walking around with diabetes without even being aware of it. "The symptoms are not specific and they tend to come late," says Dr. S.K. Pahadi, a prominent cardiologist.

Researchers are still investigating ways in which high blood sugar levels cause damage. One obvious effect is on the arteries, especially in the eyes and kidneys; sugar seems to weaken the capillary walls and clog the small vessels. According to the WHO, diabetes mellitus is a chronic, debilitating and costly disease attended by severe complications, including blindness and heart and kidney diseases. Hemorrhages destroy the retina; impaired circulation leads to ulcers in the legs and feet for which amputation may be the only cure. The risk of heart disease doubles for men; for women it goes up fourfold. Yet the misperception of diabetes as a relatively benign condition persists. The word is not yet out about how serious it is. There is no diabetes that is not bad. It is all serious.

What is Insulin?

Glucose metabolism is regulated by the hormone insulin, which is produced by the pancreas gland, a fist-size clump of tissues behind the stomach. In normal people, the pancreas secretes insulin in response to a rise in blood sugar, which happens after a meal. The relatively uncommon Type 1 diabetes is marked by a straightforward shortage of insulin, which typically shows up around puberty.

Researchers consider this an auto-im-

'Balanced Diet And Proper Exercise Is The Key'

— Dr. JEEVAN KUMAR SHRESTHA

Dr. JEEVAN KUMAR SHRESTHA is an ophthalmologist at the B.P. Koirala Lions Center for Ophthalmic Studies at TUTEaching Hospital. He spoke to SPOTLIGHT on various issues related to diabetes. Excerpts:

How do you assess the effects of diabetes on the eyes?

Diabetes is a modern disease. Like all other countries, Nepal has a mixed society of rural and urban populations. However, there are widening disparities in terms of dietary intake. While there has been rapid development in the urban population, progress in rural areas has remained stagnant. One can find diabetes patients in rural as well as urban areas, but urban people are more prone to the disease. We have not done a community study on the overall impact of diabetes, but we did a small study on the impact of diabetes on the eyes. In India, different institutions have done various studies. According to those surveys, about 2-3 percent of the rural population has problems related to diabetes. But in urban areas, the incidence is about 10-20 percent.

What is the position of diabetes in urban areas?

The urban population in Nepal is westernizing rapidly. They do fewer exercises and eat more food than previous generations. The urban people have car, TV and other facilities at home, so they normally avoid physical exercise. Urban residents consume more carbohydrates and fat but do little work to burn them. On the other hand, rural people consume less food and perform harder work. In urban areas, diabetes has increased as an epidemic. If we visualize the Indian case study, we can see how alarming it is. According to an estimate, India alone has 19 million diabetes patients. In another 20 years, that number is expected to rise to 57 million. We can draw a fair picture of

Nepal along similar lines.

What factors have contributed to the increase in diabetes cases?

There are many factors, including dietary, hereditary and environmental. According to our study, we found that among 100 diabetes patients, 25 had eye problems. Among them, 5-19 percent had severe effects. Some suffered from loss of vision. Among the 100 respondent, 83 patients said they were not aware that diabetes could harm their vision. Nobody seemed to realize the need to visit the doctor to cure his or her eye disease.

What is the level of awareness?

Our study found that more people are aware about diabetes today. In the analysis of 1993-1994, among the total retina patients, 12 percent of them were diabetes. In 1995-96, the number reached 24 percent. In 1999, about 36 percent retina patients were affected by diabetes. I don't know how this increased or whether it was because of awareness or really a rise in the actual number. It may be both.

Is there any national-level program?

We have not made any effort to study the problem at the national level, as it is still not a cause of blindness. Cataract is still one of the major causes of blindness. This is why the government is focusing on cataract. In western countries, diabetes is now the leading cause of blindness. Diabetes is also a main cause of blindness. About 30-40 percent of those who visit eye centers are diabetes patients.

What do you suggest?

Prevention is better than cure. Because of high sugar levels in the blood, the rate of blindness is going to be very high. If the urban population starts to eat a balanced diet, engages in adequate physical exercise and undergoes regular health check-up, the problems may subside. Prevention of diabetes is possible only through balance diet and proper exercise. ■

'Diabetes Is Not A Curse If One Treats It Carefully'

— Dr. RISHI KUMAR KAFLE

Dr. RISHI KUMAR KAFLE, a kidney specialist, works with National Kidney Center and Medicare Hospital. One of the busiest nephrologists in the country, Dr. Kafle spoke to SPOTLIGHT on various issues related to kidney diseases and diabetes. Excerpts:

How do you view the problem of diabetes in Nepal?

If a patient follows medical advice, diabetes can be controlled. It cannot be cured by other medicines. In our society, people want relief from all kinds of disease by taking medicines. People usually do not go for health check-up until they face complications. Once an individual is infected with some disease, then he or she goes to the doctor and wants a total cure. Even after identification of the high sugar content in blood, people start to question the credibility of the pathology report. Instead of following the physician's advice, they go for other medicines. The practice among Nepalis is to escape from treatment.

Why is this happening?

Few people seem to understand that diabetes can lead to other complications, including loss of vision, kidney failure and heart ailments. Once a patient suffers from kidney failure, he or she has to go in for dialysis, which is virtually out of the reach of the common people. According to Nepal Kidney Center, almost all kidney patients above 50 years who come for dialysis in the hospital have diabetes. Diabetes is the No. 1 killer in the United States and it is gradually penetrating all over the world. A similar situation is found in cardiology; most of the people who suffer a heart attack are usually diabetes patients. The number of diabetes cases is rising not only in Nepal but also throughout the world. Even American medical practitioners have said they can no longer afford the economic costs of treating diabetes. In our case, it will be simply impossible to treat ailments like kidney failure. This is the reason why the government must start an aggressive campaign to control it.

What needs to be done?

We need to increase awareness among

people that diabetes can lead to ailments of the kidney, heart and eyes. Every individual needs to undergo regular check-up. If a kidney of a diabetes patient fails, one has no option other than to go in for kidney transplant, which is very costly. Furthermore, post-transplant dialysis costs a lot of money. A person has to spend Rs.30,000 a month for dialysis. I don't think a large number of people are in a position to survive this way. The majority of the people do not realize that diabetes may have such harmful impacts. This is the overall health scenario. We need to have facilities in all health centers for primary health check-up.

How do you assess the cases of diabetes in Nepal?

Diabetes cases continue to rise in the urban areas because of changes in food habits and lifestyle. People normally do not walk. There is a wide diversity of food available in the country. Because of this, people become obese. We need to bring changes in the health system. Diabetes is a major problem in country. If you go to the eye hospital, you can find many people suffering from blindness because of ignorance. A diabetes patient must undergo regular check-up.

Why don't people get proper counseling?

In most cases, diabetes patients get counseling from colleagues and friends, who misguide them. They urge patients to follow other medication, without understanding the specifics of the ailment. Most patients with diabetes-nephropathy die after they get heart problems. Fifty percent die before they get kidney problems. Many patients die not from kidney problems but from heart ailments. A doctor has to spend more than an hour counseling a diabetes patient. An individual can survive even if his or her kidney fulfils 50 percent of its function. Medical convention asks us to treat blood pressure and diabetes vigorously. Dialysis is not affordable to a majority of Nepalis and the service is available only in Kathmandu. Diabetes is one of the costliest diseases to treat.

Can we control diabetes?



If we start early treatment and take precautionary measures, we can control diabetes. Diabetes is not a curse if one treats it carefully and follows the advice of medical practitioners instead of going for herbal and other treatments.

Do you mean there is no cure?

If there were a cure in homeopathy, Ayurved or natural therapy, one could earn billions of dollars. The United States has been spending billions of dollars to find a cure for diabetes. If a herbal cure were available, would people there waste time in getting it? If such herbal cure were available, patients in rich countries would be the ones to benefit the first. Therefore, instead of going any other way, a diabetes patient should follow the suggestions of his or her physician. It is not that the herbal medicine is bad. But one has to understand the purpose for which he or she is taking it.

How can you know whether you have diabetes or are prone to it?

Just because one is fit and fine and does not have any problem related to the kidneys, heart, eyes and brain does not mean one is free from problems. A person has to get a clean bill of health from a doctor at least once a year. A diabetes patient has to consult four different physicians to understand the problem. We have to develop an ideal situation. There are very simple and affordable medicines available to prevent diabetes. The sooner a person completes a health check-up, the better.

Are there institutions for regular health check-up?

Many new institutions are coming up. In addition, insurance companies insure you and your family. ■

Diabetes Symptoms

Type 1	Type 2
Frequent urination	Excess weight
Increased Thirst	Drowsiness
Unusual hunger	Blurred vision
Weight loss	Tingling and numbness in hand and feet
Irritability	Skin infections
Weakness and fatigue	Slow healing of cuts (especially on feet)
Nausea and vomiting	Itching

Source: American Diabetic Association

creas can supply, and these patients, too, often become dependent on injecting themselves with insulin.

In Nepal Type 2, or NIDDM, is very common among overweight adults, but it starts very slowly. The diabetic may develop

immune disease, possibly brought on by a viral infection. And the treatment is straightforward in concept, if not always in practice: you supply the missing insulin, if necessary by injecting it before meals. Juvenile diabetes has struck many and it is a disease you have for life; luckily, though, there is no evidence that its incidence is on the rise in Nepal.

According to the WHO, the major clinical classes of glucose intolerance include insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (IDDM or Type 1), noninsulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (NIDDM or Type 2), malnutrition-related diabetes mellitus (MRDM), impaired glucose tolerance (IGT), gestational diabetes and were unified and adopted in 1979-1980.

In developing countries like Nepal, NIDDM is rare in the traditional setting, but has become very common in many urbanized communities. NIDDM is likely to rise, due to aging, a fall in infectious diseases, mortality and increase in the prevalence of putative risk factors such as obesity, lack of regular physical exercise and inappropriate diet.

A third form of diabetes, malnutrition-related diabetes mellitus (MRDM) is also reported in the Terai region. It is reported to occur in young, underweight individuals and it requires insulin to maintain adequate metabolic control.

Type 2 is an altogether more complicated disease, a spiraling derangement in a network of positive and negative feedback loops linking the pancreas, liver (which stores and releases glucose), muscles, nerves, fat cells and brain. Perversely, the muscle cells refuse to absorb glucose from the blood; a phenomenon called insulin resistance. At least in the early stages of the disease, Type 2 diabetics usually have normal insulin production. In fact, they may have above-normal insulin, as their pancreas produces more and more of it in a futile attempt to keep up with the rise in blood sugar. Over time, though, people may need more insulin than their pan-

creas can supply, and these patients, too, often become dependent on injecting themselves with insulin.

Medication

For years, the only available form of insulin was harvested from cows and pigs, but now human insulin is being manufactured directly by recombinant DNA techniques. Drug companies are coming out with new and improved insulin, engineered with molecular changes to make it last longer in the body or be absorbed more easily into cells.

Until recently, insulin had to be injected under the skin as often as five to seven times a day, in a complex calculus of food intake, energy output and dosage designed to keep blood sugar from going either too high or too low. An implantable version may be available soon. Someday, a completely self-contained unit may be able to measure blood glucose directly and deliver insulin automatically.

Sulfonylurea is one of the oldest drugs, which has been available since the 1950s, which stimulate production and release of insulin by the pancreas. Many new effective drugs are available in the market today.

According to recent studies, genetics seems to play a role in such a devastating misreading of biochemical message. Certain population groups are especially prone to diabetes. The very complexity of the glucose-insulin cycle, though, affords numerous opportunities to intervene with therapies. The obvious therapy is, of course, insulin.

Prevention and screening programs for diabetes may be seen as a heavy economic burden on society, which may be an obstacle to their implementation. The cost of the treatment of diabetes mellitus and its consequences are so high that prevention would be beneficial in economic terms quite apart from the benefits to the health of individuals and society.

As soon as someone's diabetes is de-

tected, it is important that one immediately begins a program to control the disease. The aim of the treatment plan will be restore the balance of sugar and insulin the human body and to prevent and relieve symptoms through medications and, most importantly, by understanding the disease, its complications and its treatment. Food with higher glycemic indices pushes more rapidly into the blood stream, taxing the insulin response.

Treatments

When diet and exercise do not keep diabetes in check, drugs or insulin can help. As several classes of medication are available in the market, the patients have choices.

- Stimulators drugs like Glucotrol prompt pancreatic cells to make more insulin and
- Sensitizes glucophage and related treatments help make cells more responsive to whatever insulin is present in the body.
- Carblicers precose and Glyset help regulate blood-sugar levels by slowing the breakdown of carbohydrates in the digestive tract.

Effects

Uncontrolled diabetes can trigger a series of serious health problems.

- Nerves: Most diabetics suffer nerve damage, and many end up requiring leg amputations.
- Genitals: Eight percent of diabetic men suffer from impotence.
- Heart: Diabetics suffer two to four times the usual rate of cardiovascular disease.
- Kidneys: Nearly half of new cases of end-stage kidney disease stem from diabetes.
- Eyes: Diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness in people between ages 20 to 74 years.

There is an urgent need for proper measures to control diabetes in Nepal. Once someone is affected, it would prove costly in terms of economic and other factors. This in turn would place a great burden on a country with few resources to meet the challenge. For Nepal's health planners and policy makers, the time has come to contain the killer disease before it is too late. ■

'It's Never Too Early To Prepare For An Earthquake'

— AMOD M. DIXIT

In a room of a building with different structures, AMOD M. DIXIT, general secretary of National Society for Earthquake Technology-Nepal (NSET-Nepal), is working on ways of responding to the challenges posed by a possible earthquake. One of the aims of his organization is to develop earthquake-safe communities in Nepal. Professionally a geologist, Dixit also worked under Department of Mines before joining NSET-Nepal. After the establishment of NSET, many programs have been conducted to increase the level of public awareness. Some Nepalese technicians are now supporting efforts to rebuild communities in the western Indian state of Gujarat, which was struck by a massive earthquake earlier this year. Dixit spoke to KESHAB POUDEL and BHAGIRATH YOGI at his office in Baneshwor following the publication of a study in the US journal "Science" by American geologist Roger Bilham of the University of Colorado. Excerpts:

In a recent study, American geologist Roger Bilham of the University of Colorado has disclosed that a big earthquake is overdue in South Asia. How do you view the report?

In his report, Roger Bilham discusses the seismic vulnerability south of the Himalayas. If we see matters in totality, the report consists of predictions we already knew. The study is an elaboration of widely circulated version of seismic activities of the region. Bilham analyzes some new facts to support his arguments. Mainly his report is based on two things. First, his study is based on the new Geographical Position System satellite data of the Himalayas. Second, it is a re-examination of the region's seismic history over the past 300 years. On this basis, he has produced five points. He studied the greatest collision between the Indian and Eurasian plates. According to the study, the Indian tectonic plate is ramming northward against the Eurasian plate. The Eurasian plate progresses 2 centimeters per year. This process produces elastic strain. Eventually the rock must fracture, allowing the Indian plate to lurch northward beneath the Himalayas. This will take the form of an earthquake.

Isn't there a threat?

In the last 200 years, the region has seen five big earthquakes in the 2,100 kilometer Himalayan arc. According to the Bilham team's study, there are places where rupture is overdue. Some 55 percent of rock still needs to be fractured. According to Bilham's estimate, there will be earthquake within 50 years. However, one cannot predict earthquakes. A massive earthquake can strike any time. What this means is that there is a threat. We need to make additional preparations for a possible

massive earthquake.

If an earthquake is not going to occur soon, how practical would it be to start taking precautions now?

This is not a question about practicality. Rather, it is one of necessity. Our region is one of the major earthquake-prone zones in the world. In the last 100 years alone, we have seen several major earthquakes. Recently, there was a major quake in the western Indian state of Gujarat. Experts believe the earthquake in Gujarat was a wake-up call for the region. We have to start preparations vigorously. The Gujarat quake has generated awareness among the people in the region.

How prone is the region to earthquakes?

This is an earthquake-prone region but we cannot predict when one might occur. In such a situation, taking precautionary measures is the right step to avoid major losses in terms of human lives and property. Our level of preparedness is very poor. We need to accommodate all natural calamities in our perception and vision.

How do you see the level of preparedness?

We do not find much stress on dealing with natural calamities in our officialdom and policymaking level. Until we integrate natural calamities in our social life and national planning, we may die like insects in a major earthquake. If we do not develop long-term planning and integrate it into our day-to-day life, we will not be in a position to rescue our infrastructure. Our country will be thrust backward. To fulfill the need of the future, we have to prepare ourselves within an integrated approach. It is not that an earthquake will occur in 50 years; there may be one within the hour. If we raise awareness in even 10 people by tomorrow, there would be the possibility of rescuing five people from untimely death in a major quake. We have to work keeping in mind this broad approach.

If there is an earthquake equivalent to the one that hit Gujarat or the 1934 great earthquake, what will be the scale of damage?

If we have an earthquake like that of 1934, measuring 9 modified murkily intensity level or more than that, more than 40,000 people will be killed and more than 90,000 will be injured. According to our preliminary studies, such an earthquake will also destroy more than 50 percent of the houses in Kathmandu valley. The infrastructure of the valley, including roads, bridges, electricity and telephone services, would be badly affected and more than 50 percent of their services would be defunct. A recent study conducted by His Majesty's Government in cooperation with the Japanese International Cooperation Agency shows another scenario.

"If we do not develop long-term planning and integrate it into our day-to-day life, we will not be in a position to rescue our infrastructure."

According to the study, even an 8-intensity earthquake would kill nearly 20,000 people and injure more than 60,000.

How do you view Nepal's capability to face the situation?

The important question is not how many people would die and how many buildings would be destroyed. We have to see our capability to act. In view of our current capability and preparedness, the level of damage in a major earthquake will be much higher. If we take the case of preparedness in the hospitals, they have about 5,000 beds. Even in cities like California, the capacity of hospital service was reduced by 50 percent during earthquakes. Instead of fighting over figures on casualties, we have to see what will happen in case of large number of casualties. For instance, if we have 100 dead bodies, will we really be in a position to provide materials for cremation? In case 50 percent of the houses in the cities are destroyed, how many cranes and equipment do we have to mobilize to start rescue operation? After the quake, the major problem will be one of management, including treating the injured, cremating the dead and rescuing survivors. If we do not plan for early preparedness, we cannot do anything. In the last 15 or 20 years, we have built hundreds of concrete houses in Kathmandu. Most of these houses, according to preliminary studies, are going to be destroyed. But what equipment do we have to clear the debris. How many months will the whole process take?

How do you define an earthquake? Is it only a technical issue?

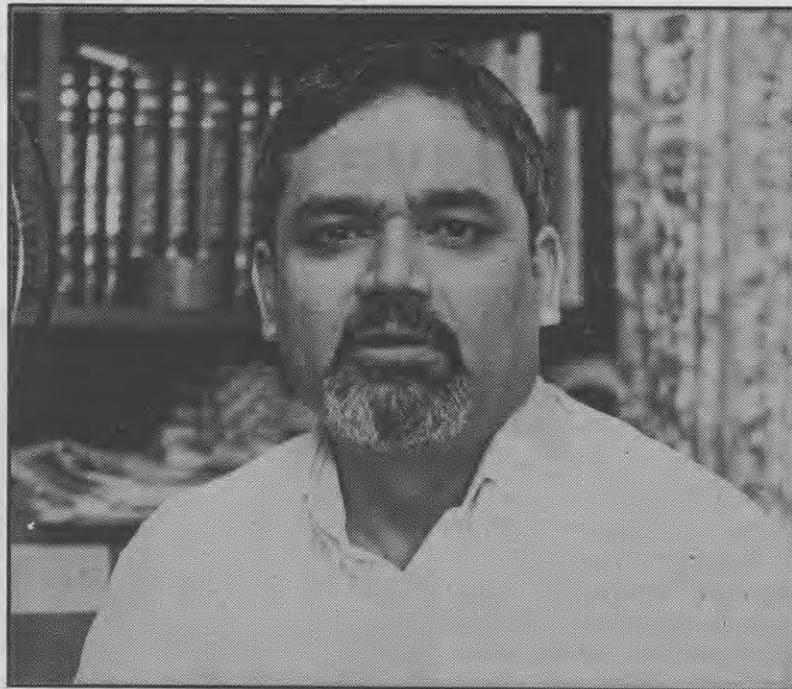
An earthquake is not only a technical issue. It is related to social, economic and political matters as well. If we do not develop a proper preparedness plan, we will be in a helpless position at the time of an earthquake. If we improve our capability and preparedness, we will be able to reduce the damage and destruction. For proper preparedness, the country does not have to invest huge amounts of money. A report published by the Global Earthquake Initiative shows that the per-capita risk in Kathmandu valley is much higher. Lapses in building construction are one of the major factors of risk. If we use basic elements in constructing houses over the next five years, the risk will be reduced by 25 percent.

How costly is low-risk construction?

If someone spends 8 to 10 percent of additional money at the time of construction, the house will be safer in case of earthquake. It will also reduce the risk of human life and injury. This is a not only natural problem. How we develop preparedness is important. First, the municipalities must strictly implement the building code. We have not been able to implement building code, which was approved eight years ago. The answer is not to see the natural question but to go on to develop building codes and other preparedness measures.

How do you see the awareness level among the people?

The awareness level in Kathmandu valley is unprecedented. After opening our organization, we have made every effort to generate awareness among the people. I am very happy to see people are gradually



grasping it. One of the aims of NSET is to teach people that science is not for the sake of science but for the sake for the people. The level of awareness is very high as we receive frequent requests to conduct research. VDCs, schools, government organizations and other institutions, including municipalities, are asking us to conduct courses.

What is the response of the rural population?

Even rural people seem to be aware about the dangers of earthquakes. We now have about 50 construction workers trained in methods of building earthquake-proof houses. These construction workers are generating awareness. Two of our workers are working in Gujarat. Along with participating in construction work, they are also teaching their skills to Indian colleagues. In Patting village of Gujarat, these two Nepalese workers are very busy right now as they are also training their colleagues. They have already built 40 houses in the village. They told me that their expertise is in high demand. It is a matter of pride that Nepalis are in high demand. In the early days, when we talked about the risk of earthquake, we always talked about the issue in a way that would avoid panicking the people. Our experience has shown that if people have scientific knowledge, they will share it.

How do you see the response of the government?

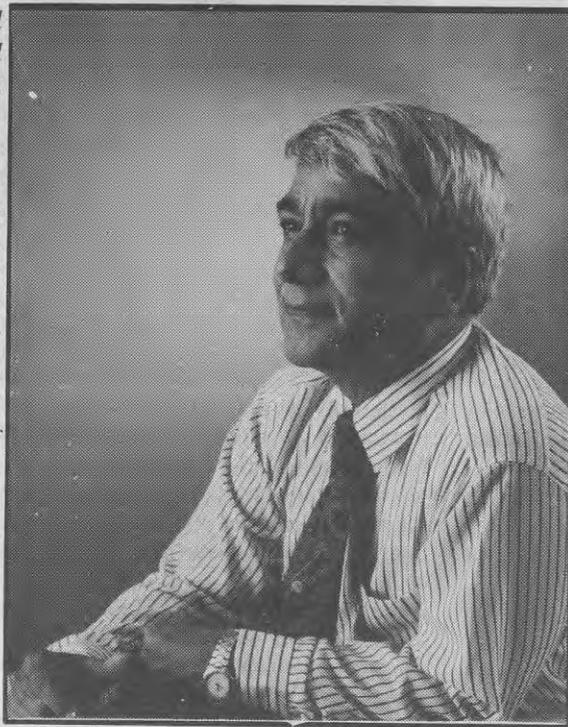
As you know, the government is a complex matter. You have to pass through various levels of bureaucracy. We find that government offices are also coming out in support of our programs. They see us as a partner. The Ministry of Education is taking our technical advice in building new schools buildings. One positive aspect is the recent decision of the Ministry of Health to prepare the emergency health preparedness to cope with natural calamities. The ministry has already started to develop emergency response planning and preparedness. A health disaster working group is also active. ■

"Two of our workers are working in Gujarat. Along with participating in construction work, they are also teaching their skills to Indian colleagues. In Patting village of Gujarat, these two Nepalese workers are very busy right now as they are also training their colleagues."

“We Made A Film The Government Should Have Made”

— Dr. BHOLA RIJAL

Film producer, lyricist, singer and prominent gynecologist - all rolled into one - Dr. BHOLA RIJAL is in the news because of his latest venture “Gaunthalee”, the critically acclaimed first Nepalese lyrical feature film. The film is a heart-rending story of child marriage and its consequence on the girls’ health as well as their social position. Dr. Rijal says the sad faces of women and girls forced into child marriages who he met as a gynecologist prompted him to pen the story/lyrics of “Gaunthalee”. He spoke to SANJAYA DHAKAL about his latest success and how he manages to involve himself in so many diverse fields. Excerpts:



Your latest film “Gaunthalee” has been drawing favorable reviews in the media. Tell us what it is really about.

“Gaunthalee” was produced differently than other commercial films. Its story is not merely a story but a representation of the tragic situation of our villages. Although the trend of child marriage is decreasing, none of the households in the villages are untouched by the situation that is portrayed in the film. That apart, this film is a lyrical one. Such lyrical films are unheard of even in India and/or this region. No won-

der this was the first lyrical feature film of Nepal. There used to be some lyrical plays but no feature film. My logic was that instead of showing this film in theaters in and around cities like Kathmandu, it could be shown across the country, in villages, so that the message it carries

Its story is not merely a story but a representation of the tragic situation of our villages. Although the trend of child marriage is decreasing, none of the households in the villages are untouched by the situation that is portrayed in the film. That apart, this film is a lyrical one. Such lyrical films are unheard of even in India and/or this region. No wonder this was the first lyrical feature film of Nepal.

gets through to the real people affected by the situation. I would like to say that this is not purely an art film but one that has a strong message and is based on everyday reality of our society.

You were involved in the produc-

tion of what are called commercial films. How come you changed tracks and produced a film like “Gaunthalee”?

Although the Mansarovar Group with which I am associated has been producing commercial films like “Laxmi Puja”, “Chhori Buhari”, “Ek Number Ko Pakhe”, “Apsara”, all of them were also guided by some social message. They were not out-and-out commercial films. We have never delivered cheap entertainment. Such message-ridden films were not new for us. Even so, we do consider “Gaunthalee” as an experiment. In fact, I think we made a film that should have been made by the government.

“Gaunthalee” is being screened in Kathmandu, too. How do you think the audiences here would receive it?

In fact, I wanted to screen this film in the stadium so that a large number of people could view it at a cheap price. But problems of security and transportation came up. If the film had to be screened in the stadium, we could only manage one night show each day. The audience would want transportation at night. Therefore, I had to drop this idea and screen it in theaters. Still, I really want my film to be viewed by a large number of people. I want my film to be screened in villages across the country so that nobody would say that they could not see it because they had no money.

You have been involved in the film sector for a long time. How do you find the current state of our film industry?

If you look at the development of the film sector over the last 10 years, you will find that it is really flourishing like an industry - a fact that was officially recognized by the government a year ago. Competition is on the rise due to many reasons. One is the glamour that has enticed many to become involved in this sector and invest money. Many producers burned their fingers, some even committed suicide. But some banners did establish themselves. One may ask, why, then, did these established banners not make more society-oriented films?

●ms that reflect and promote our culture, language and traditions should be made. However, we should not expect the private sector to always make such films. I made "Gaunthalee" but there is no encouragement for me to make more such films. We are planning to make another film called "Ukali Orali" where we will portray the life of brave Nepalis. But there should be a pat on the back from the government's side, too. Otherwise, one day I may tire of making such meaningful films and resort to productions with names like "Dance, baby, dance" because I know they ensure returns. What I want to stress is that the government and the film board should encourage us. Maybe they can buy such films outright and keep them in their library. They can help producers take the films to every nook and corner of the country and help promote the film in the international arena.

What about the commercial films being produced today?

We should not try to emulate Indian films. In fact, we cannot do that. They invest 400 million rupees in a film whereas we hardly invest 4 million rupees. There is no comparison. In fact, I believe people should get the chance to see a Nepalese film for Rs 10. Exhibitors of Indian films may charge more than Rs 100. Although, the theaters are given the authority to charge as they find appropriate, the tradition here is such that if I screen my films cheaply, my film will immediately be tagged as being low quality and so on. Therefore, there have to be certain norms on this. Nepalese films should not be forced to compete with

Indian ones. The import of Indian films should be limited for theaters. That will lead to the production of quality Nepalese films. What we see today is that except one or two, most Nepalese films are not good. I don't see this trend ending as long as there is competition between commercially successful and unsuccessful films, instead of competition between good and bad films. Take, for instance, the recent Motion Picture Awards, both good as well as bad films received awards. There has to be certain criteria.

Nepalese television channels have recently gone for satellite transmission. How can this help the film industry?

The prevalent trend today is that of exploitation. Everybody is trying to pull down everybody else. There is no attitude for mutual prosperity. Satellite channels should come, they should develop and promote Nepalese culture abroad. But I don't see them helping the film industry as of now.

You are involved in two totally different fields - film and medicine. You are also a singer as well as a lyricist. How do you manage to be so many different persons at a time?

I am in a creative field - I write songs, sing them, give music and so on. But I do not involve myself in production as such. I engage in creativity. I work for more than 18 hours. Therefore, you cannot compare me with those who work for six hours. As long as my health permits, I will continue to be busy in all these fields.

Which of the fields do you find more fulfilling?

I take them all equally. Because of time constraints, I have not sung for a while. I love all my fields equally.

What are your upcoming projects?

I am planning to release a new album with songs written by me and sung by popular artistes. The name of the album is "Sagarmatha Roi Rahechha" based on songs that try to portray contemporary concerns of the country. Besides, I am also planning to release an album where I will give the vocals myself. As far as films are concerned, we are planning to make "Ukali Orali" soon. ■

BHUTANESE REFUGEES

Politics Of Murder

Senseless violence enters into the refugee camps

One of the seniormost Bhutanese political leaders in exile, R. K. Budhathoki, was killed in cold blood by a group of refugee youths in eastern Nepal Sunday. According to Police, a refugee youth attacked Budhathoki with a Khukuri as he was coming out after taking part in a meeting of the youth wing of his party at Damak in Jhapa district. Budhathoki succumbed to injuries on the way to the hospital. Police said it has taken into custody three people in connection with the murder and was searching for the alleged assailant.

Founder chairman of Bhutan People's Party, the 48-year-old Budhathoki was the first Bhutanese refugee leader to launch a political party in exile in 1990. His death has sent shock waves to the entire refugee community and has raised questions about the safety of the refugees and chances of their early repatriation. In an emergency meeting in Kathmandu Monday the refugee leaders demanded a thorough probe into the murder and enhanced security within the refugee camps. Nearly 100,000 Bhutanese refugees are living in seven UNHCR-managed camps in Morang and Jhapa districts for the last 11 years.

Analysts say Budhathoki's murder could be an outcome of a large design to weaken the refugee movement. "It will have an adverse impact upon the entire Bhutanese refugee movement," said Rakesh Chhetri, a Bhutanese security analyst, now living in Kathmandu. "If the refugee community becomes leaderless it will certainly benefit the Royal Government of Bhutan." Refugee leaders suspect that the Bhutan government could have sponsored the murder. "The incident has taken place at a time when the law and order situation in Nepal is in disarray," said Chhetri. The Nepal government should make proper arrangements to strengthen security in the camps and restore confidence of the refugee community, analysts say.

BOOK

Bhutan Backgrounder

Dr. Joseph explains the scenario behind the ethnic conflict in Bhutan and the resultant refugee crisis

By KESHAB POUDEL

The small but strategically valuable Dragon Kingdom of Bhutan is in the midst of political and ethnic conflict. There is growing concern that any form of long-lasting conflict in Bhutan may undermine the survival of the country.

Under the India-Bhutan Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1949, Bhutan is required to consult with India on foreign relations and defense matters. The decade-long problem of nearly 100,000 Bhutanese refugees huddled in camps in eastern Nepal needs to be viewed within this reality. Experience has shown that Nepal cannot repatriate the refugees just by reaching an agreement with Bhutan. Nepal needs the permission of India to send the Bhutanese back.

Dr. Joseph focuses his entire attention on analyzing the ethnic background and composition of Bhutan before addressing the refugee problem. His conclusions seem to be incomplete because of his failure to address the other issues involved. Dr. Joseph also discusses the British colonial policy towards Bhutan and the Himalayan region and offers a critical examination of the structure of the Bhutanese society and polity.

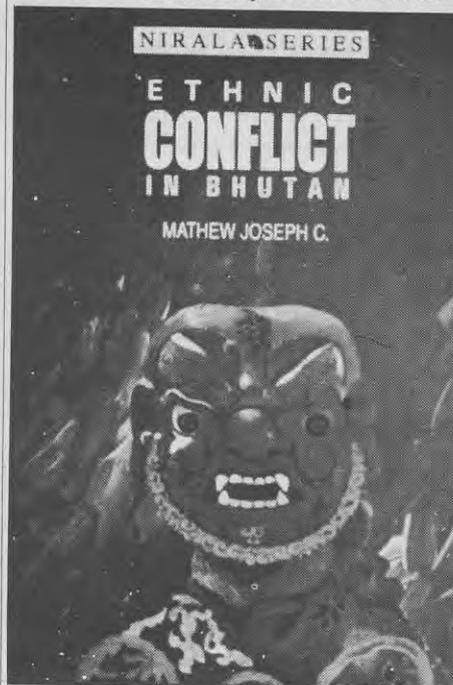
The author also points to the emergence of a sense of paranoia among the ruling elite of Bhutan because of the role people of Nepali origin in Sikkim played in that kingdom's accession to the Indian union. He also underscores the effects in Bhutan of the struggle waged in the Darjeeling Hills for separate Nepali-speaking state in India. Dr. Joseph suggests that the ruling elite in Bhutan establish a constitutional monarchy with multiparty democracy based on secularism and ethnic pluralism.

Centuries-long harmonious relations among the people of Bhutan were torn asunder in 1990 following the decision of the Bhutanese government to expel the Lhotshampas, the population living in south who are mainly of Nepalese origin. As soon as the ruling Ngalong saw the growing population of Nepalese origin in the south as a long-term threat to Bhutan,

they started to impose certain rules and regulations in order to harass them.

According to author, the roots of the ethnic conflict between the Ngalong-dominated state and the people of Nepalese origin can be traced back to the early 1950s. In 1952, the first political party in Bhutan, the Bhutan State Congress (BSC) was formed demanding the abolition of feudal system, democratization of the administration and the granting of civil and political rights to all Bhutanese people. The attempt of the BSC to move to the center of Bhutanese politics was unsuccessful.

The author discusses the colonial policy towards the Himalayan region with special reference to Bhutan. He talks about the structure of Bhutanese society and polity, the Bhutanese economy, the impact of modernization in Bhutan, the problems in southern



Ethnic Conflict in Bhutan

By Mathew Joseph C.

Published by Nirala's Publications, New Delhi, India

Distributed in Nepal by White Lotus Book Shop, Hanumansthan, Kopundole

Price: Indian Rs.359, Pages: 258

Bhutan, the factors behind the ethnic conflict and its implications before offering a summary and conclusion.

"The reason for the ethnic conflict between the Ngalong-dominated Bhutanese state and the people of Nepalese origin is located in the nature of the politico-economic developments that took place since the early 1950s. External factors also played role," Dr. Joseph says.

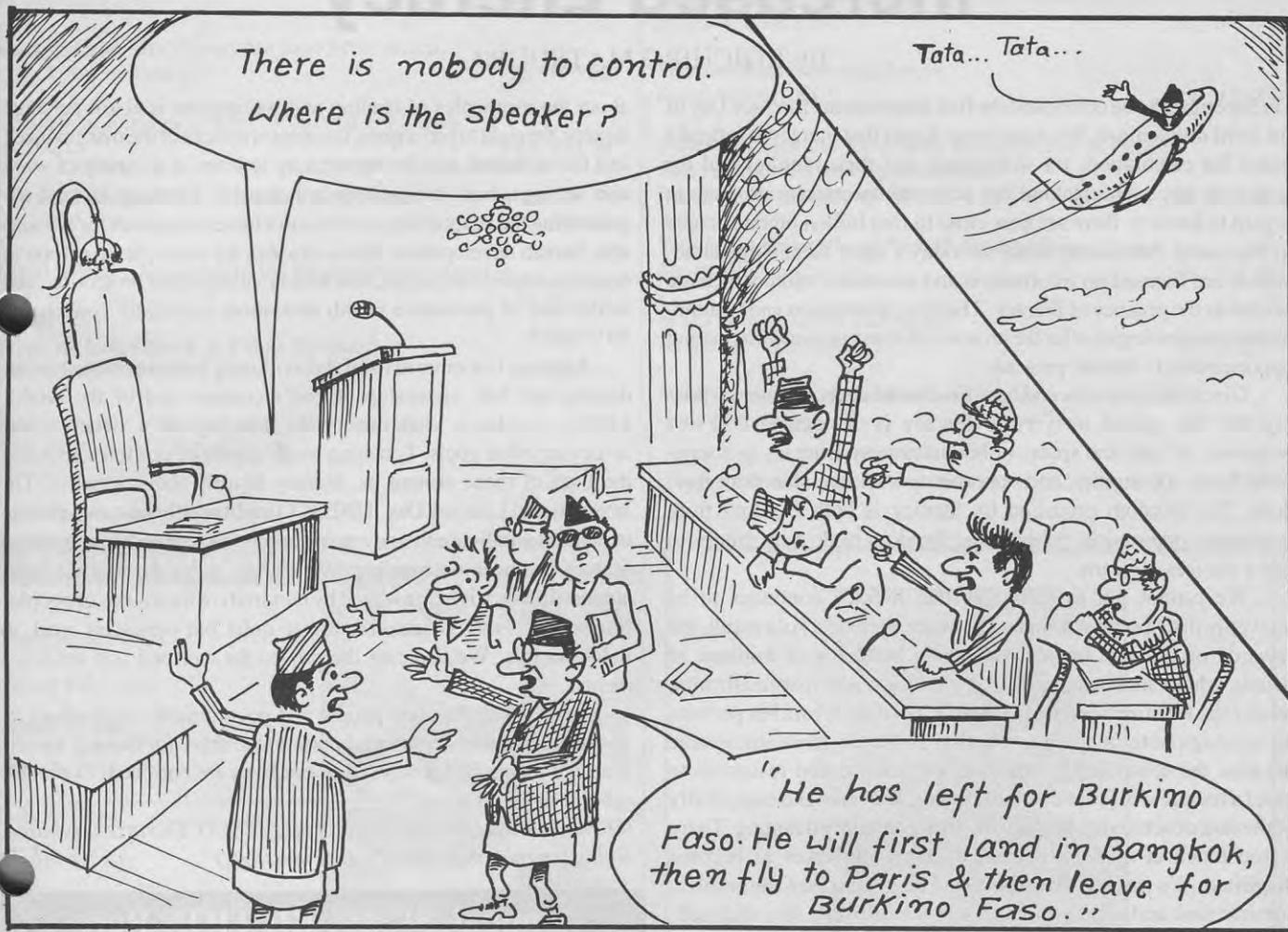
While the author explains different issues relating to the conflict in Bhutan and the reasons behind the refugee problem, he does not elaborate on the role of external factors. Despite its shortcomings, the book is a useful resource in understanding the ethnic and political tensions in a country struggling to come to terms with the pressures of modernity. ■

NEPAL-INDIA

Border Nuisances

Officials agree to a time-bound framework

The 24th regular meeting of the Nepal-India joint technical committee concluded here Friday with a commitment to immediately complete the border-related works with mutual cooperation from both sides. According to the Foreign Ministry, an agreement has been reached at the meeting to work with more efficiency in order to complete the border-related work well in time. The meeting conducted a progress review of border-related works completed last year and finalized the program to be carried out in the forthcoming field season. The meeting also agreed to mobilize joint teams for fieldwork at a favorable time next month. As per the decision of the 20th technical committee meeting, the district magistrates and chief district officers of India and Nepal respectively will make a joint inspection of the condition of the border pillars in their respective areas and present a report within September this year to the concerned bodies prior to beginning the field work, it was also agreed at the meeting, the Ministry said. The technical level border committee has been working to prepare a modern border strip map of the Nepal-India border, renovate and keep records of worn out border pillars and construct new pillars where necessary, the report said. Director General at the Department of Land Survey Baburam Acharya and Surveyor General of India, A. K. Ahuja, led their delegations during the meet.



TRANSITION

RETURNED: A seven-member delegation led by deputy commander of the Chengdu military command of the People's Liberation Army of China, Lt. General Liu Baochen home, after completing a six-day goodwill visit to Nepal.

APPOINTED: Govinda

Raj Bohara and Ratan Bahadur Ayer, as the personal secretaries, and Karna Bahadur Malla, as his assistant secretary, by the Prime Minister.

LEFT: Taranath Rana Bhat, Speaker of the House of Representatives, leading a ten member delegation, for Burkino Faso, to participate in the 106th meeting of the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU).

Lava Kumar Devkota, Secretary at the Ministry of Education and Sports, leading a delegation of three, for Geneva, Switzerland, to participate in an international conference on education.

Three Nepali Theater artistes led by Pushkar Bahadur Gurung and including Sunil Pokharel and Nisha Pokharel, for Australia, to take part in the Melbourne

Fringe Festival 2001.

RELEASED: Siddha Raj Ojha, former member of the board of directors of Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation (RNAC), accused of impropriety in Lauda air deal, on bail.

DIED: Nageshwor Jha, former minister and member of Raj Parishad, at the age of 78. ■

Enriching Our Lives Through Increased Literacy

By KOICHIRO MATSUURA

On September 8, we celebrated the first International Literacy Day of the third millennium. We must never forget that literacy is indeed a cause for celebration: for individuals and their families and for society at large. Humankind has achieved spectacular progress in regard to literacy: there are now close to four billion literate people in the world. Moreover, many of today's rapid technological advances are focused on information and communication, which are central to the practice of literacy. The new information and communication technologies offer the prospect of many new and fascinating opportunities to literate persons.

Given the pleasures and benefits that it brings, it is not surprising that the typical imagery of literacy is of opening doors or windows, of light and space, of boundlessness. Literacy is inseparable from opportunity, and opportunity is inseparable from freedom. The freedom promised by literacy is both freedom from ignorance, oppression, poverty and freedom to do new things, to make choices, to learn.

We cannot fail to recognize that literacy continues to be unevenly distributed within and between societies. As a result, the rewards of literacy are unavailable to hundreds of millions of people whose increasing poverty, exclusion and marginalization render the learning society not merely a distant dream but perhaps an unimaginable one. This situation is all the more intolerable because the technology, expertise, experience and resources to build a literate world are available today. The scale and complexity of the task of achieving literacy for all are certainly daunting. There is too much at stake, however, to allow ourselves to become dispirited. We must actively cultivate and strengthen the resolve, commitment and solidarity necessary for fulfilling this vital task, confident in the knowledge that we will thereby change the world for the better.

A United Nations Literacy Decade will be considered for formal approval by the United Nations General Assembly later this year; UNESCO is expected to be nominated as the lead agency for this important development. The United Nations Literacy Decade will provide a framework for generating renewed momentum towards literacy for all and for developing a new vision of literacy that embraces not only the learning needs of adults but also those of children and youth. Within this vision, there is a clear recognition that the solutions for different educational problems are interconnected. In particular, the growth of adult literacy, especially of women and female youth, is essential for universalizing access to primary education and improving its quality and relevance. Thus, "Education for All" and "Literacy for All", along with "Universal Primary Education" and "Lifelong Learning", are not competing slogans but are processes whose goals must be pursued simultaneously and whose dynamics are closely linked.

Similarly, it is inconceivable that poverty eradication can make much headway in the absence of major advances in literacy. This becomes abundantly clear when we recognize that literacy is not just

about the mechanics of reading and writing but is about personal dignity, the right to participate, the empowerment of the marginalized and the excluded, and the opportunity to learn in a variety of ways and settings, both formal and non-formal. Literacy is vital for generating the adaptability and resourcefulness required for sustainable human development; this is evident, for example, in efforts to build livelihoods in conjunction with environmental protection, and in the area of preventive health education, especially concern HIV/AIDS.

Literacy is a value in itself that is closely linked to basic human dignity and full citizenship of one's country and of the world. Literacy is also a vital means for securing other benefits and achieving other goals. Touching every aspect of our lives and also the lives of those around us, literacy is truly transformative. On International Literacy Day, UNESCO traditionally bestows awards to particular individuals and organizations whose work in support of literacy has been outstanding. We realize, however, that the fight against illiteracy is being waged by hundreds of thousands of people, professionals and volunteers, whose quiet but persistent work is indispensable. We dedicate the day to their efforts and achievements.

UNESCO calls upon people and governments everywhere to give increased and sustained support to the drive for literacy for all. Through increased literacy, all of our lives are enriched. ■

(Dr Matsuura is Director-General of UNESCO. This article is based on his International Literacy Day message.)

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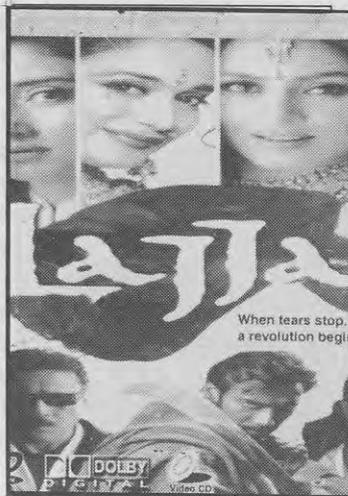
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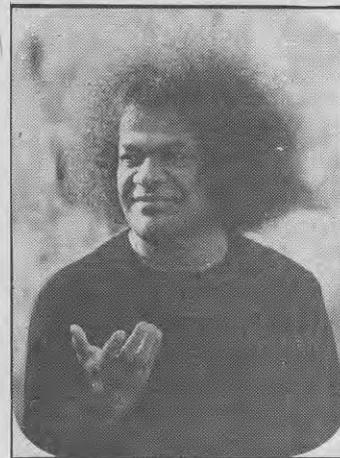
- American Pie II
- Ghost Of Mars
- Death Train
- Watchers 3
- Full Eclipse
- About Adam
- American Out Laws
- American Street Fighter
- Species 4
- American Sweethearts



Hindi

- Dil Ne Phir Yaad Kiya
- Lajja
- Dil Chahta Hai
- Yeh Raaste Hai Pyar Ke
- Hum Hogaye Aap Ke
- Pyar Ishq Aur Mohabbat
- Gadar
- Yaaden
- Tum Bin
- Lagaan

(Source : Super Star Video, New Road)



*“Knowledge without
Action is useless,
Action without
knowledge is
foolishness.”*

- SATHYA SAI BABA

EXHIBITION

Catcher In The Eye

An artist portrays the Bodhi tree as the focal point of meditation

By AKSHAY SHARMA

Prakaash Chandawadkar is not a new name among Kathmandu's art enthusiasts, having made a name through his tightly focused thematic presentations. In his latest exhibition, titled "From The Bodhi Tree", which was held recently at the Siddhartha Art Gallery in Babar Mahal, Prakaash has concentrated on the Bodhi (pipal). "I have already sold five paintings despite the rain. People are recognizing art in the true sense. The market is slowly picking up for incoming artists," he told SPOTLIGHT.

"Art is the visualization of constant change. Painting is a meditation, painting is the joy of seeking contact with eternity with the universal forces," Prakaash says. "In this series, I have used the Bodhi tree as the focal point of my meditation. The leaves of the Bodhi tree, the color and movement of the leaves express my being in the moment."

Prakaash has zoomed in on the leaves of the Bodhi tree. "I chose the leaf because it is a universal term for peace and tranquility. It represents silence and solitude. Moreover, it is the tree under which Lord Buddha meditated."

Asked to name the best among the paintings on display, he points to one on Loktha (Nepali) paper, adding: "I never give my painting a title. The leaf is an icon for Hindus and Buddhists in Nepal."

"I find that I possess more power in my hands and mind when I paint in Nepal," Prakaash

adds. "All the paintings are on Loktha paper. I have dyed the leaves and used all Nepali colors."

"The paper has a flexibility that you do not find it in any other paper in the world. You can do so many experiments with Nepali colors and paper."

Speaking about his childhood, Prakaash says: "I was really interested in painting in school but I never knew I was going to become a painter by profession. I never follow a line. I always loved

colors. I used to do formless paintings. Now, my paintings are in form."

"When I completed my studies in art, I tried everything. But I realized that I was myself when I painted. It's now a kind of a momentum in my life. When I am painting I am not Prakaash — I am just an ordinary painter seeking something inside of me. That was what I used to think as a child when I used to paint. And I just followed that path."

"On the last exhibition I played with colors by applying direct strokes on paper. This time I have started on the leaves of the Bodhi tree and the idea just came into my work."

Asked who he draws inspiration from, Prakaash says: "I have studied many painters. I have seen the paintings of big European painters, but sometimes I hate big painters because painting is not a mental game. It is the work of the person's soul. I am definitely not an intellectual artist."

Speaking about his hobbies, he says: "I love to watch movies, plays, photography and seeing places. I would be paralyzed if I could or cannot paint because painting is my best hobby."

"I listen to all kinds of music," he says. "I usually enjoy classical music and it helps me paint because it has a kind of flow (tarang) and it motivates me while I'm painting."

How is the market for paintings in Kathmandu? "If you do good painting, there are buyers in Kathmandu. My suggestion to Nepalese painters is, instead of thinking about everything around you, just devote your life to your work."

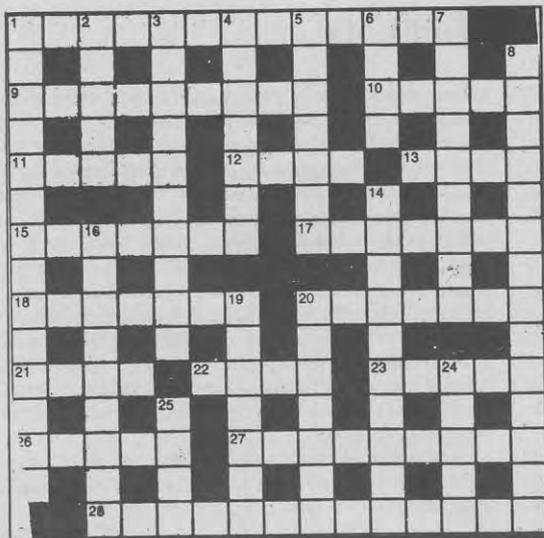
"On my last exhibition I focused on faces," Prakaash says, adding: "Life is like a drama and it's like a jungle. But for my current exhibition, I put together these paintings in 15 days. I usually put a show and it is like a series. I have done more than 50 paintings since June."

Prices at the exhibition range between Rs 5,000 and Rs 25,000. ■



Prakaash's painting : Different theme

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1. Better is about to withdraw, which could be a relief (13)
9. Seek joker or king, perhaps (5,4)
10. Get married on the rebound, say, in golf club (5)
11. Sort of panel that tends to get heated (5)
12. Favorite one left, holding party (4)
13. Woman about to eat (4)
15. Sausage cooked to satisfy (7)
17. Dropping a letter ñ it's to set an example (7)
- Short book fizzles out ñ characters to trendy ? (7)
20. Portico in museum is early Renaissance originally (7)
21. A suspicion of a wheeze (4)
22. One trapped in ladder's fall (4)
23. Huge soldier with tiny one? (5)
26. Exercise right by river (5)
27. Learner coasting, broken down and longing for home (9)
28. Pretext concealing plans succeeded with wordy Arab, perhaps (8,5)

DOWN

1. Remote control annoyingly installed in car (4-4,6)
2. Callous yarn embroidered in conversation (5)
3. Drunken Australian orgy (10)
4. Serial adaptation English had to convert into cash (7)
5. A little perch, a young swimmer (7)
6. Warmonger seen in a mortarboard? (4)
7. Produce another scheme to include new standard for seamen (3,6)
8. Newspaper's comment on the way to bind an apprentice (7,7)
14. Sacred inscription found viastar seen over island on chart (10)
16. Feel inferior, being irrational (9)
19. Put in new sink for space traveler (7)
20. Food for a stag party? (7)
24. Predict a profit to auditor (5)
25. No end of ermine seen in classical colonnade (4)

Across : 1. Backscratcher 9. Court card 10. Wedge 11. Solar 12. Idol 13. Enid 15. Assuage 17. Emission 18. Dandies 20. Veranda 21. Idea 22. Ruin 23. Giant 26. Exert 27. Nostalgic 28. Stalking horse

Down : 1. Back seat driver 2. Cruel 3. Saturnalia 4. Realise 5. Tadpole 6. Hawk 7. Red ensign 8. Leading article 14. Hieroglyph 16. Senseless 19. Spunk 20. Venison 24. August 25. Stod

NOILUTS

BRIDGE

NORTH 43
 ♠ A K Q J 10 8
 ♥ J 7 6 5
 ♦ Q
 ♣ A 8

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

SOUTH
 ♠ 7
 ♥ A K 10 9 8 4
 ♦ K 9 8 4
 ♣ 5 4

Vulnerable: North-South
 Dealer: North

The bidding:
 North East South West
 1 ♠ 3 ♣* 3 ♥ Pass
 4 NT Pass 5 ♦ Pass
 6 ♥ All pass
 *Pre-emptive

Opening lead: ?

"Action springs not from thought, but from a readiness for responsibility"

— DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Sit in today's West chair and test your readiness for taking responsibility. Cover the East and South cards and examine the bidding. What would you lead against South's heart slam?

If West plays it safe and leads East's suit, he may escape severe criticism, but he will receive no accolades for imaginative action. The club lead makes it easy for South. He wins dummy's ace, draws trumps, and runs dummy's spades. Five minor-suit losers go on the spades, and South emerges with an overtrick.

What if West choose the fearless lead of the diamond ace? Dummy produces the singleton queen, and East plays a discouraging deuce. Is it time to switch, or to stick with diamonds?

A shift now would be complete surrender. With dummy's solid spades in view, East would need a natural trump trick to defeat the slam. If he has that, any lead will defeat the slam.

However, East's weak preempt, together with South's bidding, strongly suggest no natural trump winner for East. So, what is West's final answer?

West should stick to his original plan and lead a second diamond, despite East's play of the deuce. Fortunately, East is able to overruff dummy with his trump queen, and decisive action sends the slam one down.

Transparency In Development Aid

By Dr. HARKA GURUNG

In order to enquire into the issue of lack of transparency or accountability in aid transaction, we need to consider two aspects: that corruption is the antithesis of accountability and concede the limitations of aid intervention. I will commence with the corruption aspect by quoting King Prithvi Narayan Shah the Great: "Justice is distorted by bribe-giver and bribe-taker. There is no sin in taking their life, they are great enemies of the king. The above edict in his *Dibyā Upadesh* (Divine Message) evidences that corruption in Nepal is as old as the country's foundation. The Nepalese even have a native term, *ghiu-khane* (butter eating), which can be equated with palm greasing or grease-the-wheel. The quotation has two observations. First, corruption pertains not only to the abuse of power but also the activity of the bribers. Second, corruption can be a threat to the regime.

Corruption has been long prevalent in most societies and continues as an issue of public debate. But it remained a taboo theme in development discussion until very recently. Gunnar Myrdal was perhaps the pioneer to relate corruption with political economy of 'soft states'. The significance of corruption in Asia is highlighted by the fact that wherever a political regime has crumbled... a major and often decisive cause has been the prevalence of official misconduct among politicians and administrators, and the concomitant spread of unlawful practices among business mass and the general public.

It would be banal to say that corruption has persisted under various forms of regime and successive governments in Nepal. In fact, the culture of corruption has deepened its roots and expanded its tentacles. According to the Auditor-General's reports, irregular cases of government transactions are multiplying every year. "In monetary terms, the total outstanding irregularities amounts to an astronomical figure of Rs. 17,000 million. It is estimated that 15 percent of the total government transaction is either unlawful or unauthorised transfer of money, or uncleared advances, or intentional loss to the government". Cases of corruption cited in *Bleeding Mountains of Nepal* and *Bigreko Bato* (The Distorted Way) are only a sample of wider malady. Despite existence of anti-corruption laws and agencies, corruption is rampant, as the perpetrators remain free from punishment.

The above digression into corruption was deliberate in order to portray the lack of accountability in Nepal. It is a case where corruption has made its transition from lubricant (reduce friction) to substance (for aggrandizement). The same scenario also constitutes the environment in which development aid has to operate. At the outset, I referred to the limitations of aid intervention. I could be wrong in the case of such intervention with negative connotation. Nepal is a poor country with meagre domestic resources. The corollary would be scope for minuscule corruption without outside resources. It does not need complicated statistical analysis to observe that the temporal magnitude of ascending corruption parallels the flow path of aid volume. This is not to insinuate an intrinsic nexus between corruption and aid. The simple truth is that development aid has widened the scope for corruption in Nepal. There is another dimension why aid cannot determine transparency. Aid agreements are basically an expression of rapport between the donor and established regime to assist in the latter's agenda and not to destabilize. The cooperative stance of major donors have remained the same, be it autocratic or democratic Nepal. When donors deal with a regime, they also validate its operative mechanisms. If the regime is corrupt, donor etiquette is to ignore and acquiesce. For example, of the total grant aid received, 26.8 percent or Rs. 1987 million pertaining to 11 ministries was not available for auditing. In such a situation, development aid becomes both abetment and sustenance of corruption.

I do not agree with the view that global ideological contest has shifted from politics to economics since the demise of the Second World. The agenda of major donors remains both political (democratisation) and economic (liberalisation). This is evident from their advocacy of good governance that encompasses liberal democracy, privatisation and clean government. The first two may be contested based on ideological inclination, but no one will quarrel about a government free of corruption. The basic premise of foreign aid was to help poor countries become self-reliant, or towards a condition that requires no aid. It happened to be too ambitious an idea. Nepal's experience since Point Four Agreement of 23 January 1951 has been one of increasing dependence. This had two implications. One is the proliferation of donor agencies and plethora of projects. According to an UNDP inventory for 1977, Nepal had 65 donors that disbursed US\$401 million for 648 projects. Multilateral agencies contributed 50.8 percent, bilateral countries 43.8 percent and INGO share was 5.5 percent. More than half of total disbursement was in investment project assistance while free-standing technical cooperation assistance accounted for 28.9 percent. The 648 ongoing projects in 1997 represented 16 sectors. Health, human resources development and social development led in

number of projects while energy and transport sectors together accounted for 29.5 percent of total disbursement. One glaring aspect of projects is their haphazard pattern of spatial distribution without consideration to the development level of districts or interlinkage among projects. Nepal's over-dependence is obvious from the fact that donors have to take initiative in aid coordination including sectoral ones instead of the government that negotiated for them. The problem of aid management in Nepal becomes evident when the host government plays a secondary role. The second fall-out of over-dependence on aid is the increasing clout of donors on aid conditionality. These relate not only to project management but on policy aspects. While the good governance portfolio of multilateral financial institutions (MFI) impinge on the state's regulatory functions, UNDP and some bilateral donors are more explicit in their governance agenda with incursions in political area such as empowerment and human rights. The irony is that involvement of donors has not improved the situation either in aid management or in curbing corruption.

How to go about improving transparency and accountability in development aid? I will dwell on two suggestions related to the immediate area of foreign aid and observations on the broader regime of corruption. Suggestion on the former is motivated by the disarray in foreign aid management evident from an official draft. Of the litany of problems relating to foreign aid, half are in the nature of 'beggars cannot choose'. These refer to being donor driven, aid in low priority area, too many projects, conditionalities, and increasing loan burden. In terms of category, four are donor oriented, three due to over-dependence, two of inherent weakness and two, admission of incapacity. The most intriguing of the problems is "the absence of definite policies and guidelines" as if all these years, aid was an ad hoc arena. Given the lack of clarity in problem diagnosis, policy and strategy prescriptions have not much of substance. The precondition to effective development cooperation is better aid management. This would also subsume aspects of its transparency. The measure I suggest is not radical but one of organizational re-alignment. Initially, the Foreign Aid Division was under the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs. After the creation of National Planning Commission (NPC) in May 1968, the division was shifted to Ministry of Finance. The glamour of foreign aid has overshadowed the basic function of Finance Ministry, which is domestic resource mobilisation. Therefore, Foreign Aid Division should be relocated under the NPC secretariat. This shift of aid coordination function to the NPC would be logical since bulk of the development activities is externally funded.

Finally, about initiatives towards transparency and accountability. Corruption through aid has become an established fact. Therefore, donors and international agencies are taking corruption control as one of their key concerns under rubric of 'good governance'. Since 1993, Transparency International (TI) has assumed the lead advocacy role to combat corruption. The operational model of TI is coalition building among international agencies, governments, civil society and private sector to combat and control corruption. Of these, the first two with pelf and power have the primary responsibility. Whatever the preventive and curative measures against corruption, it is the government and international agencies that have the authority to pursue and implement. Development aid has also been taken as a 'partnership' enterprise. Despite this, the increasing intervention of donors vis-à-vis suppliant recipients, there has been little break through in the campaign for transparency. Yet, much onus lies on the recipient governments. If aid flow to Nepal has multiplied, so has corruption become pervasive and endemic. Aid might have facilitated new technology and avenue to corruption but it is also the domestic environment that sustains the malady. The notion of 'donor-driven' is an expression of dependency syndrome. If Nepal is today enmeshed in aid-induced corruption, the host government is also party to it, by doing nothing. Corruption is emerging as a scourge in contemporary Nepal. So is the slow tide of public opinion against it. When things get worse, there are ripples of reaction. The introduction of three anti-corruption bills recently in the parliament is one of these. Anti-corruption agenda as one of the Eight-Point commitment of the Prime Minister might be taken as another. The third one should be the resurrection of the Mallik Report (1990) whose non-implementation has fostered impunity and spawned widespread corruption ever since. A vigorous campaign and curbing of overall corruption (forest) will also have positive impact on aid transparency (tree). Corruption was a taboo subject, has become a talk theme, and could be a doable thing. Accountability is said to be an endless prophesy. With concerted effort, transparency in development aid need not be an exercise in futility. ■

Dr. Gurung writes on development issues.

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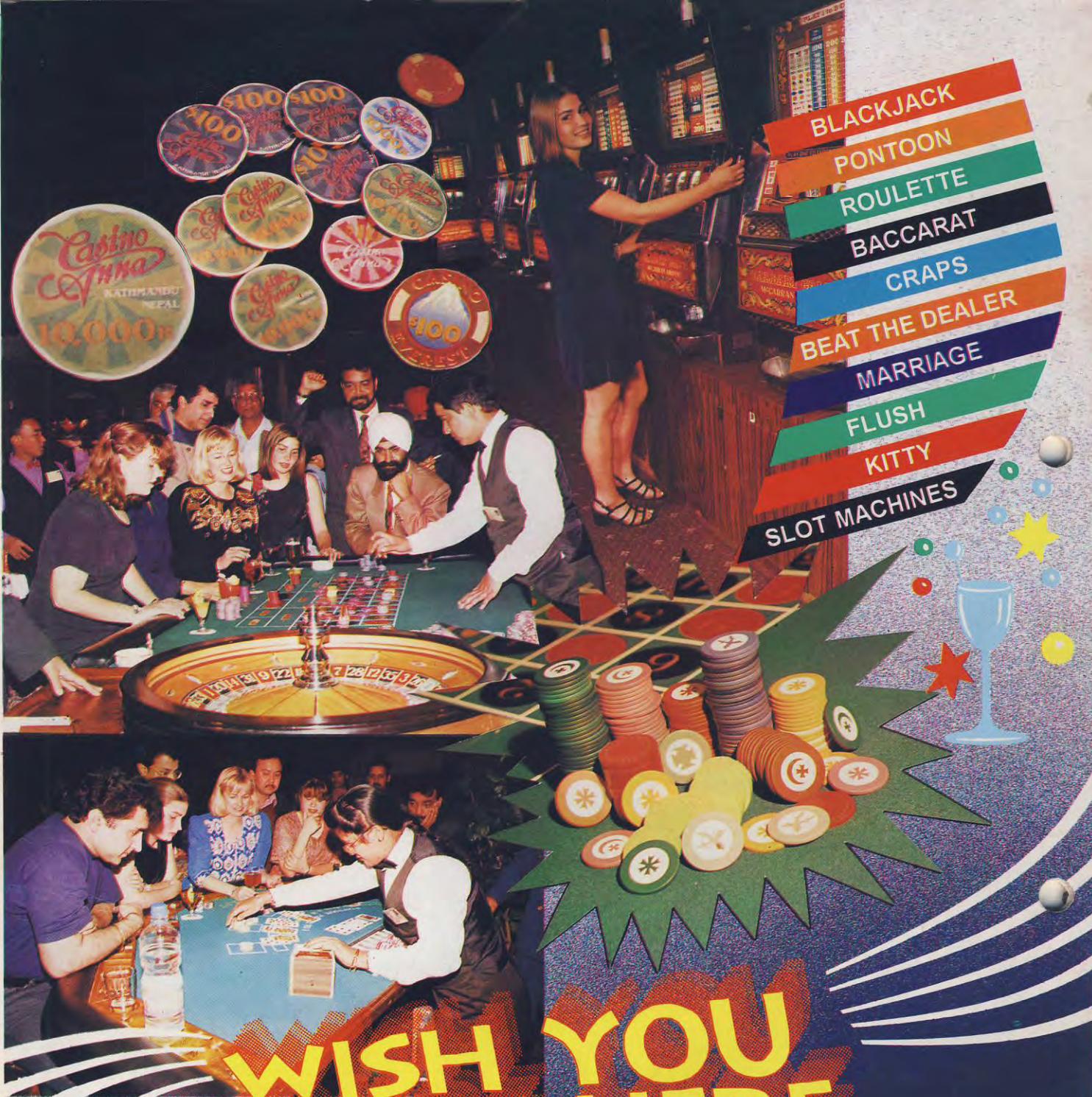
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Casino Nepal
 Soaltee Compound
 Tahachal, Kathmandu
 Tel: 270244, 271011
 Fax: 977-1-271244
 E-mail: rdt@mos.com.np

Casino Anna
 Hotel de L' Annapurna
 Durbar Marg, Kathmandu
 Tel: 223479
 Fax: 977-1-225228
 E-mail: casanna@mos.com.np

CASINO EVEREST
 Casino Everest
 Hotel Everest
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 Tel: 488100
 Fax: 977-1-490284
 E-mail: everest@mos.com.np

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 Tel: 228481
 Fax: 977-1-223933
 E-mail: royal@mos.com.np