

The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

12-18 Oct, 2001

Strikes on Afghanistan What will be the fallout?



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- NINTH SAF: PUT OFF
- PROPERTY RIGHTS

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Cover photo : Internet websites

COVER STORY : What Will Be The Fallout?

The US strikes on Afghanistan are expected to trigger tensions in this region.

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GOVT-MAOIST TALKS : In Limbo

As the two sides prepare to sit for the third round of talks, doubts rise whether they will succeed to chalk out a definite plan to restore peace.

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INTERVIEW :

Dr. Bhagwan Koirala

Director of Shahid Ganga Lal National Heart Center, Dr. Koirala speaks about issues relating to cardiac problems.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The Anglo-American strike against Afghanistan in retaliation to the terrorist attacks on World Trade Centers in New York and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. has started a war that is sure to generate far reaching repercussions all over the world. Even though Afghanistan has been totally isolated and can hardly stand up to the might of the United States, not to say anything about the world coalition, to imagine that the victors will ever tame the fanatic Islamic fundamentalists and restore uninterrupted peace in the world would be nothing but foolhardy. As long as there is one man willing to dedicate his life to his perverted cause, no country in the world can totally feel free of terrorists. The Talibans and the Al-Qaeda can be annihilated. Can the world coalition cleanse the hearts of the weird fanatics of the hatred they bear for their enemies? If history is any testimony, it is impossible. Consequently, it must be understood without the least bit of reservation that flushing out the terrorists is not the final solution. They must make sincere efforts to bring justice to the deprived people. Whether it is the Balkans, the Middle-east, Kashmir or Nepal, the smaller peoples and nations have to be protected from the domineering and aggressive acts of their bull neighbors.

War against terrorism will have to be a long drawn out affair. The causes that encourage terrorism have to be eradicated. The Indian Prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee could not have uttered a better truth when he said, "It is for America to decide whether terrorism is a global phenomenon or whether it is restricted to just one individual. America alone can determine whether it will address the symptom of terrorism or the system of terrorism. Afghanistan is (only) a symptom. America will have to look at the sanctuaries provided to terrorists, at the training camps, at the arms and money flowing into the lands of terrorists if it wants to get rid of terrorism root and branch." We Nepalese do honor the Indian Prime minister and trust he believes in what he says. Will he apply same principle to the Nepalese Maoists and other terrorist groups in the region? We, along with the world, will wait and see.

The United States has indeed a very tough job in its hand. It has not only to provide total peace and security to its own people, but as *numero uno* power in the world, has the responsibility to guard against serious unrest in any part of the world. And this demands a stupendous exercise on their part. They have to treat every information about terrorism with greatest care. They just cannot afford to ignore or neglect any leaks that may lead them to the hardcore militants and terrorists. And all the peace loving peoples of the world have to cooperate with the United States and furnish all kinds of information to them. And the United States has to meticulously use all the informations to reach to the terrorists. Eventhough the whole world is focusing on Osama Bin Laden, the Al-Qaeda and the Talibans at the moment, they have to address other flash points like the Middle-east and Kashmir too without undue delay. It is true that the Middle-east has been the forefront of global politics and Kashmir has been sidelined for long. But in the changed scenario of international equations, the United States has to accord increased importance to the solution of the Kashmir problem as it is directly related to the well being of more than one fifth of the world's poor population. The people of Kashmir have suffered greatly and it is high time they were delivered from an unjust rule and given the right to choose their own destiny. It need not be emphasized that this perennial problem has been responsible to generate a great deal of internal and external terrorism that has cost many valuable human lives. If the United States and the United Nations still prevaricate to resolve this nagging problem, no one need be surprised if it bred some terrible terrorism. The United States and its allies in the fight against terrorism must not overlook the importance of narrowing the gap between the haves and the have-nots, as it is also one of the important factors that breeds terrorism. One other factor that is greatly responsible, in generating terrorism, like in Nepal, is political corruption in poor developing countries of the world. The democratic leaders of the world cannot continue propping up corrupt politicians in the name of supporting democracy. They must not fail to appreciate that live humans must be given greater respect than lifeless ideologies. If they are really keen to mitigate terrorism from the face of the world, they must come to the rescue of the deprived peoples. Otherwise, like a Nepali saying goes "The crow will keep cawing while the oilcake will keep on drying."



Madhav Kumar Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher

FORUM: British Ambassador Ronald P. Nash INTERVIEW: Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat

SPOTLIGHT

3-11 Oct. 2001

ECONOMY Gloomy Days Ahead

- WHITHER JUDICIARY
- NEPAL-INDIA TRADE TALKS
- ENCOUNTER WITH JAI DEWAN
- HEART DISEASE: A NEW THREAT

Whither Tourism?

The most immediate fallout on Nepal from the terrorist attacks in the United States is the reverse impact on the tourism industry ("Gloomy Days Ahead", SPOTLIGHT, October 5). Already leading hotels are receiving cancellations. With the aviation sector in the focus of insecurity, very few people would dare to venture out of their homes in the next couple of months at least. By then, the damage would have been done, as far as Nepal is concerned. This is the peak season for the country's tourism industry. Another body blow has been dealt to a sector that was already struggling for life. Can it survive?

*Harsha Tamañg
Chandol*

Increase Incentives

The only way out from the present turmoil is to give incen-

tives for investment and improve the environment for business in the country ("Gloomy Days Ahead", SPOTLIGHT, October 5). Unless the engine of economy is kept running, the country would come to a standstill. Of course, times are not easy, but pulling out of the morass is not impossible. Mankind has always come out of troubling times victorious. Let's not allow a few terrorists to hijack our way of living.

*Kamal Baidya
Satdobato*

Sorry Sector

The disastrous effect of the terrorist attacks in the United States on Nepal's garment sector is truly remarkable ("Terror Fallout", SPOTLIGHT, October 5). The garment sector seems to be haunted by some malignant fate. One after another, a series of events like strikes, insecurity and terrorism, has throttled the sec-

tor. This would have a tremendously negative impact on the country's economy. For a sector that was among the largest foreign exchange earners, its collapse will mean serious economic trouble next year.

*Rajesh Shrestha
Ghattekula*

What Now?

The article "Terror Fallout" indicated that workers are being laid off en masse from the garment sector (SPOTLIGHT, October 5). This would mean the number of unemployed people will soar, which in turn will bring down consumer spending and trigger economic recession. Unless the authorities come up with concrete plans to relocate these unemployed people, the coming days are going to be extremely difficult. Adding to the woes, the insurgents and other violent elements are waiting in the wings to

lure jobless people into their fold.

*Keshab Bista
Maharajgunj*

Against Terrorism

Apropos the article "Partisans of Peace" (SPOTLIGHT, September 28), it is clear that Nepalese Muslims are all against terrorism anywhere. The article was very relevant coming at a time when some sections of western society were branding all Muslims as supporters of terrorism. The Nepalese Muslims deserve praise for their dignified stand against the violence committed against innocent people in the name of religion. They are also a proud community who have been living in harmony with people from other religions for years.

*Sushil Gurung
Naikap*

Interesting Report

The almost-rosy International Monetary Fund report on Nepal's economic progress is a bit out of sync in the present context ("Stragglings Along", SPOTLIGHT, September 28). Since national and international circumstances have changed so drastically in recent months, the report may not correctly predict the situation of the coming days. Definitely, the effects of the global economic recession would affect us. In fact, Nepal is facing difficult times in the national, regional and international fronts. Inside the country, there is an apparent anxiety over the outcome of government-Maoist dialogue. In the region, South Asia is likely to become the vortex of the global war on terrorism. In the wider international context, the country could lose the attention of many donor countries, which are already preoccupied with matters concerning their own security.

*Shekhar Chand
Kumaripati*

Maoists Release Policemen

In accordance with party chairman Comrade Prachanda's announcement on releasing all policemen and private citizens in their captivity, the underground Maoist party freed 26 more policemen from mid-western district of Rukum Wednesday, Janadisha, a pro-Maoist daily reported. According to the report, the number of policemen released so far has reached 49. More policemen will be released, the daily said. The Home Ministry is yet to confirm the latest release of the policemen, who were abducted from Holeri police post in Rolpa district by the rebels nearly three months back. The daily quoted a highly placed Maoist source as saying that the underground party was ready to sit for talks with the government any time "if the latter created a conducive environment for talks." The party has demanded the release of its leaders, including Matrika Yadav, making public the situation of missing persons, withdrawing Public Security Regulations and Armed Police Force and ordering Royal Nepalese Army personnel back to the barracks, among other things. *Compiled from reports Oct. 7.*

Airline's Permission Withdrawn

At a time when Nepalese travel trade entrepreneurs are feeling the heat in the aftermath of last month's terrorist attacks on the United States, a government agency has withdrawn its permission to allow chartered flights from Taiwan to Nepal. According to a news report, the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) has withdrawn its preliminary approval to Mandarin Airlines, a Taiwanese company, while the airlines was all set to operate a chartered flight from Taipei to Kathmandu carrying 100 Taiwanese tourists on Thursday. The CAAN gave no reason for its decision. Meanwhile, the Pacific Asia Travel Association Nepal chapter has expressed serious reservations over the government's decision and has demanded that it be withdrawn in the interest of Nepal's tourism

industry. *Kantipur Oct. 4.*

Gupta Blames Finance Ministry

In what is seen as yet another example of a tug-of-war among government ministries, Minister for Information and Communications Jaya Prakash Prasad Gupta has said the special rural telecommunication program launched by the government would not be completed on time due to lack of adequate budget alloca-



Dr. Mahat

tions. Gupta said out of the \$70 million project, which aimed to provide at least two telephone lines in each Village Development Committee in the country, the government was to provide \$40 million. Talks are being held with the Finance Ministry and if the resources are not made available, it will take another four years to complete the project, Gupta told the House of Representatives Tuesday. Out of the country's 3,914 VDCs, 1,761 have communication facilities. *RSS news agency reports.*

South Asian Maoists Slam US

A group of 10 Maoist parties from Nepal, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have condemned, opposed and called to resist what they called US war efforts in the aftermath of the "unprecedented attacks at the World Trade Center and Pentagon last month". In a statement

issued by the Co-ordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organizations of South Asia (CCOMPOSA) on September 24 but faxed to media organizations in Kathmandu on Sunday (Oct. 7), the parties said they strongly condemned "the warmonger US trying to drag the world towards a massive war." They have also condemned what they called servile role of the reactionary governments of South Asian region for "dancing to the tune of US imperialism in the name of countering terrorism." Interestingly, the Maoist parties have not condemned the terrorist attacks in the United States that are believed to have killed more than 6,000 people and injured an equal number of people on September 11. *Compiled from reports Oct. 7.*

US Envoy Lauds Nepal's Support

US charge d'affaires Larry Dinger has said Nepal's willingness to help in every way to counter terrorism is encouraging. In an interview with the official news agency, Dinger said terrorism is a global problem and that anti-terrorism efforts had focused on South Asia. Responding to a question about the Maoist insurgency in Nepal, Dinger said he hoped that negotiations would bring some fruits, adding that peaceful process is the only reliable way to resolve the problem. Democracy is the only legitimate way to handle the problem, he said. "We also believe in the rule of law and the state has the responsibility to protect private property and personal security," Dinger said. *RSS news agency reports Oct. 8.*

Investors Being Sought

Nepalese officials are looking for prospective investors to develop the 250 MW Rolwaling (Upper Tamakoshi) hydropower project in eastern Nepal, a newspaper reported. While most of the hydropower projects developed in Nepal have cost up to US\$2,500 to generate 1 MW of power, the in Rolwaling will not exceed more than \$1,100 MW, said a preliminary study conducted by the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) in July. The total project

cost is estimated at \$277 million, including the construction of 100-km 220 KV transmission line and 37-km access road. A 300-meter-high natural dam has reduced the project cost significantly, said Bishnu Bam Malla, executive director of the NEA. NEA officials said they were exploring both domestic and foreign investment to develop the attractive project. *Space Time Sep. 25.*

'Maoists Planning Attacks'

At a time when the government and Maoist rebels are preparing for the third round of peace talks, the government has beefed up security after getting information that the rebels were preparing to mount assaults on the headquarters of three northern districts, Mugu, Kalikot and Jumla, a newspaper reported Tuesday. A secret



Maoist-affected village

circular sent by Police Headquarters in Kathmandu to subordinate offices clearly hinted that there was no possibility of a peaceful solution to the insurgency and asked police to check the movement of armed guerrillas toward sensitive areas. The Police HQ pointed to the possibility of Maoist attacks in other districts as well. The Maoist party has dispatched guerrillas and arms at Siuna and Thirpu in Kalikot district, some seven hours' trek away from the district headquarters, police said. They

said the Maoists might try to capture the whole district after India refused to provide them shelter. Police have made necessary arrangements in cooperation with the Royal Nepalese Army to counter the possible assaults, a senior police official, who declined to be named, said in Nepalgunj. *Nepal Samacharpatra Oct. 2.*

'Look Toward Asian Countries'

In order to mitigate the adverse impact on Nepal's tourism industry in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, travel trade entrepreneurs have said the country should focus on its immediate neighbors and South East Asian countries. Tek Chandra Pokhrel, a senior tourism entrepreneur, said Nepal should focus on India, China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Japan to attract more visitors. The travel trade leaders demanded that the government introduce a special package to offset the adverse impact on tourism. Meanwhile, Nepal and China are going to sign a memorandum of understanding next month to open the door to Chinese tourists to Nepal. *Compiled from reports Oct. 2.*

Curfew Lifted In Tulsipur

The local administration has lifted an indefinite curfew imposed in the mid-western

town of Tulsipur in Dang district after four days. The curfew was imposed last week as agitating crowds were vandalizing public transport vehicles demanding compensation for the death of two school students who died when a bus overran them last Saturday. The crowd vandalized dozens of passenger buses causing an estimated loss of more than Rs 10 million and burnt down a ticket counter belonging to the bus entrepreneurs. A protester was killed and nine others injured when police opened fire to control the crowd. The local administration imposed a curfew since Monday. *Compiled from reports.*



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Others	14.00%	14.50%
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Priority Sector Loan	13.50%	14.50%
Deprived Sector Loan	10.00%	
Hire Purchase Loan	13.50%	14.00%
Contract Loan	13.00%	14.00%
Other Loans (Miscellaneous)	15.00%	15.50%
Loan against Govt. Papers	9.00%	9.50%
Loan against Bank G'tee	11.00%	
Loan against Fixed Deposit	9.50**	9.50**
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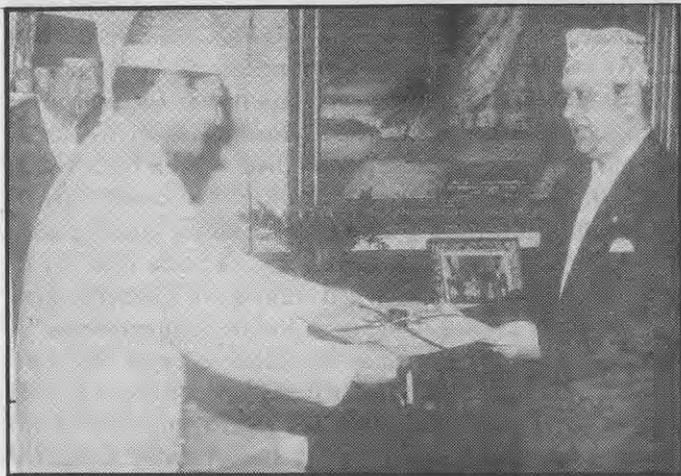
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Alliance for Development

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King Gyanendra receiving credentials from Myanmar's ambassador to Nepal U Ne Win

THE YOUNGEST OF THE QUADRUPLETS UNDERGOING treatment at a hospital in Pokhara has died, reports said. Rupa Shrestha Thapa, 28, gave birth to a son in her house last week and a day later, she delivered three more sons at the Western Zonal hospital. While the condition of two babies had improved, the other two were kept at the intensive care unit at the Manipal Teaching Hospital. The birth of identical male quadruplets is considered very rare.

AFTER NEIGHBORING INDIA DESCRIBED THEM AS A terrorist outfit, serious differences have cropped up within the Maoist rank and file on the issue of continuing their insurgent activities, Naya Sadak daily reported last week. According to the newspaper, party chairman Comrade Prachanda and other senior leaders are in favor of finding a peaceful solution through talks with the government. However, gun-toting guerrillas and militia are against any sort of agreement with the government and have threatened a revolt if the leaders struck any such deal.

TOTAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE REGISTERED A growth of 80.3 percent to Rs 2967.7 million in the first month of fiscal year 2001-02, a monthly report published by the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) said. Of the total expenditure, regular spending rose by 116.6 percent to Rs 942.9 million. Development expenditure rose by a whopping 241.8 percent to Rs 195.5 million. The flow of bank credit to the private sector increased by 0.5 percent to Rs 649.2 million. On the external front, a moderate growth of exports and a moderate decline in imports helped to narrow the trade deficit and, subsequently, the current account deficit during the review period, the central bank said. Foreign exchange reserve in the country was sufficient to cover merchandize import of one year, the report said.

AT LEAST TEN PEOPLE WERE KILLED AND 32 OTHERS injured when a passenger bus fell some 200 feet off the road into a ravine in the mid-western district of Dang Sunday afternoon. According to police, the bus met with the accident at a place called Mashot, nearly 400 km west of the capital, Kathmandu. The bus was on its way to Nepalgunj, a mid-western town, from Tulsipur in the same region. Police said the injured passengers are undergoing treatment at hospitals in the vicinity.

THE REGISTRATION OF 955 INDUSTRIES THAT FAILED

to renew their papers has been canceled in the far-western district of Kailali. According to the Cottage and Small Industries Office in the district, out of the 2,276 industries registered, only 1,321 have retained the permission. Out of those registered, only 40 percent are properly operating, the office said.

ABOUT 600 FORMER KAMAIYAS (BONDED LABORERS) have been rehabilitated in the far-western district of Kailali, officials said. According to Khadga Bahadur Chapagain, convenor of the kamaiya rehabilitation and land registration committee, more than 600 bighas of land have been allocated to the former kamaiyas. Of the 5,679 families identified as kamaiyas in the district, 5,130 did not have any land. The government abolished the kamaiya system in the country in July last year.

THE JAPANESE EMBASSY IN KATHMANDU HAS PROVIDED a grant assistance of Rs 3.45 million to set up a Human Resource Center at the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI). Under an agreement signed Monday, the grant will be used to procure equipment for different projects being launched by the FNCCI. FNCCI President Ravi Bhakta Shrestha and Japanese Ambassador Mitsuaki Kojima signed the agreement.

ACTIVISTS BELONGING TO NEPAL PEASANTS FORUM, affiliated to the Terai-based Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP), last week burnt copies of the fifth amendment bill concerning land ceiling introduced by the government in parliament. The NSP activists also demanded that the government withdraw the bill, which they said was a "conspiracy against the farmers of the terai". The NSP has been boycotting parliamentary proceedings demanding that a ceiling on private property should also be introduced.

THE NEPALESE GOVERNMENT, THE NORDIC DEVELOPMENT Fund (NDF) and the OPEC Fund for International Development have signed an agreement at NDF headquarters in Helsinki on September 18. The NDF and OPEC Fund have agreed to provide a loan assistance of SDR 7.2 million (approximately Rs 675.9 million) and US\$ 13.7 million (approximately Rs 1207.7 million) respectively. Nepal for the execution of the Melamchi Water Supply Project. The loan assistance from the NDF will be used for the Melamchi Diversion Scheme component of the project. The loan from the OPEC Fund will be used for construction of access roads.

DUE TO COMPARATIVELY HIGHER PRICES IN NEPAL, nearly 100,000 liters of milk is entering Nepal every day, entrepreneurs said. The Nepal Dairy Association has said higher cost of production and the policy of 'milk holiday' have added to Nepali farmers' burden. The association has demanded that a collective power plant be set up in the country to convert milk into powder, Aparanha daily reported.

ADDRESSING THE SEVENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of Nepal Courier Service Association here Sunday, Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat said although Nepalese tourism and industrial sectors are reeling from the global recession, the attack on Afghanistan by the United States would not affect SAARC countries. He, however, admitted that recent developments were not encouraging in terms of attracting investment. The minister said the government was ready to act against corruption, mismanagement and fraud, which, he said, were hindering the development. ■

“Let the peace talks be successful. You also come to the elections. We will be happy.”

Madhav Kumar Nepal, leader of the main opposition and general secretary of Unified Marxist-Leninist, countering allegations by the Maoists that the UML was trying to spoil the dialogue, in Gorkhapatra.

* * *

“It is the prerogative of the prime minister to reshuffle his cabinet. I am not going to put any demands before him.”

Sushil Koirala, general secretary of Nepali Congress, expressing his full support to the Deuba government, in Bimarsha.

* * *

“The Marxist-Leninist party has to agree to the decisions of the sixth convention.”

Bharat Mohan Adhikary, former minister and senior leader of UML, on the proposed UML-ML unification, in Drishti.

* * *

“Unless we take policy initiatives to empower the parliament to make laws on succession to throne, it would not be possible to defeat the Maoists’ slogans for republic.”

Narahari Acharya, central member of Nepali Congress, in Spacetime Daily.

* * *



Himalaya Times

“The aim of the dialogue is to end the terror not end the talks.”

Ram Chandra Poudel, former deputy Prime minister and senior Congress leader, alleging the political leaders of focussing merely on quick wrap-up of the ongoing dialogue between the government and the Maoists, while speaking in the parliament, in

Himalaya Times.

* * *

“The UML has to correct the decisions of its sixth convention.”

Siddhi Lal Singh, former minister and senior leader of ML, laying out conditions for the proposed UML-ML unification, in Drishti.

* * *



Destamer

“I want to migrate to the land of opportunities and this DV-2003 program has raised hopes.”

Ravi Rasaili, agriculture engineer, who wants to go the United States to enhance his career, in The Kathmandu Post.

* * *

“I sometimes think the progress of the Nepalese film industry has been unnecessarily rapid.”

Ugyen Chopel, Sikkim-based director of Nepali films, reflecting on the improvements in Nepalese film industry, in Gorkhapatra.

* * *

Democratic Reply

Two years ago when the Nepali Congress decided to support Rastriya Prajatantra Party candidate Dr. Mohammed Mohasin for the chairmanship of the National Assembly, many Congress leaders criticized their party's decision, saying Dr. Mohasin was a hard-liner pancha who did not have faith in democratic



Dr. Mohsin : Reining in

values. In recent legislative debates, Dr. Mohasin proved how firmly he is committed to democracy than self-proclaimed democrats. His actions have shown that he is strong believer in freedom, democracy and the constitution. As House of Representatives Speaker Taranath Ranabhat, a former Congress general secretary, failed to discourage MPs from denigrating the independence of the judiciary, the Muslim leader of the world's only Hindu kingdom strongly issued a ruling asking elders not raise any controversy. Whatever so-called democrats said about Dr. Mohasin, he has proved his loyalty and commitment to the constitution and an independent judiciary more than anyone else has. A man can be evaluated not on the basis of his face and race but based on his commitment to the fundamen-

tal values of the existing system. Is not Dr. Mohasin's commitment a fitting reply to his critics?

Man Of Words

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has endeared himself to many as a man of sweet words. As far as action is concerned, the premier is regarded as too leisurely or, sometimes, outright indifferent. Ever since becoming prime minister in July, Deuba has made so many commitments in so many areas that his aides must be having a hard time helping him keep his word. At a recent function, Deuba projected himself as the only head of government concerned about children's welfare. He directed the Ministry of Health to put in place incubators at Pokhara Hospital as soon as possible. If experience is any indication, Deuba's words are likely to amount to little more than fleeting sweetness. Whether the prime minister can break from the mold, only time will tell.

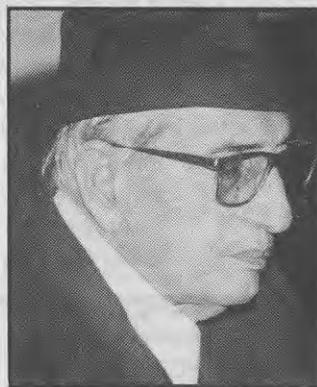
Birds Of A Feather

When Subhas Nembang, chairman of the House of Representatives Public Accounts Committee, recently made a speech that, in effect, advocated limiting the independence of the judiciary, it made little news. It's no secret that his Communist Party of Nepal Unified Marxist-Leninist has always wanted the judiciary under the control of the party. However, when Nepali Congress MP and former home minister Purna Bahadur Khadka backed Nembang's demand, many were confounded. How was it possible for a die-hard Nepali Congress member and a UML leader to speak the same lan-

guage? The answer is simple: both have the same guru. But who is that guru?

Koirala's Way

Former prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala has mastered the skill of tackling people in all kinds of settings. One favorite tactic of Koirala is to praise the place and people he is addressing. If Koirala happens to meet the people of Baitadi, he immediately declares that he has a personal affection with the place. When he visits Mustang, he does not hesitate to claim that the place is more or less like his hometown. On many occasions, Koirala's ploy works. But sometimes it backfires. This was what happened at a public function at Biratnagar, his hometown. In his speech, Koirala revealed that the city



Koirala : Foot in mouth

was the place where he started his political career. While the people endured Koirala's exertion in stating the obvious, the former prime minister continued as if he was addressing anything but a hometown audience.

Speaker's Sense

After his involvement in the high-level committee formed to probe the June 1 massacre at Narayanhity Royal Palace, House of Representa-

tives Speaker Taranath Ranabhat appears to have acquired special knowledge in investigative procedures. Last week Ranabhat claimed that he knew how bureaucrats bribed ministers. In two public meetings, Ranabhat even challenged ministers to prove his statement wrong. The speaker's strong words did not surprise his long-time colleagues. Ranabhat's favorite author in his college days was Hindi novelist Col. Bed Prakash Sharma, who has written several thrillers on espionage and conspiracies. It seems Ranabhat is busy trying to prove that he is that rare breed of politicians with honesty and integrity. Wherever he goes, Ranabhat spares wastes no time in criticizing bureaucrats and ministers for their corrupt behavior. If Ranabhat's sixth sense is actually so alert to the slightest hint of graft, he might actually prove to be more effective as the head of the country's anti-corruption watchdog.

Red Rhetoric

Communist leaders are proficient in using hard-hitting words and ear-splitting delivery to outdo opponents. This is why they always tend to launch impassioned exhortations to workers to fight on, even if the cause is hazy. CPN-ML leader Bam Dev Gautam is known as a man of fiery rhetoric. Whenever he addresses public meetings, he spares no time in coming out with a heavy-dose vocabulary to prove that he is a genuine communist. In a recent speech, Gautam even used words that went on to discredit his party leaders. But who is Gautam to worry about the image of his leaders when the audience seemed to be going along with him? ■

GOVT-MAOIST TALKS In Limbo

Both sides may meet for the third time, only to break the talks formally

By A BHAGIRATH YOGI

When government and Maoist negotiators flew into Kathmandu after the second round of talks last month, they had their own stories to tell reporters. During the Sep. 13-15 talks at the posh Tiger Tops resort in the mid-western district of Bardiya, the three-member Maoist team led by former MP Krishna Bahadur Mahara handed over their core demands to the government: institutionalization of the republic, formation of an interim government and drafting a new constitution. In their initial response, the five-member official team led by senior Minister Chiranjivi Wagle told the Maoists that a government elected under the present constitution could not meet such demands as making Nepal a republic.

Things seem to be moving very fast since then. Though both sides agreed to continue negotiations, they did not fix a timeframe as they had done during the first round of talks on August 30 at the Godavari Resort. Even after three weeks of the second round, nobody knows when the third round will take place.

"As per the understanding, Prime Minister (Sher Bahadur) Deuba himself is to fix the date and venue for the third round of talks. But so far we haven't heard anything from him," Padma Ratna Tuladhar, one of the two facilitators in the talks told SPOTLIGHT Tuesday. "Civil society should pressure both sides to continue the talks."

There have been some positive developments in between. In response to the 'hard talk' by Home Minister Khum Bahadur Khadka that the government could not release all the Maoist activists unilaterally, Maoist leader Comrade Prachanda announced that his party would release all the policemen and private citizens under

its custody. The rebels said they had released 49 policemen by last week. Officials say there are at least two dozen policemen and nearly 100 private citizens still under the Maoists' custody.

In a statement issued Monday after his party's politburo meeting, Comrade Prachanda urged the government to prepare a congenial atmosphere for the talks. By 'congenial atmosphere', the Maoists mean unconditional release of all their



Wagle : Keeping fingers crossed

activists and leaders and withdrawal of the Public Security Regulations, among other things. Sources said the Home Ministry was working to amend certain clauses in the regulations that give sweeping authority to local administration to keep people under preventive detention. Officials said they were also screening the cases of Maoists under custody.

More than internal dynamics, the changed international environment is believed to have put the Maoists on the

defensive. Within a fortnight of the terrorist attacks on the US, Indian Foreign and Defense Minister Jaswant Singh declared Nepalese Maoists as terrorists. In a swift move, police in Indian state of West Bengal started searching Maoist hideouts in Siliguri and other sensitive regions. With the Indian government's decision to deploy nearly 10,000 troops along the border "to control criminal and cross-border terrorist activities" Maoists may no longer enjoy easy access to arms and ammunitions from across the border. Moreover, with the Nepalese government expressing all-out support to the US-led coalition in its war on terrorism, the Maoists could expect little international support.

Fresh developments indicated that the Maoist leadership was losing control over its rank and file. Reports spoke of strong dissension within the party on continuing talks. "Both the government and the Maoists are preparing for an intense conflict in the disguise of talks," alleged Yuba Raj Gyawali, leader of the main opposition UML in the National Assembly.

Critics, too, suspect that both the government and rebels want to prolong the 'cease fire' for their own reasons. While the government seems to be employing the strategy of 'wearing out' the rebels by prolonging the talks, the rebels are said to be training and equipping their cadres for a final showdown.

Analysts say the government must be as accommodative as possible to bring the insurgents, who have failed to rally the people, into the political mainstream. "An interim government could be formed from within this constitution (so as to accommodate the Maoists)," said chief government negotiator Wagle in Biratnagar. Whether the Deuba government will be able to endorse such a move from the ruling party led by G.P. Koirala remains to be seen.

The Maoist leadership, too, will have to show flexibility in its political demands. By derailing the peace process, they will not only be sidelined from the public, they will also have to face the Royal Nepalese Army after being branded as terrorists. A tough choice, indeed. ■



Ministry of Foreign Affairs : Maintaining the balance

SAARC New Equation

Complementary regionalism and bilateralism could herald a new era of cooperation in South Asia

By AKSHAY SHARMA

Despite striking socio-cultural similarities and mutual developmental needs, the countries of the South Asian region have so far failed to emerge as a cohesive bloc. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has been able to achieve only moderate success, much below its potential, as member states have been suspended between desiring increased regional cooperation and the pursuit of perennial bilateral disputes. However, recent developments suggest that a new equation of "complementary regionalism and bilateralism" is emerging, which could herald a new era of cooperation in the region.

South Asia, which represents one fifth of the world's population, has failed to eradicate widespread poverty, hunger, disease, and illiteracy. In the mid-1980s, it was realized that national efforts by individual governments needed to be supplemented by bilateral and regional coopera-

tion to deal with the issues of overall development. Many of the interlinked socio-economic problems of the region further necessitated long-term collective strategy and planning at the regional level.

It was against this background that SAARC was launched in 1985 to accelerate economic growth and the strengthening of collective self-reliance. However, from the very beginning, doubts were cast over the smooth functioning of SAARC since both New Delhi and Islamabad — its two largest members — had apprehensions about the newly formed group. India feared that SAARC would compromise its national sovereignty and potentially could develop into an anti-Indian forum. Pakistan, on the other hand, suspected that India would use SAARC to develop a bloc under its leadership.

An analyst says that the problem SAARC faces is overcoming these fears and ensuring a smooth functioning of the organization. The SAARC charter strictly prohibited bilateral and contentious issues

within its ambit. However, 16 years after its inception, SAARC is still in a state of confusion, and it has failed to evolve into an effective regional body.

Several factors have contributed to this state of affairs. First, South Asia is still far from becoming a 'region' due to the inadequate degree of harmony of interests among the member states. Economic, geographic, and military asymmetry between India and its neighbors have had a negative effect.

Second, almost perpetual intrastate conflicts and crises have left individual states with little time or resources to work towards regional cooperation. Third, the lack of a common external security threat has also lowered the necessity of creating a strong regional bloc. Fourth, provisions that prevented the organization from formally considering political issues and bilateral problems have further restricted SAARC's regional role.

The analyst adds that, most importantly, notwithstanding the existence of institutional mechanisms, bitter bilateral disputes among the member states have decisively limited SAARC's effectiveness in the subcontinent. In the past two decades, political, religious, and ethnic tensions have been high in the region. Almost every South Asian country is perpetually plagued by internal conflicts and crises based on narrow considerations of caste, religion, ethnicity, language, community, and the like.

Frequent border skirmishes between India and Bangladesh, the ongoing debate between Bhutan and Nepal over the refugee issue, the irritants in relations between India and Nepal over the open border, and other sporadic events have constrained the growth of regional cooperation in the region. However, it is the unremitting hostility between India and Pakistan, which has greatly undermined the growth of SAARC. To India's discomfort, Pakistan has from time to time attempted to raise the Kashmir issue in the SAARC forums on one or other pretext.

Growing Islamic insurgency in Kashmir since the late 1980s and the tit-for-tat nuclear tests in May 1998 further poisoned the political and strategic environment in the subcontinent, adversely affecting the spirit of regional cooperation. The 11th summit has not been able to take place

because New Delhi refused to recognize the military takeover in Pakistan in October 1999.

Progress on the proposed free-trade area within SAARC became futile owing to the differences between India and Pakistan. Indeed, bilateral Indo-Pakistani conflicts are the major obstacle to the success of SAARC to the extent that the socio-economic development of this poor region of more than 1.5 billion people significantly rests on the ups and downs of these nuclear rivals' bilateral ties. The other five countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka) and SAARC's secretariat in Kathmandu have become helpless spectators.

But as the experts put the perception of SAARC, for all this, of late a broad understanding of the need to strengthen regional cooperation has begun to emerge, specifically in the economic field, though the region's leaders have been slow to pursue it.

Several developments are noteworthy. First, India and some of its neighbors are becoming fearful of being left out as the world organizes itself into regional groupings. Second, against the background of the socio-economic benefits reaped by ASEAN states, voices are rising in the South Asian region that SAARC should not let opportunities for economic cooperation slip by. Third, in the present era of globalization, the proposed South Asian Preferential-Trade Area (SAPTA) and South Asia Free-Trade Area (SAFTA) could enhance regional economic interests.

Fourth, there is an increasing concern in the smaller states that the region is paying a big price for Indo-Pakistani bilateral differences. Sri Lanka and Nepal have initiated various diplomatic moves to revive the SAARC summit. Fifth, as people within the region continue to interact at different levels, there is a growing pressure on the governments to shed their differences and to chart out strategies to fight against common enemies such as illiteracy, poverty, and unemployment. The emergence of the Citizen's Commission for South Asia (CCSA) should be seen in this context.

Sixth, in the late 1990s, as India began to attach greater importance to the economic dimension in its regional diplomacy,

its attitude towards the potential of SAARC has changed significantly. It is in this context that in recent years Delhi has actively promoted the concept of a SAPTA to be followed by SAFTA.

Based on their experience in the past, however, the South Asian nations continue to feel vulnerable to Indian political, military, and economic pressures. There is a general fear that India's comparative advantage could damage their domestic industries if unrestricted trade is allowed. Pakistan is also reluctant to boost trade with India without concurrent progress over Kashmir.

To allay small nations' fears, the Indian leadership has shown willingness to pursue a foreign policy focused on developing cordial relations with regional countries — the so-called 'Gujral doctrine'. Successful water-sharing negotiations with Bangladesh and Nepal have conveyed a positive message that India is prepared to offer concessions without demanding reciprocity.

In return, New Delhi can exploit its

table in promoting regional peace, stability, and amity, and in accelerating socio-economic cooperation," an expert says.

SAARC member states are increasingly convinced that they will all gain politically, economically, and strategically if SAARC makes good progress. The example of other political and economic regional groups clearly indicates that a regional organization could be an attractive proposition for all the member states. Notably, in the past few months, New Delhi's desire to take the SAARC process forward has also been positively matched by Pakistan, besides being strongly supported by other members. Islamabad did not raise the Kashmir issue at the recent meeting of foreign secretaries in Colombo. Sources have been informed that this approach might continue in the near future.

In last month's meeting in Delhi, the SAARC commerce ministers not only agreed to take a common position in the Doha World Trade Organization ministerial meeting in November but also reflected the new mood for regional cooperation.

Although the July Agra summit between Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf failed to make any breakthrough on the Kashmir dispute, it has certainly paved the way for the resumption of the SAARC summit. Sources reveal that preparations for the Kathmandu summit are already under way.

It is important that Pakistan should not be isolated. An isolated Pakistan is a danger not only to India but also to the stability of the entire region. The political upheavals in Pakistan are a fait accompli. There is no doubt that the nature of bilateral relations will continue to have a great impact on the approach of participating member states in the organization. However, by showing prudence, SAARC could be turned into a venue where South Asian leaders could discuss controversial bilateral issues on the margins of formal sessions.

Such an understanding would greatly boost cooperation in the areas of socio-economic development of the region. A big opportunity lies ahead for the South Asian leaders, and it is to be hoped that they will show the statesmanship and far-sightedness to capitalize on it. ■



SAARC Secretary General Rodrigo : Faces difficulties

powerful position vis-vis its neighbors to develop a regional base for its own ambitions to play a major role on the global stage. If India is seen not as a regional bully, but as a friendly neighbor with a strong base of support among the smaller South Asian countries, it could improve its chances of winning a permanent seat on an expanded UN Security Council. "It is important to note that, barring Pakistan, there is not a major dispute between India and its other five neighbors although 'perceptive differences' do exist. Therefore, amid the Indian willingness to develop confidence among its small neighbors, a consensus is slowly but gradually emerging among the member states that the SAARC process is crucial as well as inevi-

NBCCI: A Strong Bridge Between Nepal And Great Britain

By RAJENDRA K. KHETAN

The Nepal-Britain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NBCCI) was established some six years ago with the noble objective of promoting Nepal Britain ties in the field of business and economy. It was the realization of the need to have greater participation in the international market place if Nepal is to escape from the malaise of economic backwardness and fulfill the aspirations of our people for a better life. So, as a bi-national chamber we are fully committed to the ideals of free economy and globalised market.

During these years, we have achieved success by advocating the problems of Nepalese bilateral businesses. It gives me immense pleasure to report to you that our views and opinion in making the environment more business friendly have been well received not only by the government but by the cross society at large. In the field of business, too this chamber has made considerable efforts in expanding the width and depth of our economic ties. Our efforts have not confined to expanding the business of our members with U.K. We have facilitated exchange of ideas and information among businessmen of the two countries. We have been continuously involved in promoting and popularizing British goods and technology in Nepal. Our efforts have produced some positive results. Our export to UK has been showing a continuous growth in terms of volume as well as share in the total export of Nepal. During the fiscal year 1999/2000 our export amounted to 1.6 billion Nepalese Rupees, which was 2.3 percent of our total export. The British tourist arrival remained more than 30,000 which would be 7% plus of total arrival. But we think, we cannot take solace from this achievement. It is rather meager when we consider the potentials. There are many products and sectors where we could and should increase our trade and other forms of business dealings.

The people of our two countries have been enjoying cordial relationship. The Gurkhas in the British security forces have been serving Britain for more than a century now. The low pace of growth of the mutually beneficial economic ties between our two countries is not necessarily due to the lack of initiatives and efforts from the business organizations like this chamber. The incidents and developments taking place outside of our control have made a significant contribution in shaping the course of development in the economic arena. The economic situation of this country during the last few years has not been that good to say the least. The country, until two years ago, was reeling under political instability, which had its negative effects on the business environment. The incidents like the hijacking of Indian Airlines or innumerable bandhs organised by all colours were sending negative signals to the prospective investors as well as tourists. The horrifying incidents in the name of Hritik Roshan or at the Royal Palace not only halted the economic movements for some days but set a tremor signal to present & future partners of Nepal. The declining law and order situation in the past months arising out of so-called 'peoples war' has been chilling the investment climate. A political solution to this is must. The attacks in the US and the ensuing fear of continued unrest especially in our region have

aggravated the situation, which was already very hard.

We have been raising our concerns with the appropriate authorities. The three areas i.e., security especially industrial security, the tax and revenue collection procedures and the government policy on issues related to industrial relation have been of primary concern to us. The personnel manning these functions of the government, we find are rather negatively oriented towards the private sector. We often find that only lip service is given to the practical and innovative suggestions from the private sector organizations like the FNCCI & binational chambers. They often see sinister desires of the private sector in whatever suggestions we make. This is not a healthy situation. We find our policies and declarations have become more private sector friendly. But have the actions been exhibiting it? We have been much talking about the mismanagement and economic malpractices. No doubt there is rampant corruption. The situation has gone to the extent that everybody sees sinister motives in whatever is done. Natural justice provides "every body is innocent unless proven guilty". But in Nepal we seem to have developed our own belief system "every body is guilty unless proven innocent". Decisions are deferred just because some body would see sinister purposes in the decisions. For an ordinary businessman with little access to the authority that be, normal commercial dealings with government or its agency has become next to impossible.

The government, at last seems to be serious toward facilitating industrial security. We hope the current talks between the government and the Maoists would lead to the peaceful resolution of the conflict. The security situation has improved significantly during the last few weeks. We sincerely hope the situation would gradually improve in the days ahead. We have the privilege of having an ambassador who does not hide behind the veil of diplomatic nicety in describing our problems. He (British ambassador Ronald P. Nash) has been a true promoter of business between our two countries. He has taken genuine interest in improving the economy. The industrial security group is helping the businesses feel safe.

The Annual General Meeting for any chamber is the time of taking the stock of the past performance, identifying the past deficiencies and charting out the future course of action. With the active involvement of our members and strong support from our friends we have made considerable achievements. But many more things are yet to be done. This AGM, I am confident, will provide us the guidance on where to concentrate our efforts and which course of action to take for our future initiatives. ■



(Khetan is the President of NBCCI. Excerpts of his speech at the sixth AGM of the bi-national chamber held in the capital last week.)

JUDICIARY

Standing Against All Odds

Members of parliament are questioning the independence of the judiciary, largely out of ignorance

By KESHAB POUDEL

As junior members of parliament are trying to drag the country into a new controversy, two senior leaders of the House, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and leader of opposition Madhav Kumar Nepal have demonstrated their commitment to an independent judiciary by avoiding comment.

Although former deputy prime minister Ram Chandra Poudel, a leading second-generation leader of the ruling Nepali Congress, has fiercely challenged the apex court, a large number of Congress MPs have remained calm.

After the decision of the Supreme Court questioning the legality of the procedure of the Constituency Development Fund, the country's two bodies have become embroiled in confrontation.

Following the decision of the Supreme Court, a group of MPs from the ruling and opposition benches, who supported the amendment bill relating to the Commission of Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) in parliament, have made every effort to bring the court into controversy.

Particularly, a second brand of MPs, who do not know the importance of the independence of the judiciary in safeguarding democracy, are vocal. Thanks to the silence of Prime Minister Deuba and main opposition party leader Nepal, an escalation of the crisis has so far been averted.

"The MPs who are trying to discredit the judges and the judiciary are either ignorant about the value of the independence of the judiciary or motivated by someone," said a political analyst. "Poudel, who is now using every word in his vocabulary to discredit the independent judiciary, dismissed an impeachment motion tabled against then chief justice Surendra Prasad Singh. This shows the double standards of

the former speaker."

Despite many ups and downs and hindrances on the part of the judges, the apex court and other courts remain the only institutions the people can look up to for justice.

"If the CIAA (police) is given the right to investigate the judiciary, the essence of an independent judiciary will die," said a lawyer, recalling the Panchayat days when the principal secretary to the King pressured judges to take decisions in his favor.



Supreme Court : Exercising judicial authority

The question now is whether the judiciary needs to be kept independent or placed under the authority of the police who can misuse their power to influence the judges in the decision-making process.

Political leaders, however, seem to be ignoring the importance of the independent judiciary, which can interpret the law and constitution in accordance within legal tenets.

Of course, there are still many possibilities to improve the performance of the

court. But it will be in no one's interest to dangle a sword on the head of the court.

"I will oppose every move to curtail the independence of the judiciary. Some persons may be bad in the court, but the institution needs to remain independent," said former minister and RPP leader Rabindra Nath Sharma.

Some of the court's decisions are also responsible for putting the institution on the defensive. Had the court interpreted the constitution on the attorney-general's final right to prosecution and functional immunity in judicial function, the judiciary might not have had to face the present crisis.

The court rejected the claims of the attorney-general for professional immunity and failed to appreciate the need for the protection of professionals. The CIAA questioned the final decision taken by attorney-general.

When the apex court justified the

CIAA's demand to raise questions on the attorney-general's final authority, the CIAA tabled an amendment bill in parliament showing the interpretation of the court as a legal framework.

Whatever mistakes and faults the court may have made, it is only an independent judiciary through which the people can challenge injustices committed by the state. It is vital to avoid unnecessary confrontation between ignorant MPs and the independent judiciary. ■

NINTH SAF GAMES

New Calendar

As the global war on terrorism comes to the neighborhood, the South Asian Federation postpones the ninth regional games by six months

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

With South Asia, and the host nation Pakistan, in particular, turning into a key theater of the global war on terrorism, the Ninth South Asian Federation (SAF) Games have been put off by six months.

Originally scheduled to take place in Islamabad, Pakistan between October 6

next-door neighbor.

And, now, one week after the host nation called off the games in the wake of impending US retaliatory attacks against Afghanistan, it has rescheduled them for March 30-April 4, 2002. Amid growing anxiety, an October 6 meeting of the executive committee of the SAF, held in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, decided to postpone the match and reschedule it for early next year.



Nepalese athletes : In low spirits

and 15, the September 11 terrorist attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Center (WTC) in New York and the Pentagon in Washington and subsequent developments had raised doubts about the fate of the tournament. The aftermath of the attacks seven seas away took a menacing turn after the US government pointed an accusing finger towards Osama bin Laden, who is hiding in the mountains of Afghanistan, Pakistan's

Representatives from all member states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), except Nepal and India, participated in the meeting. According to Rukma SJB Rana, president of Nepal Olympics Committee, although the two countries did not participate in the meeting, they had agreed to abide by the decision taken by the SAF executive committee. He said he was in constant touch with the officials of the

SAF executive committee, who had expressed optimism that the clouds of war hovering over the region would be cleared by March.

The games were expected to draw over 1,600 sportspersons from the SAARC region. The National Sports Council (NSC) was preparing to send a 213-member strong delegation, including 157 athletes, to the Islamabad games. The government has already sanctioned funds and the NSC estimates that Nepalese participants will spend Rs 36.6 million on the games.

All seven members of SAARC — Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka — participate in the games, held every two years. The 14 disciplines that were to be played in Pakistan included athletics, boxing, football, kabaddi, karate, shooting, swimming, table-tennis, taekwondo, volleyball, weight-lifting, wrestling, badminton and squash.

The Nepalese athletes had been in close-camp training for the games. Some players had been sent abroad for training. Taekwondo players were sent to Bangkok, while karate players were in Iran. Boxers were sent to Pakistan. Following the uncertainty, training sessions for the athletes have been suspended. However, according to Rana, the athletes will receive further training after the festival of Tihar.

In the 8th SAF Games held in Kathmandu in 1999, Nepal had bagged 31 gold medals, standing second in the medal tally, behind India. As many as 28 of the 31 golds that Nepal won last time came from two disciplines of martial arts — karate and taekwondo — with female athletes chipping in with the bounty. Boxing and swimming had roped in the remaining three gold medals.

This year, however, Nepalese athletes had anything but smooth sailing. The sports calendar was disturbed when the June 1 royal tragedy led to the cancellation of the fifth national games. As the athletes were participating in the training sessions with the heavy heart, the sudden postponement of the SAF games further dampened their spirit. ■

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

Following The Money

The staggering amount of unsettled accounts mirrors the scale of corruption in the country

By AKSHAY SHARMA

The recent report by the Auditor-General Department (AGD) presents an unsettled account of Rs 26.4 billion, which represents 6.60 percent of the total audited amount of Rs 122 billion this year. Add the unsettled amount of Rs 12.1 billion of other bodies like governmental organizations, District Development Committees and other committees, and you get the alarming amount of Rs 38.42 billion.

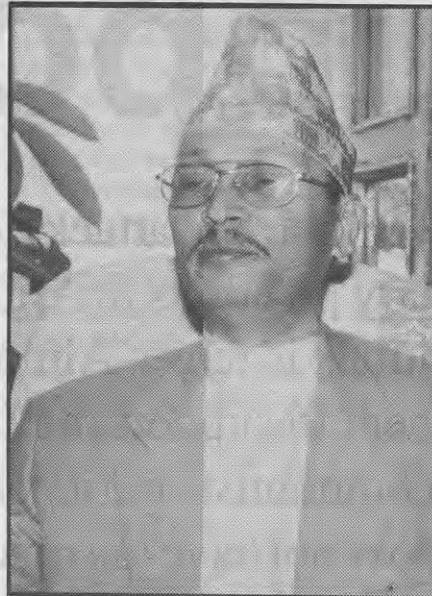
Despite repeated affirmations, the government has failed to maintain fiscal discipline. The Ministry of Finance, which spearheads the nation's financial activities, tops the list with 38.79 percent of the unsettled amount. It is followed by the Ministry of Physical Planning and Works, and the Ministry of Water Resources with 10.47 and 10.3 percent respectively.

The report suggests that the institutions have been openly disregarding the basic economic discipline and the instruction for the auditing of AGD. "This states that the lack of decision making at political and administrative levels," said Dr Badri Prasad Shrestha, a prominent economist. "Although it cannot be called corruption in the true sense, but looking at the scenario of not keeping the accounts on time shows signs of corruption," he added.

But corruption is a worthy rival of the oldest profession in the world. The ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Hebrew, Chinese, Greek and the Roman empires, too, were infested with corruption and the "varying degree of this malady, and some were destroyed by it. The Rig Veda has several references to corruption. And in the Old Testament (The Book of Exodus) it is said, "Beware of accepting bribes; they blind even the prudent, and disturb the judgment of the even just." Corruption

fueled the French and Russian revolutions, and the Kuomintang regime of China collapsed unable to bear the strain of the burden.

But how does one define corruption? It is certainly something easily observed than defined. A 1997 World Bank report describes it "as the abuse public power for private gain." In his book, "The Pathology of Corruption" S.S. Gill writes, "Cor-



KC : Augean stables to clear

ruption violates the public trust and corrodes social capital." In Nepal, it has distorted the planning and development processes, and nullified such development programs as poverty eradication.

Kautilya has put the scourge in the oldest terms in his "Arthashastra": "[W]ealth and wealth alone, is important, in as much as dharma and kama (desire) depends upon artha for their realization."

Kantipur daily reported this week that ministries had misused funds amounting to more than s 10 billion. "The amount given by donor agencies for the better-

ment to the Ministry of Education has been misused. There is also a wide variety of items like electric fans, computers, fax machines, printers, bikes etc have been taken by the top brass in the ministry for their personal use."

According to the law of the commission of financial assets, any office that has been dismissed by the government in 35 days has to submit all the financial and the items that have a financial value. The government has to have the right to know about these matters and take it into their possession.

According to Kantipur, "The top officials have declined to state what items have received. These items were made available to the ministry seven years ago when there were talks of improving the educational standards at the primary education by the Japanese organizations like JICA and the World Bank. This physical asset in the Ministry of Education is worth more than Rs 100 million."

Sources claim that JICA had provided eight trucks, three tractors, more than 30 kilograms of iron and other materials along with furniture. These items have been recklessly left in the Ministry. There are 23 motorcycles missing, sources confirm.

A commission looked into the affair and submitted its report a month ago. "The value of the items and its numbers are unaccountable," said the deputy director of the commission, Chuman Singh Basnyet. "As these items had fallen into the hands of the people working there, we have asked them to return them in a month. And it is hard to preserve these items and that is why most of these items lie unused and uncared for."

"Among the program for free primary and secondary education, of the 96 commissions that look into these affairs 37 of them have not preserved the materials they have received," Singh adds. And, according to the report, the officials in the ministry are using 16 motors and eight bikes.

Despite the government's commitment to fight corruption, it still remains a major challenge to policy makers. Moreover, as old as the tradition of corruption is, it will be a daunting task to curb it. ■

WAR AGAINST TERRORISM

Steadfast Sentiments Of Support

Following the US and British air attacks on Al Qaeda training camps and Taliban military positions in Afghanistan, the situation in most South Asian nations is tense. Almost all segments of the population, however, seem to support the US-led campaign. Despite opposition from communist outfits and a small number of Muslim groups, Nepal does not have too much to worry about right now. If the war is prolonged, however, one cannot rule out unpredictable spill-over effects

By KESHAB POUDEL

A moderate-intensity earthquake in Afghanistan, a distant neighbor but a member of the Hindu Kush family, sends tremors all the way to Nepal. Political turmoil and other upheaval in that land-locked mountainous country, too, send periodic jolts into Nepal.

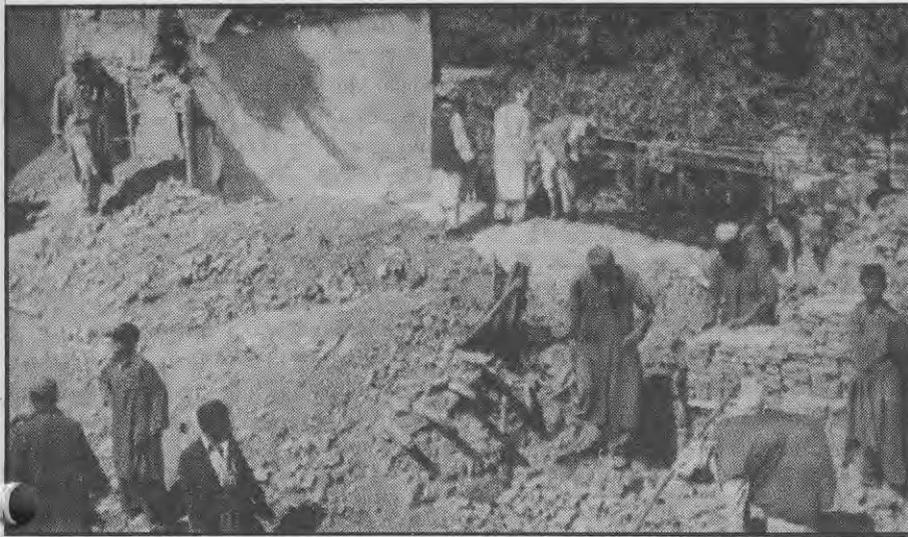
The expansion of terrorist networks and the strong presence of militants in Afghanistan in the end will bring negative conse-

quences for Nepal. If terrorist forces trained inside Afghanistan can hit a country like the United States thousands of mile away, the threats to a small South Asian nation are obviously more direct.

This is why Nepalis from all communities condemned the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York City and on the Pentagon and rallied behind the US-led anti-terrorism coalition. Nepalis, who felt a great sense of shock in the aftermath of attacks on the United States, approve the aerial bom-

bardments on suspected terrorist camps and Taliban military facilities.

The military operations against the Taliban regime were not unexpected. Had Kabul handed over Saudi-born millionaire Osama bin Laden, who Washington holds responsible for the September 11 attacks and a string of earlier deadly assaults on US facilities and interests overseas, the West would not have had to go inside Afghanistan. As members of the community of democratic nations, Western leaders took nearly a month



Afghan city after US attacks : Lying in ruins

to investigate the attacks and find credible evidence of the involvement of the Bin Laden network. Despite growing public pressure for immediate retaliatory action against those who helped to carry out the devastating attacks, the United States and other democratic governments knew they had to find conclusive evidence of Al Qaeda's complicity before launching a military response.

Aware of the lasting impact terrorism has on various facets of the nation's life and economy, the Nepalese government promptly threw its full support behind the US-led strikes against terrorist camps inside Afghanistan. "His Majesty's Government of Nepal expresses its support for the United States and international coalition in their initiatives and actions against terrorism, as it is a threat to international peace and security. There is a need for international cooperation to root out terrorism in all its forms and facets," a Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement said.

Among political parties, however, there are clear divisions over the US-led attacks on Afghanistan. Although some left parties raised the voices against air strikes, a large number of common people, religious groups and major political parties sided with the United States' declared move to eradicate terrorism from the world. Being a small and landlocked country, Nepal requires peace for economic development. Following the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Nepal's major economic sectors, including tourism, have suffered a major setback. The sooner normalcy returns, the better for Nepal.

"Events in Afghanistan will have a sig-

nificant impact on the economic, political and strategic life of Nepal," says Professor Dhruba Kumar, of Tribhuvan University's Center for Nepal and Asian Studies. "The US-led campaign can be expected to drastically reduce state-sponsored terrorism. No country would want to see the emergence of another Bin Laden on their soil."

Economically, Nepal has suffered much. The country's principal exports to Western European countries and the United States have plunged following US President George W. Bush's declaration of a global war on terrorism and his warning to the Taliban regime to hand over Bin Laden or face the consequences. If the conflict in Afghanistan escalates, Nepal, which is home to more than one million Muslims, may have a difficult time.

Nepalese Queries

In recent days, Nepalis have shown a growing interest in the history and culture of Afghanistan. After the Bin Laden network was blamed for the September 11 attacks, Afghanistan became a hot topic of discussions in Kathmandu. Almost all books on Afghanistan disappeared from store shelves within a few weeks of the terrorist attacks. Newspapers carrying stories on Afghanistan witnessed a rise in sales.

"We have sold almost all our books related to Afghanistan," says Madhab Lal Maharjan, executive director of Mandala Book Point. "Books on Afghanistan were in very low demand before attacks, but now it has suddenly gone up. Academics, in particular, seem to want more and more books on Afghanistan."

Other bookstores are reporting a similar spurt in sales. "There is a sudden surge in interest in Afghanistan," says Shiva Shrestha of Himalayan Books. "Dozens of people visit us in search of books on the Taliban and Afghanistan. I have been in this business for more than five decade and have never seen such demand for publications related to Afghanistan."

In the course of the Gorkha expansion in 1800s, Nepalese soldier marched toward Lahore, the capital of Ranjit Singh's Punjab. But Nepali soldiers did not venture beyond that point. Consequently, Afghanistan remained out of the Nepali consciousness.

Even in modern times, only a few Nepalis made an effort to understand the problems of Afghanistan, its political and geographic compulsions and its strategic importance. The growing interest in that country, which overcame British and Soviet attempts at subjugation, may be attributed to damage events there have caused to the Nepalese economy. Growing Muslim fundamentalism in Afghanistan is another cause of concern for Nepalis.

During the 1979-1989 Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, during which the Mujahideen resistance backed by the United States, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia fought a bloody liberation war, Nepal was forced to maintain silence, especially because its southern neighbor remained in close alliance with the Soviet Union. Although the Nepalese government officially opposed the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, it could hardly do anything more against Moscow's policies. During the Soviet occupation, dozens of Afghan refugees came to Nepal through India.

Now the situation is different. Afghanistan is fighting a lonely battle, evidently taking the side of Bin Laden and his network. Moreover, Nepal's powerful southern and northern neighbors are supporting the US-led campaign against international terrorism.

As most Arab nations are still reluctant to support the US and British air strikes, Muslim countries in the Gulf region, which employ tens of thousands of Nepalis, may readjust their labor policies. This would add to Nepal's economic woes, since remittances from the Gulf have assumed greater importance in recent years. Western diplomats, including the acting ambassador of the United States, have welcomed Nepal's stand against international terrorism and its commitment to eradicate it from the world.

If the conflict lasts for months, the countries of South Asia could see mounting prob-

lems. More widespread and violent outbursts of Muslim sentiments in Pakistan, Bangladesh and India cannot be ruled out. Nepal cannot remain free itself from serious religious disturbances in the region. According to an estimate, Nepal has a small number of radical Muslims trained in Taliban schools in Afghanistan. "If the conflict last for another few more months, Nepal would be greatly vulnerable to communal conflicts," says a political analyst.

Clash of Civilizations

Many analysts see the current conflict as part of the "clash of civilizations", which Harvard Professor Samuel P. Huntington predicted several years ago. With non-Muslim nations fully behind the United States, liberal Muslim nations taking a middle course, and hard-line Muslim nations, including Iran and Iraq, opposing the attacks against the Taliban, the fault lines are be-

and the west on the other. The dangerous clashes of the future are likely to arise from the interaction of western arrogance, Islamic intolerance and assertiveness," Huntington wrote in "The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order".

"Spurred by modernization, global politics is being reconfigured along cultural lines. Peoples and countries with similar cultures are coming together. Peoples and countries with different cultures are coming apart. Political boundaries increasingly are redrawn to coincide with cultural ones: ethnic, religious, and civilization. Cultural communities are replacing Cold War blocs, and the fault lines between civilizations are becoming the central lines of conflict in global politics."

Nepalese scholars agree that the initial reactions to the US-led attacks on Afghanistan come close to Huntington's prediction. Despite the atrocities committed by the Bin

Reaction of Nepalese Muslims

Nepal has a fairly small number of radical Muslims, but they may be enough to create trouble while Nepal is already struggling to maintain law and order in the midst of the Maoist insurgency.

According to the Population Census of 2001, Islam is the third largest religion in Nepal after Hinduism and Buddhism. Preliminary estimates put the Muslim population in Nepal at about five percent.

According to the Census of 1991, there were 653,218 Muslims in Nepal. The central development region has largest concentration of 303,843 Muslims. Muslims number 156,425, 131,093, 58,374 and 3,483 in the eastern, western, mid-western and far-western development region respectively. Muslims inhabit all three geographic regions, mountains, hills and terai. The western hills have about 11,110 Muslims.

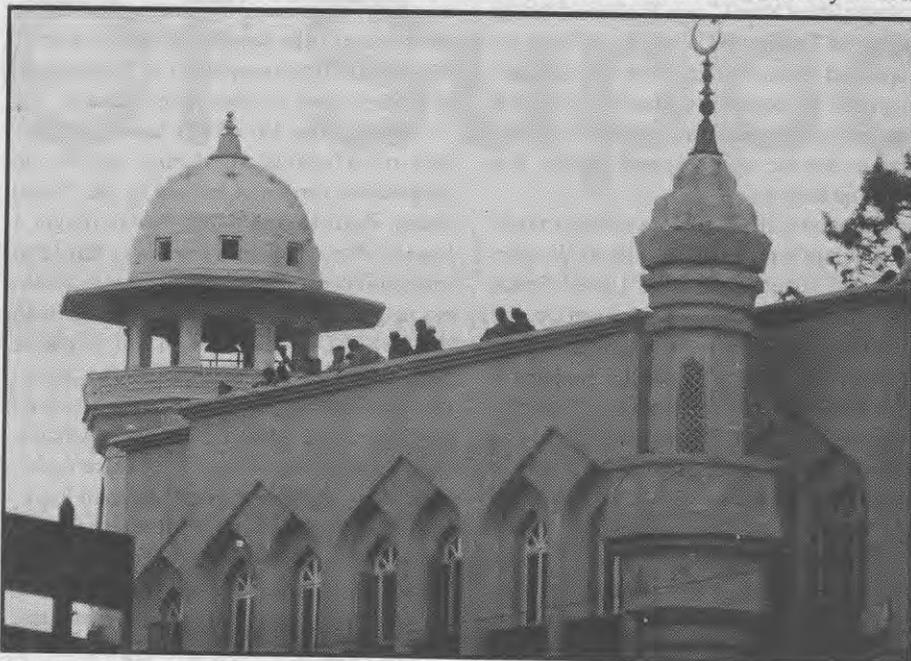
The mood of the people during first days of the air strikes shows that Nepalis are in favor of action against terrorist outfits inside Afghanistan. Although radical communist groups issued a statement denouncing the US-led attacks, they do not appear to reflect popular sentiment.

When Monday's newspapers came out with banner headlines on the US and British air strikes against terrorist targets in Afghanistan, the reaction was subdued. Students at Muslim schools attended class as usual. "We cannot support terrorism in any part of the world," says Niyaz Ahmad, principal of Madarsa Islamiya School run under the Nepalese Jame Masjid. "Islam is a religion based on peace. The US, however, must avoid the killing of common and innocent people in Afghanistan."

A small section of Muslims, however, is against the US attacks, accusing Washington and London of waging war against Islam. "We cannot remain silent when innocent Muslims are being killed in Afghanistan," says a Muslim cleric on condition of anonymity. "We might take some sort of decision after Friday prayers this week," he adds.

"One cannot hold Bin Laden responsible for the September 11 terrorist attacks without providing full evidence," says Sayabuddin Ahmad, a Muslim from Parsa district who sells goats.

After last month's attacks on the United States, the majority of Muslims have rallied behind Washington. A small segment of Muslims, however, blamed the western me-



Mosque in Kathmandu : For non-violence

coming increasingly apparent.

"In the emerging world, relations between states and groups from different civilizations will be close and will often be antagonistic. Yet some inter-civilization relations are more conflict-prone than others are. At the micro level, the most violent fault lines are between Islam and its Orthodox, Hindu, African, and western Christian neighbors. At the macro level, the dominant division is between 'the West and the rest', with most intense conflict occurring between Muslim and Asian societies on the one hand,

Laden network against the innocent civilians in the United States, a large number of Muslim people and states like Iran and Iraq appear to have sided with the Taliban's contention that the United States is waging war against Islam. "Muslim reaction the US-led attack on Afghanistan clearly indicates that even secular Muslim states like Indonesia and Malaysia cannot wholeheartedly support the United States and its allies," says Professor Dhruba Kumar. "Muslim countries in the Gulf [which have traditionally been US allies] hold similar views."

dia for publishing provocative stories linking Islam to terrorism.

Muslim politicians agree that no one should be allowed to use religion to kill people. "If someone is found guilty of killing innocent people in the name of Jihad, there is no question of protecting them," said MP Mohammed Aftab Alam of the ruling Nepali Congress. "Nepalese Muslims have a long history of tolerance and have been living in harmony with people of other religions and cultures."

Reactions of Political Parties

While Muslims have been restrained in their reaction to the air strikes on Afghanistan, some radical communist parties have condemned the US and British operations as an attack on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan. The radical left parties also see the attacks as part of a design to expand American imperialism in the world.

While other communist parties, as usual, stand at almost the same rhetoric level, democratic forces such as the Nepali Congress, the Rastriya Prajatantra Party and Nepal Sadbhavana Party are more supportive of the US-led campaign.

"We call all progressive forces in the world to oppose American imperialism," says MP Lilamani Pokharel, general secretary of the United People's Front. "Americans are responsible for killing innocent people and organizing terrorist acts. We are against all forms of religious fundamentalism, but we cannot support the naked attack of US imperialism against sovereign Afghans."

Members of other radical left parties echo Pokharel's sentiments. "We condemn the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, but we cannot support the aggression by the US and western imperialism against the independence and sovereignty of Afghanistan," says MP Nava Raj Subedi, a member of the National People's Front which has five MPs in parliament. "The attack on Afghanistan is an attack against the sovereignty and independence of that country."

Left parties are also critical of the government's decision to support the US-led alliance. "By supporting the US actions in Afghanistan, the Deuba government has stood as a stooge of American imperialism," said MP Pokharel, taking special time in the House of Representatives on Monday. Likewise, leaders of other leftist parties like Nepal Workers and Peasants Party (NWPP), Unity Center and Marxist Leninist have denounced the US strikes on Afghanistan. The attack reflects the imperialist attitude of the United

States, said Narayan Man Bijukchhe, President of NWPP.

Implications for the Maoist Movement

After the September 11 attacks on the United States, the Maoists suffered one of the major setbacks of their six-year insurgency. The deployment of Indian security forces along the Nepal-India border and the official statement of Indian Foreign and Defense Minister Jaswant Singh describing Nepal's Maoists as terrorists added pressure on the rebel leaders to find away to end the insurgency.

Although the government and Maoist insurgents agreed to a cease-fire just a month before the terrorist attacks on the United States, the new turn of events has paved the way to bringing normalcy as soon as possible. Despite sporadic acts of violence, including extortion and intimidation, the government and Maoists maintain that they will find an amicable solution to the violent insurgency.

What is Afghanistan?

"Every rock, every hill has its story," said former British prime minister Winston Churchill in his dispatch to The Daily Telegraph in 1897, describing the hills and mountains of then north-west frontier and nearby Afghanistan.

Churchill's observation of the hills and mountains of Afghanistan and western frontier states reflected the stories of western powers entering India passing through the Hindu Kush.

For centuries before leaving the Indian subcontinent, British colonial power treated Afghanistan as a buffer between British India and Russia. As soon as the British left India, a power vacuum emerged. The Soviet Union started to penetrate Afghanistan, eventually sending in troops in 1979. As soon as the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, the Afghan people entered an

era of unmitigated violence, instability and hardship. After forcing out Soviet troops, Afghans were ruled by religious zealots for six years who were ousted by the fundamentalist Taliban with alleged support from Bin Laden. As soon as the Soviets were defeated in Afghanistan, the United States, too, withdrew its engagement with the country, leaving it to battle-hardened warlords. They converted their skill and strength acquired during the anti-Soviet war to promote terrorism in the name of religion.

Afghans were turbulent people who knew how to conquer but not how to conciliate, according to a commentary by Percival Spear in the Oxford History of Modern India. They could die for a cause but not compromise for it.

The United States and its coalition partners spent nearly a month using diplomatic means to seek a positive response from Afghanistan on handing over Bin Laden. They launched military operations against terrorist training camp run by Bin Laden after the Taliban regime refused to hand over the fugitive. The challenge now is to avoid civilian casualties in order to deny Bin Laden and the Taliban regime an opportunity to incite Muslims against the US-led campaign. The sooner the terrorist outfits are destroyed, the better for world peace and prosperity. The banality of this statement is more than outweighed by the urgency of the task. ■

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DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL Forum For Talents

Nepalese directors prove their worth in documentary film-making

By A CORRESPONDENT

The four-day-long Film South Asia 2001 — the third documentary film festival — ended here on Sunday (October 7) ushering a new set of talents from the region. More importantly, the festival marked the arrival of young Nepalese talents like Dhruba Basnet and Dinesh Devkota.

The fact that Devkota's "A Rough Cut On The Life And Times Of Lachhman Magar" bagged the second prize in the competition reflects the qualitative growth



Film South Asia '01 : Successful

of Nepalese documentary-makers. The film is based on a simple story of an ordinary guy Lachhman Magar told in an extraordinary fashion inducing laughter amid agony.

Likewise, Basnet's "Killing Terraces" — based on the story of how the lives of ordinary people of the mid-western Nepal changed following the violent insurgency there — too, was critically acclaimed. It

was, however, not included in the competition.

About 45 documentaries from India, Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh were included in the competition. That apart, five others were also shown. The 50 documentaries were selected from among 175 applicants.

India had the largest participation with 30 films, Pakistan had 7 films and Nepal and Bangladesh chipped in with 4 each.

It was the "My Migrant Soul" directed by Yasmine Kabir of Bangladesh, which took the first prize and won the Ram Bahadur Trophy and a cash prize of US\$2,000.

The film is based on a story of a poor Bangladeshi worker who migrates to Malaysia hoping for a job and good pay but ends up in jail and utter slavery.

The third prize went to "Jari Mari: Of Cloth And Other Stories", directed by Sarabhi Sharma of India. The critic's award was bagged by "King Of Dreams", directed by Amar Kanwar of India.

Likewise, documentaries like "We Homes Chaps", "Highway To Hell" and "India and Pakistan Under Nuclear Shadow" managed to inspire the audiences with their themes.

The films were ranked by the three-member jury team that included Neer Shah of Nepal, Shyam Benegal of India and Firdouz Azim of Bangladesh. Benegal, the reputed director of Indian film industry, had opened the show amid a special function.

Almost 6,000 persons visited the festival venue over the four days of film screening. The organizers were particularly delighted by the large turnout of local population.

The subjects of the documentaries were as diverse as the region itself is. From social issues to political and from insurgency to migration, the themes touched every possible aspects of South Asian life. South Asia is home to the most prolific film industry in the world — the Bollywood. But, the region has not been that successful in making its mark on the global arena regarding the serious films and documentaries.

With the view to provide forum to the South Asian documentary-makers, the Himal Association has been actively organizing the Film South Asia since 1997. ■

Youth Asia Cup Starts

The third Youth Asia Cup Cricket is scheduled to start at the Tribhuvan University ground in Kirtipur from October 11. The tournament features only non-Test playing nations. Eight countries will participate in the Kathmandu games, including United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, Qatar, Kuwait (Group A), Nepal, Singapore, Oman and Maldives (Group B). The grounds at St. Xavier's School, Jawalakhel and Institute of Engineering, Pulchowk, will also be used, according to the organizers. Jai Kumar Nath Shah, president of the Cricket Association of Nepal and secretary of the tournament organizing committee, has said the games would help enhance Nepal's stature in international cricket. The first match is slated between Nepal and Oman on October 11. The winner of the tournament will qualify for the Youth World Cup to be held next year in New Zealand. The first and second Youth Asia Cup was held in Hong Kong (1997) and in Singapore (1999) respectively. The CAN expects the cost of hosting the tournament would be around Rs 4.5 million. The cost would be met through the aid from Asian Cricket Council, National Sports Council and sponsorships. Meanwhile, the CAN has released the names of the final 14 Nepalese players who would take part in the tournament. Binod Das would lead the Nepalese team. The team was selected by a committee formed under the NSC.

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Gender Gap

The lower house passes a bill establishing women's right to property

By AKSHAY SHARMA

With the Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives having approved the 11th amendment to the Civil Code, establishing women's right to property before marriage, the controversial subject has again been brought to the forefront of national discussions.

The government took an about-turn from an earlier draft that would have allowed women to retain their share of parental property after marriage. The opposition CPN-UML, accusing the ruling Nepali Congress of adopting double standards, threatened to step up protests in parliament and outside until the government ensured that women are allowed to keep their share of parental property even after marriage.

"Our lawmakers do not know what they have passed and what its likely outcome would be, because they are themselves bewildered," said an analyst on condition of anony-

my. "Neither the scribes contracted by the ruling party nor anyone else has gauged what these drastic reforms actually mean. None of the lawyers sympathetic to the ruling party have weighed whether this is the way to properly reform the situation."

Other observers agree. "Without rudimentary knowledge of what the decision entailed, supporters had the bill passed. They resorted to the pressures of last-minute debate, decisions and compromises. As the government has finally reached a decision to pass this bill under Article 16 of the constitution, nobody has bothered to ensure the people's right to be informed is

upheld," said another analyst closely following the debate.

Efforts to limit the rights under any guise inevitably draw accusations of discrimination. "The epochs that have regarded women as the 'other' are those who refuse most harshly to integrate her to the society by the right of being human," wrote Simone de Beauvoir in her seminal 1949 book "The Second Sex". "Today she can become an other who is also an equal only in losing her mystical aura. These anti-



Women : Against discrimination

feminists have always played upon this equivocation."

Critics of the bill are steadfast in their belief that it ignores the realities of Nepalese society. "The current bill passed in parliament is going to legalize the dowry system," argues an analyst. "The government has reached a half-way compromise to equalize what they give to sons and the daughters as long as she is a member of the family. The moment she changes families, the money will follow her," he adds.

Another analyst told SPOTLIGHT that the communists' stand stemmed from their ideology. "The communists in parliament

opposed the bill and the parental model of the family as something to reckon with. After seven years of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, women had no valid right to property. Perhaps the communist leaders of the country were subconsciously showing the same outlook toward the institution of marriage and family. They were contradicting other members of parliament in their approach to subvert the institutions of the family and the marital status," he added.

"Maybe the moderate democratic party in parliament has saved the institution of the family from being subverted. But the present scenario may have its negative impacts on the system as a whole, bringing back scourges like the dowry system," added another expert. "Legally property is not allowed to change hands this way, but women activist will emerge. The scenario would be something like this: my son will marry for dowry. The relatives will scream for dowry."

"For six years, a writ filed at the Supreme Court has triggered confusion and controversy," argues a legal expert. "That means the traditional family will be destroyed in Nepal. It gave an idea but it can't be said that the laws did not discriminate men from women but the government has bent down under the populist pressure in its current decision," he said.

But is it enough to change laws, institutions, customs, public opinion and the whole social context, for men and women to be truly equal? De Beauvoir wrote in her book: "We must not believe, cer-

tainly, that a change in woman's economic conditions is enough to transform her, thought this factor has been and remains the basic factor in her evolution; but until it has brought about moral, social, cultural, and other consequences that it promises and requires, the new woman cannot appear.

Bitter and divisive as the current debate has become in the midst of political grandstanding, all sides are claiming to advance the larger interest of Nepalese society and women — an objective the country has long hoped to achieve without being able to find a way. ■

'Prevention Programs Are Vital To Controlling Cardiac Diseases'

—Dr. BHAGWAN KOIRALA

BHAGWAN KOIRALA is one of the renowned cardiac surgeons of the country. Director of the Shahid Ganga Lal National Heart Center, Koirala is also associated with the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital (TUTH). Trained in Ukraine, Bangladesh, United States and Canada, Koirala is known for establishing the regular open-heart surgery unit in the TUTH since 1997. He spoke to KESHAB POUDEL and SANJAYA DHAKAL on various issues relating to cardiac ailments in the country. Excerpts:

How do you find the situation of heart disease among Nepalis?

In Nepal, we really do not have a nationwide survey that would give us the exact number of heart patients. But we do have small-scale studies and sample surveys, which indicate that there are hundreds of thousands of cases of heart diseases — a majority of which would need some kind of surgery at some point of time. There are three broad categories of heart diseases — congenital, rheumatic and ischemic. Congenital are the ones that comes by birth and the prevalence of this kind of disease is universally similar in terms of incidences. It is said that 1 percent of all live births carries congenital heart disease. That means if there are 400 children born in Prashruti Griha today — that is how it is — there would be about 4 children born with heart disease everyday in Prashruti Griha itself. If you consider the total number of births that occur in one year in Nepal, 1 percent of all them would be suffering from heart disease. There would be an accumulation of so many children with only congenital heart diseases. The next category is valve disease or rheumatic heart disease. It is born from the complication of throat infection. According to some sample surveys in Nepal, this disease is present in 1 in 1000 school children. We cannot translate that into a usual population of Nepal because the population sample is different. But we do have figures from India and Bangladesh where it was shown that rheumatic heart disease is found in 3 in 1000 population, which is a tremendous number. The third category is called ischemic heart disease, which means there is a less blood supply to the cardiac muscles. The blood supply becomes blocked by deposition of fat particles in the blood vessels. The incidence of this kind of heart ailment is ever increasing because of dietary factors, stress, pollution, smoking, presence of diabetes and hypertension all of which increases its risk.

How are the present facilities for treatment of heart disease in the country, including the Ganga Lal National Heart Center?

There are now many centers that deal with the

treatment of heart diseases. Some of them are in the private sector and others in the public sector. Shahid Ganga Lal National Heart Center is one of them. It was formally opened recently. We do have all sorts of invasive and non-invasive diagnostic tests available. There is TUTH, which does non-invasive diagnosis and does cardiac surgeries as well. Bir Hospital also has most of the non-invasive diagnostic set-up and cardiac surgery facility. These ones have surgical facilities in the public sector. Among the private ones, we know of Norvic, which has invasive (they have cathlab) and non-invasive diagnostic set-up — but they do not have surgical facilities. There is B&B where they have non-invasive diagnostic set-up and some surgical services. Then there is Medicare Hospital, which has non-invasive diagnostic set-up and some surgical facilities as well. Apart from these, there are other private hospitals and nursing homes, which do non-invasive tests.

What is ratio of cardiac manpower available in the country?

Well, I cannot give you the exact numbers. But I can give you some odd numbers that would indicate the overall status. We have about 22 doctors for 60 beds, about 10 cardiologists for 60 beds and two cardiac surgeons for 60 beds.

How many surgeries do you perform in a day? Is the cost of cardiac surgery affordable to the common people?

Right now, I do about six heart operations a week. The heart operation facilities are, I would say, accessible to a majority, not all. There are patients who cannot afford to pay even Rs 1,000. I cannot claim this is all free — this is not designed to be free. But we do have provisions for absolutely poor patients. We have, in the center, 10 percent of the beds made free for totally destitute patients. It means they can come here for the surgery even if they have nothing. I approve such services depending on the recommendation from the head of the department. The whole hospital service is free to them. Every week we can do two patients free of cost. But the design is, we have about 5/6 private rooms where the charges are high. The hospital will make some money out of that. This additional money is theoretically used for the subsidies of the poor patients. However, the majority of the beds are of general category. Here the patients pay for themselves — the principle being the hospital does not make a penny from them. The center is the government's national investment. It would be cheaper for the patients here because they will not have to pay for the investment cost, which is the case in private hospitals. In the private hospitals, the patients have to bear the doctor's charge, the medi-

If you consider the total number of births that occur in one year in Nepal, 1 percent of all them would be suffering from heart disease.

cine fee as well as the investment in the machine. Therefore, the center is reasonably affordable to the majority of people.

Many Nepalis still fly to India and elsewhere for treatment of cardiac ailments. How can they be discouraged from doing so?

There are many factors that send patients out. Number one, I would say, is the lack of confidence of people in local doctors. Until we create that confidence, people will keep on going out. It is not going to happen overnight. Even if we have a good set-up, they will still want to watch us, they will want to see the results. If the results are as good, the cost being cheaper, why would anybody want to go to some other country where you are not even considered a decent citizen? But there will be people who will still ignore local expertise. There is a psychological factor here. We may not be able to stop them. But we do not care. That's not the people we are looking at.

There is a popular conception that heart diseases affect only upper class people who live a sedentary life. What do you say?

As I said, there are different kinds of cardiac diseases, and some of them, interestingly, affect poor patients. Moreover, paradoxically, the treatment of this disease is more expensive than the one that affects the rich. For example, in rheumatic heart disease, the valve is damaged. Some of them can be repaired at low cost, but a majority of them would need expensive total replacement. That valve itself costs Rs 70,000 to Rs 80,000. Rheumatic heart disease is the disease of the poor. Ischemic heart disease — or heart attack and similar disease — affect the more affluent people. It does happen to the poor also, but probably more to richer ones. Congenital heart disease does not discriminate between the rich and the poor.

It was recently reported that Nepal has an unusually high prevalence of heart disease among its young population — up to 16 percent of people below 45 years of age being affected by cardiac ailments. Do you agree with this figure?

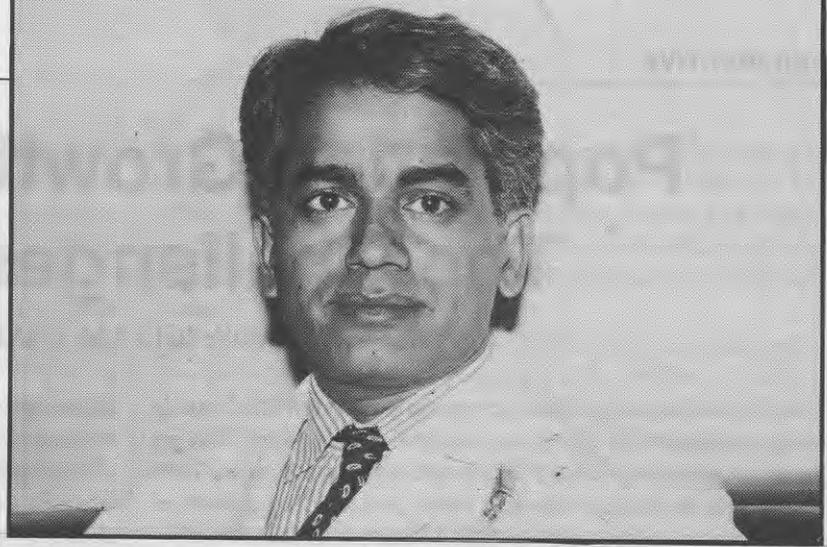
I am not aware of any scientific study that has proven that. I would still doubt the number. Rather, I would like to see that figure being quoted. But, truly, we know for sure that incidences of some of the diseases like ischemic, is going up.

There is a trend toward adopting alternative treatment instead of going for surgery even in the West. What do you say?

Well, we do have alternative medicine being practised for ages. These are essentially the same alternative practices that the westerners are trying to use now. But, there should be clear indication for modern medical treatment and for those that the modern medicines cannot help. For those that require psychological treatment, I think alternative medicines really help. But there are clearly defined situations where we have to treat with modern science.

What kind of facilities does the Shahid Ganga Lal National Heart Center have?

We have two cathlabs. One is the old one, which was broken and lay idle for one year and a half. It is now



fixed. It is now generally functional. We have been doing lot of X-ray works from it. We do thermal angiograms and we are now trying to do coronary angiograms, too. The problem with this machine is the resolution is not perfect. We can only record it in VCR tape. We have not sent tapes out for somebody else to see because of poor quality of the picture. So, we are not doing it publicly and in open manner. We are rather hesitant to publicize it. However, we are using it for our own purpose. We do have a new cathlab that is already in the building. The process of installing the machine is almost complete, it will be complete within next two months or so. After that, we will have the state-of-the-art facility.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has pointed out that cardiac diseases are going to be one of the chief public health problems in Nepal by 2020. What should the government do to prevent this from happening?

Interestingly, the WHO would not approve any project that we would ask for cardiac purpose until time ago. Now things have changed. The WHO has now realized that even in Nepal, cardiac disease is really coming up and is one of priority now. Indeed, in developing countries, it is one of the leading causes of death. It may well be that, as the WHO has predicted, it may be leading cause of problem. It is possible. To prevent from that happening, we have to act now, work on prevention programs, educating people for all rheumatic heart disease projects. All relative education things have to be done now. Even the congenital heart disease can be partly controlled by certain precautions during pregnancy. Prevention programs are the only solution.

Smoking is quite prevalent in Nepal. How much does this affect the cardiac situation?

Smoking is one of the factors that we can educate the people about. It is very hard to correlate what is the exact quantitative effect of smoking on development of incidence of heart disease. But it is proven, by many population-based studies, authentic studies that smoking is the real and one of the important risk factors for developing coronary heart diseases and thus, increases the risk of heart attacks and cardiac complications as well as other cancer and other diseases. It is a problem. We have to go on a nationwide campaign against smoking. ■

Until we create that confidence, people will keep on going out. It is not going to happen overnight.

Population Growth In Nepal : The Challenges Ahead

By DR. SHYAM THAPA

The Central Bureau of Statistics recently reported that Nepal's total population in 2001 has reached 23.2 million, having grown at an annual rate of 2.27 percent in the last decade. These figures are slightly lower than those projected by a team of demographers a few years ago. The discrepancy is not surprising, given that census data are usually subject to undercounting for various reasons.

Nepal has conducted a census every decade for nearly 100 years. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, what can we forecast about Nepal's population growth over the next few decades? Recently Dr. Griffith Feeney, a preeminent American demographer, Mr. Keshav Sharma, director of Nepal's Central Bureau of Statistics, and I mapped several demographic trajectories for Nepal. (Details of the study are being published in a journal). The population problem facing Nepal is both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitatively, every year about half a million people are added to Nepal's population, about the same number as the current population of Kapilbastu District. Qualitatively - in terms of human resources - only about half of Nepal's population is literate, and the literacy rate among females is especially low. In this note, I shall focus on the quantitative aspects of population change in Nepal.

Nepal carried out five population censuses prior to the 1961 census, in 1911, 1920, 1930, 1941, and 1952-54. Our detailed analysis of the series indicates that the censuses of 1911, 1920, and 1930 undercounted the total population by about one-third. The basis for this conclusion is the impossibility of arriving, by any reasonable combination of fertility and mortality levels, at the 1961 census population without adjusting the earlier enumerated numbers substantially upward. After reconstructing the population's past 100 years of age structure and growth, we projected the rate and structure of population change for the next several decades, basing our projections on four sets of assumptions, or scenarios.

Scenario I: Continued slow decline of growth

Our first scenario assumes that fertility (the birth rate) will decline by 0.45 children per woman per decade and continue to decline until reaching replacement level, taken to be 2.1 children per woman, after which replacement-level fertility will be maintained. In this scenario, fertility reaches replacement level in 2056, by which time the total population will have grown to 77 million. Nepal's young age structure will produce sufficient population momentum, however, to delay population stabilization for another 50 years, during which the population will grow to just under 100 million.

The rate of fertility decline is slower in Nepal than in Asia generally. The average rate of decline for 21 Asian countries,

according to United Nations estimates, is one child per woman per decade, and rates of decline as high as two children per woman per decade have been observed. It is therefore appropriate to consider alternative scenarios for Nepal, in which fertility declines more rapidly.

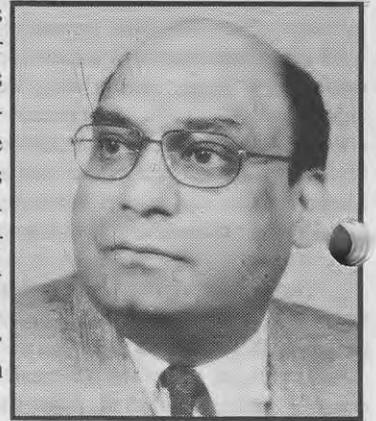
Scenario II: Zero population growth beginning in 2001

Simply as a mathematical exercise, it is possible to construct a scenario in which population growth ceases immediately. In such a scenario, in which no immigration is assumed to occur, the number of persons five years old and older in 2006 must be less than the total population in 2001 (given that some of those alive in 2001 will have died). Reducing fertility so that the projected number of persons aged 0-4 in 2006 equals this difference will result in zero growth during 2001-2005, and similarly for subsequent periods. This hypothetical scenario is instructive, for it shows that zero population growth is impossible to achieve over the short term and that it would probably be undesirable if it were possible.

The most optimistic scenario for rapid fertility decline - reduction from five children per woman to one child per woman in only five years, is clearly out of the question. Even if so rapid a fertility decline to so low a level were possible -- and it should be noted that one-child families remain a goal of China's population policy -- it would be undesirable because it would cause dramatic changes in the population's age structure. The social stresses that would result from so radical a distortion of the age structure can only be guessed at, but they would likely be as great as the stresses caused by rapid population growth. This consideration and the improbability of achieving such rapid fertility decline rule out an early attainment of zero population growth.

Scenario III: A smooth approach to zero growth

Because the previous two scenarios represent extremes, a more rapid fertility decline than exists now - but not too rapid - is likely to be in the best interest of the country. This general notion can be made more specific by considering a third scenario, in which the rate of decline in population growth, though rapid, has acceptable effects on the population age structure.



Standard population projections work forward from an observed initial age distribution and assumed future levels of fertility and mortality to an implied future age distribution and total population size. Scenario II's projection of population stabilization inverts this procedure by stipulating how great population growth is to be (zero) and then ascertaining what levels of fertility are required to yield zero growth.

We apply a similar procedure here; but instead of requiring total population size to be constant, we require that the number of persons 0-4 years of age be constant beyond 2001. This results in a smooth approach to zero population growth sometime in the future, with no disruption of the age structure. Population growth is minimized, subject to the condition that future age distributions never have fewer persons in younger age groups than in older age groups.

Scenario IV: More rapid fertility decline

The rate of fertility decline projected in Scenario III is substantially faster than Nepal has experienced in the recent past, but it is also considerably slower than the declines that have been observed in several other countries. It is therefore appropriate to consider a scenario in which fertility declines more rapidly than it does in Scenario III. Be-

cause of the way in which Scenario III was constructed, some distortion of the age structure will necessarily result from a more rapid fertility decline. A moderately distorted age structure, however, may be a reasonable price to pay for less population growth.

Scenario IV implies a total fertility rate of 3.7 children per woman for 2001-2005, 2.8 children per woman for 2006-2010, and 2.2 children per woman for 2011-2015, with near-replacement fertility achieved thereafter. This represents an average rate of decline of 1.8 children per woman per decade which is extremely rapid, but within the range of observed experience in other countries. The gains in reduced population growth from this modest distortion of the population age structure are substantial: population rises to 40 million rather than to the 56 million of Scenario III.

Conclusion

Our study of Nepal's demographic transition has produced evidence, necessarily tenuous in view of the limited statistical

data for the first half of the twentieth century, that mortality began to decline from a very high level during the 1930s. Recent data indicate that fertility decline has begun, probably during the 1970s. It has not yet proceeded very far, but the evidence provides some basis for projecting future declines.

The four scenarios for future fertility decline and population growth that we have presented point to several conclusions. A continuation of the recent, slow pace of fertility decline (Scenario I) would result in a total population of nearly 100 million persons by the end of the current century. More



At the current rate of fertility decline, Nepal's population will grow to nearly 100 million over the next hundred years. A doubling of the population to 40 million persons is the least growth that can be expected. If a smaller population size in this range is in the national interest, striving for a more rapid decline in fertility is as important as striving to accommodate a much larger population.

rapid decline, similar to the median experience of Asian countries (Scenario III), would reduce this growth to fewer than 60 million persons. Still more rapid decline, close to the limit observed in countries that have experienced the most rapid declines (Scenario IV), could reduce the growth to 40 million persons. It is possible, if not yet likely, that very rapid decline could be achieved through a combination of smaller family sizes and delayed childbearing. A rapid approach to zero population growth - and anything less than a doubling of current population size - (Scenarios II and IV) may be ruled out with a high degree of certainty.

Considered together, the four scenarios point to a prediction that can be made with considerable confidence: Nepal's population will at least double over the current century. No conceivable fertility decline can prevent this, whether or not induced to some degree by rising age at childbearing. Only catastrophically high mortality levels could prevent this future growth, which will result from the momentum of the population's young age structure.

It should be emphasized that a doubling of population to 40 million persons is the least growth that can be expected. At the current rate of fertility decline, the population will grow to 100 million over the next hundred years. If a smaller population size in this range is in the national interest, striving for a more rapid decline in fertility is as important as striving to accommodate a much larger population. ■

(Dr. Shyam Thapa, Senior Scientist, Family Health International, specializes in demographic and public health research and evaluation.)

BOOK

Splendid Story-Telling

Madhuban Poudel builds on interesting, everyday plots to express various hues of inner feelings

By A CORRESPONDENT

As a short-story writer, Madhuban Poudel has built a firm reputation for choosing vivid, everyday characters who explain the social and cultural realities of Nepali life. In his quest to bring to the fore different aspects of the human experience that are inextricably woven into its surroundings, Poudel zeroes in on individual problems that mirror the larger societal context.

Poudel's stories span a vibrant range of subjects and techniques, from the inner struggles of the individual and his social challenges to issues of religious faith and personal affections. These compelling story lines tackle problems of personal and social identities in parallel. Poudel's stories are important chronicles of our times and facilitate a purposeful understanding of personal relationships.

As Nepali poetry and short stories have acquired increasing demand in recent years, books are arriving in the market faster and more diverse qualities. Poudel's latest book "Avataran Ra Aru Kathaharu" (Landing and



Avataran Ra Aru Kathaharu

By Madhuban Poudel

Published by Royal Nepal Academy

Price: Not disclosed

other Stories) is published by Royal Nepal Academy. Unlike his previous four books, the author focuses his attention on social maladies. In highly elementary expressions, Poudel attempts to describe love, affections and emotions of the individual. His stories deal with various social phenomena. Amid the growing frustrations of the day and the confused state of affairs, he has delved deep into human problems.

Poudel discovers the identity of the individual, confronts human problems and establishes their relation to the universe. In doing so, he draws new plots from day-to-day happenings in society. Narrations of love, hate and individual friendship pulsate throughout his stories. In this collection of 33 stories, Poudel portrays the challenges, hardships and difficulties of the individual. He analyses the consequences of social confrontations in purely human terms. As society passes from a period of entrenched traditional values to a fast-paced phase of modernity, Poudel's stories provide a glowing glimpse of the difficulties of the transition.

The problems encountered in everyday life have much to do with cultural, religious and personal preferences and predilections. Poudel peppers these realities with episodes of tragedy, love, individual

problems, and contemporary political issues. In this way, his stories are replete with varied interpretations of society and the complexities of human relationships. "Poudel's stories are more related to the complexity of the individual rather than social problems," said Madan Mani Dixit, former vice-chancellor of Royal Nepal Academy. "He has a remarkable ability to grasp the situation and present it in simple manner."

Poudel's description of events and narration of characters are unique in the sense that they exercise lively conversation. His style and presentation seem to be inspired at times by Rabindra Nath Tagore, Guy de Maupassant, Emile Zola and Sarat Chandra

Although his stories are full of romance and varied expressions of human emotions, he avoids the vulgarization of relations between different groups. The expressions of all his characters are symbolic and natural. Poudel tackles difficult themes carefully, avoiding the use of offensive words and bringing to life a vivid picture of society as it exists. ■

Picturesque and Peaceful a Pilgrimage with Pleasure

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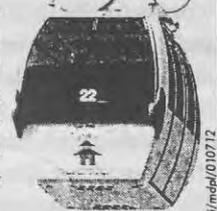


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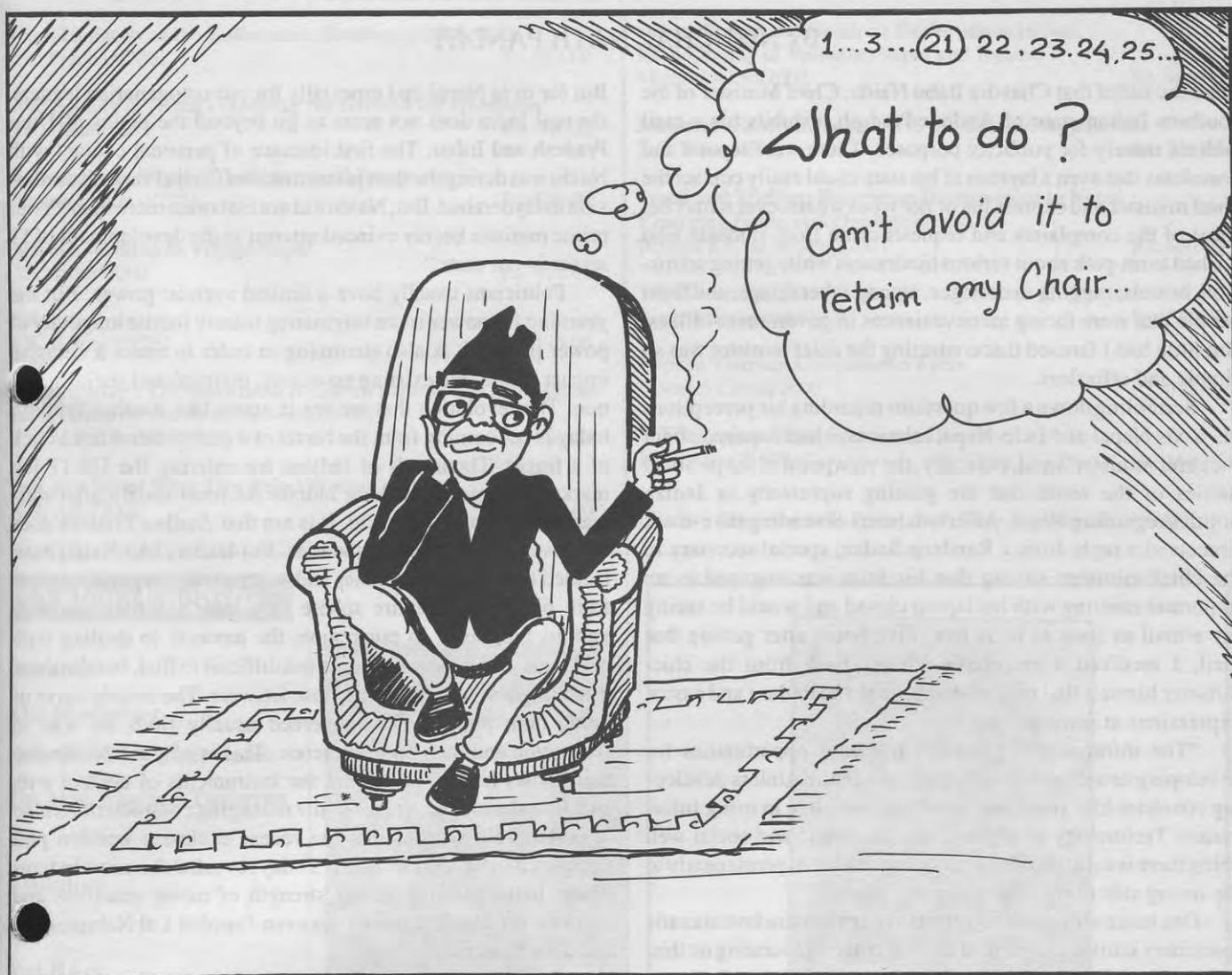
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By M.S.KHOKNA



TRANSITION

LEFT: Khum Bahadur Khadka, for Melbourne, Australia, to take part in the Asia Pacific ministerial level meeting on HIV/AIDS.

ELECTED: Uma Adhikary, as the President of Nepal Women's Association, by the association's first national convention. Rukmini Koirala and Chet Kumari Dahal from

the eastern region, Kamala Thapa and Sushma Mudwari from central region, Sita Laxmi Neupane and Jaswati Gurung from western region, Anita Devkota and Uma Karki from mid-western region and Divya Kishori Shah and Ishwori Neupane from far-western region, as central members of the association.

PASSED: The Education Bill (Seventh Amendment) 2001,

by the House of Representatives.

RETURNED: Pradip SJB Rana, Inspector General of Police, after participating in the 70th general assembly of International Police Organization, held in Budapest, Hungary.

LEFT: Narayan Shumshere Thapa, Foreign Secretary, for Seoul, Korea, at the invitation

of his Korean counterpart.

RE-ELECTED: Gajendra Bista, as the president of Society of Economic Journalists of Nepal.

SUBMITTED: The 11th annual report of the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA), to His Majesty the King, by CIAA Chief Commissioner Surya Nath Upadhyaya. ■

An E-mail From Chandra Babu Naidu

By NISHCHAL NATH PANDEY

I had the belief that Chandra Babu Naidu, Chief Minister of the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, exhibits his e-mail address merely for publicity purposes. There were reports and anecdotes that even a layman of his state could easily contact the chief minister and express his or her woes whatsoever it may be. Most of the complaints and requests came from students who wished to nit-pick about various hindrances while getting admission, hostels, ragging in colleges, among other things, and from people that were facing inconveniences in government offices. But little had I fancied that contacting the chief minister was so simple and effortless.

Scribbling down a few questions regarding his perceptions vis-a-vis Nepal and Indo-Nepal relations, I had inquired about the chief minister's and, basically, the viewpoint of the political parties of the south that are gaining supremacy in Indian politics regarding Nepal. After two hours of sending the e-mail, I received a reply from a Randeep Sudan, special secretary to the chief minister, saying that his boss was engaged in an important meeting with his laptop closed and would be seeing my e-mail as soon as he is free. Five hours after getting that mail, I received a surprising answer back from the chief minister himself that read with informal vocabulary and casual expressions at some point.

"The information age offers immense opportunities for developing countries to leapfrog into the future. Unless developing countries like yours and mine take initiative in using Information Technology to improve our economic and social well being there is a distinct danger of being relegated permanently to the wrong side of the digital divide," he said.

One hears a lot about his efforts to put his entire bureaucratic machinery into the easy link of the computer. Elaborating on this, Naidu stated that "you in Nepal can learn from our experiences in using IT for the benefit of the people. Many of the applications developed for use in different departments of the government can be replicated elsewhere with slight modifications. This can save immense expenditure and effort on the part of governments embarking on the path of IT". Concerning Nepal, Naidu said, "Traditionally India has very close ties with Nepal and the people of India in general and Andhra Pradesh in particular, have great admiration and respect for the Nepalese people."

After reading his mail, a few thoughts came to my mind. One, southern India, especially Andhra Pradesh, has progressed tremendously as far as the living standard of its peoples is concerned. Two, while it is a star-crossed to be adjoined with ill-governed states like Bihar, there is a complete famine of knowledge and understanding on the part of political parties and politicians of the south let alone their people. Younger breed of politicians with a more incisive and sharper perceptive of the wishes and requirements of people that elect them to power have come up with added expertise of new technologies like the IT.

But for us in Nepal and especially for our octogenarian leaders, the real India does not seem to go beyond the plains of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The first instance of personal contact with Naidu was during the then prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala's visit to Hyderabad. But, Naidu did not elaborate more than "Your prime minister keenly evinced interest in the development of IT sector in our state."

Politicians usually have a limited agenda: power. But the yearning for power is not originating merely for the longevity of power per se. It is also stemming in order to make a decisive impact to alter the existing economic, political and social status quo. The revolution that we see in states like Andhra Pradesh today is not coming from the barrel of a gun, rather from a click of a finger. Thousands of Indians are entering the US IT job market each month, making Indians the most sought after software specialist in the world. It is not that Andhra Pradesh does not have problems and quandaries. But leaders like Naidu have tackled ongoing insurgencies and succeeded in separating them from piercing the entire sphere of a state's activity through various programs. In our region, the answers to dealing with problems of misgovernance are not difficult to find, but the sheer unwillingness to implement those answers. The double curse of being both poor and misgoverned usually finds its way to frustration and then on to violence. This is why the leadership that knows how to command the instruments of control with steadfast democratic values while managing contradictions is so important. No wonder that the recent exclusive opinion poll conducted by MARG and India Today revealed that most Indians praise Indira Gandhi for her strength of moral absolutes and patriotic ruthlessness more than even Jawahar Lal Nehru or Sher Bahadur Shastri.

The foremost criterion in this writer's personal conviction of a strong and capable leadership in today's world is the age factor. Bill Clinton became US president at the age of 46 and Tony Blair entered Number 10 at the age of 44. We are not producing future leaders by keeping the younger generation bottled up in a bygone mindset or by creating an environment that prompts them to leave the country forever. Sher Bahadur Deuba, our newly installed prime minister, has that one very crucial essentiality that makes him understand the pulse of the people and the genuine desire of the new generation of scholars, journalists and entrepreneurs that is coming up in our country. This is why there is so much of optimism from the present government. We too can make headway in the international arena provided we get the necessary backing from our political leadership which was conspicuously centralizing itself in ill practices in the last 12 years of multiparty democracy. ■

(The author is Research and Documentation Officer at the Institute of Foreign Affairs)

Now In Town

BOOK

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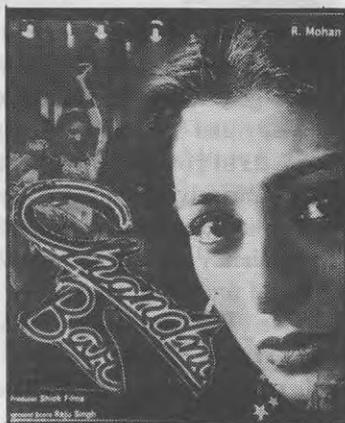
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Video (English)

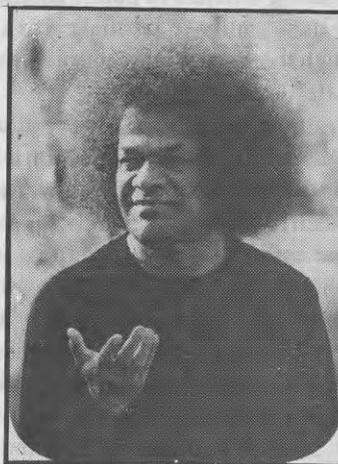
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GIA
Evolution
Black Star
Rat Race
"O"
Soul Survivors



Hindi

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Chandni Bar
Nayak
Ajnabee
Kyoum Ki Mein Jhooth Nahin Bolta
Hum Hogaye Aap Ke
Tum Bin
Lajja
Ittefaq
Dil Chahta Hai

(Source : Super Star Video, New Road)



“Do not get attached to worldly things and pursuits. Be, in the world but, do not let the world be in you.”

- SATHYA SAI BABA



Counterfeit Certificates In Civil Service

By MOHAN PRASAD DHAKAL

Nepal's civil service seems to have lost its track, particularly after the political change of 1990. It could not change its pattern of functioning in accordance with the ideology of multiparty democracy. Development on all fronts of the nation has not been as desired. The civil service, the major executive organ of the government, seems to be lost in the whirlpool of ineffectiveness, politicization and frivolity. Its performance does not reflect the norms and values of democracy. There are numerous setbacks in the organization itself, but two issues are in the media limelight. They have triggered intense debate within the corridors of government offices. These two issues are the high incidence of counterfeit certificate holders and cheating on retirement age in the central service records.

The issue of fake certificates has grabbed widespread attention through different media. This issue was highlighted particularly after the statement made by then secretary of the Public Service Commission (PSC) some time ago in an interview with a local daily. The statement fueled queries and prompted mental exercise among leading scholars of public administration. Subsequently, it drew the attention of lawmakers in a parliamentary committee, although the issue now seems to have settled down without proper follow-up.

Until recently, the issue of counterfeit certificate holders in the civil service was under cover. Yet, no action is being initiated to do away with the practice. Do the officials who are responsible for investigating such problems have no courage to speed up the probe? Why is the urgency of investigating a matter of such national interest not being felt? What makes the officials so passive in probing a matter that is contaminating the whole civil service? Why are organizations like the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority and the Special Police Department reluctant to take immediate action to identify phony degree holders who may even be in important decision-making positions?

Organizations responsible for dealing with such problems should be empowered not only through sufficient statutory authority but also through strong physical and moral support from the government. They must be provided with sufficient budget and specially trained manpower. For their part, these organizations must clarify, at least to the public, the main constraints hindering their work.

The civil service, on the other hand, is becoming increasingly passive. Everybody can observe that the civil service as a whole is so contaminated that not a single government office or corporation—barring a few exceptions—seems to be free of corruption and scandal. The inflow of incompetent, short-sighted and under-qualified personnel are responsible for this. Our experience, particularly after the popular change in 1990, has shown that every issue starts with good intentions but ends up with bad execution, resulting in entirely adverse effects. This

time, let us hope that the good job initiated by the House of Representatives State Affairs Committee is taken to its logical conclusion before it is too late.

The issue of cheating on retirement age is another major problem in Nepal's civil service. Investigation on this matter has become a complex job for those who are examining it. Those involved are still holding top executive posts. The result and confirmation on such malpractice hopefully may appear later when the investigation is completed. Questions have been raised against personnel records maintained in the Department of Civil Service Records. Even the senior officials at ministries are found to be sticking to their chairs by lying their age. They are reportedly engaged in correcting the record of their own age in order to cling onto their positions longer.

In such a situation, even a layman can assess and evaluate the level of knowledge and the quality of senior position holders responsible for framing national policies. This clearly indicates how serious the situation in Nepalese civil service is. Plenty of other cases may surface if the investigation is made more intensive.

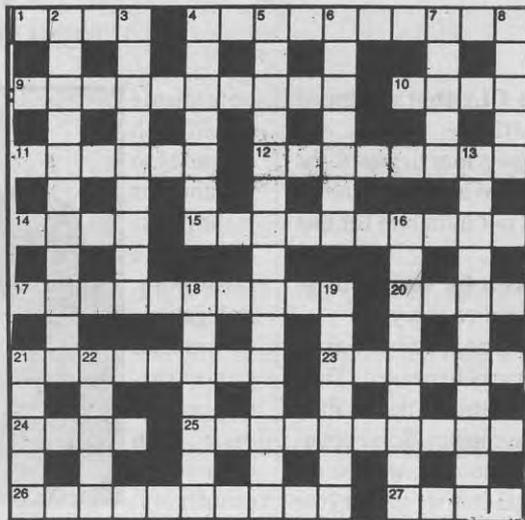
In recent decades, the civil service in Nepal has largely failed to attract talented sections of the young generation. The blame goes to present education system as a whole and course of study and selection process on the part of the PSC. The products of government schools in general are less competent than their private-school counterparts. Better educated manpower are less attracted toward government service and have the tendency to serve abroad, whereas low-standard people are dumped and have constantly tried to enter the government service. The problem of brain drain has become a major challenge in Nepal. Doctors, engineers, specialists and IT experts always have gone abroad in search of greener pastures whereas dull manpower such as those holding sub-standard certificates compete in the PSC exams. The selected ones are from among these people who go on to hold officer posts later. The PSC has not been able to select competent manpower through the best selection process.

The syllabus of PSC itself is defective, which cannot supply best personnel to government organizations. English education has been always neglected in the PSC syllabus. Throughout the world, English has become a major source of knowledge, but in Nepal the case is opposite. The dumped section always creates trouble when the PSC tries to put at least one compulsory subject of English in the syllabus.

If we want to attract better talent in the civil service, we should make at least one English subject a compulsory paper in PSC course of study. But who would dare do that when opponents of English are occupying top policy-making positions? ■

(Dhakal is a senior officer at the Public Service Commission)

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1. Hands over exchanged item (4)
4. Maybe gossip about old students finally became slander (10)
9. Soldiers restricted by mist enveloping nearby territory (10)
10. Incentive to knock time off sprint (4)
11. Bird by a railway — it's a sort of finch (6)
12. The man touching a bull gets skin complaint (4,4)
14. Something planted in ground is said to bring this yield (4)
15. Far end of the mine has gas in outer layer (10)
17. It's good, being in Europe? That's uncertain (10)
20. End journey by a take (4)
21. We left — theatre production not entirely appreciated (8)
23. Right beast! (6)
24. Drug detected in underground operation (4)
25. Has nothing to do with Uriah, ostracized family member (5,5)
26. Zany ruse — it is concocted to get power (10)
27. Head chef's preparation (4)

DOWN

2. Oddly found on meadow, one plant usually among trees?
3. Stop drinking endless beer — it's common (9)
4. Scottish historian who's given a hearing in English city (7)
5. All harangue kid — I, being different, chortle raucously (5,4,1,5)
6. Messy remedy offered by doctor going round upper-class spa (3-4)
7. A Greek star outshining the others (5)
8. Den's deficiency — no roof (5)
13. Food ingredient that could make gateau a mess (7,4)
16. Craft displayed here may be brilliant (9)
18. Excellent blank chap, set up to protect one African country (7)
19. One keeping any number in bird? (7)
21. Water may have drained from them? Plug is required (5)
22. Eliminate gangster upsetting S. American city (2,3)

8. Earth 13. Sausage meat 16. Lightship 18. Namibia 19. Turnkey 21. Wadis 22. Lapaz
Down: 2. Wood anemone 3. Prevalen 4. Carlyle 5. Laugh like a drain 6. Mud-bath 7. Alpha
 26. Suzerainty 27. Pate
Across: 1. Swap 4. Calumniate 9. Foreground 10. Spur 11. Canary 12. Heat Rash 14. Cede
 15. Epithelium 17. Contingent 20. Goal 21. Welcomed 23. Rotter 24. Dope 25. Black sheep

NOIUTOS

BRIDGE

4-23

NORTH
 ♠ A 10 3
 ♥ 8 5 4
 ♦ 6 5 4
 ♣ 8 7 4 2

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

SOUTH
 ♠ K Q J
 ♥ A Q 6 3
 ♦ A Q J 9
 ♣ A 5

Vulnerable: North-South
 Dealer: South

The bidding:
South **West** **North** **East**
 2 NT Pass 3 NT All pass

Opening lead: Club trey

**'If a man's wit be wandering,
 let him study the mathematics.'**

— FRANCIS BACON

In today's interesting game, South has six top winners. He has prospects for developing three more in the red suits. How should he plan to play the red suits?

One popular approach would be to use dummy's solitary entry to finesse in South's stronger diamond suit. After winning the club ace, these players cross to dummy's spade ace to take a losing diamond finesse. The defenders then take their club winners for defensive book, and exit safely in spades. South is lucky enough to drop East's diamond 10 for three diamond winners, but it's not enough. He has to dummy entry to try a heart finesse, and he wins only eight tricks.

Applying basic arithmetic, South needs three total tricks in one red suit and two in the other. Since South can take only one finesse, he cannot finesse in both suits. Without the need of a finesse, the odds of developing three winners are strongly in favor of the more solid diamond suit. In diamonds, South can win three tricks without a finesse when the suit breaks 3-3, or when he drops a singleton or doubleton 10. And since the lack of solidity in hearts reduces the odds of doing the same in that suit, South should sue dummy's sole entry for a heart finesse.

After taking a successful heart finesse, South leads diamonds from his own hand, collecting three winners when East's 10 drops doubleton.

'Terrorism Is Bad And Must Be Stopped'

— BENJAMIN BASSIN

The ambassador of Finland to Nepal, **BENJAMIN BASSIN**, is also the Finnish envoy to four other South Asian countries, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Bhutan. During his recent visit to Kathmandu, the New Delhi-based envoy spoke to **BHAGIRATH YOGI** on bilateral relations, terrorism and other issues days before the US-led forces started air strikes on Afghanistan. Excerpts:

How do you see the problem of terrorism in South Asia?

Practically, all the countries of South Asia have problems of terrorism. If the international community takes a concerted effort to wipe out terrorism, that will be a very good beginning. If, as a consequence of events in Afghanistan, Pakistan reduces or ends its support to the Mujahideen in Kashmir, nothing will prevent better relations between India and Pakistan. But there is no guarantee that this will happen.

How does the European Union (EU) view the US initiative against terrorism?

The EU has accepted that the US is the only super power at this time. They are the injured party. They have full justification in initiating action (in Afghanistan) together with the international community. We don't have any objection to the US-led initiative. It will be a wise move to have blessings from the United Nations on the upcoming operation. Many in Europe feel this way. There are very good bilateral contacts between the US and EU countries. We think that the UN's blessings will give legitimacy to this initiative.

How justified would it be for the US to start bombing Afghanistan before producing enough evidence to the international community?

I don't know what evidence the US holds against Osama bin Laden. They may have evidence. During the operations, casualties to civilian population will have to be kept at a minimum. It can't be entirely avoided because terrorists there will be hiding along with the general population. Some damage may be caused to the common people also.

But it was the CIA that equipped bin Laden, wasn't it?

They did not equip him to attack the World Trade Center. When they trained Mr. Laden, they did not train him for that purpose.

How justified is it for the US to go and bomb a sovereign country?

The US are the injured party. It was on their soil that the attacks happened. They are in a very special position. The situation varies from country to country. Some country may have chosen another way to respond to such attacks. But we must agree that terrorism is bad and must be stopped.

How do you see the problem of narco-terrorism in the days ahead?

Afghanistan is one of the major production and refining centers of opium. It is then smuggled to Myanmar and other parts of the world. Money from such operations is probably used to finance terrorism. In their own interest, countries around the world have to stop manufacturing and exporting drugs.

How do you see the Maoist insurgency in Nepal? Should the government declare them as terrorists?

I am not well informed on this issue. Branding them terrorists may be helpful but we don't know for sure. It may be helpful in drawing the attention of the outside world including the South Asian countries. Maoist groups have contacts all over the world. So, I am not giving any advice to the Nepalese government in this regard. Peaceful solutions are always the best.

What should be done to promote economic relations between Nepal and Finland?

We have to activate the business

communities in both countries to remain alert to the possibilities that are there. Delegations of business communities need to visit each other's countries.



By involving the business people, we can explore more opportunities in trade and investment. So, there should be greater cooperation between the business communities.

There has been a tendency among a section of the Nepalese intelligentsia to blame the country's democratic polity for all the ills in the country. Would you like to comment?

Democracy is always difficult even in a rich country. It must be difficult for a poor country like Nepal. The alternative to democracy is always totalitarian or authoritarian rule. We don't have a choice. You should not lose patience. ■

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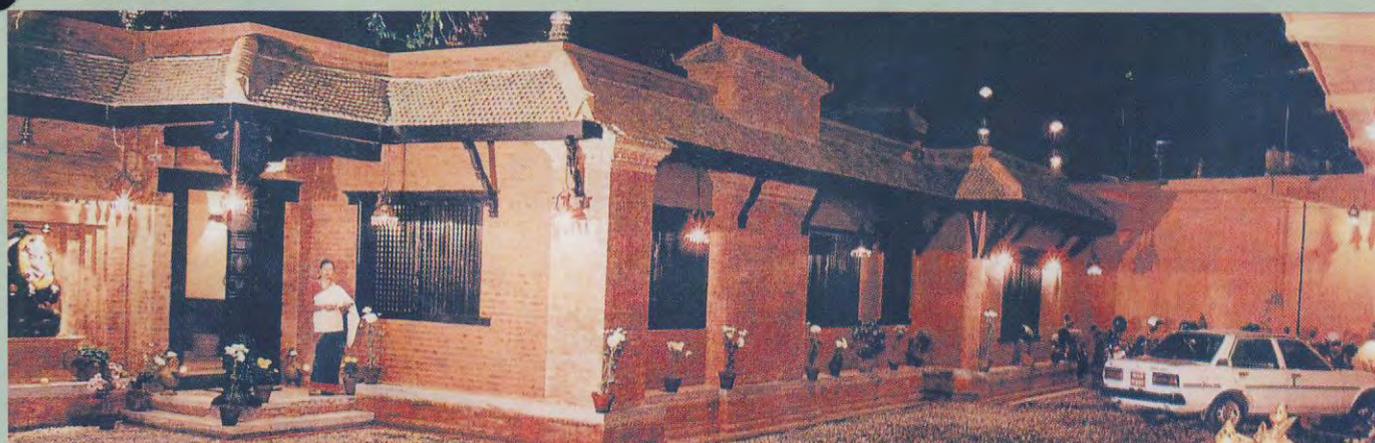
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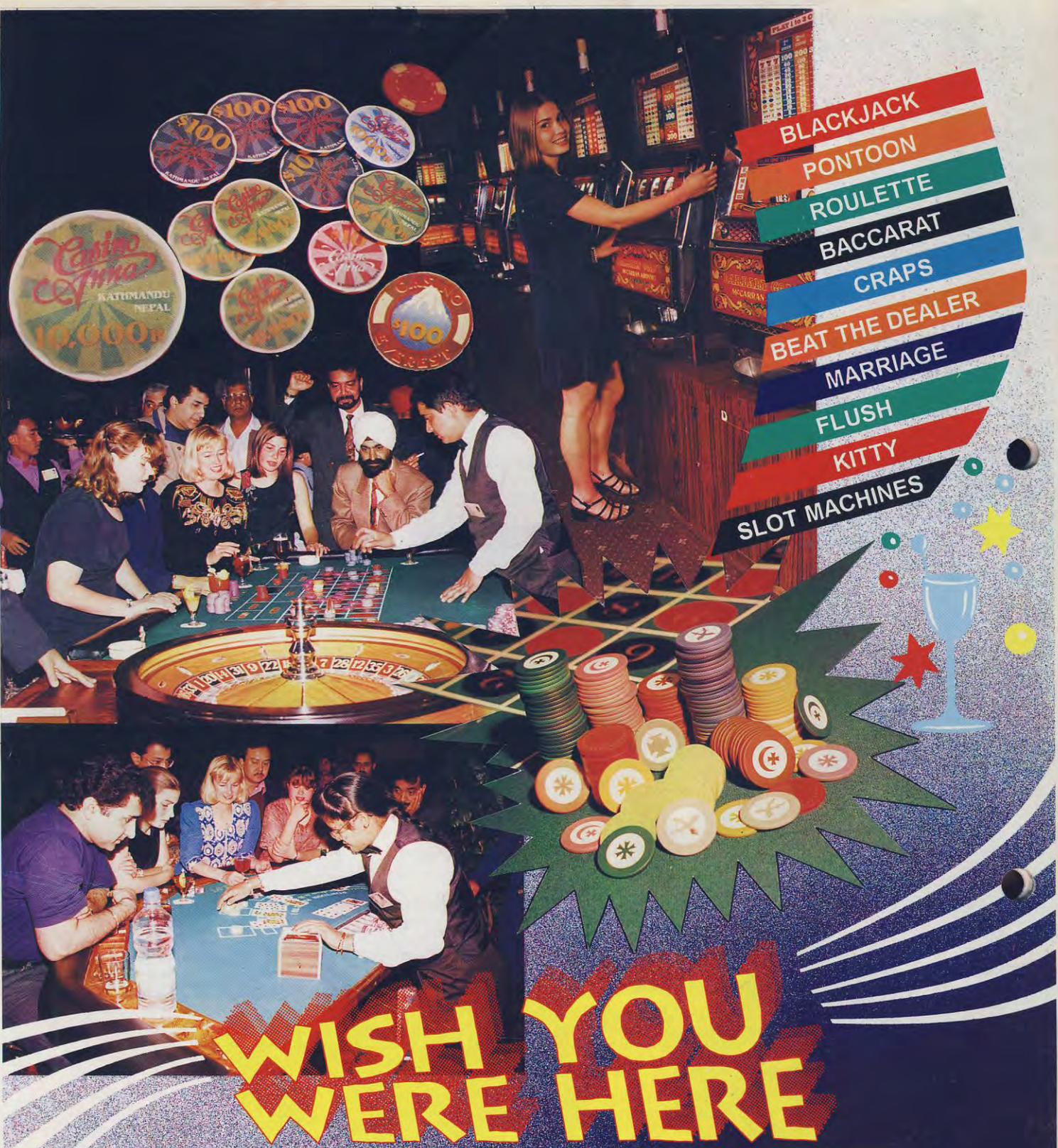


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